

“Beauty, that piercing joy akin to pain”:
Romanticism and the “Christian Moral Economy of ‘Sacrifice’” in First World War Poetry

by
Samantha Hamilton

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
in
English

Department of English and Film Studies
University of Alberta

©Samantha Hamilton, 2015

Abstract

This thesis examines the connection between Romanticism and the Christ-like sacrifice of soldiers depicted in British poetry of the First World War. It focuses on the Romantic notion of the artist as an individual with special knowledge who suffers in order to create beautiful art, which, this thesis argues, provides a precedent for poets during the war to portray the suffering and sacrifice of combatants in beautiful – and, thus, aesthetically acceptable – ways. Particularly, this thesis focuses on a small, but diverse, group of poets who use the consecrated language of Christianity not only to express in poetry the un-poetic aspects of war (suffering and death), but to navigate a wartime culture of hyper-nationalism and what Peter Howarth calls “a Christian moral economy of ‘sacrifice’ for national honour or the common good” (51) in order to express their thoughts and feelings on the war to a large (and largely conservative) audience.

The methods used in this thesis include a historical analysis of the culture and context in which the poets here examined developed and published their work. This analysis includes an examination of the formal and informal education that these poets likely received as well as the publishing conditions in Britain during the First World War. This historical context provides the basis for applying the genre theory used by Nils Clausson, who argues for the necessity of poetic models being available to poets to write about their wartime experiences poetically. This thesis argues that Romantic poetry was made an accessible poetic model for poets via their education, and this genre of poetry is demonstrated to have influenced the poetry herein examined through the close reading and formal analysis of selected works by Sergeant Leslie Coulson, Eva Dobell, Private Wilfrid Gibson, Rudyard Kipling, Marjorie Pickthall, Lieutenant Siegfried Sassoon, and the Reverend Geoffrey Anketell Studdert Kennedy.

Preface

This thesis is an original work by Samantha Hamilton. No part of this thesis has been previously published.

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge the support and assistance I have received during the course of researching and writing this thesis. First and foremost, I would like to thank Stefen Osl for his unwavering support of my ideas and my work. I thank my parents for providing the opportunities that led me to be able to complete such a project.

Next, I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Christine Wiesenthal for her excellent direction and feedback throughout the planning, research, and writing of this thesis. I would like to thank the members of my examining committee, Dr. Robert Brazeau and Dr. Irene Sywenky, as well as the chair, Dr. Sarah Krotz, for their time and effort in seeing my project to completion.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the University of Alberta's Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research and the Department of English and Film Studies for the research and funding opportunities that made my work on this thesis possible.

Table of Contents

Introduction	p. 01
Chapter 1: The State of Education and Available Poetic Models in the Pre-War Years	p. 11
Chapter 2: Literary Movements and Markets in Wartime England	p. 31
Chapter 3: English Nationalism, Romanticism, and a Christian Moral Economy of Sacrifice	p. 53
Conclusion	p. 87
Works Cited	p. 89
Appendix	p. 99

List of Figures

- Fig. 1: *The Great Sacrifice* p. 99
- Fig. 2: *Card for Easter Day Services, St. George, Brandon Hill* p. 100
- Fig. 3: *Sei getreu bis in den Tod* p. 100
- Fig. 4: *What Will Your Answer Be?* p. 101
- Fig. 5: *If You Cannot Join the Army – Try and Get a Recruit* p. 101
- Fig. 6: *Do You Realise Our Peril?* p. 102
- Fig. 7: *Fill Up the Ranks! Pile Up the Munitions!* p. 102
- Fig. 8: *Are You In This?* p. 103

INTRODUCTION

I think it is appropriate, having passed the centennial of the outbreak of the First World War and looking ahead to the centennial of the war's conclusion, to discuss poetry written about the war. Notwithstanding a "minor revival in the 1930s, coinciding with a strong resurgence of other kinds of war literature," Elizabeth Marsland writes, the "recent revival in critical interest" in First World War poetry "dates from the mid 1960s" – albeit, with "notable predecessors" (10). These include D. S. R. Welland, whose "work throughout the 1950s . . . was invaluable in breaking trail," as well as the former soldier-poet Edmund Blunden, whose work – the 1958 British Council booklets *War Poets, 1914-18* – "set the dichotomy pattern that most critics have followed until recently" (Marsland 10). The dichotomy of which Marsland writes can be seen in the tendency of scholars to separate the war poets according to their attitude towards the First World War, "so that pro-war and anti-war poems are viewed as opposites" (Marsland 13). Moreover, this dichotomy exists in anthologies of poetry on the war. The "editorial orthodoxies" from the 1960s, George Walter writes, "still influence the form and content of contemporary selections of First World War poetry" (xxxii). Indeed, he notes that "modern anthologies tend to only favour those poems which stress the horrors of the war, which are compassionate about the suffering of those who endured it and, preferably, translate that compassion into anger towards war and those who perpetuate it" (Walter xxxii).

As a result of these "editorial orthodoxies," early First World War poetry scholarship is often restricted "only to poems which are judged to be worthwhile because they combine the presentation of direct experience with the articulation of a 'seared conscience'," which in turn encourages readers of First World War poetry to "use one or both of these criteria to judge the worth of any other war poems they may encounter" (Walter xxxiv). For instance, the scope of

poets analysed in Bernard Bergonzi's early study of First World War poetry, *Heroes' Twilight: A Study of the Literature of the Great War* (first published in 1965), is quite limited. Examining the third edition of Bergonzi's work, we can see that the first seven chapters are devoted to soldier-poets; yet, only one chapter covers civilian responses and, even here, only one woman (Virginia Woolf) is ever mentioned. Bergonzi writes that his "main concern is with the literary *records* of the Great War left by those who fought in it" (129, italics added). In short, Bergonzi's concerns lay primarily with the wartime experiences of the poets and the documentary nature of the poems they wrote, and not necessarily with poetics.

This brings us to the issue of documentation in First World War poetry, or the preference for "realism" among early critics. The works that Bergonzi chose to include in his study are, he writes, "written as an act of anamnesis, to make experience clear to their authors and to preserve the memory of what they had seen and undergone" (7). Likewise, Jon Silkin includes in his early anthology – *Out of Battle: The Poetry of the Great War* (first published in 1972) – his objection to the treatment of the war poetry "as though its supreme and supervening category were *poetry*" (2nd ed. vii, italics in original). He suggests that "we consider war poetry as a creation arising from a particular experience" and that "the activity of war . . . is not different in degree but in kind from other experience" (Silkin viii). Of course, Silkin refers only to a particular kind of war experience: combat. Much like Bergonzi, he includes only a few civilians in his anthology (none of whom are women), demonstrating his preference for the poets whose wartime experience took place on the front lines, in combatant roles. In fact, this preference became so common amongst scholars of First World War poetry that James Campbell came up with a label to describe this ideology: he calls it "combat gnosticism," which he defines as "the belief that combat represents a qualitatively separate order of experience that is difficult if not impossible to communicate to

any who have not undergone an identical experience” (203). The ideology manifests itself among critics as “an aesthetic criterion of realism” and has, according to Campbell, “served both to limit severely the canon of texts that mainstream First World War criticism has seen as legitimate war writing and has simultaneously promoted war literature’s status as a discrete body of work with almost no relation to non-war writing” (203). Walter concurs, suggesting that underlying many readings of First World War poetry “is the perception that war poetry is somehow more authentic than other kinds of poetry” and that, as we have seen, “all too often war poems are read not as poetry, but as being realistic, accurate reportage” (xxxv).

The historical tendency to read or analyse First World War poetry in light of its apparent realism has resulted in the dismissal of poems that are clearly not realistic, particularly those that employ conventional Romantic forms and/or content. In fact, Marsland tells us that “the image that the criticism promotes [is] a typical English First World War poet [who] was a combatant, usually a junior officer, apolitical, who . . . was converted by his war experience from a patriotic idealist to a disillusioned realist” (14-15). For example, the critic Argha Banerjee writes almost exactly this: “there was a gradual but a radical shift in the focus of the poetic fad from the die-hard patriotism and romanticism associated with the war, to the tragic and brutal reality of the trenches and modern warfare” (4). Here, romanticism is contrasted with reality; it is assumed to be unable to tell the “truth” about the horrors of war and, thus, is not fitting for the documentary nature of war poetry. In fact, this assumption can be seen among many critics of First World War poetry. Dorothy Goldman and her co-writers, for instance, suggest that “the realities of this war did not lend themselves to heroic and consoling verse” (74-75), while Peter Howarth suggests that “what we see in much First World War verse is the struggle of older forms with a reality which cannot be ‘contained’ by them” (53). However, if one looks at the broad scope of poetry

written about the First World War, one can see that, in fact, many poets utilised older, heroic forms to engage with the contemporary issues resulting from this modern, total war.

On the other hand, some critics suggest that contemporary events are best discussed using equally contemporary poetry – such as Modernist forms. Indeed, Howarth argues that “only modernist fragmentation can really convey the derangements of the war on the psyche, or the abandonment of any moral scheme of overall justification for war” (53). Likewise, Paul Fussell – the original, pre-eminent authority on First World War literature – suggests that those who recalled the war found “the war ‘indescribable’ in any but the available language of traditional literature” because, he implies, the Modernist poets “Joyce, Eliot, Lawrence, Pound, Yeats were not present at the front to induct them into new idioms which might have done the job better” (189). In other words, if Modernist poets just had more combat experience, their poetry would be considered most fitting to describe the “indescribable” aspects of war.

However, we do not find this preference for Modernist poetic forms over conventional ones only in First World War poetry scholarship; after all, the English literary canon includes more Modernist poets than non-Modernist ones among early twentieth-century writers. Matthew Arnold suggests that there is “a direct connection between the critic’s work and the making of canonical authors and texts, such that what becomes canonical is itself largely a function of the critic’s careful efforts behind the scenes” (Crocco 47). Indeed, there were many critics among the Modernist poets – both civilians, like T. S. Eliot, and combatants, like Herbert Read – who were in a position to lobby for Modernism’s place in the literary canon. Many of the poets who wrote conventional and/or Romantic verse during the First World War were not as well-educated as the Modernist poets generally were and, thus, did not have similar opportunities for promoting their kind of verse amongst scholars and critics. Consequently, Modernist poetry has been upheld by

critics both within and without First World War poetry scholarship, while poems influenced by older forms – such as Romanticism – have, until recently, been largely ignored.

Fortunately, the realist and Modernist preferences among First World War poetry critics have been challenged in recent years. Many scholars acknowledge the influence of Romanticism on particular poets who wrote about the war, such as Sarah Cole, who tells us that “the English literary history that permeated Sassoon’s imaginary” included Romanticism, especially (101). Additionally, Diana M. A. Relke points out that Marjorie Pickthall – an English-Canadian poet who resided in England during the war and contributed to the war effort “as much as her health permitted” (Bennett and Brown 314) – is “a woman poet in the Romantic tradition” (Relke 34). Some scholars, like Samuel Hynes and Elizabeth Marsland, also point out the general influence of Romantic ideologies and/or forms on First World War poetry as a whole where it is applicable to their work. Likewise, scholars such as Nosheen Khan and Judith Kazantzis draw attention to the Romantic characteristics often found in women’s poetry on the war. Khan writes that “[t]he idiom exploited by women poets is primarily that of the nineteenth century” (5), while Kazantzis notes that women’s poems can be “half romantic, half altruistic . . . giving grounds for the use of that famous smear-word ‘sentimental’, which has been so generously applied down the critical ages to all parts of women’s poetry” (xvii). Yet, though these scholars challenge the assumptions that war poems must be realistic, unromantic, and definitely not “sentimental” to be canonical, they do not often discuss possible reasons why their poets of study might have chosen to use imaginative, Romantic verse instead. At the very least, these reasons do not become the focus of these scholars’ studies.

Those critics who do focus on Romanticism and the factors influencing poets to utilise its forms and ideologies in First World War poetry are few. Indeed, Richard Badenhuisen argues

that soldier-poets' relative anonymity and lack of free expression – due to “the military’s blanket censorship of most forms of written expression, realized most thoroughly in the Field Service Post Card” (269) – had a profound impact on the diction of their verse. Badenhausen sets out to bind “the way language emerges in consciously literary treatments of the war to both the taxing psychological atmosphere of the fighting and to the soldier-writer’s concomitant need to ground the self, gain control, and finally assert power, however temporary and tenuous that power might be” (269). Soldier-poets use language to create power, Badenhausen asserts, through naming or creating new compound nouns. He further suggests that “compounding allowed poets a way of relating experience . . . by transforming those landscapes creatively in a procedure with roots in Romantic theories of perception” (Badenhausen 277-278). In essence, the poet’s “imagination allows a redrawing of artwork or landscape so that a new reality exists within the poem, even if only provisionally” (Badenhausen 278). Yet, Badenhausen does not dismiss the Romantic influence on war poetry as being unfit to represent the “new reality”; rather, he points out that “the idea that an actual ‘reality’ of the war existed is a seriously flawed notion” and, in fact, “such a ‘reality’ proved elusive” to poets seeking to represent it (278).

Another critic, Margot Norris, likewise seeks to explain combatants’ use of conventional, Romantic-influenced poetry without dismissing it out of hand. She posits that British combatants chose to use Georgian poetic forms over Modernist ones because these poets “were appalled by the militarism and violence implicit in the Futurism and Vorticism that excited many of the pre-war modernists” (Norris 137). Norris writes of Vorticism that “the war imitated the Vortex too dramatically and too destructively”; in other words, that it “produced a kind of collateral damage by depriving the British soldier poets of an avant-gardism that could have given them the reality-altering forms they needed to express their experiences of combat” (140). Norris suggests that

“[t]he aggressive ideology behind Britain’s pre-war avant-garde movements can offer a more nuanced explanation for the British trench poets’ turn toward the pastoralism of the Georgians for their conventions” (140). The explanations she provides for the combatants’ use of Georgian poetic forms include the fact that they offered an escape from the calamities of war; that Georgianism was an “anti-mechanistic ideology” that “may have attracted the soldier-poets”; and, moreover, that its “pastoralism was transformed into a viable and powerful expression of the British soldiers’ World War I combat experience,” while “such natural images as poppies, wheat, and the cyclical year became signifiers of the war’s cost” (Norris 140, 143). Norris’ theory that the soldier-poets’ use of conventional poetic forms constitutes a deliberate choice is therefore a far cry from the dismissive attitudes of previous scholars towards conventional or Romantic forms and the poets who employed them.

Finally, a critic who focuses explicitly on Romanticism and its influence on First World War poetry is Nils Clausson, who argues for the significant role of Romantic verse forms on the development of the trench lyric. Clausson asserts that in order to write about a subject poetically, one must first have access to a poetic model that one can emulate. Indeed, “just as no one would write a Petrarchan sonnet without first reading one, no one would (or could) write a poem about trench warfare without some antecedent model to follow” (Clausson 105). Clausson challenges the view that poetry in general – and First World War poetry in particular – emerges “from the unique experience of the poet, and that to be authentic it must directly express that experience” (106). Instead, the difficulty that poets face “is not one of evolving an adequate response to an unparalleled experience but of finding or identifying a *literary form* that will enable the poet to have an adequate *poetic* response to that experience in the first place” (Clausson 107, italics in original). The literary form used by many poets in the trenches, Clausson argues, is the greater

Romantic lyric. However, the major war poets transformed this lyric into the trench lyric; thus, Clausson writes, “the trench lyrics that have been praised for their realism turn out to be just as ‘conventional’ as the patriotic lyrics that are condemned for their inflated language and lack of realism” (107). In short, Clausson does not only argue for the influence of Romanticism on the canonical First World War poets, but challenges the assumptions made by other critics regarding the “realism” of the verse they praise.

However, it is clear that Badenhausen, Norris, and Clausson all focus on combatant poets in their analyses, despite the fact that their arguments can also apply to non-combatant war poets. After all, non-combatant poets also engage in “literary treatments of the war” (Badenhausen 269) and, in many cases, imaginatively recreate the landscapes of war in their poetry. Likewise, those engaged in combat are not the only poets with a distaste for the violence of Vorticist and Futurist ideologies; indeed, the misogyny apparent in Futurist manifestoes was likely distasteful to many women writers. Moreover, one does not need to be a combatant to protest the violence promoted by these Modernist movements or to prefer the pastoral escapism of (the more popular) Georgian poetry. Finally, as we shall see, poets and would-be poets of all sorts were exposed to, influenced by, and utilised in their own verse Romantic forms and content. Additionally, the phenomenon of the “trench lyric” was not limited to combatant poets, since non-combatants like Wilfrid Gibson wrote convincingly realistic trench lyrics despite having never been to the Front (Holt and Holt 220). In short, despite advocating for conventional, Romantically-inspired poetry, Badenhausen, Norris, and Clausson still fall into the habit of treating First World War poetry as combatants’ poetry, perpetuating the ideology of “combat gnosticism.”

I understand that, in order to write something new about First World War poetry, critics may show well-known poets in a different light; they will argue for a fresh way of looking at old

favourites, as the above critics do. It is thus my intention to push the arguments of Badenhausen, Norris, and Clausson (as well as to those of Adrian Caesar and Evelyn Cobley) further, and to include amongst the combatant poets many non-combatant participants in the war. To this end, I have included in my analysis the following poets: Sergeant Leslie Coulson, a non-commissioned soldier (Holt and Holt 129); Eva Dobell, a volunteer nurse (Reilly 132); Private Wilfrid Wilson Gibson, an army medical clerk (Hibberd 21); Rudyard Kipling, an author, war reporter, and pro-war propagandist (Kendall 205); Marjorie Lowry Christie Pickthall, a farmer, ambulance driver, and librarian (Walter 351); Lieutenant Siegfried Lorraine Sassoon, a commissioned officer (Holt and Holt 231); and Reverend Geoffrey Anketell Studdert Kennedy, also known as “Woodbine Willie,” a Chaplain to the Forces (Holt and Holt 172, 175).

In considering this range of combatant and non-combatant poets, I do not seek to make judgements regarding the value of Romanticism or its conventional poetic forms versus that of Modernism and its experimental forms. However, throughout my thesis, I engage with the work of John Guillory on cultural capital and literary canon formation; thus, I explore and analyse the relative value(s) of both Romantic and Modernist poetry in Britain during the First World War, especially as these values are affected by the social status and political alliance(s) of those who wrote verse at this time. I explore the potential reasons why poets might choose to align with one poetic form or literary ideology over the other, which include: a familiarity with Romantic forms dating to poets’ school days; the violent, adversarial position of the Modernists; better publishing opportunities for conventional, patriotic poetry; and a literary culture that promotes beauty above all else in poetry. To this end, I will focus on the role of Romanticism in the education of First World War poets in addition to the social and literary factors that affected the publication and content of their poetry.

In the first chapter, I will assess the state of education in Britain during the pre-war years, when poets who would write poetry during the war were educated. I include the literary texts to which students were likely exposed and demonstrate that pupils were taught that the Romantic poets wrote the best poetry, the poetry worth emulating. In addition, I emphasise the influence of Christianity on students' education, as it provides a cultural and linguistic shorthand with which poets could communicate with their readers. Finally, I discuss how other scholars and I define Romanticism and Romantic poetry, focusing particularly on the importance of the poet as an individual with knowledge not available to others, as a sort of prophet or national mythmaker who speaks for his or her group or nation.

In the second chapter, I move on to discuss the emerging literary movements in the pre-war years (the Georgians, the Modernists, and the Poetry Society) and their various manifestoes. I point out the reception to each movement amongst the general public as well as the publishing opportunities for each before and during the war. I note the development of a hyper-nationalism in response to the outbreak of war that both officially and unofficially limited the publication of poetry to largely patriotic verse; however, I am careful to cover the extenuating circumstances that often limited poets in their publication goals, such as their class, gender, and/or sexuality.

In the third and final chapter, I reinforce the influence of nationalism on the poetry of the war, arguing that poets negotiated the patriotic atmosphere of wartime by turning to the allusive, euphemistic language offered by Romantic forms and ideologies. Limited by contemporary beliefs about what defines poetry, poets utilise the consecrated language of Christianity to write about the un-poetic subject of war poetically. They confront the guilt generated by what Peter Howarth calls "a Christian moral economy of 'sacrifice'" (51) and use the very same rhetoric of sacrifice to pursue their own personal and/or political ends.

CHAPTER 1: THE STATE OF EDUCATION AND AVAILABLE POETIC MODELS IN THE PRE-WAR YEARS

As a result of the 1789 French Revolution, France went to war with Austria and Prussia in 1792 – a war that not only enveloped Europe for twenty-four years, but which, Michael Ferber argues, “truly deserves the name World War I for its global scope and enormous battles” (10). Of course, the war we actually call World War I, or the First World War, began over a century later in 1914, with France and Germany as antagonists once again. Yet, there are further similarities between these two eras, the Romantic and the Modern, in Britain: population growth, increasing urbanisation, and demands for political reform, to name a few (Ferber 10). More importantly for our purposes, however, is the increase in literacy, the literary market, and the study of canonical English literature that occurred in both periods. Francesco Crocco notes that, during the 1700s, “standard English was codified, literacy peaked, the literary marketplace thrived, and the study of English literature became institutionalized, replete with disciplinary standards and a national canon” (22). Likewise, Elizabeth Marsland explains the outpouring of verse in English between 1914 and 1918 as a result of the growing literacy among Britain’s population: she writes that general education “was a vital factor in determining the size of the poetic response” through “a greatly-expanded reading public” (44). However, this same education, Marsland notes, “imbued students . . . with a taste for a restricted canon of verse, including the [English] nation’s treasury of patriotic and heroic poems” (44). This canon of verse was, as we shall see, largely Romantic in genre; and, in the pre-war years, aspiring poets would encounter canonical works formally through state-run, church-run, or public schools as well as informally through home schooling, Sunday schools, and popular culture. It would be to these Romantic poets that many First World War poets would turn to utilise as models for their own developing verse during the war.

I am in agreement with the critic Nils Clausson, who argues that, in order to write about a subject poetically, aspiring poets must have an example or model upon which to base their own verse. In Clausson's words, "just as no one would write a Petrarchan sonnet without first reading one, no one would (or could) write a poem about trench warfare without some antecedent model to follow" (105). The crucial word here is "some": Clausson does not argue that poets require an *exact* model to follow; they simply require some sort of template – or "code," as Clausson puts it (106) – that they can imbue with their own content. Yet, Clausson notes, "it is the conventions (the code) that create the 'content'; content does not come unmediated from experience through the poet and then into the poem" (106). In other words, "[t]o write a trench lyric, it is not enough to have experienced the reality of trench warfare";¹ rather, one must "be enamoured of the poetic form, the genre, that one must imitate in order to say anything *poetic* about one's experience" (Clausson 106, italics in original). As we shall see in this chapter, the genre and poetic forms to which many First World War poets turned was the Romanticism of canonical poets, such as Wordsworth, Keats, and Shelley, and the utilisation of conventional forms like sonnets.

"In sociological terms, the canon is a paramount example of what Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger have dubbed a *neo-tradition*, which they define as 'a set of practices . . . which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past'" (Crocco 23, italics in original). These scholars suggest, Crocco writes, "that one should expect the invention of [new] tradition[s] 'to occur more frequently when a rapid transformation of society weakens or destroys the social patterns for which "old" traditions have been designed'" (23). In this instance, Crocco refers to the troubles of the Romantic era for the British Empire, citing "ethnic resistance to national unification, colonial

1. After all, Wilfrid Wilson Gibson wrote convincingly realistic trench lyrics without having ever left the British Isles during his military service (Holt and Holt 220).

and imperial wars, profound economic and technological transformations, multiple class conflicts, and secularization” (23). Yet, similar troubles were plaguing the British in the years before the First World War. Samuel Hynes writes that Irishmen, women, and workers in particular “were all exerting pressures against established society and its mores”; in 1912 alone “there was a prolonged miners’ strike, Suffragists began their campaign of destroying property by breaking London shop-windows, and the government once more tried and failed to get a Home Rule bill for Ireland through Parliament” (6). It makes sense, then, during the tumultuous pre-war years that those in positions of power and influence would seek to reinforce traditions, such as the English literary canon, in an attempt to maintain order and the status quo.

Matthew Arnold discusses the issues of working class demonstrations, the Irish, and more in *Culture and Anarchy*. He suggests that “an Englishman’s right to do what he likes,” including “his right to march where he likes” as well as “threaten” and “smash as he likes” – in essence, to demonstrate and riot – “tends to anarchy” (Arnold 37). This tendency toward anarchy, he argues, results from British society’s “want of light” (37) – Arnold’s term for intelligence (33). The cure for anarchy, for demonstrations in the streets, for political riots, put forth by Arnold is culture, or the “*study of perfection*” (6, italics in original), with perfection itself being defined by Arnold as “a harmonious expansion of *all* the powers which make the beauty and worth of human nature, and is not consistent with the over-development of any one power at the expense of the rest” (9, italics in original). Nor is perfection an individual pursuit. “The individual,” Arnold writes, “is required, under pain of being stunted and enfeebled in his own development if he disobeys, to carry others along with him in his march towards perfection” (9). It is upon this basis of uplifting the whole of the nation towards perfection – and thus, towards a well-behaved, orderly society – that the notion of a universal education system arose.

Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century and continuing into the twentieth, educational reforms were passed which increased general access to elementary education and standardised curriculum across England. “Economic growth and the formation of citizens” Susannah Wright tells us, “were cited throughout the period as reasons why all young people should receive an elementary education” (22). “Contemporaries feared that limited educational opportunities might lead to industrial decline” and, consequently, “the elementary school was seen as the place where the mass of young people could be collected together, and taught attitudes and behaviours that would remedy deficiencies of home and neighbourhood” (Wright 23). Furthermore, moral values were taught to pupils via “school discipline . . . , drill, religious instruction, and the use of school texts to promote nationalism and citizenship” (Wright 25). In particular, “[t]he general discipline of elementary schooling was deemed an important tool for socialising working-class children” Wright notes (25). Therefore, in the 1860s, the state increased its involvement in financing and organising elementary education, issuing a Code of Regulations, which – with its 1862 revision – “established a common curriculum and a country-wide apparatus for inspection and funding” (Wright 22). Access to state elementary and secondary schooling became more accessible with the 1870 Education Act, which “provided school places for all children aged 5-12,” and the 1902 Education Act, which established more secondary schools and a competitive scholarship system, respectfully (Wright 22).

This is all to say that the move to increase and improve education for all classes in Britain during this period was not *necessarily* for the benefit of the working class – though Heather Ellis points out that “[t]here was frequently a genuine desire to improve access to elite education for the children of working-class families and to enhance the quality of elementary education” (55) – but was pushed for the benefit of the nation as a whole. It was a means of bolstering nationalism

and pride in the English – not British – race. Arnold boasts that “[n]o people in the world have done more and struggled more to attain this relative moral perfection than our English race has” and, as a result, the English have been rewarded “not only in the great worldly prosperity which our obedience to this command has brought us, but also, and far more, in great inward peace and satisfaction” (16-17). Thus, Arnold implies that, hand-in-hand with the moral development of the nation’s populace, striving for perfection in all things will bring further prosperity to the British Empire – quite the incentive to establish a universal system for improving the plight of Britain’s youth, including the working class.

In the early twentieth century, there were multiple school systems in Britain, which were divided along class lines. The relatively new state elementary schools catered primarily to the working class, while the private, fee-paying public schools were often limited to the middle and upper classes. However, the education provided by the former was not always inferior in quality to the latter. Indeed, Ellis points out that although “[m]uch has been made . . . of the supposed division between the classical curriculum pursued in middle-class schools . . . and the modern curriculum followed in elementary schools” there was, in fact, “a modernisation of the syllabus” in both cases at the end of the nineteenth century (53). This modernisation occurred in the wake of critics like Matthew Arnold, who lauded vernacular language and literature over the Greek and Latin classics, using the latter as “touchstones” to authorize the former (Crocco 33). Thus, modern subjects recommended by the Clarendon Report to be taught in schools included modern languages, such as French and German, as well as English grammar and literature (Ellis 53). The classic languages and literature of the Greeks and Romans, Arnold argues, belong to “a culture which is begotten by nothing so intellectual as curiosity”; that “it is valued either out of sheer vanity and ignorance, or else as an engine of social and class distinction, separating its holder . . .

from other people who have not got it” (4). Modern languages and literature, on the other hand, allowed people of all classes to share a common, English culture that would bind them together in times, like war, when nationalism was most desired.

Therefore, by the 1880s, if a pupil was to attend a public school for middle- and upper-class boys, he would have likely received a similar education as a working-class pupil attending an elementary school. Further reasons for this similarity in curriculum – besides a general desire for a modern curriculum – include the fact that the public school system “acted as an important model for the development of elementary schooling in England between 1870 and 1900” (Ellis 46). Another reason can be attributed to publishing. Beginning in the 1860s, Oxford’s Clarendon Press was producing readers for elementary schools in addition to books for both university and secondary school systems (Ellis 54). Therefore, despite the fact that secondary and university schooling was also often restricted to those who could afford it – in other words, those of the middle and upper classes (Stephens 103-104, 118) – elementary-school-aged pupils read texts similar in quality as those read by students who continued their education.

Instead, the largest difference in primary curriculum in the pre-war years appears to have been between boys’ and girls’ education. For example, starting in 1905 “domestic training was made compulsory for all girls attending elementary schools,” but was not a requirement for boys (Wright 33). Furthermore, although the number of endowed, proprietary, and secondary schools for girls increased dramatically between the 1860s and 1914, the “vast majority” of middle-class girls “were still educated at home or in traditional private schools” (Stephens 109-110). Stephens notes that these private girls’ schools (largely unavailable to the working-class) “achieved very high academic standards”; yet, their curriculum stressed literary and humane subjects, and often ignored the sciences (111). Additionally, rather than preparing girls for careers, the purpose of

their education was “to allow middle-class women . . . to develop intellectual and personal attributes enabling them to fulfil their traditional roles as wives and mothers more effectively” (Stephens 111). However, this does not mean that girls did not also learn the skills to produce poetry. According to Tim Kendall, of the individuals who published verse during the war, about a quarter were women (200), demonstrating that girls – as long as they belonged to middle- or upper-class families – were also exposed to literary figures upon whom they could model their own verse.

Both boys and girls would have been taught reading and writing in schools, which, John Guillory points out, “[l]ike any other social practices . . . are subject to various forms of control or regulation, to institutional forms and organization” (“Canon” 239). Indeed, we see this sort of regulation occurring, for instance, in 1880 when “the use of readers to improve the reading skills of elementary school pupils [became] mandatory” and in the 1890s, when government codes and curriculum included “a strong focus” on the subjects of reading and writing (Wright 27, 24). Of course, increases in general literacy in Britain as a result of educational reforms like these were part of a much broader trend of rising literacy levels beginning with the increased affordability of literary texts in the eighteenth century, resulting in “a highly literate society” by the end of that century (Crocco 23). Nevertheless, Guillory argues that “the school was assigned the general social function of distributing various kinds of knowledge, including the knowledge of *how* to read and write as well as *what* to read and write” (“Canon” 240, italics in original). Therefore, by the time that war broke out in 1914, many of those in Britain who were writing verse would have been educated in the modernised school systems and have been influenced not only by the way they were taught to read – particularly in the case of poetry – but by what they were expected to read and have read in order to be considered well-rounded poets.

It is difficult to pinpoint exactly what kind of literary texts that pupils in either privately-run public schools or state-run elementary schools would have read, but we can glean some idea from typical anthologies of the pre-war period. This difficulty stems largely from the fact that, although the study of literature “was seen as ‘first-hand study of the works of great writers’, the choice of suitable books [was] left to the teachers” (Gordon and Lawton 85). As noted, Oxford’s Clarendon Press published texts for use in schools of all levels, and thus books like the *Oxford Book of English Verse* – which Marsland notes was “enormously influential” (26) – were likely widely available to pupils. Furthermore, Francis Palgrave’s *Golden Treasury of Songs and Lyrics* was also “highly popular” according to Marsland (28). Both texts appear to have been owned by large numbers of soldiers, who brought them to the Front during the war (Clausson 112; Holt and Holt 5), suggesting that these young men were familiar with, or even acquired these texts during the course of their education. Additionally, a 1914 edition of Romantic works selected from the *Golden Treasury* – entitled *Poems of Wordsworth, Shelley, and Keats* – had been “Edited for the Use of Schools” and its Editorial Note mentions the intent of the editors to meet requirements for high-school students (n.pag.).

Within these anthologies are poems that the compilers considered to be the “best” works by poets writing in English. These poems range from anonymous works to those by Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, and others. A. T. Quiller-Couch, editor of *The Oxford Book of English Verse* (1906), states in the Preface that he has “tried to range over the whole field of English Verse from the beginning, or from the Thirteenth Century to the closing year of the Nineteenth, and to choose the best” (vii). Likewise, Francis Palgrave notes in his Preface to *The Golden Treasury of Songs and Lyrics* (1908) that he has attempted “to include in it all the best original Lyrical pieces and Songs in our language . . . by writers not living, – and none besides

the best” (47). The “best” works in English, however, seem to be largely of a Romantic nature. In fact, writing of anthologies of national poetry, Crocco states that “[t]he Romantics came to dominate the rosters of authors appearing in these anthologies so completely that [William] St. Clair speculates by the end of the [nineteenth] century they were read and esteemed on a level equal to that of the Bible” (15). “The frequency of Romantic selections in school anthologies” in particular, Crocco notes, “rose precipitously in the 1830s”; moreover, “by the 1850s and 1860s, Wordsworth, Byron, Scott, Southey, and Hemans were dominating the rosters, with Coleridge, Shelley, and Blake enjoying more moderate success” (15). The publication (first in 1912, and again in 1914) of selected works by Wordsworth, Shelley, and Keats drawn from the *Golden Treasury* for the purpose of schools suggests that the desire for a Romantic-focused curriculum continued into the twentieth century. Thus, aspiring poets in the pre-war years were taught, via their schools’ curricula, that the “best” works in English were of a largely Romantic nature and, as a result, many would turn to these works as inspiration or models for their own verse during the war.

I think it is important to note the diction in both Quiller-Couch’s and Palgrave’s Prefaces: these editors have drawn attention to the fact that their selections do not include contemporary poetry or poets. In fact, one reason that the verse included in their anthologies is considered the “best” in the English language likely stems from the age of said works. In *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation*, Guillory suggests that “as cultural works recede into the past, they simultaneously gravitate into the realm of ‘restricted production’ . . . by virtue of the fact that the knowledge required to decipher them is the cultural capital of the school” (330). In other words, the less we know of the historical context surrounding a work – particularly any language unique to its time or place – the more valuable that knowledge becomes due precisely

to its scarcity. In “The Market of Symbolic Goods,” Pierre Bourdieu puts it succinctly: “works of restricted art” – those works within the realm of restricted production – “owe their specifically cultural rarity to the rarity of the instruments with which they may be deciphered” (23). Because the instruments to decipher past poetry are acquired through the school system, this institution largely determines which works will be accessed by pupils and, as a result, which works will be preserved from one generation to the next. Furthermore, “the educational system, claiming a monopoly over the consecration of the past and over the production and consecration of cultural consumers,” writes Bourdieu, “only posthumously accords that infallible mark of consecration, the elevation of works into ‘classics’ by their inclusion in curricula” (26). Thus, contemporary works traditionally fell outside the purview of school systems, while past works – like Romantic poetry – are included in and canonised via the curriculum, enabling their work “to have a lasting effect on national culture” (Crocco 4).

In addition to Romantic works of poetry, aspiring poets were also exposed to texts which may have influenced the ideas behind or subject-matter within their poetry on the war. Included among these is Sir Robert Baden-Powell’s *Aids for Scouting* (1899), which Allen J. Frantzen tells us “was widely used by schoolteachers in the United Kingdom,” as well as his *Scouting for Boys* (1910), which was aimed at a school-age audience (150). Notably, the Boy Scouts before and during the First World War are described by Frantzen as being “a paradigmatic link between the chivalry of duty, with its call for bloodless self-sacrifice, and the war” (151). The values of duty and self-sacrifice would thus have been communicated to boys in a positive light via Baden-Powell’s texts. In a similar vein, Adrian Caesar argues that the teaching of “the classics” – which we know were available to public and elementary school pupils through Oxford’s Clarendon Press from the 1860s on (Ellis 54) – reinforced “the ideology of self-sacrifice, and the ‘beauty’

of pain and death” (7); in particular, Caesar notes that J. W. Mackail’s *Greek Anthology* includes “epigrams about ‘love and death and the fate of youth and beauty’” in addition to covering “the death of youth in battle” (8). The subjects of self-sacrifice and the beauty of death in war, as we shall see, were commonly utilised by poets during the First World War.

Finally, there is one text that was taught to almost all children, regardless of their class or gender: the English Bible. During the period from 1870-1900 “[r]eligious instruction was . . . considered by many to be an essential feature of elementary schooling” partly due to “the moral education it was thought to provide” (Wright 26). In both “voluntary,” church-run schools and state-run elementary schools, Bible readings were included as part of pupils’ religious instruction (Wright 26). On the other hand, in public schools pupils’ religious education was largely centred in the school chapels, where compulsory attendance was the norm (Gordon and Lawton 98, 78). In addition, the girls’ schools that were modelled on boys’ public schools emphasised “character training in a religious and moral environment” and, furthermore, many girls’ proprietary schools were denominational (Stephens 112). Thus, it was likely that, if a poet had been educated in one of these school systems, s/he would have a working knowledge of Biblical stories, allusions, and vocabulary. In fact, the ubiquity of religious – specifically Christian – instruction to children in Britain meant that poets and readers shared a common literary language that was accessible to all classes and genders, and could be utilised to reach as wide a readership as possible. Indeed, this is the view espoused by Nosheen Khan, who writes that religion is “public property and in this sense available to all” (39).

Even if one was not formally educated in the school system, one would still have been exposed to Christian teachings during the pre-war years. Like the push for universal elementary education, religious instruction was meant to improve the citizens of the British Empire. Arnold

writes in *Culture and Anarchy* that religion is “the greatest and most important of the efforts by which the human race has manifested its impulse to perfect itself”; that its “aim . . . is the great aim of culture, the aim of setting ourselves to ascertain what perfection is and to make it prevail” (8). For children, Sunday schools were a popular supplement to moral education during the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century (Wright 37-38), with around three out of four children attending Sunday schools in 1888 (Wilkinson 7). In addition, the Church of England established “church institutes with appropriate libraries, while the Society of Friends set up adult schools where bible reading predominated” (Stephens 156), and Christian agencies like the SPCK and the British and Foreign Bible Society “distributed over forty million Bibles, prayer books, hymn books and tracts [to the Western Front] in the first two years of the war” (Wilkinson 153). Thus, common reading materials that were likely to have been readily available to most people outside of the school system included the King James Bible, as well as hymn books like *Hymns Ancient and Modern* (Holt and Holt 5). Hymns in particular, Wilkinson notes, were intimately familiar to soldiers, who knew “a dozen or so hymns from day school, Sunday school, church or chapel,” including those that “seemed to give religious sanction to the war” (156). Wilkinson and Khan both provide examples of hymns which appear to promote an “imagery of the Christian life as one of warfare” (Khan 37): “Onward Christian Soldiers,” “Fight the Good Fight,” and “Soldiers of Christ” were widely known (Wilkinson 156; Khan 37). It is therefore not surprising that many poets, familiar with the Christian hymns that can still be heard at Remembrance Day ceremonies today, would often associate Christianity with warfare and, as a result, turn to Christian subject matter when writing about the war.

Other than hymns, there were very few examples of poetry written in English about war before 1914. Indeed, Clausson writes that “there was simply no English tradition of war poetry

upon which a modern poet could draw to write about trench warfare,” pointing to Tennyson’s “Charge of the Light Brigade” as one of “the few famous English poems about war” (106). Yet one popular collection of war poems published before the First World War is Rudyard Kipling’s *Barrack-Room Ballads*, a collection which contains poems about military conflict in Britain’s imperial outposts (Karlin 59). Critic Andrew Rutherford argues that “[f]or at least a quarter of a century, Kipling was the most widely read and influential writer on war in the English-speaking world” (xii). Fred D. Crawford suggests that it was “Kipling’s attention to the lot of the soldier and his praise of men in the ranks [which] made him unique among well-known prewar poets,” while “his use of colloquial speech and varied meters inspired several imitators during the war” (33). Likewise, Tracy E. Bilsing notes that even writers of propaganda pamphlets drew from works like Kipling’s “the ideas of sacrifice, spiritual progression and sportsmanship to appeal emotionally to the population of Britain” (78). Of course, we must keep in mind that if Kipling was one of only a few writers whose subject-matter was war, then it would not have taken much to establish him as the literary authority on the matter.

It is important to note the relative lack of English poetry written about warfare because this meant that poets who wrote about the First World War had, in this regard, few models upon which to base their own work. Yet, with few exceptions, many of these poets did not utilise the war poetry of Tennyson or Kipling as their poetic models. One of the early soldier-poets, the Georgian Rupert Brooke, used as his own model “the patriotic sonnet in the tradition of Milton and *particularly* of Wordsworth’s ‘London, 1802’” (Clausson 107, italics added). Clausson argues that the dominant poetic models available to soldiers to write about their war experiences were the patriotic sonnet and the Romantic lyric; yet, “the major war poets eventually abandoned the patriotic sonnet as a model” while retaining the Romantic lyric as their “primary inspiration”

(107). The logic behind this argument appears to be that if “one’s model of an authentic poem is ‘Lines Composed upon Westminster Bridge’ . . . then what one can say about World War One *in poetry* will necessarily be constituted by the conventions of that genre” (Clausson 110, italics in original). As we have seen, poets had been taught, via their childhood education, that the canonical, largely Romantic poems by those like Wordsworth were indeed considered “authentic.” Therefore, if one aspired to write one’s own “authentic” verse, one would do well to follow the template of poetry already accepted as canonical.

According to Ferber, though “a consensus has been reached . . . on who the Romantics are, there has been no agreed definition of the term that defines them” (3). Thus, while we can identify canonical Romantic poets of the period – those who have been frequently anthologised during the nineteenth century, such as Wordsworth, Byron, Scott, Southey, and Hemans, as well as Coleridge, Shelly, and Blake (Crocco 15) – we must come up with our own working definition of Romanticism. Ferber proposes his own, rather lengthy definition as such:

Romanticism was a European cultural movement, or set of kindred movements, which found in a symbolic and internalized romance plot a vehicle for exploring one’s self and its relationship to others and to nature, which gave privilege to the imagination as a faculty higher and more inclusive than reason, which sought solace in or reconciliation with the natural world, which ‘detranscendentalized’ religion by taking God or the divine as inherent in nature or in the soul and replaced theological doctrine with metaphor and feeling, which honored poetry and all the arts as the highest human creations, and which rebelled against the established canons of neoclassical aesthetics and against both aristocratic and

bourgeois social and political norms in favor of values more individual, inward, and emotional. (3-4)

From this definition, we can surmise that Romanticism, as a movement and an ideology, sought to express the spiritual or the imaginative faculties of the individual through poetry. Nature takes a prominent role in this poetry, and “the visual report” of a landscape depicted “is invariably the occasion for a meditation which turns out to constitute the *raison d’être* of the poem” (Abrams 528). Indeed, Romantic poets, though they often wrote about nature, “were humanists above all, for they dealt with the non-human only insofar as it is the occasion for the activity which defines man: thought, the process of intellection” (Abrams 528). In short, Romanticism places emphasis on the human, particularly the individual, over the natural world even when its poetry ostensibly focuses on the latter.

The individualism inherent in Romanticism is even more present in its treatment of the artist. Ferber asserts that “[n]o feature of Romanticism is more definitive than the glory it confers on the poet”; in fact, the poet “inherits the role of prophet, preacher, and priest from the receding Christian tradition” and “is seen as the creator of the imaginative world and national myths; he becomes a hero, almost a god” (16). The role of the poet as national mythmaker, in particular, is evident in the reception of First World War poetry within a century after the war. George Walter writes of the memorial to poets of the war in Westminster Abbey that “[t]he existence of this monument is a public acknowledgement of the unique cultural significance of First World War poetry, confirming its status as . . . ‘a sacred national text’” (xxxix). Furthermore, the fact that, as Walter points out, “children are more likely to first encounter the poetry of the First World War not in English lessons, but as part of their History curriculum” and are “asked to analyze them . . . for what they reveal about the experience of war” (xxxv), demonstrates the (selected) war

poets' role in building a national history. The war-time treatment of soldier-poets as national heroes is yet another example of the Romantic treatment of the artist, especially following the Romantic idea "that 'beauty' is inextricably associated with pain, and that the artist must therefore suffer to create beauty" (Caesar 8). The suffering of the soldier-poet in battle and its aftermath provides an opportunity for poets to utilise this pain and sacrifice to create beautiful, Romantic poetry.

The forms taken by Romantic poetry are varied, but there are recurring trends among the original Romantic poets and the First World War poets. Susan Stewart writes that the themes of Romantic poetry "were expressed in meters and forms of great variety"; that "some reach back to antiquity, others were newly invented, and many were put to new occasions and uses" (54). Yet, "for eighteenth- and nineteenth-century poets themselves, characterizing their work often meant organizing books for publication under the headings of 'sonnets,' 'eclogues,' 'metrical tales,' 'monodramas,' and other forms" (Stewart 54). Alternatively, Ferber tells us that "[i]f any single form is distinctive of British Romantic poetry, it is the ode" (66), which, in the English tradition, was "based on either the Pindaric or Horatian model" and incorporated both the hymn, with its "inescapably Christian connotation," as well as "the biblical psalm" (67). Ferber adds that "the Romantics felt licensed by the English Pindaric tradition not only to play with stanza sizes and rhyme schemes but to make abrupt transitions between stanzas" (68), a habit that many First World War poets emulate in their own verse. Second to the ode, however, is the sonnet form: Ferber asserts that "the second great age of the sonnet was the Romantic era" (115). As we shall see in the second chapter, publication limitations during the war meant that short, lyric poems like sonnets became common among collections of First World War poetry. Finally, writing of Romanticism and mourning, Mark Sandy tells us that "the elegiac voice of Romanticism

permeates numerous formal poetic modes” (4); yet, “Romanticism’s investment in the fragment as a poetic form for grief and mourning” lends itself to expression through epitaphs (7) – one of the most recognisable modes amongst First World War poetry.²

These various forms, however, include content common to much Romantic poetry. The inclusion or focus on nature, in particular, is a typical feature. A first-person speaker, the “lyric I” of traditional lyric poetry (Marsland 23) is also common, particularly one who, Wordsworth suggests, speaks “for and to the people in a language and style that is common and accessible” (Crocco 53). What M. H. Abrams calls “the greater Romantic lyric” (528), for instance, shares these qualities. Clausson notes that poetry in this genre “typically consists of the first-person utterance of a thoughtful, sensitive, and perceptive speaker who is usually alone in (or close to) a natural landscape”; one which “is described in some detail, usually in the opening lines” (111). Abrams also notes that the speaker resides “in a particularized, and usually a localized, outdoor setting” and speaks in both vernacular and formal language (527). Many First World War poems follow this template, outlining a particular aspect of the French landscape, or reminiscing about an English one, combining the rough language of soldiers with formal language more appropriate for poetry. Often, “some particular aspect of that landscape (flowers, or a bird) attracts the attention of the speaker, who is moved to reflect, speculate, or otherwise respond to this arresting aspect of the natural scene” (Clausson 111-112). During “the course of this meditation the lyric speaker achieves an insight, faces up to a tragic loss, comes to a moral decision, or resolves an emotional problem” (Abrams 527-528). As may be expected, poets during the First World War

2. For instance, Rudyard Kipling is well known for his epitaphs on the war. Kendall writes that “Kipling publicly mourned not as an individual but as a conduit for his country. His ‘Epitaphs’ is an attempt to bring to national consciousness all those killed in war for the Allied cause, from Hindu sepoy to Voluntary Aid Detachment nurses” (205).

had much tragedy and loss with which to struggle, and the template of the greater Romantic lyric offered a means of working through their resulting grief or guilt.

Of course, not all works inspired by the greater Romantic lyric – or all Romantic poems themselves – will follow this template exactly. Poets during the First World War may also have utilised similar sources of inspiration as the original Romantic poets themselves did, resulting in coincidentally similar forms. For example, Susan Stewart writes that a “widespread interest in hymns became a pervasive literary influence” during the eighteenth century, and she highlights how Blake’s *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience* are both imitations and commentaries upon Watts’ *Divine and Moral Songs* (61). After all, hymns were also pervasive during the First World War and were a potential source of inspiration for poets. Thus, it is possible that some of the poems about the war which appear to emulate the greater Romantic lyric, or a particular poet, do so coincidentally – however, the likelihood of this being the case is difficult to determine when classical works, hymns, the Bible, and Romantic poetry were all so widely available to aspiring poets for inspiration.

The thesis of Clausson’s article, “‘Perpetuating the Language’: Romantic Tradition, the Genre Function, and the Origins of the Trench Lyric,” argues that major war poets “transformed” the Romantic lyric “into a new lyric form, the trench lyric” in order to represent “what had only seemed alien and ungraspable” (107). In other words, the trench lyric follows the conventions of the Romantic lyric, but focuses on the subject of warfare and all that it entails (Clausson 115). Of course, by the “major war poets,” Clausson refers only to soldier-poets such as Edmund Blunden or Isaac Rosenberg, and occasionally to Siegfried Sassoon (112) – those poets who did not write trench lyrics (particularly those who did not experience trench warfare) are not included among the poets who, Clausson argues, participated in a “generic transformation” akin to the Modernist

renewal of traditional genres (125). In fact, Clausson dismisses a poem of Leslie Coulson's for its "late-Victorian poetic clichés," arguing that Coulson lacks "a set of *literary* conventions . . . that will enable him to write a poem about the new (but only seemingly inexpressible) horrors of trench warfare" (109, italics in original). Having died of a gunshot wound early in the war (Holt and Holt 132), Coulson did not have a chance to become established as a canonical trench-poet. Marsland points out the tragedy of the narrative that criticism promotes of the "typical English First World War poet . . . who, *if he lived long enough*, was converted by his war experience from a patriotic idealist to a disillusioned realist, and who then used his poetry as a tool of protest" (14-15, italics added). This narrative within the criticism of First World War poetry ignores the fact that poets like Coulson wrote protest poetry during the first half of the war, leading poetry like his to become either completely ignored or explained away as an anomaly (Marsland 20).

However, there has been a shift in First World War poetry scholarship to include civilian and non-combatant poets (including women) within the canon. A large part of the reason for the exclusion of these poets in the first place has to do with what James Campbell calls the ideology of "combat gnosticism," which he defines as "the belief that combat represents a qualitatively separate order of experience that is difficult if not impossible to communicate to any who have not undergone an identical experience" (203). Unfortunately, this belief has not only led many civilian and non-combatant poets to be historically excluded from the canon, but "[t]he attitude that gives a privileged position to the literature that records active participation in combat also encourages women writers to exclude themselves from serious consideration" (Goldman et al. 28). Furthermore, Dorothy Goldman and her co-writers argue that "[a] million and one horrors occurred elsewhere than on the western front, and they were directly experienced, not imagined,

by women” (28). Evidently, then, experience of war (though not necessarily combat) is still considered a criterion for some scholars to include a poem amongst First World War poetry. This criterion of experience in First World War poetry conflicts with Romanticism’s exaltation of the imagination, resulting in critics downplaying or outright dismissing Romanticism’s influence on the canonical war poets and their poetry as well as privileging combatants’ poetry over that of non-combatants, whose poetry about combat and the war was often necessarily imaginative.

However, the conventions of Romantic poetry are themselves so pervasive that it can be difficult to distinguish Romantic poetry from lyric poetry in general. Indeed, Clausson writes, “[s]o strongly has this genre enforced itself upon the literary consciousness of poets and readers alike that, by the end of the nineteenth century, it had become virtually synonymous with the lyric poem” (112). This very pervasiveness meant that, like the English Bible, Romantic poetry was accessible to poets and readers of all classes and genders in England, making the genre an appealing choice to those who wished to have their poems – and the message(s) within these poems – read by a wide audience. Early and frequent exposure to the canonical Romantic poets via a newly-established, nationwide school curriculum ensured that many poets writing about the First World War turned to the Romantics as models upon whom they could model their own verse. As we will see in the following chapter, both the reading public of England and editors of publications also preferred the accessible and compact nature of Romantic lyrics over the complex and oftentimes lengthy Modernist verse. Societal, financial, personal, and, in rare cases, legal restrictions on what could be published about the war while it was ongoing further limited the choice of poetic genre for those who wished to have their work published and disseminated amongst the masses.

CHAPTER 2: LITERARY MOVEMENTS AND MARKETS IN WARTIME ENGLAND

While rising literary and education levels in England influenced the poetic response of its citizens during the First World War by introducing young, aspiring poets to a national canon of literature and instilling in them the idea that an “authentic” poem was Romantic, these were not the only factors determining England’s poetic response to the war. Although the audience for poetry was growing, consumers’ tastes remained largely traditional in subject-matter and form, often leading editors and publishers to avoid publishing verse that expressed dissident ideologies or utilised experimental forms. After, all, as Elizabeth Marsland reminds us, “poems exist not only as texts . . . but also as commodities, printed objects that circulate in society and are bought and sold” (25). Thus, we need to keep in mind that, if poets desire to have their poetry published, to have their message read by more than a niche audience, they must conform – at least to some extent – to the popular poetic conventions of the day. Indeed, Marsland argues just this: that “[t]he accommodation to a contemporary audience is also evident in the propagandist nature of much of the writing [on the war], whether the poet’s inclination was for or against involvement in the war, and many of the poems cannot be appreciated now without making allowance for the political and social situation that prevailed at the time” (4). In the case of poetry during the First World War, the prevailing convention was that of patriotic, pro-war poetry written in traditional, rhyming metres, often influenced – as we have seen – by the poetics of Romanticism (Marsland 71, 87).

On the other hand, despite the proliferation of traditional verse, the beginning of the twentieth century also saw the development of innovative literary and artistic movements. These movements consisted of Georgians and Modernists (who themselves were made up of Futurists, Vorticists, and Imagists). They each sought to break free of the conventions of the Victorian and

Edwardian eras; in some cases, they outright rejected English institutions and traditions. Yet, the manifestoes or artistic goals of the various Modernist movements versus the Georgians set them apart enough to influence the public's perception of and publishing opportunities for adherents of each movement. As we will see, Modernist art (including poetry) was associated with violence and foreign influence – traits which, when war broke out, were unattractive to many publishers, readers, and even poets. Alternatively, Georgian poets – though often innovative – attempted to maintain a position between experimentation and conservatism in order to appeal to the widest readership possible.

Broadly, the Modernists were a loose collective of avant-garde writers and artists who were engaged in “a thorough-going revolt against representational art” (Ross 18). Included in this revolt, Marsland notes, was the aim of early Modernist poets “to free themselves from the ‘lyric I’ of Romanticism,” instead “adopting a variety of other personae and deliberately striving for objectivity and apparent non-commitment” (203). However, the goals of the Modernists were not only artistic or literary in scope. In fact, John Guillory defines “the dynamic of the ‘avant-garde’ [as] the struggle of cultural producers against the institutional forms of their domination” (*Cultural Capital* 331). Likewise, Samuel Hynes argues that the pre-war “art-war” was “a war declared by a violently adversarial avant-garde against *all* English institutions and traditions: one of its slogans was ‘END OF THE CHRISTIAN ERA’, and that is not a statement about *art*, but about an entire culture” (8, italics in original). Indeed, we must keep in mind, when we examine the literary decisions of poets before and during the First World War that their rejection of modernist literary forms or techniques may have as much if not more to do with a group's cultural beliefs as their poetic manifestoes.

One clear example of a movement which likely discouraged (if not outright prevented) certain poets from joining or adhering to it is the Italian Futurist movement. Hynes tells us that “Futurism was a brand of modern art that celebrated machinery, noise, speed, and violence, and wholeheartedly condemned the past” (7). Their first manifesto proclaimed their “wish to glorify War,” which was, they argued, “the only health-giver of the world” (qtd. in Hynes 7). Likewise, the Futurists’ manifesto included the wish to glorify “militarism, patriotism, the destructive arm of the Anarchist, the beautiful Ideas that kill, [and] the contempt for women” (Hynes 7). It is not difficult to see why many poets (women poets, in particular) might steer clear of this movement – especially once the First World War was underway and civilians and combatants alike could see that the toll of modern warfare was anything but glorious.

Concurrently with Futurism’s introduction to England was the development of Vorticism, which Hynes calls “an English modern movement of comparable violence” to Futurism (7). The originators of this movement were Wyndham Lewis and Ezra Pound (Hynes 7). Vorticism was unique in its focus on multiple art forms, “seeing in all of them the same potential energy, to be expended against English traditions, and the English past; and it defined itself in generational terms, and opposed itself specifically to the previous generation” (Hynes 8). Its publication, *Blast* contained a manifesto which included the “Blasted” and the “Blessed”: the former “are primarily establishment figures of the time,” while the latter “include many artists, but also belligerents in the other wars against society” including trade unionists, Ulster rebels, and militant Suffragettes (Hynes 8-9). The “Blessed,” Hynes suggests, are supported “because they are opponents – and potentially violent ones – of English society,” not necessarily because the Vorticists agreed with their particular causes (9). Their second manifesto is not entirely clear, but Hynes notes that what is clear “is the imagery and language of warfare. The manifesto seems to declare a war without

meaning, with the combatants undefined and the cause No-Man's[; it is] a war to be fought for the sake of its violence" (9). It seems, then, that Vorticism was an antagonist of English society and tradition largely for the sake of being an antagonist. Compared to the propaganda of the First World War – which provided ample causes behind which the people of England could rally, including the defence of Belgium and France, as well as “the sanctity of borders as a matter of principle” (Marsland 50) – the pro-war stance of the Vorticists may have seemed hollow and uninspiring to poets searching for a muse during the war.

Another movement associated with Ezra Pound was Imagism, or *Les Imagistes*. Together with his friends and fellow poets, Richard Aldington and Hilda Doolittle, Pound decided that a new direction was needed for poetry (Lindop 42). Their principles were: “direct treatment of the thing, whether subjective or objective”; “to use absolutely no word that does not contribute to the presentation”; and “to compose in the sequence of the musical phrase, not in sequence of the metronome” (qtd. in Lindop 42). According to Grevel Lindop, “[t]he last principle was code for ‘to compose in free verse’, though this was not made quite explicit” (42). Indeed, perhaps one of the most distinguishing characteristics of Imagism was its experimentation with free verse forms, which “took poetry much further from Victorian and Edwardian conventions than the Georgians were prepared to go” (Barlow 16). Yet, despite the fact that the Imagists’ goals appear to have been largely literary, rather than overtly political (especially compared to the other Modernist movements) and were therefore less likely to offend potential adherents, the Imagists were much less popular than the Georgian poets in the pre-war years (Barlow 16).

However, Adrian Barlow warns readers that “it is important not to over-emphasise the differences between the Georgians and the modernists,” since, “at first, there was a good deal of overlap between them” (17). As noted above, the initial goals of each movement were to reject

Edwardian and Victorian literary conventions. Indeed, Lindop points out that there are many similarities between these otherwise disparate poetic movements: for instance, the editor of the *Georgian Poetry* anthologies, Edward Marsh, shared many opinions with Pound, “and echoed nearly all the younger critical voices” in 1912 (42). Like Pound, Marsh believed that poetry must include “intensity of thought or feeling” while remaining free of “vapidity” (qtd. in Lindop 42). In fact, it seems they disagreed primarily on form – Marsh disliked free verse, while Pound was obviously an advocate (Lindop 43). It is thus through their verse forms that Georgian poems can be most readily distinguished from Imagist works – the former, despite attempting to modernise poetry, still used traditional rhyming schemes.

Indeed, Georgian poets also sought to break free of the poetic conventions of the past. They saw their “revolt,” in the words of Robert H. Ross, “as a repudiation of the unbroken chain of poetic history which had extended from the Romantic Revival through the Victorian age to the inevitable cul-de-sac of the nineties” (20). They sought realism in their work, promoting “poetic sincerity” over the “languorous lyrics of the fin de siècle” (Ross 21). “The modern poet’s task,” Ross continues, “. . . as he conceived it at the turn of the decade, was before all else to achieve truth to life” (21). He further notes that “[t]he beginnings of Georgian poetic realism can be seen in the early works of two young men, Wilfrid Gibson and Rupert Brooke” (Ross 27). These two, with the aid of Marsh, were the founders of the Georgian poetry movement (Walter 340). The group’s popularity was aided by Marsh’s marketing campaigns: Ross suggests that “his artful and pre-eminently successful direction of the reception of *Georgian Poetry I*” was “the first significant step toward making modern poetry popular” (105). In addition to their literary revolt, the Georgians were also liberal in their politics, with many of the educated among them adhering to socialism (Ross 12). Therefore, in their literary innovation and dissenting cultural beliefs, the

Georgians were not all that different from Modernist groups; yet, in many cases Georgian poets were conservative in their poetry and poetic aims.

According to Barlow, the Georgian poets believed that their task was to make their poetry accessible to a wide audience (15). In order to achieve this goal, then, they needed to avoid being too experimental and yet too conservative in their work. To this end, the Georgians sought “to celebrate ordinary – particularly rural and suburban – life rather than grand poetic themes and to do so in a diction that was neither clichéd nor grandiose” (Barlow 15). Recall that Wordsworth believed much the same thing about Romantic poetry: that it should be written “in a language and style that is common and accessible,” and it should be “about ordinary shared experiences” (Crocco 53). It should therefore not be surprising that many Georgians “were happy to deploy conventional verse forms – the sonnet, blank verse, lyric quatrains or . . . rhyming couplets” (Barlow 16), much as the original Romantics did. On the other hand, the Georgians may have used conventional forms because it was important to them to have their poetry read, and not dismissed, by middle-class audiences who were, according to Ross, “conservative in literary tastes” yet Liberal in their politics (12). A Georgian poet like Wilfrid Gibson, who “wrote in direct, colloquial language and became known as ‘the poet of the inarticulate poor’” appealed to conscientious readers with “[h]is story lines of unemployment, disablement and poverty” (Holt and Holt 221), while still utilising traditional verse forms like sonnets and heroic couplets.

The Georgian poets encompass those who Ross calls “the Centrists”: poets who “saw some value, aesthetic or personal, in retaining certain of the traditional poetic techniques” (23). In fact, the Centrists were more focused on the subject matter of their poetry than on the manner of representing it (Ross 23). Ross acknowledges the difficult and, ultimately, “doomed” position of the Centrists: they wished to “transfuse into poetry new blood from the romance of actuality

and nature, but, at the same time . . . try never to forget its high and noble traditions inherited from the great ones of the past” (24). Perhaps it is this connection to the past “great ones” that compels Hynes to argue that Georgianism is the “cosy descendant” of Romanticism (194). T. S. Eliot, too, notes the influence of Romantic poets on Georgian poetry, writing of the latter that “there are two varieties of pleasantness: 1] the insidiously didactic, or Wordsworthian” and “2] the decorative, playful or solemn, minor-Keatsian” (qtd. in Ross 160). So, despite the fact that the Georgian poets were attempting to break away from poetic conventions of the past, many of them still appeared to emulate the “great ones” of Romanticism. After all, as we have seen, these Romantic poets were held up to pupils in the British school systems throughout the pre-war years as representative of the English canon, as part of a “high and noble tradition,” and therefore as worthy of emulation.

While the Georgian and the Modernist poets were developing their verse in the pre-war years, a third group, “rarely mentioned by critics but by far the largest” was developing as well (Hibberd 11). Its adherents can be, according to Dominic Hibberd, “thought of as typical Poetry Society members – conventional in their tastes . . . seeing no need for reform or new ways of writing but preferring to compose traditional verse that gave them and sometimes their readers much pleasure and satisfaction” (11). The Poetry Society was founded in 1909 by one Galloway Kyle, together with a publishing house under the pseudonym “Erskine Macdonald” (Hibberd 11). “Once [Kyle] had added the *Poetry Review* to his armoury in 1913,” Hibberd writes, “he was able to run an ingenious system by which would-be poets were drawn in through the Society, published – at their own expense – by Macdonald . . . and praised in the *Review*” (11). The First World War provided ideal conditions for Kyle’s scheme: there were “many young men keen to get into print before they were killed and many grieving parents [who were] anxious to bring out

memorial volumes” of their sons’ verse (Hibberd 11). In fact, the poetry of Leslie Coulson – one poem of which Clausson criticises for its “conventional diction, imagery and meter” in addition to its pastoral theme (108-109) – was published posthumously by “Erskine Macdonald,” likely at the expense of Coulson’s parents. In this way, much traditional – and, often amateur – verse was published during the war.

In fact, publishing opportunities in England for traditional, conservative poetry were far more common during the war than those available for the experimental verse of the Modernists. Before the war broke out, the Modernists were not popular among “the more conservative tastes of society at large,” but that society “made no attempt to suppress any of them” (Hynes 5). Yet, once war was declared, critics began to see the ideas and works of Modernism “as constituting a single common enemy that threatened the moral foundations of the nation. To be Modern, they saw, was to be German, and it was right and patriotic that English critics should declare war on Modernism wherever it could be detected” (Hynes 58). Likewise, Marsland tells us that “simply to write in free verse instead of adhering to a recognisable metric pattern was on the whole to place oneself on the side of the dissenters” during the war (168). After all, *verse libre* is clearly associated with a foreign – albeit, French – influence, and is therefore not patriotic in nature.

“The arguments in this polemical war [against Modernism] were various,” Hynes writes “and by no means consistent with each other” (59). Many in England saw the outbreak of war as a symptom of a disease – “some foreign pestilence” – that was spreading throughout their nation; some, like W. R. Colton, called this disease “*Modernism*” (Hynes 57-58, italics in original). The “Modern,” Hynes continues, was for those like Colton a disease that “did not begin with Post-Impressionism . . . but was an infection that went back to Nietzsche and Wagner” (58). Moreover, with the exception of Vorticism – which, as we have seen, was an antagonist of English society –

Modernist movements were influenced by foreign sources: Italian Futurism and *Les Imagistes* are clearly not English in origin. It did not matter, Hynes notes, that “the principle influences on the artists included” in a London Group exhibition in 1915 “came from England’s allies, from France and Italy”; the *Times* review of the show was headlined “JUNKERISM IN ART,” expressing the belief that modern art was an “expression of a specifically *German* barbarism” (59, italics in original). For others in England, “war and modern art were simply two expressions of the same values” (Hynes 59) – values like militarism and violence, as we have seen. Critics who were also moralists identified this “common brutality . . . as a symptom of the culture’s sickness” (Hynes 59). Still others believed that the disease which had engulfed England could be traced back to Oscar Wilde and decadence (Hynes 60), demonstrating that not all opposition to Modernism was rooted in xenophobia and English nationalism, but that some stemmed from a distaste of deviant sexualities. Indeed, “[t]he conflation of decadent art with sexual and moral issues affected the situation of modern art in England generally,” because “it spread a blurry discredit over any new work that departed from the traditional English main stream, and made all Modernism seem not only *un-English* but *anti-English*” (Hynes 230, italics in original).

Polemics against Modernism during the war were either effective or unnecessary, as the various movements in England came to a halt. Before the war had begun, Modernist journals like A. R. Orage’s *New Age* and Wyndham Lewis’ *Blast* provided “outlets for advanced literature,” but with the outbreak of war, they ceased this function: Hynes tells us that *Blast* collapsed in the summer of 1915 and *New Age*, “though it continued, ceased to harbour Modernist writers” (65). In short, “the war had virtually stopped the English Modern movement” (Hynes 65). The direct cause for the cessation of some publications was the war itself: editors like Lewis “were soon to enter the army,” and did not have the funds necessary to continue publication (Hynes 65). Avant-

garde movements in England were also dissipating due to the war. Hynes tells us that the “artists who had gone into uniform were separated from those who hadn’t, who might otherwise have been their allies in one modern movement” (67), while many intelligent young people (the target audience of the generational Modernist movements) were absorbed in war work of some kind or other (65). Essentially, “the audience for serious (or adversarial) modern writing was shrinking” (Hynes 65). The outbreak of war had drawn a line across Europe “that divided good culture from wicked culture” and the English once again became an insular people, argues Hynes, “suspicious of whatever was new, or different, or above all foreign” (67). Modernist poetry in England, being new, different, and influenced by foreign movements, was not, therefore, high on the priority list of most publishers during the war.

For practical purposes, editors of periodicals and anthologies preferred to publish concise poems during the First World War. Indeed, Marsland writes that the literary editors of political publications such as *The Harold* and *The Nation* “assumed readers would not appreciate long experimental poems, at a time when the public taste in poetry was largely traditional, and especially when space was limited by the high cost of newsprint” (228). Likewise, Ross suggests that, “[f]aced with a wartime paper shortage, publishers liked the notion of small volumes at high prices” (144), implying that it was in the best interests of publishers to encourage submissions of short poems that could be anthologised and sold for similar prices as larger novels. Therefore, lyric poems such as sonnets – which, Susan Stewart notes “fit neatly into the space available for newspapers” (58) – were much more likely to be published than those long, experimental poems which appeared later, like Eliot’s *The Wasteland* and Pound’s *Cantos*. In fact, perhaps one of the reasons that *Naked Warriors*, a collection of war poems by Herbert Read, was not published until 1919 may have been due to the fact that it contains long, free-verse poems like “My Company”

(which spans eight pages of the collection). Of course, many Modernist poems can be as concise – if not more so – than sonnets. However, if poem length were the only criterion of editors and publishers, then we would see many more Modernist poems published during the war; instead, we see formally conservative, largely pro-war poems in print.

The high volume of patriotic, pro-war verse published in England during the war possibly stems from, or was at least influenced by the legal restrictions enacted at the time. The Defence of the Realm Act (DORA) was enacted on the fourth day of the war (Hynes 78), and was later extended to include the prevention of “the spread of reports likely to cause disaffection or alarm” (qtd. in Hynes 80). In 1916, “amendments made the power of DORA over the arts more explicit” – no word of mouth or written publication could be made “to cause disaffection, or to prejudice recruiting or training” (Hynes 80). In other words, “any expression of opposition to, or criticism of, the war in any art form,” Hynes writes “. . . had become a criminal offense” (80). These legal restrictions may have forcibly prevented many protest poems from being published, or they may have acted as a deterrent, preventing would-be poets from seeking publication for fear of censure or reprimand.

Yet, despite the existence of DORA, Marsland argues that censorship in England has had less of an impact on the publication of protest poetry than we previously thought. She writes that although one can find “occasional references to censorship, the censors appear to have interfered little with the distribution of protest poetry” (Marsland 187). Of course, Marsland acknowledges that “[s]uch a statement can only be tentative . . . since it is impossible to know how many poems were refused publication, and whether the refusal came from publishers or from the censor” (187). However, she posits that the role of soldiers as “the nation’s heroes” likely contributed to a “readiness to allow soldier-poets to publish,” but that a more likely cause for the publication of

protest poetry “arose because poetry was simply not viewed as a hazard” (Marsland 188). For instance, Siegfried Sassoon published much of his protest poetry throughout the duration of the war, with *The Old Huntsman and Other Poems* (1917) and *Counter-Attack and Other Poems* (1918) containing some of his most recognisable works. However, “although highly regarded today, Sassoon was seen as something of a minor poet during the war years” – contemporary reviewers did not even consider his work to be poetry (Walter xxii). Therefore, while he was not prevented from publishing his protest poetry, Sassoon’s work was simply not that popular during the First World War. Indeed, even allowing protest poetry like Sassoon’s to be published did not necessarily mean that it was read; Marsland points out that these poems “reached only a limited audience,” appearing only in particular, limited-circulation journals and newspapers (Marsland 189). This is all to say that the prevalence of patriotic, pro-war poems published during this time in England was likely less influenced by legal restrictions and ramifications than it was by social factors having to do with class and political affiliations, gender and sexuality, and a wartime cult of English nationalism.

Essentially, we are faced with a question of value – determining the sort of poetry most valued by the dominant group(s) and class(es) of wartime English society. When we examine the outlets for protest poetry in English, we see a common theme emerge. Marsland tells us that the main outlet for protest poetry was the *Herald*, edited by socialist and pacifist George Lansbury (18). Additional publications in which protest poems appear include *The Nation*, a magazine that was “associated with the progressive branch of the Liberal party” and the *New Statesman*, which was a journal “devoted to ‘the world movement towards collectivism’,” while small magazines such as the Quaker Socialist Society’s *The Ploughshare* and the Worker’s Suffrage Federation’s *The Worker’s Dreadnought* “offered occasional examples” (Marsland 19). Clearly, most of these

publications are associated in some way with socialism or the working class. Here we must turn to “the sort of question that might be raised by a Marxist aesthetic – the question of the relation of the aesthetic to the domains of the social” (Guillory *Cultural Capital* 281). In other words, we must question if protest poetry was dismissed because of its relation to these political groups or social classes. Guillory suggests that “the qualitative distinction between the work of art and the commodity could be coordinated with class distinction as the distinction between taste and the lack of it” (*Cultural Capital* 313). Guillory’s statement reveals the traditional view that poems written by working-class poets or those associated with them (such as socialists) are merely commodities, while the poems written by those from the dominant classes of English society are art and, thus, worthy of publication in well-regarded journals or anthologies.

We are therefore faced with issues of monetary and cultural capital. In *Cultural Capital*, Guillory asserts that “it is impossible to experience cultural capital as disarticulated from the system of class formation or commodity production” (336). Essentially, those with the economic means to self-publish are also those with the social connections to be published in prominent venues. This group is not a part of the working class and is generally unlikely to include socialist members. As a result, this group’s poetry has been published more frequently and with a wider circulation than the protest poetry of working-class or socialist poets. Indeed, Marsland tells us that “[a]lthough combatants of all ranks had potentially equal access to the privilege of writing poetry” – since, as we have seen, literacy and educational access were, by this time, widespread – “they certainly did not have equal access to publication, and therefore to permanence” (197). We must also keep in mind those publishing houses like Kyle’s “Erskine Macdonald,” which could persuade poets or their relatives to publish at their own expense – an expense likely out of the reach of most working-class poets and their families, thus limiting published poetry to that

written by middle- and upper-class poets. “In general,” Marsland writes “. . . little of the English poetry that has survived in individual collections came from the working class” (198).

Protest poets’ publication opportunities were further limited by their perceived sexuality as well as their sex or gender. As noted, beginning in 1914, “Decadence and Oscar Wilde were very much alive, as issues,” constituting a perceived “continuing and urgent threat to English morality” (Hynes 16). Indeed, there existed “a wartime renewal of feelings that had surrounded the Wilde case in the Nineties – hatred and fear of sexual deviance, and a felt need to suppress the art and ideas about art that were associated with it” (Hynes 16). Adrian Caesar also suggests that “the late-nineteenth-century ‘Decadents’ had fostered the idea that aesthetic experience was allied to a ‘feminine’ sensitivity and sensuality” and via this association, “art and homosexuality became related to each other” (77). Therefore, male poets who did not wish to be outwardly associated with deviant sexuality – even if they did, in fact, harbour secret deviant inclinations – had to ensure that their poetry was not Decadent or overly focused on aesthetic pleasure. (Recall that the Georgians – as opposed to the Imagists – focused on content over form as part of their rejection of late-nineteenth-century aesthetics.) Guillory points out that “the nature of aesthetic pleasure” is “problematic” in that it seems to be incapable of being expressed as anything but “sensuous” pleasure on the one extreme or “disgust or distaste” on the other (*Cultural Capital* 333). Alternatively, female poets like Marjorie Pickthall appear free to engage in Decadent and Aesthetic poetics – at the very least, the “popular and critical acclaim” that Pickthall received in her day for her work published in both North America and England (Bennett and Brown 314) suggests that it was acceptable for women in England to continue to engage with this aesthetic deemed “feminine.”

Here, we can begin to see how one's sex or gender could hinder or help a poet to publish certain kinds of work. In fact, the very term "poet" could be a questionable epithet at this time if one was a man. In this period, only combatants appeared to be granted a pass: Marsland tells us that "the term 'poet' had attracted some derision from the populace at large as a consequence of the homoerotic tendencies of the nineteenth-century Aestheticism and Decadence"; however, the "merging of 'poet' with 'soldier' restored the title to manly respectability" (192). Additionally, from what Ross suggests, it was advantageous for publishers to seek out works by soldier-poets: Ross writes that "[b]y mid-1916 booksellers were reporting that the public was eagerly buying slender volumes of works by the less well-known poets, especially if the authors had been killed in action" (143). The public's willingness to "sentimentalize," as Ross writes (143), the impact of the war on its participants unfortunately meant that men's verse was more likely to be bought and sold than women's. Add to this the fact that a movement like Futurism – with its outright declaration of misogyny – held the potential to turn off women poets from Modernism, and the avenues for publication of women's poetry during the war were comparatively slim.

In fact, the only avenue for publication that was open to poets of almost all divisions of English society during the war was the nationalistic one: it appears that, generally, only protest poetry was limited by the political, economic, or gendered position of its author, since "patriotic war poetry . . . clearly belonged to the literary mainstream, regardless of the social status of its author" (Marsland 90). Additionally, Marsland notes: "[f]or poets of all classes . . . the writing of patriotic verse proved that one was a true patriot, in that the public declaration of loyalty was in itself a patriotic deed" (91). For the most part, then, poetry that was valued in wartime England expressed patriotism or support for the war, even if it was, as Hynes writes, "inept" (29). In fact, while patriotic literary reviewers could be, and often were, severe in their criticism of the early

patriotic poetry's literary qualities, they were usually generous about its patriotic content (Hynes 29-30). These reviews align with Guillory's assertion that "the aesthetic disposition" judges not only works of art, but all cultural productions by their perceived "disinterestedness" – or, rather, their "deferred pleasure," which Guillory argues "is inevitably accompanied by expressions of *distaste* for lower-class or mass cultural productions which offer more immediate pleasures" (*Cultural Capital* 332-333, italics in original). Thus, the patriotic, pro-war poetry about which Hynes writes provides pleasure to readers who already support the war (because it confirms the latter's beliefs), but it must be publicly dismissed as mere entertainment – not art – because it is at this time being mass-produced.

Despite the limits imposed on protest poetry and the relative ease of publishing patriotic poems, it has been commonplace in critical studies of First World War poetry to suggest that most pre-1916 English poems were written in support of the war, while post-Somme poetry is anti-war, written largely in protest of the conflict (Marsland 15-17).³ Yet, if we examine poetry published between 1914 and 1918, we can see that pro-war poems continued to be printed well into the final years of the war. In fact, though Marsland notes that the number of patriotic, pro-

3. On the first day of the Battle of the Somme, 1 July 1916, almost 20 000 British soldiers alone were killed (with comparable losses among the Germans) – the futile attack lasted for two more weeks before being abandoned (Marsland 17). This has led many critics to speculate that the decline of new pro-war poetry in the later years of the war is related to the devastating losses that the British suffered during the course of this campaign. For instance, Robert Giddings, in *The War Poets* (1988), writes that "[t]here is plenty of evidence to support this view" regarding the claim that "the early poetry, written before the Battle of the Somme in 1916" differs significantly from later poetry, though he does note that "signs of disquiet exist in much of the poetry written in the earliest days of the war" (8). Furthermore, critics who argue for a shift in the poetry of the First World War include David Daiches – who, in his article "Poetry in the First World War," writes that "[a]fter the spate of patriotic verse at the beginning of the war . . . there gradually appeared indications of a more realistic attitude" (323) – as well as Argha Banerjee – who, in "Went to War with Rupert Brooke and Came Home with Siegfried Sassoon": The Poetic Fad of the First World War," writes that "there was a gradual but a radical shift in the focus of the poetic fad from the die-hard patriotism and romanticism associated with the war, to the tragic and brutal reality of the trenches and modern warfare" (4).

war poems appearing in newspapers and magazines began to decline near the end of 1915, the public's taste for this kind of poetry had not diminished; rather, the simple forms and limited themes of the pro-war poetry (in other words, its lack of innovation) meant that all its variations had been played out by the end of this year (104). Alternatively, Ross argues that the public's interest in poetry began to increase early in 1916 "largely as a result of the emotional impact upon the British public of the death of Rupert Brooke" (14). Nevertheless, after the Battle of the Somme had already passed, "poems that had already appeared in ephemeral form were collected and reprinted in books" (Marsland 105) – perhaps as a result of a decline in new patriotic poetry being written or because the public was eager to purchase their own copies of poetry collections. The act of collecting patriotic, pro-war poems for compilation and further publication points to a culture of English nationalism that thus proliferated during the war.

Anthologies in particular, Marsland writes, are a "good indicator of what editors and publishers expect the reading public to appreciate, and patriotic anthologies continued to appear" throughout the duration of the war (105). Barlow concurs, writing that "[d]uring and just after 1914-18, anthologies tended to promote a patriotic and heroic definition of war poetry: they had titles such as *Valour and Vision* and *The Muse in Arms*" (96). Likewise, Hugh Haughton tells us that early anthologies contained patriotic, traditionally-heroic poetry and songs by both civilians (including women) and soldiers (424-426). Later anthologies focused on poems by the "soldier-poet," but were still patriotic: Galloway Kyle's *Songs of the Fighting Men* (1916) and *More Songs of the Fighting Men* (1917) are typical (Haughton 426). Additionally, George Clarke's late-war *Treasury of War Poetry* (1918), while including poems by civilian men and women, "represents conventional patriotic views of war and poetry" (Haughton 428). It was not until the final year of the war, Haughton notes, that "[t]he first anthology to be directed against 'the false

glamour of war” was published: Bertram Lloyd’s *Poems Written during the Great War 1914-1918* (429). Instead, protest poetry by “writers such as Owen and Sassoon appeared first in literary magazines and did not find their way into these [patriotic] anthologies” during the war (Barlow 96).

Although there are exceptions, much of the pro-war poetry published during the war was conventional in form. Marsland speculates that “it is possible that, because the earliest poems to be published were mainly by established writers, who worked in the accepted tradition of the moment, and because newspapers circulated their poems with unusual speed, the standard for an appropriate patriotic poem was very quickly set” (44). Indeed, poets like Rudyard Kipling – who was far from experimental in his verse – were recruited by the English government early in the war to write pro-war propaganda. “In September 1914,” Tracy E. Bilsing writes, “Kipling was invited, along with fifty-three other noted literary figures, to a secret meeting held at Wellington House” in order to “secure these authors’ help to counter anti-British propaganda that was being distributed worldwide” (77). Hynes, too, argues that one effect of this meeting was that “from the earliest days of the war there was an ‘official’ war literature” (27). The tendency of this patriotic poetry was to follow “established, though limited, practice, in the sense that very few poets chose to express their loyalty in anything other than traditional metre and stanza-structure” (Marsland 71). Marsland continues, noting that “there is a marked preference for simple four or eight-line stanzas, rhyming alternately or in couplets, and a regular trochaic or iambic metre” (72).

While we cannot determine from a mere preference for conventional form whether or not patriotic poetry also tended to emulate or borrow from Romanticism, we do know that writers of this patriotic verse inherited an important concept from nineteenth-century Romanticism: that is, the significance of the artist or poet, which I have already discussed in the first chapter. These

patriotic poets exploited “the concept that the poet is a special individual apart from the crowd, with a unique message,” inherited “from the Romantic view of the poet as a uniquely gifted individual with privileged insight and extraordinary powers of imagination” (Marsland 87-88). This allowed patriotic poets to act as spokesmen, reiterating “the accepted and popular point of view about the war” (Marsland 88). Furthermore, patriotic poets employed the conventional, lyric ‘I’ of Romantic poetry – Marsland suggests that “most of the readers and writers of the patriotic poetry were traditionalists, so they assumed that the voice that spoke the poem could be safely equated with the poet” (87). Instead of an individualistic ‘I,’ however, writers of patriotic verse often used the plural ‘we,’ which “enables the poets to claim for the nation at large (including themselves) the suffering endured by their compatriots directly affected by the war” (Marsland 88). This shared suffering claimed by the poet-artist has its roots in Romanticism as well: Caesar points out that “[t]he idea that ‘beauty’ is inextricably associated with pain, and that the artist must therefore suffer to create beauty is central to the Romantic tradition” (8). Thus, with its conventional forms and Romantic-inspired content, patriotic poetry of the First World War did not differ much from original Romantic poetry.

However, warns Marsland, we should not “assume that the division between traditional and innovative forms is concomitant with acceptance or rejection of the Establishment position *vis-à-vis* the war itself” (5). Rather, we must keep in mind that, “[o]n the whole . . . experimental writing was not common, and by far the majority of war poets adhered to conventional rhyme, metre, and poetic syntax” (Marsland 5). Likewise, Marsland points out that “pacifist and socialist poems in English” – which we have seen are often written in protest of the war – “are traditional in style” (227). For the most part, the outpouring of verse written in the First World War was by amateurs “unfamiliar with experimental techniques” (Marsland 5). These amateur poets, as we

have seen, were exposed to conventional, largely Romantic poetry throughout their education – they were not being taught, for instance, the free verse forms of the Imagists. In fact, the opposite was likely communicated. In the Introduction to Francis Palgrave's *Golden Treasury of Songs and Lyrics*, Alphonso Gerald Newcomer tells readers that “[n]early all definitions of poetry agree in requiring that its language shall be measured, that is, be given metrical form” (13). Given this definition of poetry since their school days, it likely would have been difficult for poets to alter this mindset and write in free verse when they began to compose poetry on the war.

On the other hand, it has been suggested that some poets may have deliberately avoided writing in the experimental style of the Modernists in protest of the groups' manifestoes. Margot Norris argues that soldier-poets such as Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon, and Isaac Rosenberg “generally rejected the new forms offered by an ideologically problematic avant-garde” because they “were appalled by the militarism and violence implicit in the Futurism and Vorticism that excited many of the pre-war modernists” (137). Instead, Norris suggests, “the anti-mechanistic ideology of the Georgians may have attracted the soldier-poets” (140). Indeed, this seems to be the case when we examine a poem like Leslie Coulson's “The God Who Waits,” which deplores the death and destruction caused by the machinery of war. However, Norris' argument rests on the assumption that the soldier-poets as a group were largely critical of the war (144). Yet, if we examine the actual beliefs of particular poets, we see that this assumption is not entirely correct. For instance, although Sassoon did in fact protest against the war, his issue was not with war *per se*, but with the ways in which the First World War was being carried out by those in positions of power without and within the military (Holt and Holt 234-235). The other end of the spectrum includes Herbert Read, a soldier-poet, pacifist, and Imagist whose poetry exhibits characteristics of Vorticism (Rawlinson 85, 87). According to Norris' argument, Read should not have even

considered writing Modernist poetry – since she includes him amongst the soldier-poets who were “consigned . . . to old and seemingly exhausted poetic forms” (144) – and should have been appalled at the violence of Vorticism instead.

This is not to suggest that poets did not deliberately steer clear of one or more Modernist movements for personal or political reasons. It is possible that those poets who wrote jingoistic or patriotic poetry in support of the war – such as Rudyard Kipling or Geoffrey Anketell Studdert Kennedy – rejected the internationalism that they saw in Modernism and instead followed the tradition of established poetry in English (such as the Romantics) in order to better express their English nationalism. Likewise, it is possible that those poets who wrote in protest of the war or the way in which it was conducted – like Leslie Coulson, Wilfrid Gibson, and Siegfried Sassoon – wrote in the Romantic-inspired pastoral or Georgian modes because, in addition to providing ample publishing opportunities, these modes (unlike the Modernist ones) avoided minimising the violence they witnessed first- or second-hand during the war. Additionally, poets like Eva Dobell and Marjorie Pickthall might very well have rejected Modernism for the misogyny of its sub-movement, Futurism, opting to use Romantic or Decadent forms as alternatives. Finally, the English Modernist movements’ general rejection of English institutions – including religious ones (Hynes 8) – likely put off many of these poets, who engage with religious subject matter in their poetry and who are, for the most part, quite religious themselves. I do not think that these poets would have willingly supported any literary movement whose goals include the opposition of the Christian institutions that many of them held dear.

Thus, with publishing opportunities and tradition supporting patriotic, conventional, often Romantically-inspired verse over its protest, experimental, or Modernist counterparts, along with personal and political motives to reject the latter, it is not surprising that many poets during the

First World War, wishing to have their poetry circulated and read, would write in what we today might consider outdated, clichéd, or even mediocre verse. The rise of English nationalism during the war, bolstered by “a Christian moral economy of ‘sacrifice’” (Howarth 51) created conditions in which it was strategic for many poets to write conventional, Romantic verse so that they could express those feelings so common during times of war, particularly during the First World War. This war, with its relentless propaganda campaigns, high casualty rates, and cultural restrictions on what could be expressed in poetry led many poets to attempt to express their guilt at either their participation or perceived lack thereof in the war; their lamentations for the dead, sacrificed, Christ-like, for the British Empire; and their struggle to express these decidedly un-poetic topics in acceptable, poetic ways.

CHAPTER 3: ENGLISH NATIONALISM, ROMANTICISM,
AND A CHRISTIAN MORAL ECONOMY OF SACRIFICE

The general rejection of Modernist art and poetry in England during the First World War due to Modernism's foreign origins points to a growing nationalism in the nation over the course of the war. Indeed, one of the expectations that most Englishmen had at the beginning of the war was that "the fact of its existence would unify England in one patriotic whole" (Hynes 101). The desire for a unified nation, complete with patriotic citizens, could be promoted through literature and, "in his key works of criticism, [Matthew] Arnold espoused the belief that literature and the nation shared a symbiotic relationship, and that literature could be used to promote the cultural unification of the nation, including its empire" (Crocco 44). As we have seen, pro-war, patriotic poetry was much more likely to be published and promoted in England than the protest poetry during the war, as can be expected when the nation was trying to rally a volunteer army for the first half of the war. Yet, despite wartime's hyper-patriotic culture, in which supporters of the war existed until its conclusion, it became increasingly difficult to justify the toll the war took upon its participants as it progressed. In fact, "[a]s the length of casualty lists increased, and the public at home became aware of the awesome tally of human destruction the war was causing," Elizabeth Marsland observes, "the need remained strong for people to be convinced, and to convince themselves, that death on behalf of the nation was different from ordinary death" (106).

The death of combatants in the First World War is often distinguished from "ordinary" deaths through the portrayal of combatants as Christ-figures in popular media, but especially in poetry. A frequent allusion in the poetry of the war is the Crucifixion of Jesus, which is linked to the sacrifice of combatants and used to justify casualties of the war "through a Christian moral economy of 'sacrifice' for national honour or the common good" (Howarth 51). This "Christian

moral economy” places survivors of the war in debt to the fallen, payable only through their own blood sacrifice. Many combatants who survived the war often express guilt for the extent of their participation in the violence and suffering that occurred as a result of it. Their attempts to alleviate this guilt are evident in their poetry, in which they often only allude to – if not outright ignore – acts of violence committed by the speaker or subject. Conversely, many non-combatants suffered from guilt at their inability to fight for their nation and for the fact that combatants died so that they and others might live. Their poetry includes expressions of survivor’s guilt as well as memorials for the dead, often in an attempt to repay the debt they felt they owed the combatants. The poetry of both groups is often conventional, borrowing from Romanticism its ideologies and poetic forms: these poets utilise conventional literary devices (such as allusion, the lyrical “I,” and turns in perspective or tone) and poetic forms (particularly sonnets) in order to communicate, obliquely, the sensitive subject-matter of war, which was not considered appropriate for poetry at this time. In order to express this often gruesome, and potentially offensive, material in poetry, poets needed to adapt the Romantic view that pain and suffering can be beautiful and, therefore, poetic. Indeed, Romanticism offered poets of the First World War the poetic devices and forms through which they could euphemistically discuss the war and its un-poetic consequences; it was through their utilisation of Romanticism in their poetry that poets could simultaneously appeal to a conservative audience of critics and readers, navigate a wartime culture of British (or English) nationalism, and express their pro- or anti-war opinion(s).

During the period in which the First World War occurred, beauty was perceived to be an integral part of poetry. In his Introduction to Francis T. Palgrave’s *The Golden Treasury of Songs and Lyrics*, Alphonso Gerald Newcomer presents to readers what he believes are ideal conditions or pre-requisites for poetry. Regarding “the question of beauty,” Newcomer writes that poetry

“should work through a medium of beauty and to beautiful ends” (ix). If it becomes the case that the materials for poetry – such as the gruesome details of war – are themselves “unlovely,” then “such material must be so presented as to give no offense, or the art ceases to be art” (Newcomer ix). However, Newcomer allows for the occasional representation in poetry of “physical or moral deformity and pain” if only “to heighten some contrasted beauty, or to body forth some truth the deep significance of which is in itself a beauty” (x). Nevertheless, Matthew Arnold, still one of the most influential critics of the period, argues that “the idea of beauty and of a human nature perfect on all its sides . . . is the dominant idea of poetry” (15) and, therefore, gruesome details should not overshadow or interfere in any way with the aim of creating beauty. Poets in this period who sought to write about the First World War – particularly regarding the suffering or sacrifice of combatants – therefore likely felt pressure to present their material in such a way as to highlight the beauty of the natural world or of England, or to portray the “deep significance” of the war and its casualties to the nation, so that their poetry would be looked upon favourably by critics of the period.

Not only the themes, but the language of poetry should be beautiful, argues Newcomer. He asserts that “poetry usually prefers the simple word,” as long, hard words “have not gathered about them so many associations” (11). The Romantic poets – particularly Shelley, Keats, and Poe – write poems that are “filled with the most beautiful and melodious words the language possesses,” Newcomer writes (12). Thus, poets wishing to write poetry worthy of the title “art” would do well to follow the examples set by their Romantic predecessors. Furthermore, we learn that “poetry, being consecrated to the highest spiritual purposes, seeks a consecrated language. It avoids all words that might shock or offend” (Newcomer 9-10). It is therefore fitting that poets often utilise Christian rhetoric in their verse, for this consecrated language allows them to avoid

the more gruesome details of war in their poetry. In other words, it is much less offensive – and thus, more fitting for poetry – to write that a soldier has been “crucified” for his nation than to state bluntly that his limbs have been torn from his mangled body by an enemy’s shell while he was hunkered down in his trench.

Poets who wrote about the First World War thus faced the issue that their subject matter was often not suitable for poetry – especially if they wanted it to receive widespread publication. Romanticism offered poets a solution to this problem both through its treatment of suffering and grief, as well as the poetic forms most often associated with it. Adrian Caesar points out that, in the Romantic tradition, “[t]he idea that ‘beauty’ is inextricably associated with pain, and that the artist must therefore suffer to create beauty is central” (8); therefore, if the suffering and sacrifice of combatants can be rendered beautiful by poets, then this subject matter becomes appropriate for poetic engagement. Additionally, Michael Ferber notes that “[i]t is still a common image of the Romantic poet or artist that he dies young” (31).⁴ Indeed, these poets were taught, via their childhood education, “the ideology of self-sacrifice, and the ‘beauty’ of pain and death” through a Romantic reading of classical literature (Caesar 7). These teachings idealised the “beautiful male youth self-sacrificed in battle” (Caesar 8), and Marsland points out the importance of this beauty and youth to the patriotic poetry of the war: she writes that English patriotic poets place “an emphasis on immortality,” resulting in the heroes of these poems, the sacrificed combatants, remaining “eternally young” (83). If it could be shown in a poem that the suffering and death of

4. Ferber adds that “[d]ying young is not the only unhappy fate that might befall a poet,” citing the blindness of Milton and the madness of Tasso as examples which “were often in the minds of the Romantics” (33). Physical deformity, disability, and shell-shock were often in the minds of soldiers and their loved ones during the First World War as well. Working through the subjects of death, dismemberment, or shell-shock, poets writing on the war could thus turn to their Romantic predecessors for inspiration about how to present these issues poetically.

a combatant preserved his beauty, then the poem would become acceptable under contemporary standards of poetry.

Writing about the subject of a young man's death, Eva Dobell attempts to showcase this beauty in her sonnet, "An Epitaph." In this poem, the speaker asserts that "Beauty" is a "piercing joy akin to pain" ("An Epitaph" l. 2), aligning with the Romantic view that pain and suffering are indeed beautiful. The subject of Dobell's poem appears to have been an artist himself, one who "loved all beauty . . . / . . . / With that deep love that is the artist's dower" ("An Epitaph" ll. 1-3). This artist's love of beauty urges him "to render forth again / The rapture gathered in from sky and flower" ("An Epitaph" ll. 4-5); it is his joy to create rapturous scenes – with the Christian connotation of a heavenly ascent – out of the natural world, in the tradition of Romantic poetry, in order to capture and preserve what is beautiful. Establishing that this man is a Romantic artist, Dobell then turns to his death in the second and final stanza of "An Epitaph": "through the gate of Death he passes free, / Casting exultant down the load of age / Clear of Time's dust" (ll. 11-13). The artist is now therefore free of the effects of Time's passage; he will not age, but remain eternally young. Indeed, he has been called "to a sterner pilgrimage" ("An Epitaph" l. 10), where he will be "[o]ne with that Love whose earthly veil is Beauty" (l. 14). These lines suggest that this "Love" is an ethereal thing, only accessible after death, but embodied on Earth by "Beauty." Therefore, one's desire for or pursuit of beauty is shown by Dobell to be a kind of spiritual quest, combining neatly the subject of death with Romanticism and the consecrated language approved of by Newcomer.

On the other hand, the conventions of Romantic poetry could be used to mock and thus protest the expectations surrounding First World War poetry's depiction of fallen combatants. Siegfried Sassoon does just this in his satire, "How to Die." The poem opens in typical Romantic

fashion, with a landscape emerging spectacularly in the morning light; then, a dying soldier “lifts his fingers toward the skies / Where holy brightness breaks in flame; / Radiance reflected in his eyes” (“How to Die” ll. 5-7). The Romantic landscape, the holiness of the light washing over the dying soldier – this scene presents the romanticism and consecration of death typical to the verse written about dying or dead combatants. Indeed, Marsland points out that there is a tendency for “English patriotic poets to view the process of dying in war in a romantic way,” adding that, in English, “there is apparently a firm conviction that soldiers die both nobly and joyfully” (145). She posits that protest poets have “a correspondingly strong desire” to prove the patriotic poets wrong, resulting in a high frequency of anti-heroic deaths appearing in the English protest verse of the period (Marsland 145).

Sassoon’s satire demonstrates this desire to disprove the patriotic poetry’s depictions of Romantic deaths. After imitating the typical rhetoric of a soldier’s beautiful and noble death in the first stanza, the speaker of “How to Die” both switches to a more conversational tone and addresses readers of the poem directly:

You’d think, to hear some people talk,
That lads go West with sobs and curses,
And sullen faces white as chalk,
Hankering for wreaths and tombs and hearses. (ll. 9-12)

In these lines, the speaker mocks the opinions publicly expressed by those who discuss, in print or speech, the supposed feelings of combatants and their willingness – their eagerness, even – to die at the Front and their dread to return home (“go West”) without the pomp and ceremony of a funeral. The speaker then nods to the poem’s title, “How to Die,” by pointing out that the “lads” have been “taught the way to do it / Like Christian soldiers” (ll. 13-14). These lines can have a

dual meaning: Sassoon may allude to the fact that poets have been taught – particularly via their childhood educations – the “proper” way to present the death of soldiers in poetry, or to the pro-war propaganda campaigns that encouraged young men to view themselves as Christ figures who are willing to sacrifice themselves for the sake of their nation. These soldiers have been taught to die, “not with haste / And shuddering groans; but passing through it / With due regard for decent taste” (“How to Die” ll. 14-16). With these lines, Sassoon points out that the deaths of soldiers are not, in fact, heroic but are either quick or painful. He thus mocks the entire idea of decorum in poetry with this satire, protesting the tendency of patriotic poets to present the gruesome and potentially offensive subject-matter of war in tactful and inoffensive ways. However, Sassoon does not linger on the reality of these deaths – rather, he maintains enough decorum in his own poem to ensure that it remains acceptable to conventional literary tastes.

As I discussed in the first chapter, poets require a model of some sort in order to write about a subject poetically. Romantic poetry that engages with grief and loss could be a source of potential models upon which First World War poets might base their own verse. Mark Sandy writes that “Romantic poetry about grief acts as a defence against, and encounter with, the final silence of death that challenges poetry’s eloquent capacity for meaning and signifies the end of its own linguistic existence” (1). The challenge of communicating the incommunicable was not unfamiliar to poets writing about their experiences during the First World War: many soldier-poets in particular subscribed to the ideology of “combat gnosticism,” James Campbell’s term for “the belief that combat represents a qualitatively separate order of experience that is difficult if not impossible to communicate to any who have not undergone an identical experience” (203). This ideology manifests itself in poetry as “an aesthetic criterion of realism” (Campbell 203), making Romanticism and its emphasis on the imagination a direct challenge to the ideology. For

instance, one of the ways in which Romantic poets deal with their “grief-stricken instances of mourning” is to focus upon “the futures that they imaginatively project for the living and the dead” (Sandy 5). Inspired by “Romanticism’s fascination with these imagined afterlives” (Sandy 5), poets writing on the war could process their grief and perhaps alleviate any guilt they may have felt at their own role (however large or small) in perpetuating the war by imagining the casualties of war living on in an imagined afterlife.

We can see that Dobell has modelled some of her verse after Romantic poetry, especially in her sonnets “War Memorial” and “Advent 1916.” In the former poem, the speaker begins with a question, self-reflective of poetry’s wider question regarding how to address the casualties of war: “How shall we honour them, our holy Dead?” the speaker asks (“War Memorial” l. 1). This sort of self-reflection is evident in “Romantic poetic forms of grief,” which, Sandy writes, “are indelibly marked with their own self-awareness of death at their point of origin” (3). Indeed, we can imagine Dobell sitting down to write this memorial poem, spurred by the question of how to honour the fallen in the war. The solution clearly has its origins in Romanticism: the speaker asks readers to remember the dead, to “[l]et their bright memory . . . , / Make other lives as lovely as their own” (“War Memorial” ll. 3-4). Dobell’s choice of syntax in these lines links “their” with the dead; thus, these “lovely” lives are those of the deceased, imagined in the minds of survivors. The speaker encourages this sort of imagination, intoning: “in the name of the belov’d, who died, / Break we the bread, and bid the dying live” (“War Memorial” ll. 9-10) – even if the fallen only live on in the minds of those who remember them. However, imagination comes to play a more significant role in Dobell’s “Advent 1916,” which is composed as a dream-vision entirely within the mind of the speaker.

“Advent 1916” falls squarely into the long tradition of dream-vision poems in the English literary canon, which serves not only to legitimise Dobell as a well-read and, therefore, serious poet (which is always a potential concern for women poets), but to allow Dobell to write about the war without others calling into question her wartime experiences. By presenting the poem as a dream-vision, she dodges the issue of combat gnosticism and its aesthetic criterion of realism – after all, nobody can argue the validity of details in another’s dream. Yet, whether or not Dobell really had a dream and recorded its contents in this sonnet is moot; it is the presentation of the contents as a dream that is important. By doing so, she is free to use imagination and creativity, to paint an image of the trenches without having been in them, herself.

“Advent 1916” also follows the Romantic tradition of naming a poem for a specific time or place. M. H. Abrams tells us that the landscape of the greater Romantic lyric “is in most cases precisely localized, in place, and sometimes in time as well” (534). “Advent,” of course, refers to “[t]he ecclesiastical season immediately preceding Christmas” (*OED Online* advent n. sense 1), placing either the poem’s writing or setting during this particular period. Its second meaning also originates from Christian theology and refers to “the coming of Christ to the world” or, in other words, “Christ’s expected return to the earth on Judgement Day” (*OED Online* advent n. sense 2). Indeed, the opening lines of “Advent 1916” refer to just such an occasion: the speaker dreams that “Christ came to earth again” (l. 1). The octave describes the “dream-quest” (“Advent 1916” l. 3) of the speaker’s soul as it searches the land for a glimpse of the returned Christ, finding him at last in “a place where death and pain / Had made of God’s sweet world a waste forlorn” (ll. 5-6) – the speaker finds him “[w]here the grim trenches scarred the shell-sheared plain” (l. 8). It is, however, not only a battlefield that Dobell describes; the sestet makes clear that this is a massive graveyard as well. Sandy writes that, in Romantic works of mourning, “[i]nvariably, Romantic

poets locate their bereft or meditative speakers near a graveside or by a churchyard” (4), and, in fact, Dobell does just this in “Advent 1916.” Having arrived at the trenches, the speaker watches Christ pass “through that Golgotha of blood and clay” (“Advent 1916” l. 9). *Golgotha* refers to both “[a] place of internment; a graveyard, charnel house” (*OED Online* golgotha n. sense 1) in addition to the “place of a skull” where Jesus was said to be crucified (*KJV* Matthew 27.33, 35; Mark 15.22, 25; John 19.17-18). Dobell thus draws on the Romantic tradition to draw her own parallels between the Crucifixion of Jesus and the sacrifice of combatants in the trenches.

Yet, Dobell is not content to simply describe the combatants’ sacrifices in the language of Christianity; instead, she carefully utilises the first-person persona to subtly protest the effects of combatants’ fates on survivors of the war. Throughout “Advent 1916,” Dobell uses “I” and “my” – “[m]y soul” (l. 2) and “my dream” (l. 11) – in order to distinguish the speaker from those in the trenches, where she uses the third-person plural to describe “their nameless graves” (l. 12). These combatants have died, “[s]lain for the world’s salvation” (“Advent 1916” l. 13), like Jesus; in fact, the speaker states, “[f]or others’ sake [these] strong men are crucified” (l. 14). The use of the word “other,” here, draws our attention to the fact that these men have not gone to war and been killed for their own sake. Yet, neither have they done so for the sake of the speaker. If Dobell meant to include the speaker among those for whose sake the combatants *were* crucified, then she would have remained consistent with the first-person pronouns and have written “[f]or *our* sake . . .” (adjusting the line as needed to remain an iambic pentameter). The fact that she did not do so suggests that Dobell rejects the idea that survivors of the First World War must accept the sacrifice of combatants unconditionally, to take upon themselves the debt of owing another one’s life because others have gone to war and been killed – no matter how strong the speaker states the combatants are.

The conventional poetic forms often used by Romantic poets also offered First World War poets a means to present the subject matter of their verse poetically. Sandy notes that it is “[t]hrough conventional codes and rites, [that] mourning commemorates the unique, singular, and irreplaceable moment of death and, according to Derrida, simultaneously obliterates the singularity of death by repeating and reiterating the event itself” (3). Poets could express their grief (and/or anger) at the toll of the war on its participants through the conventional “codes” of poetry, comforting themselves and their readers with the idea that a single combatant’s death was not singular and/or protesting the fact that the casualties of the war were so numerous. Indeed, writing of Romantic poetry, Sandy notes that “[w]hat consolation can be derived for the living is reluctantly realised through submitting heartfelt personal grief to those public conventions of ritual, code, and poetic language and form” (4). Peter Howarth argues much the same point about First World War poetry. He suggests that “[w]ar poetry is written not only for the public record, but for the survivor’s own psychic needs” and, furthermore, that “[t]he neatly arranged lines of epitaphs and elegies are part of the process of segregating the living from the dead – especially important in the trench zone where this often did not physically happen – and of inviting others to share your grief” (Howarth 56). These common forms, familiar to those who were taught the English canon in grade school, were much more accessible – and, thus, relatable – to poets and readers than experimental alternatives.

As we have seen, sonnets in particular were commonly used amongst the Romantic poets, and, for reasons which include limited publishing space, poets during the First World War often used this form as well. Though originally an Italian form, beginning with the Petrarchan sonnet, the Shakespearian, or Elizabethan, sonnet has been long established in the English literary canon. With nationalism growing in England during – and, in part, due to – the war, and with Modernist

poems looked upon suspiciously for their experimental forms and (ironically) foreign origins, it is not surprising that many poets during the war adopted this ubiquitous “English” form. After all, as we know, a conventional poem like a sonnet was more likely to be published, reviewed, and circulated at this time than the irregular, free-verse forms of Modernist verse. Furthermore, the sonnet form offered poets a template within which they could employ “circumscribing language” (Badenhausen 272), thus discussing details of the war without being too graphic for their readers and reviewers. Subscribing to a literary movement like Imagism – with its poetic manifesto that includes “direct treatment of the thing” (qtd. in Lindop 42) – did not offer the same opportunity to poets who sought more allusive, less straight-forward language in their poetry.

According to a few critics, a poet writing on the war might wish to use indirect or passive language in order to avoid communicating directly the subject of combat – particularly of killing and the poet-speaker’s role in an enemy’s death. Marsland points out that in both protest and pro-war poems, the subject of killing does not emerge: in any case, whether one respects or despises one’s enemy, one does not admit that the speaker or subject of the poem may have killed said enemy (149-150). She continues, noting that “[t]he writers of the modern heroic poetry, one must assume, prefer to believe that enemy soldiers succumb to an impersonal Death or have somehow become dead, without the agency of a killer; to suggest that the nation’s heroes are killers would clearly be in bad taste” (Marsland 150). Likewise, Evelyn Cobley tells us that, in narratives of the First World War, “the imagery of war is consistently that of natural catastrophes like storms, earthquakes, fires, floods, volcanoes” and, furthermore, that “[d]estruction seems as inevitable as it is impersonal” (84). Alternatively, Richard Badenhausen suggests that soldier-poets avoided the subject of killing as, “[f]or most young men who found themselves at the front, no event in

their prewar lives had equipped them with a language to discuss killing, disease, severed limbs, and the like” (271). Recall that there were few, if any, canonical literary examples from which these poets could draw inspiration in order to write about the subjects of killing and mutilation poetically – the war poems of Lord Alfred Tennyson and Rudyard Kipling certainly did not discuss the gory and un-glorified aspects of war.

Furthermore, both Badenhausen and Copley suggest that soldier-poets in particular used indirect language in their poetry in order to cope with the guilt brought on by participating in a combat role in the war. Badenhausen writes that “poets employed a ‘circumscribing language’ that ‘produced a circumscription of experience, whereby understanding of the war could be “held in” and limited to what was acceptable [according to societal norms] or could be coped with [by the beleaguered soldier-writer]’” (272, square brackets in original). In a similar vein, Copley argues that “[t]he strategies used to circumscribe acts of killing in war (omission, normalization, justification) could be seen as a largely unacknowledged but ‘desperate effort to wipe off the blood-guiltiness’” (86). The internal quotation in this statement is from soldier-poet Richard Aldington (Copley 86), who here acknowledges a connection between the result of violence (“blood”) and the guilt it causes among soldiers. Literary strategies used by poets to circumscribe these acts of bloodshed include the use of a passive voice, “to illustrate the soldier’s lack of command over his situation” (Badenhausen 269) or a perspective that turns inward to focus on the speaker and his (for the speaker is often a soldier) reaction to a violent scene instead of focusing on the scene itself (Badenhausen 274). However, I would like to push Badenhausen’s and Copley’s theories further, to extend their theses to non-combatant participants in the war who nevertheless likely felt guilt, or at least unease, at their level of participation in the war – whether they felt that they were contributing too much or too little to the war effort.

Traditional sonnet structures offer poets a seemingly “natural” opportunity to make a turn in perspective mid-poem in order to avoid lingering on the particulars of a violent scene. Further precedent for making such turns was set by the Romantic poets, who, according to Ferber, “felt licensed by the English Pindaric tradition not only to play with stanza sizes and rhyme schemes but to make abrupt transitions between stanzas” (68). Wilfrid Wilson Gibson, a non-combatant, yet enlisted poet, utilises the sonnet form to much the same effect as described by Badenhausen and Cogley. “The Conscript” – a poem from “In Khaki,” a section of his collection, *Neighbours*, based on Gibson’s wartime experiences (Holt and Holt 225) – is a modified Petrarchan sonnet, in which Gibson plays with the rhyme scheme, producing an unusual *abbacddc eefgfg* scheme. The speaker of the poem is most likely an army medical clerk – Gibson’s position at the time (Holt and Holt 225) – who describes the “landscape” of a medical examining board, where doctors sit under unnatural lights, determining the fitness of conscripts for military duty. These conscripted men are passive, clearly lacking command over their situation. They are merely an “endless stream of naked white / Bodies” (“The Conscript” ll. 3-4), diverted to the path of combatant or non-combatant by the chairman’s proclamation. Additionally, the speaker outlines the possible fates awaiting those who are approved for enlistment, noting that their options are life, death, “or the living death / Of mangled limbs, blind eyes, or a darkened brain” (“The Conscript” ll. 5-6). However, this is as explicit as the speaker is willing to go to describe the violence that awaits the conscripts on the front lines. Rather than expanding on the “doom” pronounced upon the young men (“The Conscript” l. 8), Gibson makes a turn in perspective after the octave, switching to the lyrical “I” in the sestet.

The effect of this turn in “The Conscript” is twofold: it allows the poet and, therefore, the speaker of the poem to avoid the rather un-poetic language needed to describe the particulars of

the conscripts' fates at the Front, and it allows the speaker and, therefore, the poet to separate himself from the institution of and those involved in conscription. Since the first of these effects is fairly straight-forward, I will simply point out that this strategy of Gibson's – to avoid subject-matter potentially off-putting to readers – aligns with the overarching strategy of the Georgians, of whom Gibson was a co-founding member (Walter 340). Their poetic aim, as we have covered, was to appeal to as wide a readership as possible, limiting their poetic license to mild subject-matter and rather conventional forms.

The second effect of the turn in Gibson's "The Conscripts" stems "from the Romantic view of the poet as a uniquely gifted individual with privileged insight and extraordinary powers of imagination" (Marsland 88). Writers of patriotic verse, Marsland notes, inherited from the Romantics "the concept that the poet is a special individual apart from the crowd, with a unique message" (87). After the turn from the octave to the sestet in "The Conscripts," the speaker uses the first-person voice for the first time, establishing himself as an individual. He is further set apart from the "[i]ndifferent, flippant" doctors ("The Conscript" l. 1) and the monocle-wearing chairman in that he is apparently the only one to see the apparition standing before them all: a young man is described as standing "[w]ith arms outstretched and drooping thorn-crowned head, / The nail-marks glowing in his feet and hands" ("The Conscript" ll. 13-14). Unlike the others, who only "stare, untroubled" at the Christ-like figure who stands before them ("The Conscript" l. 12), the speaker has an immediate, visceral reaction to seeing the form: "I shudder as I see," he states, "[a] young man standing before *them* wearily" ("The Conscript" ll. 9-10, italics added). Here, the speaker separates himself from the others, by using "I" and "them." Whether the others simply cannot see the apparition (because they are not privileged with a poet's vision) or they are merely indifferent to the magnitude of the sacrifice implied by the conscript's appearance, it is

important that the speaker and, by proxy, Gibson himself are not associated with the men whose job it is to uphold the newly-implemented laws of conscription in Britain. Of course, as an army medical clerk, it *was* Gibson's job to participate in this institution, but it is clear from this poem that he felt the need to distance himself from it, and to ensure his readers that he recognised and cared about the sacrifice of the young men who were called up to enlist in Britain's armed forces, despite his role in their fate.

1798, Francesco Crocco tells us, was “a moment of paranoia” for the people of Britain, who were “tremulous with the fear of a threatened French Invasion” (121). During this time, the Empire mobilized “the greatest mass *levee* of volunteer militia in a decade” (Crocco 121, italics in original). Much like this Romantic-era tradition, those in power in Britain during the First World War relied on a volunteer army for the first two years of the war; however “the recruiting boom was relatively short-lived” due to a lack of volunteers (Levi 137). Conscription was thus implemented, beginning with the first Military Service Act of 1916 (Levi 138). This “involved the immediate compulsory military enlistment of unmarried males between the ages of 18 and 41 who did not fit one of the listed exempt categories” (Levi 138). The second Military Service Act implemented in 1916 drafted married men, extended the duration of service to the end of the war, and lowered recruiting standards (Levi 138).⁵ Unsurprisingly, conscription was not met with enthusiasm. For instance, Margaret Levi notes that trade union leaders lobbied “against any form of civilian national service” (139). In *Culture and Anarchy*, Arnold had already summarised what he believed to be the typical Englishman's view of conscription, writing that “the very idea of a conscription is . . . at variance with our English notion of the prime right and blessedness of doing as one likes” (37).

5. For further information regarding exemption categories in Britain, see “The Military Service Act.” *The British Medical Journal* 1.2875 (Feb. 5, 1916): 211.

Conscription represented a curtailing of those freedoms that the English people believed their government was bound to uphold. Indeed, Samuel Hynes notes that “[c]onscription was the most obvious instance of the principle of compulsion in action” (145). He suggests that, as early idealistic support for the war waned, governmental controls increased; “if people would not be voluntarily patriotic,” Hynes writes, “they must be compelled to be so” (145). Furthermore, he argues, conscription was “a means of controlling dissent among male civilians, and of assuring those who supported the war that other men were not avoiding it” (Hynes 145). Britain’s social upheavals in the pre-war years – the workers’ strikes, the Irish problem, and Suffragettes – were thus controlled, at least in part, by ensuring young men were on the front lines, where they could not cause trouble at home, and women were replacing these men’s recently-vacated positions in the workforce, keeping them off the streets and away from protests as well.

On the other hand, conscription offered poets a means to protest against the war and/or the treatment of combatants by those in power during the war. Cobley suggests that those who wrote about their participation in the war rationalised their “acts of aggression by constructing the soldier as a sacrificial victim of forces beyond his power” (75). Conscription was just such a force outside the soldier’s control, and it allowed combatants to deny that they had any agency and, thus, responsibility for the violent actions they took during the course of their deployment. Instead, combatants could place the blame for the war and the suffering it caused on those who they perceived to be in power in Britain: the politicians, the Anglican priesthood, and the high-ranking officers of the military. These figures could be blamed for implementing and supporting conscription, sending the “passive sacrificial victim[s]” (Cobley 76) of conscription to the front lines against the latter’s will. From early in the war up to its conclusion and even aftermath, “the theme of the Old Men – the conviction that the war had empowered the elderly to send the young

to their deaths” – was expressed by many (Hynes 246). The term “Old Men” was not only used to denote the generational gap between those in charge and those carrying out their orders, but was a class term as well: Hynes notes that “the term meant those men beyond service age who had the power to send young men to their deaths” (248).

We have already seen an example of the theme of the Old Men in Gibson’s sonnet, but it is more explicit in some of Siegfried Sassoon’s poems. Sassoon’s “They” and “Conscripts,” in particular, focus on the role of the Anglican clergy and the officer class, respectively. In “They,” a capitalised Bishop (who can stand in for all bishops) speaks to a group of young boys who have recently returned from the Front. By referring to the young combatants as “boys,” Sassoon draws attention to the age gap between them and the Bishop, whose overblown rhetoric in this poem stands in for the recruitment campaigns and pro-war propaganda carried out by men in positions of power like him. The Bishop’s speech stands in stark contrast to the crude diction of the boys, who speak in the language of common soldiers. Much like Gibson’s sonnet, “They” is divided into two stanzas, turning after the first from the Bishop’s sermon to the boys’ response; and it is through these contrasting stanzas that Sassoon highlights the disconnection between the rhetoric used by the Old Men to promote the war and the experience of the combatants on the front lines. On the other hand, “Conscripts” is written from the perspective of one of these Old Men – an officer who trains new recruits before sending them off to the Front. However, Sassoon attempts to humanise the officer, noting that he “longed to set [the conscripts] free” (“Conscripts” l. 12). Nevertheless, the officer does his duty, sends the recruits to France, where most of them “got killed” (“Conscripts” l. 20). “Conscripts” does not linger on the sacrifice of the soldiers, but uses circumscribing language to describe their fate: rather than focus on the violence and suffering of the combatants, Sassoon celebrates the “stubborn-hearted virtues” of the survivors who “stood

and played the hero to the end” and were awarded with “gold and silver medals” for their efforts upon returning home (ll. 27-29).

In writing “Conscripts,” Sassoon faces a similar challenge as Gibson does with his poem, “The Conscript” – Sassoon is an officer himself; he is one of the Old Men, and thus, contributes to the cycle of sending fresh new recruits to the front lines. Sassoon’s critique of conscription is not as effective as it might have been had he not felt the need to downplay the fates of those who sacrificed their life, limbs, or mind on the front lines, and instead focus on those who benefitted in some way from the war, becoming heroes in the eyes of their family, friends, and country. In fact, Caesar writes that Sassoon’s verse and his descriptions of his nightmares suggest “both guilt for engaging in the killing and guilt for surviving the fighting whilst others, implicitly in his care, have died” (86). Another thing to note is that Sassoon uses the lyrical “I” in “Conscripts,” while it is absent in “They.” Marsland suggests that many protest poets use the first-person pronoun to establish a public and personal identity through their verse and, moreover, that soldier-poets who are officers may have written said verse “to counter the knowledge that they were contributing, however reluctantly, to the suffering of the men under their command” (183). By focusing on the accolades of the young men sent off to fight in France, Sassoon attempts to alleviate his guilt and to reassure his readers that his contribution to the war has been more positive than not.

In addition to one’s own sense of guilt at one’s role in perpetuating the war, Copley notes that both moral and religious sanctions against killing conflicted with a soldier’s legally-required military duties. She asserts: “[t]he gap between moral law and military law is not easily bridged; two equally absolute (textual) authorities – the Bible and the War Act – confront the soldier with mutually exclusive demands” (Copley 87). For Christian combatants, the biblical commandment against killing must have weighed heavily upon their minds, even though conscription compelled

them into military service. “In an attempt to align biblical and martial imperatives,” Cobley adds, “many narratives about the First World War distinguish between the human being and the killing machine” (88). The mechanisation of warfare had changed the way that soldiers were perceived and, thus, portrayed during the war. “Leaving little room for the soldier to display the aggressive personality required of warrior heroes,” Cobley writes, “mechanized warfare resulted in a new perception of the soldier” – this new perspective “emphasized the hero’s willingness to sacrifice himself, rather than his skill as a courageous aggressor” (78). This mechanisation also provided an opportunity – like conscription did – for poets to represent combatants as passive victims of forces outside of their control. Thus, “[a]s a victim, the soldier epitomized human suffering; as a killer, he was a cog in an impersonal machine over which he had no control” (Cobley 88).

A poignant example of a poem that contrasts the humanity of soldiers with the machines used to kill them is Leslie Coulson’s “The God Who Waits.” This poem uses religion to protest the rhetoric of sacrificing oneself to an impersonal war machine: Coulson argues that the current generation has agency, has chosen to willingly participate in this mechanised warfare, and has reaped the consequences of its choice as a result. In “The God Who Waits,” the God of the past generations is abandoned by the people of today, who have instead fashioned an “iron God” (l. 37) – they have given up the Romantic, pastoral life of their predecessors for an industrial one. This new, iron God “[s]its throned with lips that dribble red / Among the sacrificial dead” (“The God Who Waits” ll. 38-39). This industrialisation, this mechanisation of warfare has resulted in the bloodshed of soldiers who are merely fodder for the military-industrial complex. An image of hell comes next: “[b]elching their flames between the bars, / Our fires sweep out like scimitars,” engulfing what Coulson calls “the Eden of the stars” (“The God Who Waits” ll. 40-42), implying not only that this war has corrupted the innocence of the landscape, but that it is the fault of those

contributing to the war effort. The fact that it is “[o]ur fires” that sweep through Europe puts the onus on Coulson’s readers to include themselves in the current generation he criticises.

On the other hand, the speaker of Coulson’s poem switches to a passive voice when he highlights how “souls are sold and souls are bought, / And souls in hellish tortures wrought / To feed the mighty Juggernaut” (“The God Who Waits” ll. 43-45). The speaker thus avoids placing blame for these souls’ fates on any one person, group, or nation in particular. I think that Coulson treads carefully around the word *Juggernaut*, as his use of the passive voice here suggests that he does, because of its colonialist connotations and Britain’s role in subjugating other nations and peoples around the world. Keep in mind that, when the British Empire joined the war in 1914, many of its colonies followed suit. The word *Juggernaut* has its origins in Hindu mythology, as “[a] title of Krishna, the eighth avatar of Vishnu; *spec.*, the uncouth idol of this deity at Pūrī in Orissa, annually dragged in procession on an enormous car, under the wheels of which many devotees are said to have formerly thrown themselves to be crushed” (*OED Online*, *Juggernaut* n. sense 1). However, it has also come to be known literally as “[a] large heavy vehicle” (*OED Online*, *Juggernaut* n. sense 3). To suggest that people have been bought, sold, and mistreated to run this machine – which itself has been co-opted from a colonised people – would perhaps put the British Empire in too negative a light if Coulson continued to use the “we” persona; instead, by skirting the issue of colonialism, Coulson can focus the poem on the current war being fought and the casualties inflicted closer to England.

Figuratively, the term *Juggernaut* also refers to “[a]n institution, practice, or notion to which persons blindly devote themselves, or are ruthlessly sacrificed” (*OED Online*, *Juggernaut* n. sense 2), likely stemming from the original Hindu definition. Coulson criticises the unthinking support of the war by recreating the Hindu procession in a modern scene: the speaker of “The

God Who Waits” describes how the “dripping wheels” of the mighty Juggernaut “crush and kill us where we lie / Blaspheming God with our last cry” (ll. 46-48). This stanza suggests that the participants in the war have willingly laid themselves down in front of this foreign god-machine, renouncing the Christian god in the process. Not only have these participants blindly sacrificed themselves for an ignoble cause, they will reap no reward in this life. Their cries go unheard by their fellow men, no matter how much they cry out “[t]o come away, to come away!” (“The God Who Waits” l. 54).⁶ However, the benevolent God of the previous generations “waits still” for those sacrificed in the war: “beyond the city gate” – which can represent urbanisation and/or the city of Revelations – “fallow fields eternal wait / For us to drive our furrow straight” (“The God Who Waits” ll. 57-60). There is thus always a chance, though perhaps only in the eternity of the afterlife, for redemption in the eyes of the Christian god and creed.

The separation of biblical morality and the impersonal war machine described by Cobley and versified by Coulson was not always necessary, or even desirable, during the war. After all, the Church of England supported Britain’s involvement in the First World War from the start, setting a precedent allowing Christians to participate in militarily-sanctioned acts of violence. In fact, Stuart Bell writes that the Church not only immediately supported the British government’s declaration of war, but that it was “largely uncritical [in its] endorsement of the way in which the

6. Cf. Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night*, Act 2, Scene 4: Feste says, “Come away, come away death, / And in sad cypress let me be laid” (ll. 50-51). The Editors’ note on *cypress* states that it “must refer to a black coffin of cypress wood” in addition to being “a tree associated with churchyards and with mourning” (Warren and Wells 137). This scene also appears in *The Golden Treasury of the Best Songs and Lyrical Poems in the English Language* under Shakespeare’s “Dirge of Love” (26-27) and in the 1908 edition of *The Golden Treasury of Songs and Lyrics*, again under Shakespeare’s “Dirge of Love” (88-89). Therefore, Coulson did not necessarily need to be familiar with the whole play and would only have needed to know of the scene from one of these poetry anthologies in order to make this brief reference, with which he acknowledges the lure of death, of everlasting rest in a graveyard, for those who have sacrificed themselves in this way.

conflict was subsequently waged” (45). This “almost entirely supportive position had become the de-facto policy of the Church,” though Bell notes that there was, of course, a minority opposed to participation in the war or at least specific acts of war (45). Furthermore, the Anglican Church was not the only religious institution in Britain to support the Empire’s involvement in the war. Alan Wilkinson tells us that “[t]he reactions of the Free Churches ran along similar lines to those of the Church of England,” though there were “proportionately more Free Church than Anglican conscientious objectors” (2). Additionally, “[t]he Roman Catholic Church . . . gave its support to the war,” but was smaller and, therefore, less influential than either the Church of England or the Free Churches in its support of the war (Wilkinson 2). Any opposition to Britain’s participation in the war for moral or religious reasons was effectively undermined when Germany invaded “brave little Belgium”; consequently, “there was hardly any debate about the morality and ethics of Britain’s declaration of war on Germany and precious little analysis of what, for example, the doctrine of the ‘Just War’ might say about a conflict which had taken a whole nation by surprise” (Bell 38).

Germany’s invasion of “brave little Belgium” gave English patriotic poets material with which to express their pro-war beliefs. However, “[i]n justifying their part in the general outcry at the violation of boundaries,” Marsland notes, “English poets were in a more difficult position than their French and German colleagues, since their home territory was neither attacked nor directly threatened” (50). Instead, taking up “the issue of the sanctity of borders as a matter of principle,” patriotic poets put “much emphasis . . . on Britain’s thoroughly unselfish role in the war” defending France and Belgium (Marsland 50). Supporters of the war were further aided in their stance by the publication of the Bryce Report in May, 1915, which documented the alleged atrocities committed by the Germans in Belgium and northern France (Hynes 52-53). However,

Michael A. Matin argues that the proliferation of invasion literature in England both before and during the First World War points to suspicions “about German spies and saboteurs in England” (434) as well as anxiety about the British Isle’s vulnerability to naval blockades and, therefore, an interrupted food supply (446). In either case, however, if one viewed British participants in the war not as aggressors against Germany, but as selfless defenders of innocent victims at home or abroad, one could justify Britain’s participation in acts of violence as guiltless acts, since they were ostensibly committed in self-defence or in defence of others.

Alternatively, there were those in Britain who perceived the war against Germany to be a kind of “Holy War” or Crusade and justified the Empire’s participation in the war in this vein. “At the popular level,” Nosheen Khan writes, “the British illusion of being ‘the agent of a divine power’ was sustained through comparison of the conflict with a ‘Holy War’, which image, with its connotations of the Crusades, helped establish the maleficent [*sic*] Antichrist character of Germany and its Kaiser” (37). Khan continues, suggesting that “seeing the war in terms of the Crusades” served the purpose of providing participants “a means of absolving the taint of sin inseparable from the act of bloodshed” (40). I do not know how necessary this latter view was, considering that the British churches’ support of the war sanctioned “the act of bloodshed” in the context of the war – as Khan acknowledges when she references Article xxxvi of the Church of England, which reads: “It is lawful for Christian men, at the commandment of the Magistrate, to wear weapons, and serve in the wars” (Khan 36). On the other hand, portraying the First World War as a holy Crusade could only help the British churches justify their support – and perhaps “the moral economy” – of the Empire’s involvement in the war and ease any misgivings that Christians held at their contributions to the war effort as combatants or non-combatants.

Additionally, by declaring the war to be a “Holy War,” Khan argues, combatants were offered “the consolation of martyrdom” (40), through which they could achieve salvation for themselves and/or their nation. In effect, “[t]he feeling for salvation through martyrdom, the inclination to locate virtue in pain and suffering, emanates from a mood based on the conviction that only through some vast sacrifice and redemption could society be purged of its complacency and its grossness” (Khan 43). This feeling that English society had become complacent did not only occur in a religious context, but was prevalent among secular opinions as well – as we have seen in the second chapter. For instance, Hynes points out that for writers like Edmund Gosse, war “was the disinfectant that would cleanse the present,” an idea that had been around since the Victorian period and was called by Carlyle the “Condition of England” problem (12-13). “What the war did,” Hynes continues, “was to make the condition of England a social disease for which war was the cure” (13). This disease was Edwardian luxury, “the physical opposite” of the war’s “male asceticism, its discomforts and deprivations” – yet, the latter’s “demand for dedication and sacrifice” made it the Edwardians’ “*spiritual* opposite” as well (Hynes 13, italics in original). It was this spiritual opposition, perhaps, that prompted so much of the Christian rhetoric used by those who lived through the First World War.

Howarth suggests that the casualties of the war were justified through what he calls “a Christian moral economy of ‘sacrifice’ for national honour or the common good” (51). Those who were on the receiving end of this sacrifice – in other words, civilians and non-combatants who felt that their nation and lives were spared thanks to the sacrifice of combatants – were thus in debt to combatants, with no adequate means of repaying them for their sacrifices. Propaganda campaigns throughout the First World War encouraged a kind of “Christian moral economy of ‘sacrifice’” by continuously comparing the sacrifices of combatants on the front lines with the

Crucifixion of Jesus. Indeed, this iconic scene “came to be seen as a valuable reference-point for the interpreting of the condition of the prime instrument of war: soldiers” (Khan 49). Khan draws our attention to an example of a popular picture from Christmas of 1914, captioned “The Great Sacrifice”: she writes that it “is a visual representation of the close alliance between Christ and soldiers; it portrays a dead soldier in the field, his uniform neat and tidy, his only wound the size of a small coin in his head as he lies with one hand on the feet of a spectral crucified Christ” (50-51).⁷ Other images of soldiers as Christ figures appeared in common, every-day places. Allen J. Frantzen, in an analysis of chivalry as it is represented in First World War postcards, observes a category of postcard that evokes “the knight’s imitation of Christ’s life and death” (160). “These works,” he continues, “position the foot soldier . . . and Christ in a relationship that suggests their shared suffering” (Frantzen 160).⁸ Poems, too, like those we have already seen – Gibson’s “The Conscript” and Dobell’s “Advent 1916” – as well as Sassoon’s “The Redeemer” and Geoffrey Anketell Studdert Kennedy’s “Dead and Buried,” often compare the sacrifice of combatants to that of Jesus in the Christian tradition. Depicting the suffering and death of combatants in light of the Crucifixion implies that these combatants have sacrificed themselves for the sake of others – the citizens of Britain, who are now (willingly or unwillingly) in debt to those who have suffered and/or died in the war, ostensibly for their sake.

Quite a few poems by non-combatants express the belief that survivors of the war – non-combatants, in particular – are in debt to those combatants who have sacrificed themselves in some way during the war. The speakers of these poems express guilt at their inability to repay the combatants adequately. Rudyard Kipling’s “The Question” depicts a survivor who can only offer combatants “a word” of consolation (l. 15), which is not recompense enough to satisfy the

7. See Appendix, fig. 1.

8. See Appendix, figs. 2-3.

debt incurred by the combatants' sacrifices. Likewise, the speaker of Marjorie Pickthall's "When It is Finished" laments the fact that there are "[n]o words, no deeds, to pay [the combatants'] sacrifice" (l. 10). The only avenue left to survivors, the speaker of Pickthall's poem argues, is to offer up the souls of the deceased to the Christian god, with whom, it must be presumed, they will be better off in an imagined afterlife.

However, Reverend Geoffrey Anketell Studdert Kennedy's poem, "Woodbine Willie," is especially explicit in its depiction of the debt that non-combatants owed and the resulting guilt that they felt due to the sacrifice of combatants during the war. The title of Studdert Kennedy's poem is a nod to the nickname given to the Reverend by the soldiers under his care and suggests that the poem is, at least in part, autobiographical. In "Woodbine Willie," the speaker expresses guilt at the death of his comrades while he stood by, unable to do anything more for the men but distribute cigarettes (l. 12). He writes that his sins have been atoned with the blood of "Christ's fools" – those combatants who were wounded or killed in battle ("Woodbine Willie" ll. 5-6). The name of the fallen combatants is for the speaker a "symbol / Of unpaid – unpayable debt" to the soldiers for whom the speaker "owed God's Peace" ("Woodbine Willie" ll. 9-11). This debt is "unpayable" because the speaker, as a non-combatant, has never had the opportunity to sacrifice himself for those who have already done so; the most he could do for the combatants was offer comfort (in the form of cigarettes) to the young men before they engaged in combat. The diction of Studdert Kennedy's poem – of payment and debt – clearly underscores the idea of a Christian moral economy of sacrifice, under which British citizens incur a debt that can only be paid in blood. Indeed, it seems that, no matter how much non-combatants contribute to the war effort, their participation will never be on par with and, therefore, can never adequately repay the self-sacrifice of combatants.

Pro-war propaganda campaigns attempted to ensure that citizens of Britain believed that their Empire could only be saved by the sacrifice of its people. Marsland tells us that the concept of nationhood “was evolving” in places like Britain and, as a result, the task of defending one’s homeland “was considered a collective responsibility, assigned in practice to men of combatant age” (34). In the patriotic war poetry, too, “there is an implication that the country’s life can be guaranteed only by the death of its inhabitants” (Marsland 36). Indeed, it was simply fact that, “[f]or all the belligerent countries the major weapon in the war was not guns or shells but people, and the availability of that weapon depended on the readiness of individuals to sacrifice their lives, or to condone the death of hundreds and thousands of compatriots, in the nation’s cause” (Marsland 230). To ensure this readiness, pro-war propaganda posters encouraged men to enlist in addition to encouraging civilians to shame men into enlisting (Frantzen 158).⁹ “Many of these applications” Frantzen writes, “either called for civilian sacrifices or called civilians’ attention to the sacrifices of men at the front” (158).¹⁰

With various means of justifying Britain’s involvement in the war, it was a simple matter for average citizens to express their support in word or on paper. Yet, to lend tangible support to the war was another matter entirely. Indeed, Marsland points out that, “for people who were not in a position to volunteer to fight, there was a . . . sense of willingness to contribute what one could to the cause”; this could include “knitting socks and rolling bandages” as well as “writing poems of loyalty and support” (131). However, for many supporters of the war, these acts may not have been enough. For example, Wilfrid Gibson volunteered for military service four times, despite his first three attempts being rejected due to poor health, and he was only approved for non-combatant duties after recruiting standards had been lowered (Hibberd 20). I do not believe

9. See Appendix, figs. 4-6

10. See Appendix, figs. 7-8

that Gibson tried this desperately to participate in a combatant role during the war unless he felt that what he had been doing up until this point – writing poetry about the war (Hibberd 15) – was sufficient to demonstrate his willingness to support his nation's cause. Gibson's non-combatant role still may not have satisfied him: Tonie and Valmai Holt suggest that the lack of documented evidence of Gibson's private life, "especially [as it] applies to his war service," may be the result of the fact that "he was not particularly proud of it" (220). In reality, it was not always possible for those who wished to support the war to do so to the extent that they had been convinced was necessary – that is, to risk one's life and limb engaging in combat.

The resultant guilt at one's perceived lack of contribution to or support of the war appears among those who were discouraged or outright prevented from participating in combatant roles. The general perception that to truly participate in or support Britain's war effort, one must be a combatant, fighting on the front lines against the Empire's enemies, appears widespread; in fact, writer H. G. Wells asserts that "[n]obody . . . wants to be a non-combatant in a war of this sort" (qtd. in Hynes 21). It is possible that propaganda campaigns, like those discussed above, which encouraged young men to enlist, also affected those who could not volunteer for combatant roles by generating guilt for the latter's "lack" of contribution to the war effort. Moreover, combatants in this war were often treated – even if only in patriotic poems – as heroes; yet, Marsland points out, "the Great War offered little opportunity for civilian heroism" (134). Indeed, "if civilians . . . wished to prove that their own patriotic dedication was extraordinary, almost their only recourse was to words," particularly to express their "praise or support for the nation's 'warrior sons'" (Marsland 134). In an environment where young men were encouraged to go to war and sacrifice their minds, bodies, or lives for their nation, those who wrote verse may have felt that their own efforts were lacklustre in comparison.

During the First World War, clergymen's participation in combat was initially disallowed and then, later, discouraged. According to Bell, many clergymen nevertheless desired to enlist in Britain's armed forces, and "[t]he archbishops soon agreed that 'every effort should be made to liberate them for work as chaplains in the Army and Navy'" (41). However, "what was far more contentious was the possibility that the clergy might serve as fighting men" and, though "[m]ost Church leaders opposed this," they recognised "little could be done to stop young priests who were determined to enlist" (Bell 41). It was not until a new Military Conscription Bill was introduced in the spring of 1918, "which included clergy in the general conscription," that the archbishops conceded that clergy could enlist for combat service – though they did so only after this requirement was withdrawn from the bill due to pressure from the archbishops themselves (Bell 42).

Much like the clergy, many women in Britain during the war perceived themselves to be negatively affected by the fact that they were not allowed to enlist in the armed forces, much less become combatants. Hynes writes that, for women whose only "role" was to wait for loved ones to return safely from the Front, "the war brought feelings of helplessness, uselessness, and guilt," which are expressed in the "many war poems by women" (92). Even women who volunteered as nurses' aides in the Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) felt the effects of participating in the war as non-combatants. Hynes points out that "[t]he impression that one gets from [these] women's accounts is of self-doubt and self-denigration, of being women who can't do what the trained nurses can do, and who feel inferior to men because they can't be *in* the war as men can" (91-92, italics in original). Even if we today would consider those nurses who were employed in military hospitals to be soldiers, not civilians, it appears that "the nurses themselves make a clear distinction between their own role and that of the combatants, and . . . they apparently consider

their own function in the war to be decidedly secondary” (Marsland 220). If even nurses felt that their contributions to the war effort could not be compared to that of combatants, then what must other women – those without the skills or means to become nurses – have thought about their own efforts to support their nation during the war? If we examine some of the poetry written by women who engaged in wartime work, we see that their focus is not on their own efforts, but on the efforts of the young men who were on the front lines.

Indeed, the subjects of the war poetry written by Marjorie Pickthall and Eva Dobell are often soldiers. The speaker of Pickthall’s poem, “Marching Men,” is passive; she stands “[u]nder a level winter sky” (l. 1), merely an observer of the marching men of the title, who pass her by. With one exception, Pickthall’s poem focuses on the soldiers and their Christ-like sacrifice. Only in the final lines does the speaker note the effect the war has on women like her: for each soldier who has left, “[s]even swords have rent a woman’s heart” (“Marching Men” l. 12). “Marching Men” thus obliquely references those women whose “role” in the war is to wait and watch while men give up their dreams and, often, their lives to support the war effort. Likewise, Dobell, who worked as a nurse during the war (Reilly 132), wrote poetry about her time working in an army hospital, but focuses on the combatants under her care, rather than her own effort or those of her fellow nurses or aides. Both “In a Soldiers’ Hospital I: Pluck” and “In a Soldiers’ Hospital II: Gramophone Tunes” demonstrate this focus: only in the final stanza of the latter poem does the speaker use an active, first-person voice, and even then, it is used only to recall the bravery of her patients in the face of pain and death.

Pickthall and Dobell may have focused on soldiers instead of themselves in these poems because, as Hynes and Marsland suggest, they may have believed that, despite their own, valid contributions to the war, their efforts were not worthy of being recorded in poetry – especially

when compared to the Christ-like sacrifices of combatants. Alternatively, they may have valued their own contributions but recognised that editors, publishers, and readers were not seeking their wartime experiences for publishing and reading material, preferring instead the heroics of brave men marching off to war or stoically tolerating their wound dressings. Indeed, recall what Robert H. Ross writes about the preferences of the wartime reading public: “[b]y mid-1916,” he tells us, “booksellers were reporting that the public was eagerly buying slender volumes of works by the less well-known poets, *especially if the authors had been killed in action*” (143, italics added). Ross adds that, “in spite of the best efforts of critics, reviewers, and professional poets, the public was pathetically eager to sentimentalize over ‘these memorials of promise unfulfilled, ambition frustrated, high hopes and ardent passions effaced at a breath’” (143). Since women could not engage in combat, there was little chance that they would be killed in the course of their work and, thus, their poetry did not have the same sentimental appeal as that written by now-deceased combatants. In this way, the Christian moral economy of sacrifice also affected the literary market and the monetary economy of Britain by appealing to the public’s eagerness to immerse themselves in the lives of their nation’s (combatant) heroes.

The celebration of death suggested by the British public’s purchasing habits is evident in the patriotic poetry of the war as well. Marsland tells us that the new version of heroic poetry “is entirely elegiac, though the hero’s death is not mourned but celebrated” (80). The cause for this celebration, I think, stems from the constant portrayal of fallen combatants as crucified Christ-figures. Indeed, Caesar notes that “[t]he god-like youth sacrificed in a noble cause, has obvious Christian as well as classical overtones” (1). Yet, Caesar acknowledges that the war poets about whom he writes largely attended public schools where, as we have seen, the classics were slowly being replaced with a modern curriculum, already present in the elementary schools. Moreover,

recall what Matthew Arnold said about the classic languages: that they are valued “as an engine of social and class distinction” (4). Therefore, we should conclude that the Christian overtones that Caesar references were more familiar to and, thus, likely had a greater impact on the general population of Britain – the target audience of both pro- and anti-war propaganda. These Christian overtones lend credence to the celebration of combatants’ deaths; after all, Caesar suggests that “[t]o condone pain, to endure suffering are at the heart of Christian idealism,” because “[w]e, as followers of Christ, are called upon to ‘take up’ our ‘cross’ and ‘follow him’” (5). He continues, noting that “[t]his path of faithful suffering will lead to treasures in heaven” (Caesar 5). We have seen rhetoric very similar to this in *Culture and Anarchy*, where Arnold argues that the English have received worldly prosperity for their struggle towards moral perfection (4). In fact, Arnold posits that “[t]he impulse of the English race towards moral development and self-conquest has nowhere so powerfully manifested itself as in Puritanism” (17). Supporters of Britain’s role in the First World War could thus argue that, by emulating Christ and suffering faithfully for their nation, combatants in the war work simultaneously towards the prosperity of their eternal soul in heaven as well as the worldly prosperity of their fellow citizens in the British Empire.

In this way, British – and, often, specifically English – nationalism was inseparable from Christianity. The wartime rhetoric of good, heroic soldiers sacrificing themselves, Christ-like, for the sake of their nation and its people was ubiquitous. Even before the war, Matthew Arnold uses the language of sacrifice in his description of English culture, which he argues places Hebraism over Hellenism (90). Hebraism, he suggests, aims “at self-conquest and rescue from the thrall of vile affections . . . by conformity to the image of a self-sacrificing example”; indeed, he writes, “[t]o a world stricken with moral enervation Christianity offered its spectacle of an inspired self-sacrifice” (Arnold 96). Thus, the deprivations of pre-war England could be cured, somehow, by

the self-sacrifice of its young men during the war. Like Jesus, their blood would purify, sanctify the nation and those who accepted their sacrifice. Of course, as we have seen, not all survivors of the war accepted this condition; instead, they co-opted the language of Christianity to protest the toll of the war on its participants – whether combatants, non-combatants, or both. These poets navigated the restrictions imposed on them by educators, publishers, and critics: they looked to their Romantic predecessors (about whom they had learned in school) for models upon which they could develop their own verse suitable for the limited publishing space available to them and to fulfill the requirement of beauty imposed upon them by conservative critics of poetry. Moreover, poets during the First World War had only to look at the limited publications of their Modernist counterparts to conclude that, if they wanted their poetry to reach a wide audience, to have the maximum impact, they must work within the confines of contemporary criticism. They must use the literary forms and devices at their disposal (sonnets, allusions, passive voice, etc.) to present their subject-matter – the suffering and sacrifice of combatants in war – in an inoffensive light; attempt to alleviate any guilt they felt at their own contributions, or perceived lack thereof, to the war effort; and to do all this within a culture of growing nationalism. Romantic ideologies and poetic forms offered these poets a means to do all this using language still beautiful enough for poetry written during the First World War.

CONCLUSION

I hope that in future studies of First World War poetry, critics will not reflexively judge poets who use conventional, Romantic forms and/or content, but will first consider the various barriers that the average poet faced in accessing, writing, and publishing poetry during the war. After all, the pervasiveness of Romantic poetry in Britain's pre-war school curriculum and in "the literary consciousness of poets and readers alike" (Clausson 112) made it an accessible genre to poets and readers of all classes and genders in England. Indeed, Romantic poetry provided a readily-accessible model, which First World War poets could emulate in their own verse, especially for those who wished to have their poetry and their thoughts on the war widely-circulated. Additionally, the easily-digestible and, often, compact nature of Romantic lyrics were preferable to editors and publishers in Britain's wartime literary market, and were often chosen over the more complex and, oftentimes, lengthy verse of the Modernists. Aided by personal and/or political reasons for choosing Romantic over Modernist poetic forms and content, many poets during the First World War utilised Romantic ideologies to negotiate the current poetic conventions that limited verse to discussions of beauty and beautiful subjects. These poets co-opted the language of Christianity in order to protest "a Christian moral economy of 'sacrifice'" (Howarth 51) and its toll on the survivors of the war – whether combatants, non-combatants, or both – while utilising the religion's consecrated language to ensure that their poetry remained acceptable to critics. Finally, Romanticism offered poets a means of writing about the gruesome details of war while still expressing their pro- or anti-war sentiments, guilt at their degree of participation in the war effort, and some level of pro-English nationalism.

Of course, I do not intend to imply that all, or even most, poets during the First World War deliberately turned to Romanticism for poetic inspiration, as Margot Norris argues British

combatant poets did; just that many poets – some of whom are not often, if ever, discussed in First World War poetry scholarship – wrote Romantically-inspired or Romantic-like verse. Yet, I think that there is room to further explore the verse of poets, like the Imagist Herbert Read, who engaged with the work of Romantic poets but did not themselves use conventional, Romantic forms. Indeed, the critic Solomon Fishman discusses Read's poetics and criticism, arguing that "Read's affinity with the 19th century romantic poets was much greater than he himself had known" (159). Furthermore, it has been shown that Read's poem, "The Happy Warrior," is an inversion of a poem by Wordsworth of the same name (Crawford 92) – though Read's poem is thoroughly an Imagist one. It is worth exploring why, say, Read and Sassoon, who had similar roles in the war (they were both officers on the front lines) and who engaged with the works of Romantic poets (such as Wordsworth) might produce such disparate poetry. In other words, how did Sassoon end up a Georgian poet and Read an Imagist? By comparing poets of the period who share a similar education, publishing opportunities, and culture, by inquiring why they might use one form over another in response to the same, all-encompassing war, we might come to a still more nuanced understanding of the poetry and poetic movements during the years from 1914 to 1918 – perhaps we may come to this understanding by the time of the centennial of the First World War's conclusion.

Works Cited

- Abrams, M. H. "Structure and Style in the Greater Romantic Lyric." *From Sensibility to Romanticism: Essays Presented to Frederick A. Pottle*. Eds. Frederick W. Hilles and Harold Bloom. New York: Oxford UP, 1965. 527-560. Print.
- "advent n. sense 1." *OED Online*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2014. Web. 14 August 2014.
- "advent n. sense 2." *OED Online*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2014. Web. 14 August 2014.
- Are You In This?* n.d. The Robert Opie Collection. *The First World War*. Web. 27 April 2015.
- Arnold, Matthew. *Culture and Anarchy: An Essay in Political and Social Criticism*. London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1909. Digital Facsimile. 4 March 2015.
- Badenhausen, Richard. "Representing Experience and Reasserting Identity: The Rhetoric of Combat in British Literature of World War I." *Style* 30.2 (Summer 1996): 268-288. Web. 11 July 2014.
- Banerjee, Argha. "'Went to War with Rupert Brooke and Came Home with Siegfried Sassoon': The Poetic Fad of the First World War." *Working with English: Medieval and Modern Language, Literature and Drama* 2.1 (2006): 1-11. Web. 28 May 2014.
- Barlow, Adrian. *The Great War in British Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000. Print.
- Bell, Stuart. "The Church and the First World War." *God and War: The Church of England and Armed Conflict in the Twentieth Century*. Eds. Stephen G. Parker and Tom Lawson. Farnham, Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2012. 33-59. Print.
- Bennett, Donna and Russell Brown, eds. "Marjorie Pickthall." *A New Anthology of Canadian Literature in English*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002. 314-315. Print.
- Bergonzi, Bernard. *Heroes' Twilight: A Study of the Literature of the Great War*. 3rd ed. London: Macmillan, 1996. Print.

The Bible: Authorized King James Version with Apocrypha. Eds. Robert Carroll and Stephen Prickett. 1997. New York: Oxford UP, 2008. Print.

Bilsing, Tracy E. "The Process of Manufacture: Rudyard Kipling's Private Propaganda." *War, Literature and the Arts: An International Journal of the Humanities* 12.1 (2000): 76-100. Web. 11 July 2014.

Bourdieu, Pierre. "The Market of Symbolic Goods." Trans. Rupert Swyer. *Poetics* 14.1-2 (1985): 13-44. Web. 4 Dec. 2014.

Caesar, Adrian. *Taking it Like a Man: Suffering, Sexuality, and the War Poets: Brooke, Sassoon, Owen, Graves*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1993. Print.

Campbell, James. "Combat Gnosticism: The Ideology of First World War Poetry Criticism." *New Literary History* 30.1 (1999): 203-215. Web. 21 Feb 2014.

Card for Easter Day Services, St. George, Brandon Hill. n.d. Bristol Record Office, Bristol. *The First World War*. Web. 27 April 2015.

Clark, James. *The Great Sacrifice*. 1914. Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University Library. "Religious and Spiritual Themes in British Academic Art During the Great War." By Peter Harrington *First World War Studies* 2.2 (2011): 145-164. 148. Web. 27 April 2015.

Clausson, Nils. "'Perpetuating the Language': Romantic Tradition, the Genre Function, and the Origins of the Trench Lyric." *Journal of Modern Literature* 30.1 (2006): 104-128. Web. 27 June 2013.

Cobley, Evelyn. "Violence and Sacrifice in Modern War Narratives." *SubStance* 23.3 (1994): 75-99. Web. 28 May 2014.

- Cole, Sarah. "Siegfried Sassoon." *The Cambridge Companion to the Poetry of the First World War*. Ed. Santanu Das. New York: Cambridge UP, 2013. 94-104. Print.
- Coulson, Leslie. "The God Who Waits." *From an Outpost and Other Poems*. London: Erskine Macdonald, 1917. 21-23. Digital Facsimile. 18 Aug 2014.
- Crawford, Fred D. *British Poets of the Great War*. Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1988. Print.
- Crocco, Francesco. *Literature and the Growth of British Nationalism: The Influence of Romantic Poetry and Bardic Criticism*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Co., Inc., 2014. Print.
- Daiches, David. "Poetry in the First World War." *Poetry* 56.6 (1940): 323-332. Web. 12 May 2014.
- Do You Realise Our Peril?* c. 1914-1918. Imperial War Museums, London. *The First World War*. Web. 27 April 2015.
- Dobell, Eva. "Advent 1916." *Poetry of the Great War: An Anthology*. Eds. Dominic Hibberd and John Onions. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1986. 95. Print.
- - -. "An Epitaph." *Verses New and Old*. London: The Favil Press, 1959. 30. Print.
- - -. "In a Soldiers' Hospital I: Pluck." *The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry*. Ed. George Walter. London: Penguin Books, 2006. 207. Print.
- - -. "In a Soldiers' Hospital II: Gramophone Tunes." *The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry*. Ed. George Walter. London: Penguin Books, 2006. 208. Print.
- - -. "War Memorial." *Verses New and Old*. London: The Favil Press, 1959. 31. Print.
- Ellis, Heather. "Elite Education and the Development of Mass Elementary Schooling in England, 1870-1930." *Mass Education and the Limits of State Building, c. 1870-1930*. Eds.

- Laurence Brockliss and Nicola Sheldon. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012. 46-70. eBook. 14 May 2014.
- Ferber, Michael. *The Cambridge Introduction to British Romantic Poetry*. New York: Cambridge UP, 2012. Print.
- Fill Up the Ranks! Pile Up the Munitions!* n.d. The Robert Opie Collection. *The First World War*. Web. 27 April 2015.
- Fishman, Solomon. "Sir Herbert Read: Poetics vs. Criticism." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 13.2 (Dec. 1954): 156-162. Web. 21 July 2014.
- Frantzen, Allen J. *Bloody Good: Chivalry, Sacrifice, and the Great War*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2004. Print.
- Fussell, Paul. *The Great War and Modern Memory*. New York: Oxford UP, 2013. eBook.
- Gibson, Wilfrid Wilson. "The Conscript." *Neighbours*. London: Macmillan and Co., 1920. 103. Digital Facsimile. 12 May 2014.
- Giddings, Robert. *The War Poets*. New York: Orion Books, 1988. Print.
- Goldman, Dorothy; Jane Gledhill; and Judith Hattaway. *Women Writers and the Great War*. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1995. Print.
- "golgotha n. sense 1." *OED Online*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2014. Web. 14 August 2014.
- Gordon, Peter and Denis Lawton. *Curriculum Change in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1978. Print.
- Guillory, John. "Canon." *Critical Terms for Literary Study*. 2nd ed. Ed. Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1995. 233-249. Print.
- . -. *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1993. eBook. 26 May 2014.

Haughton, Hugh. "Anthologizing War." *The Oxford Handbook of British and Irish War Poetry*.

Ed. Tim Kendall. 2007. New York: Oxford UP, 2009. 421-444. Print.

Hemmings, Robert. "Landscape as Palimpsest: Wordsworthian Topography in the War Writings of Blunden and Sassoon." *Papers on Language and Literature* 43.3 (Summer 2007): 264-290. Web. 23 July 2014.

Hibberd, Dominic. Introduction. *Harold Monro and Wilfrid Gibson: the Pioneers*. London: Cecil Woolf, 2006. 7-23. Print.

Holt, Tonie and Valmai Holt. *Violets from Overseas: Poets of the First World War*. London: Leo Cooper, 1996. Print.

Howarth, Peter. "Poetic Form and the First World War." *The Cambridge Companion to the Poetry of the First World War*. Ed. Santanu Das. New York: Cambridge UP, 2013. 51-65. Print.

Hynes, Samuel. *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture*. London: The Bodley Head, 1990. Print.

If You Cannot Join the Army – Try and Get a Recruit. n.d. The Robert Opie Collection. *The First World War*. Web. 27 April 2015.

"Juggernaut n. sense 1." *OED Online*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2014. Web. 14 August 2014.

"Juggernaut n. sense 2." *OED Online*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2014. Web. 14 August 2014.

"Juggernaut n. sense 3." *OED Online*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2014. Web. 14 August 2014.

Karlin, Daniel. "From Dark Defile to Gethsemane: Rudyard Kipling's War Poetry." *The Oxford Handbook of British and Irish War Poetry*. Ed. Tim Kendall. New York: Oxford UP, 2009. 51-69. Print.

- Kazantzis, Judith. Preface. *Scars Upon My Heart: Women's Poetry and Verse of the First World War*. Ed. Catherine W. Reilly. London: Virago Press, 1981. xv-xxiv. Print.
- Kendall, Tim. "Civilian War Poetry: Hardy and Kipling." *The Cambridge Companion to Poetry of the First World War*. Ed. Santanu Das. New York: Cambridge UP, 2013. 198-209. Print.
- Khan, Nosheen. *Women's Poetry of the First World War*. Lexington, Kentucky: UP of Kentucky, 1988. Print.
- Kipling, Rudyard. "The Question." *The Years Between*. New York: Doubleday, Page and Co., 1919. 32-33. Print.
- Levi, Margaret. "The Institution of Conscription." *Social Science History* 20.1 (1996): 133-167. Web. 14 May 2014.
- Lindop, Grevel. "The Year They Invented Modern Poetry." *PN Review* 39.1 (Sept-Oct 2012): 41-43. Web. 11 July 2014.
- Logan, J. D. *Marjorie Pickthall: Her Poetic Genius and Art*. Halifax: T. C. Allen and Co., 1922. Print.
- Marsland, Elizabeth. *The Nation's Cause: French, English, and German Poetry of the First World War*. Routledge, 1991. Print.
- Matin, A. Michael. "'The Hun is at the Gate!': Historicizing Kipling's Militaristic Rhetoric, from the Imperial Periphery to the National Center. Part Two: The French, Russian, and German Threats to Great Britain." *Studies in the Novel* 31.4 (Winter 1999): 432-470. Web. 11 July 2014.
- "The Military Service Act." *The British Medical Journal* 1.2875 (Feb. 5, 1916): 211. Web. 14 May 2014.

Moore, L. Hugh, Jr. "Siegfried Sassoon and Georgian Realism." *Twentieth Century Literature* 14.4 (Jan 1969): 199-209. 23 July 2014.

Newcomer, Alphonso Gerald. Introduction on the Study of Poetry. *The Golden Treasury of Songs and Lyrics*. Ed. Francis T. Palgrave. Chicago; New York: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1908. v-xiv, 1-43. Digital Facsimile. 20 Aug. 2014.

Norris, Margot. "Teaching World War I Poetry: Comparatively." *College Literature* 32.3 (2005): 136-153. Web. 8 May 2014.

Palgrave, Francis T., ed. Preface. *The Golden Treasury of Songs and Lyrics*. Chicago; New York: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1908. 47-50. Digital Facsimile. 20 Aug. 2014.

Pauwels, F. *Sei getreu bis in den Tod*. c. 1914-1918. Bibliothek für Zeitgeschichte in the Württembergische Landesbibliothek, Stuttgart, Germany. *The First World War*. Web. 27 April 2015.

Pickthall, Marjorie L. C. "Marching Men." *The Wood Carver's Wife*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1922. 99. Digital Facsimile. 9 Sept. 2014.

- - -. "When It is Finished." *The Wood Carver's Wife*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1922. 100. Digital Facsimile. 9 Sept. 2014.

Quiller-Couch, A. T., ed. Preface. *The Oxford Book of English Verse*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1906. vii-xii. Digital Facsimile. 20 Aug. 2014.

Rawlinson, Mark. "Later Poets of the First World War." *The Cambridge Companion to the Poetry of the First World War*. Ed. Santanu Das. New York: Cambridge UP, 2013. 81-93. Print.

Read, Herbert. *Naked Warriors*. London: Art and Letters, 1919. Print.

- Reilly, Catherine W., ed. *Scars Upon My Heart: Women's Poetry and Verse of the First World War*. London: Virago Press, 1981. Print.
- Relke, Diana M. A. "Demeter's Daughter: Marjorie Pickthall and the Quest for Poetic Identity." *Canadian Literature* 0.115 (Winter 1987): 28-43. Web. 11 July 2014.
- Ross, Robert H. *The Georgian Revolt 1910-1922: Rise and Fall of a Poetic Ideal*. Carbondale; Edwardsville: Southern Illinois UP, 1965. Print.
- Rutherford, Andrew. Introduction. *Rudyard Kipling: War Stories and Poems*. Oxford World Classics ed. 1999. New York: Oxford UP, 2009. xii-xxv. Print.
- Sandy, Mark. *Romanticism, Memory, and Mourning*. Farnham, Surrey, England: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2013. eBook.
- Sassoon, Siegfried. "Conscripts." *The Old Huntsman and Other Poems*. London: William Heinemann, 1917. 51-52. Print.
- - -. *Counter-Attack and Other Poems*. London: William Heinemann, 1918. Print.
- - -. "How to Die." *Counter-Attack and Other Poems*. London: William Heinemann, 1918. 20. Print.
- - -. *The Old Huntsman and Other Poems*. London: William Heinemann, 1917. Print.
- - -. "The Redeemer." *The Old Huntsman and Other Poems*. London: William Heinemann, 1917. 22-24. Print.
- - -. "They." *The Old Huntsman and Other Poems*. London: William Heinemann, 1917. 35. Print.
- Shakespeare, William. "Dirge of Love." *The Golden Treasury of the Best Songs and Lyrical Poems in the English Language*. Ed. Francis Turner Palgrave. London: George Routledge and Sons, Ltd. n.d. 26-27. Digital Facsimile. 14 August, 2014.

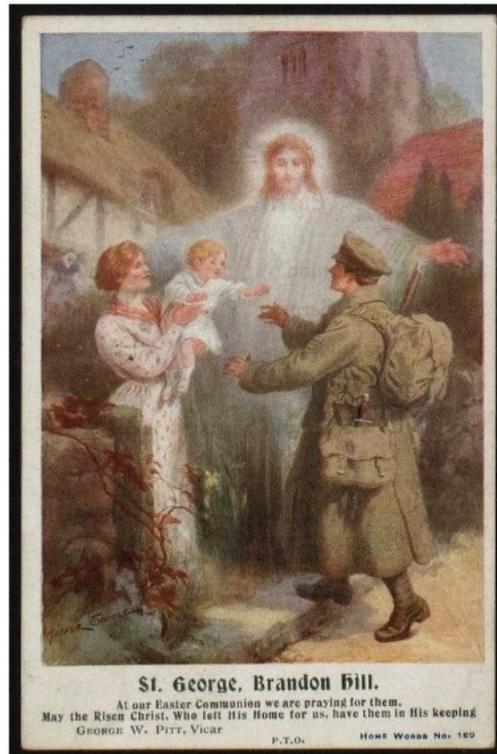
- - -. "Dirge of Love." *The Golden Treasury of Songs and Lyrics.* Ed. Francis T. Palgrave. Chicago; New York: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1908. 88-89. Digital Facsimile. 14 August 2014.
- - -. *Twelfth Night.* Eds. Roger Warren and Stanley Wells. 1994. New York: Oxford UP, 2008. Print.
- Silkin, Jon. *Out of Battle: The Poetry of the Great War.* 2nd ed. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan Press, 1998.
- Stephens, W. B. *Education in Britain 1750-1914.* London: Macmillan Press, 1998. Print.
- Stewart, Susan. "Romantic Meter and Form." *The Cambridge Companion to British Romantic Poetry.* Eds. James Chandler and Maureen N. McLane. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2008. 53-75. Print.
- Studdert Kennedy, G. A. "Dead and Buried." *The Sorrows of God and Other Poems.* London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1924. 90-91. Print.
- - -. "Woodbine Willie." *The Sorrows of God and Other Poems.* London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1924. 11. Print.
- Trent, W. P. and John Erskine, eds. *Poems of Wordsworth, Shelley, and Keats selected from "the Golden Treasury" of Francis Turner Palgrave.* 1912. Boston: Ginn and Company, 1914. Digital Facsimile. 20 Oct. 2014.
- Walter, George, ed. *The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry.* London: Penguin Books, 2006. Print.
- What Will Your Answer Be?* c. 1914-1918. Bristol Record Office, Bristol. *The First World War.* Web. 27 April 2015.
- Wilkinson, Alan. *The Church of England and the First World War.* London: SPCK, 1978. Print.

Wright, Susannah. "Citizenship, Moral Education and the English Elementary School." *Mass Education and the Limits of State Building, c. 1870-1930*. Eds. Laurence Brockliss and Nicola Sheldon. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012. 21-45. eBook. 14 May 2014.

Appendix



(fig. 1) Clark, James. *The Great Sacrifice*. 1914. Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University Library.



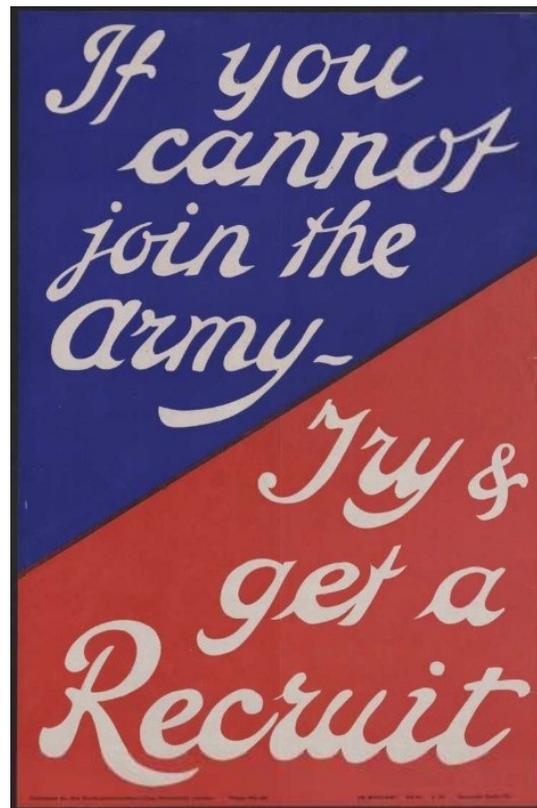
(fig. 2) *Card for Easter Day Services, St. George, Brandon Hill.* n.d. Bristol Record Office, Bristol.



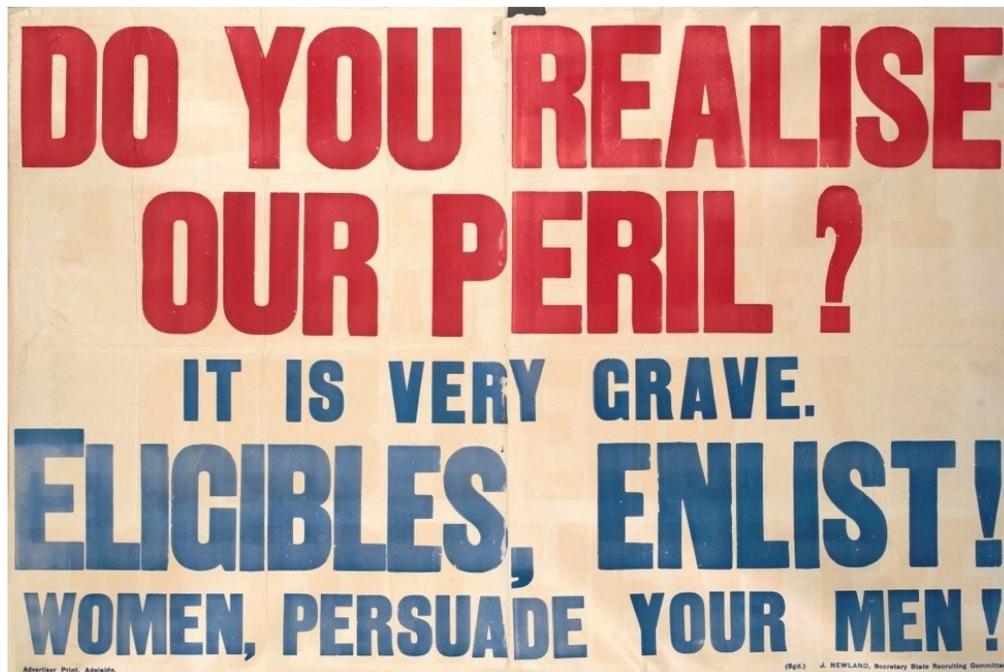
(fig. 3) Pauwels, F. *Sei getreu bis in den Tod.* c. 1914-1918. Bibliothek für Zeitgeschichte in the Württembergische Landesbibliothek, Stuttgart, Germany.



(fig. 4) *What Will Your Answer Be?* c. 1914-1918. Bristol Record Office, Bristol.



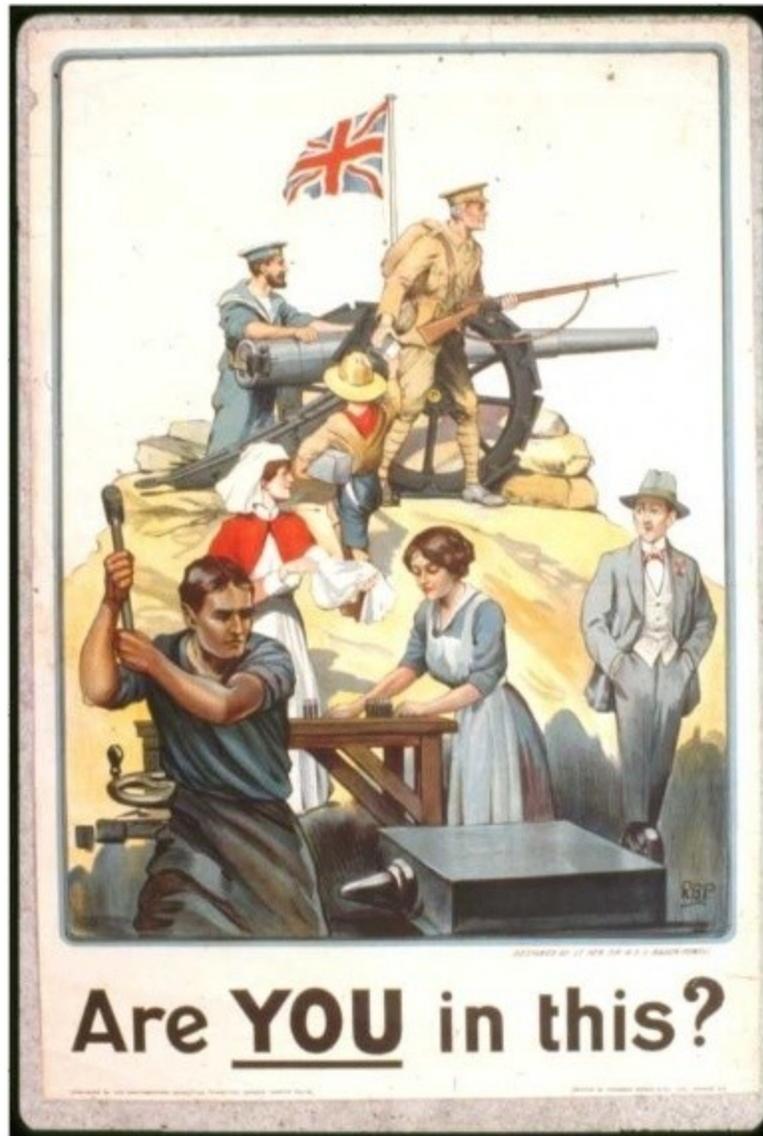
(fig. 5) *If You Cannot Join the Army – Try and Get a Recruit.* n.d. The Robert Opie Collection.



(fig. 6) *Do You Realise Our Peril?* c. 1914-1918. Imperial War Museums, London.



(fig. 7) *Fill Up the Ranks! Pile Up the Munitions!* n.d. The Robert Opie Collection.



(fig. 8) *Are You In This?* n.d. The Robert Opie Collection.