"Lest We Forget":
Canadian Combatant Narratives of the Great War

by

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A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of

The University of Manitoba

In partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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Acknowledgements

It is my pleasure to thank my advisor, David Williams. I admire his intellectual discipline as well as his commitment to teaching, and am thankful for his mentorship throughout my Ph.D. programme. Among my favorite graduate school memories, I remember how David taught me that writing in the margins adds value to texts. While writing this dissertation, I was always grateful for his unflagging encouragement, his expert guidance, and his meticulous attention to editing details. For all of the time and energy you've given me, David, I thank you.

I appreciate the financial support I received from St. Paul's College—my "home base" on campus. I wish to acknowledge the financial support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. I would also like to thank Mark Libin, Gerald Friesen, Adam Muller, and Jonathan Vance.

In addition, I wish to acknowledge my parents, Norm and Liz Dumontet for their unending encouragement. Their support and care helped me overcome setbacks and stay focused on my graduate studies. Mom and Dad, I could not have done it without you. I am also grateful to my good friends, who helped me maintain balance in my life with timely distractions. I would like to thank my academic sister, Ying Kong, and my colleagues at the Learning Assistance Centre, especially Miriam Unruh who gave practical help and sincere understanding. I have also been inspired by many of the students I worked with at the Learning Assistance Centre, especially the graduate students whose hard work and dedication to their own thesis projects served as encouraging examples. Finally, I am delighted to thank Amir Shalmashi, whose love and support brings joy to my heart.

Abstract

Paul Fussell's *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975) has long been the dominant cultural study of Great War Literature. Because Canadian literary critics, such as Evelyn Cobley and Dagmar Novak, rely on Fussell's text as a model when they write about Great War texts, they either eliminate a variety of interesting texts, or severely distort and misread a narrow range of texts to make them fit Fussell's ironic, anti-war ideology. This study aims to recuperate and reevaluate a number of Canadian Great War texts by examining a wider ideological range of texts than Fussell or his followers allow.

In *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning, and the First World War* (1997), cultural historian Jonathan Vance offers a viable antithesis to Fussell in his method and conclusions. This present study, focused on eight Canadian combatant narratives written between 1917-1939, develops and expands Vance's argument from the vantage point of literary criticism.

The first chapter examines four canonical European anti-war texts, delineating their characteristic features and ideological positions. Chapter 2 shows how the extreme ends of the spectrum of literary responses to the war in Canadian combatant writing distort the truth and are equally unsatisfying. Chapter 3 examines three Canadian narratives located in the middle ground between jingoistic romances and cynical anti-war texts, focusing on their social inclusivity and balance—features which allow for a more multifaceted representation of the Great War. Chapters 4 and 5 offer close readings of two of the best Canadian combatant narratives, Will Bird's memoir *And We Go On*, and Philip Child's novel *God's Sparrows*, showing not only how both texts confirm and

illustrate the characteristics of more inclusive, balanced war texts, but also how they evoke and affirm the fact of historical and social continuity.

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Introduction

The title of this dissertation, "Lest We Forget," manifestly derives from the refrain of Rudyard Kipling's "Recessional," written in 1897 on the occasion of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. But it is a Janus-faced poem that simultaneously looks two ways in a celebration of imperial pride, and in a stark warning against hubris by recalling the decline of other empires (with particular reference in line sixteen to "Nineveh and Tyre," the capitals of two great empires that are no more). Though written seventeen years before the Great War began, the poem's plea not to forget past sacrifices has long been linked in social rituals of remembrance with the Great War (1914-1918), as it continues to be cited in Remembrance Day observances, on war memorials, and in epitaphs for fallen soldiers.

In this vein of social remembrance, one ought not to forget Laurence Binyon's oft-cited poem, "For the Fallen," first published by *The Times of London* on September 21, 1914 (immediately after the Battle of the Marne), especially its fourth stanza, which is also read in Remembrance Day ceremonies, and also adorns numerous war memorials:

> They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
>
> Age shall not weary them, nor the years contemn.
>
> At the going down of the sun and in the morning
>
> We will remember them.

Both in Britain, and in Dominions of the former British Empire, Binyon's heavily-cadenced vow to "remember them" has come to serve as the antiphonal response to Kipling's admonishing refrain.

More particularly in Canada, but also in other Commonwealth countries, it is the poem "In Flanders Fields," written by the Canadian John McCrae on May 3, 1915 and first published in *Punch* on December 8 of the same year, which takes pride of place in Remembrance Day solemnities, and on some memorials and epitaphs. The duty to remember is also central to this, perhaps the best known of all Great War poems, both in its injunction to "Take up" the fight, and in its implicit note of threat, "If ye break faith with us who die" (11, 14). A community of ghostly voices assures the participants that, if the dead are duly honoured in this solemn ritual of remembrance, if the living will lend their breath to these words proposed by the still-speaking dead, then generations unborn may hope to commune in "unisonance"[1] with the passing of the "torch" of tradition. Equally, however, should they happen to forget, they can expect to be haunted by those who "will not sleep, / Though poppies grow in Flander's fields."

While my topic is less focused on social rituals than on the cultural attitudes found in literary discourse, I begin with this social anxiety about forgetting because it does seem to have been characteristic of all forms of Great War discourse from their inception. Such anxiety is not only expressed in poetry of the period, or in the contemporary commemoration of it, but appears in our present concern about the passing of the Great War generation. One need only recall the official sentiments of Prime Minister Stephen Harper in his statement announcing the death of Canada's last known veteran of the Great War, John (Jack) Babcock, as reported in a February, 2010 *Winnipeg Free Press* article, "Nation's last WWI soldier fades away":

> The passing of Mr. Babcock marks the end of an era. His family mourns the passing of a great man. Canada mourns the passing of

> the generation that asserted our independence on the world stage and established our international reputation as an unwavering champion of freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

Certainly, concern about the passing of the Great War generation is not limited to Canada, as is evidenced by similar announcements from other nations that participated in the Great War.[2]

Our Prime Minister's statement nonetheless indicates the particular significance that the memory of the Great War holds in relation to Canadian culture and identity, thus adding considerable weight and consequence to the loss of a first-hand connection to this extraordinary period in Canadian and world history. Literature of the Great War, therefore, becomes another sort of ritual gateway to a vanished time. Reading and reflecting on the discourse of former combatants in the inter-war period (1919-1939) becomes its own form of communion with the now vanished Great War soldier.

It would be difficult, and even irresponsible, however, to enter into a discussion of Great War literature without addressing Paul Fussell's *The Great War and Modern Memory*, which, since its publication in 1975, has been the dominant cultural study of this literature. Structured thematically, each of Fussell's nine chapters offers a close reading of a single text in the context of other texts developed around a governing theme. This seminal book "about the British experience on the Western Front from 1914 to 1918 and some of the literary means by which it has been remembered, conventionalized, and mythologized" (ix), focuses on the canonical memoirists, novelists and poets, including Siegfried Sassoon, Robert Graves, Edmund Blunden and Wilfred Owen. Fussell's enabling assumption is that "there seems to be one dominating form of modern

understanding; that it is essentially ironic; and that it originates largely in the application of mind and memory to the events of the Great War" (35).

Criticism of Fussell's text to date has largely been concerned with issues of inclusion and exclusion. Patrick Quinn and Steven Trout respond to Fussell in their collection of essays, *Beyond Modern Memory: The Literature of the Great War Reconsidered* (2001), by including analyses of Great War literature from the home-front, from the colonies, and from women, to show that Fussell's project is limited not only by his particular focus on high-culture literature produced by British combatants, but also by his limited definition of Modernism. Jonathan Vance's *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning and The Great War* (1997) offers a similar challenge to Fussell's preoccupation with high culture by including in his popular survey such "texts" as war memorials, honour rolls, memorial windows, war graves, troop entertainments, veterans' rituals, reunion dinner menus, public speeches, paintings, commercial advertising, sentimental songs and postcards, newspaper doggerel, and popular war stories, as well as serious memoirs and literary fiction by combatants.

In *Media, Memory, and the First World War* (2009), David Williams adds perceptively to the criticism that Fussell's study is unrepresentative. For example, he criticizes Fussell for failing to properly consider historical context of texts, and for his utter contempt for "cultural practices that do not fit his criteria" (21-23). He also points to the failure of Fussell's method, adopted from Northrop Frye, concluding that "Fussell's whole attempt to yoke an ahistorical method to historical contingency finally slides into incoherence" (27). In addition, Williams shows that Fussell contradicts himself by finding evidence of continuity (especially technical traditionalism) rather than a chasm

separating the time before the Great War from the time after (28), and criticizes Fussell's use of Cold War rhetoric to describe the Great War (32). For Williams, however, Fussell's biggest failing is his failure to see the shift in perceptual frameworks brought on by new media (32). This criticism of Fussell's work clearly reflects Williams' innovative focus on the relationship between modes of communication and structures of cultural memory, and his assertion that memory "takes its character from the media environment in which it finds itself" (9). Williams states, "'modern memory' is both larger and other than Fussell's 'modern' mode of irony, since it is ultimately defined by a filmic epistemology that silently underwrote the undisputed classics of the Great War." Further, Williams argues that this cinematic epistemology is what separates "modern" from traditional "ways of seeing," and that the shift from print to filmic ways of seeing is what is really "new" and "modern" in the Great War canon (7). Throughout his study, Williams focuses primarily on the effects of the medium of film on our perceptions of time, arguing that cinematic epistemology collapses past and present, "allowing the past to *invade* the present with a force that erase[s] ontological distinctions between them" (8). To illustrate this collapse of past and present, he points, for example, to the present-tense narration of Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* and Charles Yale Harrison's *Generals Die in Bed*, and shows how these texts are "haunted by 'spectral images' from the past that invade the present with cinematic immediacy" (8). Later, Williams shows how Fussell's "print-formed" perceptual framework misreads Siegfried Sassoon's war writing because it misreads filmic elements, such as shifts to present tense narration, as flaws (148-149).

My own critique of Fussell also goes beyond questions of inclusion and exclusion. Because *The Great War and Modern Memory* offers a cultural study, it is imperative to consider Fussell's own cultural context and his attendant biases. Produced in the immediate aftermath of the Vietnam War, Fussell's text often appears to address this contemporary conflict as perpetuating social and political attitudes formed in the Great War; for example, Fussell refers several times to "war in our times," such as when he comments on "the general vision of war in our time" (33). Fussell's interest also would seem to be directed towards the Vietnam War when, on the last page of his second chapter "The Troglodyte World," he builds to a comparison of the perceived endlessness of the Great War as a model for the perceived endlessness of the Vietnam War (71). Similarly, Fussell's discussion of "gross dichotomizing" and "binary deadlock" in his third chapter, "Adversary Proceedings," appears to echo the language of the Cold War more than that of the Great War, thus demonstrating that Fussell's interpretation is ultimately shaped by the American present of the 1970s.

In addition to his historical moment of writing, Fussell's characteristic biases reflect his cultural position as an American; indeed, *The Great War and Modern Memory* might best be described as Fussell's effort to "translate" (more harshly, one could say "appropriate") the Great War into an American context. Consider, for example, how many of Fussell's chapters build to American literary examples from the Second World War, specifically texts by Norman Mailer, Joseph Heller, and Thomas Pynchon. The way in which half of Fussell's chapters, including the final chapter of his text, move towards American texts in a study purportedly about British literary responses to the Great War,

can easily shade into a grievous imposition of American literary tradition onto another culture for the accommodation of an American audience.

Fussell's American cultural bias is also evident at the very heart of his argument. In keeping with his American cultural paradigm, where a radical break from the past, or even a radical "separation from Europe" is made the essence of American identity (see, e.g., R.W.B. Lewis's 1955 study of American culture *The American Adam*), Fussell suggests that the Great War separated the rest of the West from the past, made us all finally modern (read "American"), by shattering the social and cultural forms on which the West had long depended for its identity. This latter claim in which the Great War represents a caesura in history, however, is contradicted by many of the central chapters of the book, wherein Fussell shows over and over how the literature of the Great War is really characterized by continuity, rather than discontinuity, with tradition. Chapters such as "Myth, Ritual, and Romance," "Theater of War," and "Arcadian Resources" lead to a strangely paradoxical conclusion that British writers continued to structure their reading of "modern" warfare in the familiar forms of Bunyanesque romance, Jonsonian comedy of humours, and Miltonic pastoral.

Perhaps the clinching contradiction in this thesis about a rupture from the past emerges, as David Williams has shown, out of Fussell's reliance on Northrop Frye's theory of literary modes, from myth to romance to the high mimetic mode, and from high to low mimetic, and, finally, to the ironic mode (Frye 33-4). When Fussell argues that a particular historical event—the Great War—resulted in a break from the past, but then falls back on an ahistorical literary model to do so, his method becomes not only suspect, but dangerous, since his literary examples turn into museum pieces of a "natural" cycle in

literary evolution, rather than demonstrating a real historical caesura in the expression of Western culture.

Perhaps my most serious concern about Fussell's text, however, relates to its continuing position of dominance. Because Canadian literary critics rely on Fussell's *Great War and Modern Memory* as a model when they write about Great War texts, they flatten history and exclude a wide range of materials that do not fit Fussell's ideology. For example, Fussell's influence is clearly seen in Evelyn Cobley's *Representing War: Form and Ideology in First World War Narratives* (1993). In this study, Cobley aims to refute "the traditional views of war narratives as a literature of protest," and instead to show, by focusing on formal elements, especially narrative techniques, that this literature is ideologically complicit with the war it seems to protest (ix). Despite her assertion that her theoretical approach to Great War narratives "departs radically" from earlier studies that were "conducted mainly on cultural and thematic lines," she not only cites Fussell extensively, but also follows patterns established in *The Great War and Modern Memory* (3). Specifically, she follows the structural model found in *The Great War and Modern Memory* when she ends her study with an epilogue that shifts from the Great War to the Vietnam War. The aim of this historical leap may be, as Cobley suggests, to allow a comparison and contrast of form and ideology across periods, but the effect is a kind of historical flattening (13). Further, though she finds evidence of ambiguity within the texts she examines, her own understanding of the Great War seems remarkably unnuanced. Seeming to echo exactly Fussell's post-Vietnam inflected anti-war stance, Cobley apparently shares his ironic conclusions when she remarks: "the fact remains that men were killed in great numbers for a purpose which has become increasingly dubious" (21).

Likewise, she shares Fussell's tendency to universalize when she asserts that the Great War was an entirely negative experience for every combatant, regardless of who they were or which side they fought on. For example, she states: "no matter what the author's nationality, the war experience seems to have been distressingly similar and has generated remarkably similar narrative strategies" (18). Cobley seems to reiterate the ideology of the anti-war canon as much as she purports to criticize the literature.

Dagmar Novak also cites from, and relies on Fussell's *Great War and Modern Memory* as a model, in *Dubious Glory* (2000). Her study, which aims to illustrate the dramatic changes in Canadian war literature between the two World Wars, reveals Fussell's strong influence when Novak suggests that a war narrative is successful only insofar as it is anti-war. Like Cobley, Novak follows Fussell's structural model and ends her discussion with a post-Vietnam novel (Timothy Findley's *The Wars*). She also follows Fussell's methodological example, paradoxically employing Northrop Frye's a-historical theory of modes to explain the historical evolution of Canadian war literature from romance to realism to irony. Novak's reliance on this critical model may explain why she included Findley's *The Wars* (though it was produced by a non-combatant with no first-hand experience of the war he writes about, and, therefore, does not fit the criteria Novak lays out in her Introduction), but overlooks two far less ironic narratives by contemporaries of Findley, Kevin Major's *No Man's Land* (1994) and Jack Hodgins's *Broken Ground* (1998). Of course, it is not reasonable to expect Novak to discuss every possible text, but it seems telling that those left out do not support the conclusions required by this critical model about the Canadian war novel's fulfillment of a literary cycle of modes ending in irony.

Cobley and Novak are just two examples serving to demonstrate how criticism of Great War literature is still dominated by those whose assumptions are essentially anti-war and, thus, anti-historical. In fact, the anti-war ideology of Fussell's text has become so pervasive that we are literally confined by it. We are forbidden to criticize, or even to question, the canonical anti-war texts and their ideological interpretation of the Great War. If we refuse to see war as universally brutalizing, dehumanizing, and demoralizing, we are lumped together with the early pro-war jingoists. It is my hope, then, to step out of Paul Fussell's long shadow—especially his Frye-inspired method and his post-Vietnam era anti-war bias—in order to recall a wider range of historical narratives, and to put Canadian literary responses to the Great War in a new light.

For my approach, I am greatly indebted to Jonathan Vance's work in *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning, and the First World War*, in which he positions himself as the antithesis to Fussell in method and conclusions. As noted above, Vance responds to Fussell's constricting lack of representativeness by turning to a multitude of sources, including visual art, menus, and monuments, not just elitist literary responses. In adopting the same thematic method as Fussell, Vance is able to show that Canadian culture, without ever taking a pro-war stance, still found ways to create positive meanings out of the Great War. Several of his chapter titles, including "Christ in Flanders," "O Death, Where is Thy Sting?", and "If Ye Break Faith," underscore the traditional character of Canada's public response to the Great War, most notably in its familiar notions of sacrifice and resurrection. According to Vance, the Canadian myth of the Great War represents a different set of values and meanings, and resists the anti-war canon, which has become the dominant, and almost unquestioned, ideology of war writings. Certainly,

in his examination of literary works, Vance shows that Canadian texts rarely support the anti-war canon. Instead, he shows how Canadian literary writings of the Great War are more often about continuity. Keeping faith with the past is really central, as Vance sees it, to the Canadian myth of the Great War. Thus, he contests Fussell's notion that the Great War represents a caesura in history. Finally, in contrast to the nihilism of the anti-war vision, Vance concludes that the Canadian memory of the Great War had to be useful—the Great War had to mean something so that it could meet the social need for consolation.

Like Vance, then, I start from the assumption that it is still possible to find positive meaning and value in memories of the Great War, despite the undoubted horrors of the conflict. Aside from focusing on Canadian responses to the Great War, I also follow Vance's example by questioning deeply-entrenched notions about the Great War, by looking for complexity rather than by universalizing, as well as by reading texts on their own terms rather than by imposing contemporary views and attitudes on the past. While Vance writes from the perspective of the cultural historian, however, I write from the vantage point of literary criticism, engaging with and expanding on the argument in *Death So Noble* by developing the literary evidence that Vance telegraphs but does not analyze.

To stay within a reasonable length, this study could not include all Canadian narratives concerning the Great War. By focusing on combatant narratives written in English between 1917-1939 whose primary concern is the Great War, especially front-line experience on the Western Front, I aim to include a limited, but representative, selection in terms of range of responses to the war. To focus on combatant narratives

does exclude important Great War texts written by women (although I do mention some in my Conclusion). Similarly, my focus on Anglophone Canadian narratives necessarily ignores any Quebecois or Canadian francophone literature on the subject. Again, for reasons of length, my study is limited to those texts published between 1917-1939. This date range excludes a number of texts based on material produced during the period, but not published until much later, including, for example, Donald Fraser's *The Journal of Private Fraser, 1914-1918* (1998). Of course, even within the limits of my selection criteria, which maintain a disciplinary focus on literature, I had to leave out some important historical memoirs, including only three of these for discussion. For instance, I do not discuss Canon Frederick George Scott's *The Great War As I Saw It* (1922), in this case (as in others), largely because the noteworthy themes and structures found in this memoir are already thoroughly illustrated by a fictional text I do include (Ralph Connor's *The Sky Pilot in No Man's Land*).

In addition to one play and several poems, my study includes a majority of novels and three memoirs, all of which I analyze using the rhetorical tools and structural methods of literary criticism. This approach seemed to offer the best opportunity to explore the rhetoric and political position of each text. Much as Vance uses Canadian novels of the Great War to support some of his conclusions about social attitudes as they find expression in other social media, I use three representative memoirs to suggest their continuity with the fiction. Though I treat them similarly here, I am not unaware that there are significant generic differences between memoirs and novels. In *On Autobiography*, Phillipe Lejeune asserts that an autobiography (of which memoirs may be considered a subclass), a "retrospective prose narrative written by a real person

concerning his own existence" (4), is defined by the autobiographical pact, in which readers of non-fiction tacitly agree that the author, narrator, and protagonist of the text are identical (14). In regards to the Great War narratives studied here, however, there is sometimes considerable blurring of the line between memoir and fiction. More specifically, the memoirs examined in this study seem to drift into the realm of fiction, such as when Will Bird changes the names and locations in *And We Go On*, or when events are altered or reordered for artistic purposes or to highlight a given theme. These changes, of course, do not constitute a break with the autobiographical pact, because, according to Lejeune, the definition of autobiography does not depend on the factual truth of the narrative, but is, rather, text-internal (14). Other features, such as the multiple narrators in O'Brien and Goddard's battalion memoir, *Into the Jaws of Death*, also function to complicate the generic categorization of some memoirs.

Similarly, many of the fictional texts discussed here, in which the author and the protagonist do not share an identity (the name of the author on the book's title page does not match the name of the protagonist), nevertheless, reflect their author's own lived experiences. Names, locations, and events may correspond almost exactly to the facts of an author's life (or may be only thinly veiled, as they appear to be in Peregrine Acland's *All Else is Folly*, whose narrator is Alec Falcon, a nominal mirror image), yet the reader is not asked to accept the autobiographical pact. All the same, these first-person narratives which record well-documented historical events are very much like memoirs. In the case of writing about the Great War, it may be that the experiences of war are so overwhelming, and that the cataclysmic events of the war leave such indelible images,

that even novels are necessarily memoirs. In effect, the searing experience of the Great War predisposes such novelists towards a realist epistemology.

Hayden White sheds further light on this complicated relationship between the genres of memoir and fiction when he addresses the relationship between narrative discourse and historical representation in *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation*. In his seventh chapter, "The Metaphysics of Narrativity: Time and Symbol in Ricoeur's Philosophy of History," White follows Paul Ricoeur's lead in finding multiple resemblances between the two discourses, particularly when he quotes Ricoeur's statement that "both belong to the category of symbolic discourses and share a single 'ultimate referent,'" which is temporality, or "the human experience of time" (175). Given the circumstances represented in Great War narratives, it is, perhaps, not surprising that, whether memoir or novel, these narratives are concerned ultimately with the mysteries of time and death, making it fair to consider them together, even when a novel like Philip Child's *God's Sparrows* shifts at the end into dream vision and scenes of divine judgment to pursue such questions about death evoked by war.

To give Fussell his due, I nonetheless begin, in "The Inter-War Years and the Anti-War Canon," with a selection of canonical European anti-war texts of the inter-war period, in order to set out some of the characteristic features, and ideological positions, of those texts produced by writers whose vision of the Great War was in fact profoundly negative. Here, I also test Vance's definition of anti-war texts as those which universalize the experience of the trenches, where every soldier becomes an anonymous victim "sacrificed in a pointless slaughter," stripped of individuality and identity, and transformed "into a pawn whose suffering and death were of little consequence to

anyone, even himself" (191). The classic instance of this type is found in one of the best-known anti-war texts, Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1928/1929). This German war narrative (or "Gothic romance"—196—in Fussell's rather odd dismissal of it) is written primarily in the present tense and from a first-person point of view in which the narrator, Paul Bäumer, ruminates on his thoughts and feelings about the war, or switches to first-person plural to describe the collective experience of the soldiers immediately around him. The form of this novel, particularly the use of the present tense and the first person, functions not only to draw the reader into the narrative, but also to universalize the experiences of soldiers in the Great War. The particularity of soldiers' experiences and suffering is further effaced, or flattened, by the absence of specific place names, or dates in Remarque's text. In addition, Paul's statement, that "it's the same for everyone…the common fate of our generation…the war has ruined us for everything" (81), relates to this tendency to universalize and authorizes a characteristic assumption of anti-war texts: war brutalizes, dehumanizes, and demoralizes all participants, regardless of which side they are on, who they are, or why they fight. Similar themes, if not identical techniques, are found in Richard Aldington's novel *Death of a Hero* (1929), R.C. Sherriff's three-act play, *Journey's End* (1929), and Siegfried Sassoon's three-part fictionalized autobiography, *The Complete Memoirs of George Sherston* (1937).

Chapter 2, "The 'Old Lie' and the 'Big Lie': False Notes in Inter-War Canadian Fiction," shifts the focus to English-Canadian narratives of the Great War by demonstrating the extreme ends of the spectrum of literary responses to the war in Canada. This chapter aims to show that both ends of the spectrum distort the truth and are

equally unsatisfying. A monochromatic image of the Great War—whether as a noble and glorious enterprise, such as is presented in the jingoistic romances, or as a futile hardship, such as is seen in the anti-war narratives of disillusionment—effaces the complexity of war experiences and the agency of those who took part. I begin with a reading of Ralph Connor's *The Sky Pilot in No Man's Land* (1919), a representative example of the patriotic and jingoistic texts produced in Canada, particularly in the years during and immediately after the war. Though largely dismissed or ignored by contemporary readers as sentimental romances or idealistic adventure stories with little literary merit, these narratives still deserve critical attention, at the very least because they represent a particular perspective, and offer a remembrance of the war that is as authentic as any other. Indeed, the refining, regenerative, and instructive functions of war, which Connor emphasizes in *The Sky Pilot*, continue to be important elements of Canadians' understanding of the Great War even today (cf. the Prime Minister's statement about the meaning of the Great War for Canadian identity). Connor's protagonist in *The Sky Pilot*, Barry Dunbar, testifies to the potential of war for human improvement, rather than degradation. Though he is idealized from the outset, Barry is still shown to grow from a judgmental moral "policeman" (30), a "wooden" preacher (56), and an anti-social non-mixer (104), into a compassionate listener, an inspirational leader, and a personable character. Connor's vision of the war is, ultimately, too optimistic about the benefits of war experience. With its emphasis on patriotism, virtuous imperialism, and heroic sacrifice, *Sky Pilot* does fall far short of a realistic depiction of the discomforts, agonies, and deaths that defined life at the front.

The remainder of chapter 2 examines two Canadian anti-war novels, Peregrine Acland's *All Else Is Folly* (1929) and Charles Yale Harrison's *Generals Die in Bed* (1930). These two representative examples demonstrate that the Canadian anti-war canon rests largely on the same assumptions and follows the same structural patterns as their German and British counterparts. Acland's *All Else Is Folly* presents the adventures, in war and love, of Alexander Falcon. A literary-minded university student working on a Southern Alberta cattle ranch when war breaks out, Falcon enlists immediately, not because he is a patriot, or because he is an imperialist, but because of the anticipated action and glamour of fighting, and because of his family's military heritage. Despite Falcon's refusal to give in to despair, and his indomitable faith in the future, the novel's focus on Falcon's descent from heroic romance into disillusionment means that *All Else Is Folly* is best classified as an anti-war text.

Though he is American by birth, I include Harrison's *Generals Die in Bed* in this study because he had significant ties to Canada in addition to his service with the Canadian Expeditionary Force. As Dagmar Novak writes, when explaining her own criteria for selection and justification for Harrison's inclusion in *Dubious Glory*, he "was raised in Canada and lived and worked in the country before and after the war" (3). Harrison's inclusion is further justified because his novel focuses predominantly on Canadian characters and Canadian perspectives. In Harrison's story about a soldier's descent into disillusionment, the narrator faces a sequence of dehumanizing and brutalizing experiences, including his bayoneting of a young German soldier (116), his self-identification as a quarter of "beef on the way to market" (219), and his recognition of his participation in the looting of Arras (228). This sequence of demoralizing actions

climaxes in the murder of surrendering Germans (254), after the Canadian soldiers are incited to murderous vengeance by a general's speech, which, according to the narrator, is a dishonest report about the sinking of the *Llandovery Castle* (245). Much of the novel's anti-war message depends on this structural climax, which ends with the narrator's recollection of this shameful war crime. To some extent, the anti-war message of Harrison's text is undercut by a reconsideration of the historical accuracy of the general's speech. And, it becomes evident that Harrison's own use of a lie to support the anti-war ideology is no less reprehensible than the "old lie" of heroic propaganda.

A wide range of narratives can be found in the middle ground between the heroic romances and cynical anti-war texts. Chapter 3, "Refuting the Myth of Passivity: Social Levelling and Social Inclusivity," examines three Canadian narratives (two historical memoirs and one novel) that offer more complex representations of the Great War. Indeed, Jack O'Brien's *Into the Jaws of Death* (1919), James Pedley's *Only This* (1927), and George Godwin's *Why Stay We Here?* (1930) are all characterized by their inclusivity and balance—features which allow for a more multifaceted representation of the Great War. The inclusivity of these texts rests on their incorporation of multiple voices and points of view, and even opposing perspectives. For instance, these texts give space to women's experiences on the home front, and expressions of pacifism. They are also inclusive because, as well as offering vivid depictions of the horrors of war, they record positive recollections, such as fun pranks, sustaining comradeship, raucous parties, comic incidents, and successful achievements. In this way these balanced texts find a middle ground between the unrelieved pessimism and despair of the anti-war texts and the naïve heroism and rampant patriotism of more traditional war narratives. The balance

of these texts is found in structural patterns of both/and, which contrast with the either/or patterns given to us in the canonical anti-war texts. Balance is also achieved through even-handed portraits of good and bad in officers, other ranks, Germans, and civilians, thus avoiding the broad brush-strokes that efface difference and individuality. In fact, these texts insist on the autonomy and accountability of individuals, thereby countering the passive helplessness found in the anti-war texts.

Chapter 4, "The Continuities of History in Will Bird's *And We Go On*," offers a close reading of one of the best Canadian Great War narratives. In part, my reading demonstrates that Bird's memoir confirms and illustrates the characteristics of balanced war texts seen in chapter 3. Like other balanced texts, *And We Go On* (1930) records the horrors of war, including the mud, rats, lice, violence, mutilation, and death, as well as more positive aspects of war, such as European travel, breath-taking adventure, male camaraderie, and boyish amusements. Balance is also achieved through Bird's well-shaded portraits of the men he encounters in the war. Men are always treated as unique individuals, allowing the narrative to transcend the dishonesty and inaccuracy of universalization. Further, Bird responds directly to the debate about how the war should be represented, offering an overt corrective to anti-war texts. In particular, Bill asserts that the anti-war canon's image of soldiers as "sodden cattle," or mindless sheep, is a misrepresentation by showing how soldiers were autonomous actors, able to make independent choices. He also counters the anti-war texts' portrayal of the soldier "as a coarse-minded profane creature, seeking only the solace of loose women or the courage of strong liquor," by asserting that the men of his draft are good, clean, and decent (5), and that they "did not seem to care for hard liquor or the red light" (56). Bird affirms that,

even in the environment of war, it is possible to maintain compassion, dignity and justice. In fact, Bird's ongoing concern for ethics and morality in war gives the lie to the nihilism and despair that have become hallmarks of the anti-war canon. My reading of Bird's war narrative also shows how, in its title, form and content (especially allusions to history and historical events), Bird's text evokes and affirms the fact of historical continuity, thereby undercutting Fussell's argument that the Great War marks a decisive rupture in history, splitting us off from an older, traditional world.

Chapter 5, "The Continuity of Organic Society in Philip Child's *God's Sparrows*," offers another close reading of what might well be the best Canadian novel by a Canadian combatant in the Great War. Like Bird, Philip Child responds directly to the anti-war canon's singular focus on the horrors of war and on the anti-war canon's insistence that soldiers were passive victims of war's brutalizing, dehumanizing, and demoralizing effects. In *God's Sparrows* (1937), Child writes: "The thousands went into battle not ignobly, not as driven sheep or hired murderers … but as free men with a corporate if vague feeling of brotherhood because of a tradition they shared, and an honest belief that they were doing their duty in a necessary task. He who says otherwise lies, or has forgotten" (140). Further, *God's Sparrows* illustrates how textual openness is a key characteristic of the balanced war texts of the inter-war years. In this story about the Thatcher family's experiences in the Great War, both on the home front and on the battlefront, various attitudes towards the war are explored: anti-war, pacifist, spiritual, existentialist, nationalist. This range of opinions is expressed in a variety of forms: documents, poems, debates, and dreams. All of this variety and inclusivity conveys Child's faith in free will and individual responsibility. At the same time, the novel stages

an ongoing debate between body and soul. Similarly, the novel sets up a rich moral problem: is it better to die actively killing, or to die passively, but innocently? In these continuing dialogues the reader is not coerced, and no simple binaries are stipulated. Instead, a plurality of options is laid out, again allowing for individual difference and choice. Finally, Child's novel successfully resists the despair and disillusionment of the anti-war texts, thanks to its fraternal, redemptive ideology. Indeed, its themes of forgiveness, of living life to the fullest, and of human interconnectedness and interdependence function to set *God's Sparrows* far apart from anti-war texts.

While the anti-war canon represents the Great War as universally and necessarily brutalizing, dehumanizing, and demoralizing, some Great War narratives do include elements of elation, of pride, and of camaraderie in their depiction of war experiences. It is my hope that this dissertation might free these texts from the dominance of critics whose assumptions are essentially anti-war. As a consequence, I also hope to recuperate a number of forgotten or under-valued texts. Texts like George Godwin's *Why Stay We Here?* deserve to emerge from ill-deserved obscurity. Finally, it is my hope that, in its small way, this project may help Canadians to retain consciousness of the Great War, and those who participated in it, and thus to resist the loss of heritage and pride: "Lest We Forget."

Chapter 1

The Inter-War Years and the Anti-War Canon

For Paul Fussell, the author of *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975), it would seem that the only good war book is an anti-war book, characterized by an unremitting focus on details of destruction, horror, and gore. His selections from among British combatant memoirs, novels, poems, and plays to represent the general tenor of Great War literature are all concentrated on the brutalizing, dehumanizing, and demoralizing effects of combat on front-line soldiers. Most of these works are likewise ironic in their tone and vision—the only "appropriate means" (3), in Fussell's influential estimate, for writing about the Great War.

More recently, the Latvian-Canadian historian Modris Eksteins has seconded this view that irony "became for many the rhetorical mode and mood" of postwar literature (219). Eksteins is somewhat more prescriptive, however, in his view that all accounts of war experience that are not focused on the soldiers' feelings of "alienation" and "marginality" (211), or maybe even on their sense of themselves as socially and morally "diminished" by the war (212), are inherently "misleading" (218).

Though not embracing the anti-war stance as the only appropriate expression of war experience, the Canadian cultural historian Jonathan Vance would not dispute this definition of the anti-war canon. He writes:

> One of the distinguishing features of the canon of antiwar literature was its negativity. Generally speaking, it refused to recognize anything positive in the war experience, seeing it as a destroyer of

> human body and spirit. Battle was not a refiner's fire but an insatiable beast that chewed up soldiers and left only shattered and insensate hulks in its wake. With its parade of characters who drank, swore, and fornicated their way through Flanders, the canon revealed the power of war to bring out the worst in humanity. (188)

In his characterization of the method of these texts, however, Vance makes the telling point that the anti-war writings tend to universalize the experience of the trenches, so that every soldier becomes an anonymous victim "sacrificed in a pointless slaughter," stripped of individuality and identity, and transformed "into a pawn whose suffering and death were of little consequence to anyone, even himself" (191). The classic instance of this tendency to universalize appears in one of the most well-known anti-war novels, Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1928), a text which Vance does not explore at length. Beginning with Remarque's novel, this chapter will examine a selection of canonical anti-war texts produced in the inter-war period, with the aim of delineating the characteristic features and ideological positions of those texts produced by writers whose vision of the Great War is profoundly negative.

All Quiet on the Western Front

Erich Maria Remarque's German war narrative was first published as *Im Westen nichts Neues* (1928), and was quickly translated into English as *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1929). The novel follows Paul Bäumer and his school classmates who volunteer to

join the German army shortly after the start of the First World War. Barely out of school, the nineteen-year-old Bäumer's romantic ideals are crushed by ten weeks of training, which leave him "first astonished, then embittered, and finally indifferent" (25). The front-line terrors, including endless bombardments, gas attacks, night patrols, and the ever-present fear of imminent death, brutalize and harden Bäumer. To survive the agony of war, Bäumer deliberately disconnects himself from emotions like grief, sympathy, and fear. Feeling increasingly detached from German civilian life, Bäumer resigns himself to the fact that he and his comrades are members of a lost generation, and blames the older generation, especially authority figures such as teachers, priests and politicians, who are responsible for this destruction. As his disillusionment grows, Bäumer becomes increasingly convinced of the pointlessness of war. Bäumer is killed in October, 1918, and the irony of his death, just one month before the end of the war, is further emphasized by the army report that day—"All quiet on the Western Front"—which takes no notice of the death of an individual soldier.

All Quiet has frequently been read as the quintessential anti-war novel. In "War and Degradation: Gleanings from the Literature of the Great War," Alfred Bonadeo places *All Quiet* squarely within the anti-war canon by focusing on Remarque's representation of the degradation of soldiers who fought in the trenches. Bonadeo argues that survival on the battlefields of the Great War required "the transformation of men into something less than human, something 'subhuman[,]'" and that writers who marveled at, or celebrated the power of human beings to exert themselves to overcome adversity in extraordinary circumstances "belittle the wear and tear" suffered by men in combat (409). In other words, like Paul Fussell, Bonadeo argues that the only good war book is an anti-war

book, being characterized by an unremitting focus on the degradation of those who fought. Further, Bonadeo asserts the universality of the negative effects of war. “Degradation,” Bonadeo contends, “is not exclusive to one country or one society. It knows no national boundaries … its presence is discernible in all countries at war” (427).

Other readers of *All Quiet* have also noted features that define Remarque’s novel as an anti-war text. Richard Arthur Firda’s *Erich Maria Remarque: A Thematic Analysis of His Novels* (1988), for example, focuses on Paul Bäumer’s disillusionment (45) and pessimism (46). Like Bonadeo, Firda notes the universality of the experience of trench warfare across national lines when he affirms “the comradeship between German and French soldiers on grounds of a commonly shared destiny” (46). Thomas C. Ware’s short essay “Remarque’s *All Quiet on the Western Front*” focuses on the intense irony in Remarque’s text, particularly in the scene in which Bäumer and his comrades seek cover from heavy bombardment in a cemetery (63-67). Following Paul Fussell, especially chapter seven of *The Great War and Modern Memory*, “Arcadian Resources,” Ware notes that this scene echoes the pastoral motif of *Et in Arcadia Ego*, and therefore, “partakes of this classical tradition” in order to produce an ironic juxtaposition (99).

In “Innocent Killing: Erich Maria Remarque and the Weimar Anti-War Novels,” Brian Murdoch, like Ware, also mentions the irony in *All Quiet* as the one overriding feature that identifies Remarque’s novel as an anti-war text (148); but, like Bonadeo, his main focus is on the war’s “brutalizing effect upon a sensitive young man, the consequent devaluation of practically everything in life before, social or educational, and what war as such actually means” (144). Murdoch goes on, however, to show how the pacifist message and the tendency to universalize in *All Quiet* also served the particular

ideological needs of the Weimar republic. For example, Murdoch asserts that the "absence from these texts of a picture of the enemy is one of the principal features of the antiwar novel, especially significant in the Weimar context, of course, as an outwardly directed policy message" (146); and, later, that the "internationalism of the work is important, and it was indeed appropriate for a Weimar liberal novel to proclaim to the world that the ordinary soldier in the German army was virtually identical to all the other combatants, as a way of diminishing German militarism" (150). Murdoch concludes that the anti-war features of *All Quiet*, particularly its "underlying theme of the universality of the ordinary soldier" and its pacifist message "that war is an evil per se," are what maintains the novel's worth and significance (162).

In keeping with these critical readings, one has to concede that Remarque's focus on the brutalizing effects of war is one of the key features that identifies *All Quiet* as an anti-war text. Before the war, Paul Bäumer and his classmates were full of romantic idealism, but they are changed by their military training. Bäumer observes: "We were trained in the army for ten weeks and in this time more profoundly influenced than by ten years at school. We learned that a bright button is weightier than four volumes of Schopenhauer." Further, military training taught these young men "that what matters is not the mind, but the boot brush, not intelligence, but the system, not freedom but drill" (25). All the young recruits' "eagerness and enthusiasm" is knocked out of them and the young soldiers in training soon become "hard, suspicious, pitiless, vicious, [and] tough" (29).

The brutalization of training is soon supplemented by the brutalization of battle, where, as Bäumer notes, the first bombardment they survive "broke" them "in pieces"

(17). The brutalizing effects of the war destroy Bäumer's poetic sensibility, and he mourns this loss when he recalls a play and some poems at home in the drawer of his writing table that he "cannot comprehend…any more" (23). Similarly, Bäumer mourns his loss of emotional sensitivity. Reflecting on their visit to the dying Kemmerich in the hospital, Bäumer justifies, or excuses, Müller's scheming determination to acquire Kemmerick's boots by explaining that soldiers are motivated only by practicalities, because they have "lost all sense of other considerations" (24). Though "[o]nce it was different" (25), their war experiences have left these men callous and unfeeling. Further evidence of Bäumer's diminished emotional response is apparent during his visit to Kemmerick's mother. Bäumer feels neither sympathy for, nor empathy with this grieving woman, because, having "seen so many dead," he "cannot understand any longer why there should be so much anguish over a single individual" (160). Worse yet, though Bäumer frequently extols the powerful sense of comradeship engendered by the war, he also notes the deadening of his feelings for his fellow soldiers, such as when, in the midst of an attack, he ignores the cries of those who have fallen, and remarks: "We have lost all feeling for one another" (105).

As well as deadening his emotions, the war deadens Bäumer's intellect, too. So brutalized is Bäumer by the conditioned response of his training that, when he kills the French soldier (the first time he has killed with his hands, in close combat) (193), his actions are not chosen, or willed, but are merely the automatic performance of a task programmed by endless training drills. As Bäumer looks at the body of the man he has killed, he thinks, "But you were only an idea to me before, an abstraction that lived in my mind and called forth its appropriate response. It was that abstraction I stabbed" (195).

Similarly, after surviving an attack and retreat, and in the course of mounting a counter-attack, Bäumer describes himself and his comrades as “automata” who are “powerless, madly savage and raging” (104), and thinks of himself and his comrades as “insensible, dead men, who through some trick, some dreadful magic, are still able to run and to kill” (105). For Bäumer, this lack of intellectual engagement is, in some sense, deliberate, because “terror can be endured so long as a man simply ducks;—but it kills, if a man thinks about it” (124).

While on leave, Bäumer is discomfited by his father’s questions about his experiences at the front, because putting “such things” into words threatens to make his war experiences “gigantic” in his mind. It is “too dangerous” for Bäumer to think too much, or to understand too clearly (146). Bäumer deliberately shuts down his thinking not only to avoid fear, but also to avoid facing the senseless arbitrariness of the war. He shuts away his thoughts about how only “a word of command has made these silent figures [the Russians] our enemies” (170), because allowing such thoughts would lead to “the abyss” (171). Further evidence for the need to deny his intellect is seen when, on his first patrol after returning from his stay in hospital and rest leave, Bäumer is overcome by terror and paralysis *because* he thinks too much: “In whirling confusion my thoughts hum in my brain” (184).

Having lost, or suppressed, his emotional sensitivity as well as his rationality, Bäumer is hardly human. Indeed, nothing in *All Quiet* more convincingly illustrates the brutalizing effects of the war than the debasement and animalization Bäumer and his companions experience as a result of the war. Because the army relies on the notion that “man is essentially a beast” only lightly covered “with a little decorum” (44), it treats its

soldiers "as though [they are] circus-ponies" (26). Accordingly, Bäumer himself tends to see his fellow soldiers in animalistic terms. Where Himmelstoss refers to the recruits in training as "swine" (29), Bäumer outdoes him in making Haie Westhus a beast rubbing "his paws" together (46). An airman downed in no-man's–land is caught in the searchlights like "a black insect" trying to escape (58); Tjaden has "dull pig's eyes" when he confronts Himmelstoss (77); a panicky recruit "butts his head against the wall like a goat" when trapped in a dug-out during a barrage (101); German troops are described [as] "crouching like cats" as they retreat from an attack by the French (103); and Kantorek offers his "paw" to shake and "bleats" a greeting to Mittelstaedt (154). Later, Kantorek is even described as "dashing up and down like a wild boar" (156), while the Russian prisoners are first compared to "meek, scolded, St. Bernard dogs" (167), and then are seen to be "like sick storks, like great birds" (169). Bäumer sees himself moving "over the ground like a crab" when caught in No Man's Land during a bombardment (187), and he and his comrades "sweat like monkeys" setting up a dug-out (202). He imagines whole columns of men moving "like a swarm of bees" (206), while the wounded "bellow like steers" when their sticking bandages are changed in hospital (220). If a sadistic doctor now wants to experiment on soldiers in the hospital as though they are "little dogs" (225), battle has already conditioned Bäumer to see airmen chasing men on the ground "just as though they were hares" (247). He even thinks that his friend Detering has the look of a "cow" just before he disappears (239).

For Bäumer, these transformations from human to animal are specifically related to the men's proximity to the war's brutality. He takes it for granted that "we reach the zone where the front begins and become on the instant human animals" (56), and "we

turn into animals when we go up the line" (124). And it is not until after they return to their own lines that they "gradually" "become something like men again" (106). As with his loss of intellect, Bäumer is nonetheless ambivalent about this debasement, which he sees as simultaneously abhorrent and necessary to survival. The war, observes Bäumer, "has transformed us into unthinking animals in order to give us the weapon of instinct—it has reinforced us with dullness, so that we do not go to pieces before the horror, which would overwhelm us if we had clear, conscious thought … it has lent us the indifference of wild creatures" (237).

In addition to suffering reduction to an animal existence, Bäumer and his comrades also suffer the loss of their individuality. This loss, already begun in training where they must submit to a demeaning "renunciation of personality" (25), is exacerbated by life at the front. For example, soldiers marching to the front "resolve themselves into a block, individuals are no longer recognizable, the dark wedge presses onward, fantastically topped by the heads and weapons floating on the milky pool. A column—not men at all" (56). Similarly, Bäumer describes soldiers as coins melted down who now "all bear the same stamp." Once again, Bäumer expresses some ambivalence about this transformation. On the one hand, he sees that the melting down of individuals creates "brotherhood," "solidarity," and "loyalty." On the other hand, he seems to regret the loss of individuality and "the old distinctions" between soldiers, which he now recalls with accompanying feelings of strangeness and shame (236).

The strangeness Bäumer feels about individual identity worsens when he returns home on leave. Sitting on his mother's sick-bed after arriving home, Bäumer looks around his home, sees the familiar faces of his mother and his sister, as well as the

familiar objects in the house, “but,” he thinks, “I am not myself there” (142). When he changes into his civilian clothes, he feels “awkward,” and “overgrown.” “It is a strange sight,” thinks Bäumer, filled with “astonishment,” when he looks at himself in the mirror (145). Here, the use of the pronoun “it” in reference to his own reflected image suggests Bäumer’s alienation from himself, as well as his loss of humanity. Of course, Bäumer “imagined leave would be different from this” (148), but he comes to realize that he has been so “changed” and so “crushed” by the war that “there lies a gulf” between his pre-war self and himself now (149).

The estrangement Bäumer feels between his past and present selves is particularly evident when he and his classmates bitterly mourn the loss of their youth: “Youth! We are none of us more than twenty years old. But young? Youth? That is long ago” (21). So complete is their alienation and so profound is their hopelessness that Bäumer believes that he and his classmates “are lost” (111). Bäumer asserts that his youth is not just lost, but irretrievable when he says that, “even if these scenes of our youth were given back to us we would hardly know what to do” (119). Bäumer and his young comrades, then, are entirely “cut off” from their “early life” by the war (23)—“cut off from activity, from striving, from progress” (82).

The dehumanizing effects of the war isolate Bäumer from others as well as from himself. The horrors he witnesses leave him and his fellow soldiers feeling “terribly alone” (17). More particularly, he and his comrades feel abandoned and betrayed by the previous generation. He asserts that the older generation, who “ought to have been mediators and guides” for him and the other “lads of eighteen” as they matured into adulthood, has “let us down so badly” (16). Keenly aware of the divide between his

generation and his father's, Bäumer claims that their faith in the older generation's "insight" and "wisdom" was "shattered" by the first death they witnessed.

Bäumer's alienation is not limited, however, to faceless authority figures whom he blames for the war. While on leave, he "cannot get on with the people" at home no matter who they are (146). For example, Bäumer rejects connection with the red-cross sister who greets him on the railway platform. When she calls him "Comrade," he "will have none of it" (138). Bäumer also has similarly unpleasant encounters with a Major on the street of his hometown (144-145), and with his German-master from school (147-148). More distressingly, Bäumer is disappointed by the interaction he has with his father, because he no longer "has any real contact with him" (146). Even with his sister and his mother, Bäumer feels "a distance, a veil" separating him from them (142). In response to this separation from those around him, particularly those he loves, Bäumer is increasingly disquieted by a "terrible feeling of foreignness" (152). His only comfort comes when he thinks of his fellow soldiers, and wonders what they are doing (150, 152). His alienation from himself and civilians having come sharply into focus while visiting home, Bäumer repeats: "I ought never to have come on leave" (163).

Brutalized, de-humanized, and alienated as a result of their war experiences, it is not surprising that Bäumer and his comrades are also demoralized. Much of their demoralization stems from their alienation from their former lives and former selves. This is particularly true for the young soldiers—those who enlisted right out of school along with Bäumer. For the older soldiers the war might be merely "an interruption" in their lives. Those who are married, and whose lives were more established before the war "are able to think beyond it" (24). Kat, for example, is able to imagine a post-war future

with his wife and children, in which he must "see to it that they've something to eat" (73). Haie says that, after the war, he might "stay with the Prussians and serve out my time" rather than return to his pre-war occupation as a peat digger (74). Projecting even further into the future, Haie imagines himself retiring from army life with his pension and becoming "the village bobby" (74). Detering, who still thinks every day about the weather and crops back home (76), has never lost his connection to his old farming life, and "would go straight on with the harvesting" if the war were to end (75).

In contrast to the older men, however, Bäumer and his classmates whose lives "had as yet taken no root" cannot imagine a future life after war (24). Because "nothing remains" of their lives, their interests, or their hobbies from before the war (24), Bäumer and his classmates cannot imagine the future. Krop, for instance, when asked what he would do if there were peace and he were home, says, "I don't think we'll ever go back" (81). To the same question, Bäumer responds, "I can't even imagine anything" (81). Later, when Bäumer does imagine the future, his vision is bleak: "Trenches, hospitals, the common grave—there are no other possibilities" (245). Later still, when the armistice is on the horizon, Bäumer again claims to be unable to think about the future: "Here my thoughts stop and will not go any farther" (253). Bäumer believes that he and his comrades might have had a life if they had gone home in 1916, but now, at the end of 1918, "if we go back we will be weary, broken, burnt out, rootless, and without hope. We will not be able to find our way any more" (254). The only future he imagines includes an ongoing, perhaps life-long, alienation from those who did not fight in the trenches: "men will not understand us." He also imagines an ongoing and life-long alienation from himself: "We will be superfluous even to ourselves, we will grow older, a few will adapt

themselves, some others will merely submit, and most will be bewildered;—the years will pass by and in the end we shall fall into ruin" (254).

For Bäumer, some of the alienation he and his comrades experience results from their enslavement to history. Bäumer explains that he and his comrades are cut off from the world of their parents because they have "surrendered" "to events" and become "lost in them" (110). Thus, Bäumer and his comrades' demoralization is attributable, in part, to the soldiers' lack of self-determination. Bäumer's reflections about the arbitrariness of events reveal some of the same ambivalence he has felt before. On the one hand, the vagaries of chance in war contribute to his enjoyment of life's pleasures. While sitting on a latrine box, Bäumer happily reflects: "It might easily have happened that we should not be sitting here on our boxes to-day; it came damn near to that. And so everything is new and brave, red poppies and good food, cigarettes and summer breeze" (14). On the other hand, the arbitrariness of chance means that soldiers "must await fearfully whatever may happen" and "live in a suspense of uncertainty." In this more negative assessment, the vagaries of chance and the soldiers' inability to determine their own fate makes the front into "a cage" that traps the men like helpless animals. Further, Bäumer asserts: "It is this Chance that makes us indifferent" (92). Chance, therefore, is also blamed for the soldiers' deadened emotions.

Chance is also to blame, Bäumer suggests, for the death of his French counterpart Gérard Duval. As Bäumer describes the scene, he abdicates responsibility for his actions: "I do not think at all, I make no decisions" (189). Bäumer's repetition of "if only" ("if only I had impressed the way back to our trench more sharply on my memory. If only he had run two yards farther to the left") further demonstrates his avoidance of responsibility

for the death of the French soldier (194). Recall, too, that Bäumer believes that it is only "a word of command" that makes the soldiers in one trench enemies of the soldiers in another trench (170). Bäumer, therefore, presents himself not as a rational actor who makes conscious choices directed by his own will, but as a helpless victim of arbitrary chance and order.

Indeed, for Bäumer, external circumstances alone determine behaviour. Take, for example, Bäumer's evaluation of the Russian prisoners' treatment of one another. He observes that they "are more human and more brotherly towards one another" than are German soldiers, and, for Bäumer, external circumstances—in this case the Russian prisoners' extreme misfortune, and their exemption from further warfare—are the only explanation for this behaviour (169). Bäumer also blames external forces when he portrays himself as a victim of social institutions. In particular, Bäumer condemns the army itself, as being full of "fraud, injustice, and baseness" (244). Parsons, professors, and politicians are similarly excoriated. Bäumer and his comrades are thoroughly demoralized and "have given up hope" because they feel powerless to influence their own fates (243).

The impossibility of individual response to circumstances is what underpins the universalizing message and method of Remarque's anti-war novel. The use of the present tense and the first person—particularly the first-person plural "we"—in *All Quiet* functions not only to draw the reader into the narrative, but also to universalize the experiences of all soldiers in the Great War. Additionally, the absence of specific place names or dates in Remarque's novel effaces or flattens the particularity of soldiers' experiences and suffering. The first lines of the novel supply an example of both the

universalizing "we" and the absence of geographic and temporal specificity: "We are at rest five miles behind the front. Yesterday we were relieved" (7). Here, and throughout the novel, specific dates, place names, and regiment numbers have all been omitted. The war as Bäumer describes it might have taken place anywhere, anytime, to any army. Thus, in *All Quiet*, the experiences of the ordinary soldier are so generalized that British, French, Russian and German front-line soldiers are entirely interchangeable.

As further evidence of this universalizing tendency, consider Bäumer's statement that "it's the same for everyone … the common fate of our generation … the war has ruined us for everything" (81), followed by his later assertion that "all the men of my age, here and over there, throughout the whole world … all my generation is experiencing these things with me" (228). These statements share a characteristic assumption of other anti-war texts that war invariably brutalizes, dehumanizes, and demoralizes all participants, regardless of which side they are on, or who they are, or why they fight. Finally, the universalizing tendency of *All Quiet* is supported by the novel's structure, as well as its point of view, content, and diction. Ending the narrative with the narrator's death and *before* the armistice supports its message of universal hopelessness and despair, because there is no difference between those who have fought and won, and those who have fought and lost.

Death of a Hero

Similar anti-war themes, if not identical techniques, are found in Richard Aldington's *Death of a Hero*. This British war novel, published in 1929, opens with a prologue set immediately after the 1918 armistice. The prologue not only reveals the entire plot of George Winterbourne's life and death, but also introduces the major characters with its depiction of his loved ones' response to the news of his death in combat. Additionally, the prologue establishes the bitter and ironic tone of the whole novel, including its vitriolic condemnation of the cultural forces which are deemed responsible for the causes and effects of the Great War. The rest of the novel, which the narrator calls an act of "atonement, a desperate effort to wipe off the blood-guiltiness," is divided into three parts (32).

Part I depicts the social and sexual hypocrisies of the Victorian and Edwardian world that produced George Winterbourne's parents and led to his awkward childhood and adolescence. Part II traces George Winterbourne's efforts to earn a living in London, his association with the intelligentsia, his development as an artist, his romantic entanglements with Elizabeth and Fanny, and his enlistment as a soldier in the war. Part III, the only section of the novel that deals specifically and directly with the war, describes George's experiences on the battlefields of France, including vivid and realistic details relating the horrors of the trenches, marked by the mud, filth, boils, lice, and rats. The novel closes with an epilogue, consisting of a poem set "Eleven years after the fall of Troy," about the younger generation who do not understand, the beautiful young men who died, and the surviving veterans who are broken and suffering (439).

Though critical responses to *Death of a Hero* may not dwell on its anti-war features, the critics' frequent comparisons of this novel to canonical anti-war texts clearly identify Aldington's novel as part of this group. For example, in "Richard Aldington and *Death of a Hero*—or Life of an Anti-hero?", John Morris notes parallels between *Death of a Hero* and Siegfried Sassoon's *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer*, Robert Graves's *Good-bye to All That*, and Remarque's *All Quiet*, because they all recount the "betrayal of a generation of young men," as well as the "social and temporal gulf" which separated those who fought in the war from the preceding and following generations (183). Though Morris's essay aims primarily to examine the satirical function of Aldington's use of stereotypical characters, the relationships between the narrator, protagonist and author, and the novel's formal structure, this essay does note the presence of some typical anti-war characteristics in *Death of a Hero*, including its reliance on irony, its tone of loathing and contempt, its indictment of authority as the "real enemy" (191), and its treatment of themes such as social hypocrisy, and the crushing effects of despair on soldiers.

Like Morris, Richard Smith overtly compares *Death of a Hero* to Remarque's *All Quiet* in his *Twayne's English Authors Series* book about Aldington (115). Smith's primary concern is with the novel's unusual form, its similarities to Greek tragedy, and its "jazz" technique (102); however, he also comments on the anti-war elements in Aldington's Great War narrative. Smith observes, for example, the degenerative effects of war on Winterbourne's mind, his growing despair, and the loss of individuality he suffers. Finally, Smith's description of Aldington's novel as satirical, angry, and brutally shocking fits the type of an anti-war novel.

More recently, Hugh Cecil also identifies *Death of a Hero* as part of the anti-war canon. In *The Flower of Battle: How Britain Wrote the Great War* (1996), Cecil explains that Aldington's novel was part of an "avalanche of debunking books" (9). Along with *Death of a Hero*, Cecil lists Remarque's *All Quiet*, and R.C. Sherriff's play, *Journey's End*, Charles Yale Harrison's *Generals Die in Bed*, Sassoon's *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man* and *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer*, as well as Peregrine Acland's *All Else is Folly* as part of the flood of Great War narratives of disillusionment and disenchantment (8-9). Although Cecil offers a predominantly biographical reading of *Death of a Hero* in which he details how Winterbourne's terrible experiences parallel Aldington's experiences at the Front, he also addresses the novel's anti-war features when he writes about the ironic tone and Winterbourne's spiritual and physical destruction.

In "The Censored Language of War: Richard Aldington's *Death of a Hero* and Three Other War Novels of 1929," J.H. Willis outlines the publication history of Aldington's Great War narrative with a particular focus on the novel's censorship problems. Again, *Death of a Hero* is classified as an anti-war text through its inclusion in a list with others, including Remarque's *All Quiet*, Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*, and Frederick Manning's *The Middle Parts of Fortune* (also published in expurgated form as *Her Privates We*). Further, Willis identifies typical anti-war characteristics in *Death of a Hero* when he writes about the profound and permanent changes suffered by the soldiers in body and mind, and the novel's tone of bitter disillusionment.

Certainly, there is ample textual evidence which supports the categorization of *Death of a Hero* as an anti-war text, beginning with the narrative's depiction of war's

brutalizing effects on the body. This brutalization is evident in the bodily "degradation" Winterbourne suffers in the trenches, "in the dirt, the lice, the communal life in holes and ruins, the innumerable deprivations and hardships. He suffered at feeling that his body had become worthless, condemned to a sort of kept tramps' standard of living, and ruthlessly treated as cannon-fodder." His face loses its "fineness," "his hands seemed permanently coarsened, his feet [are] deformed by heavy army boots," and his skin breaks "out in boils" (334).

Even more than "the inevitable physical degradation," Winterbourne dreads the mental degradation (275). But, just as inevitably, Winterbourne's mind, as well as his body, is corrupted by his exposure to the brutalities of war:

> It was a fact that his mind degenerated; slowly at first, then more and more rapidly. This could scarcely have been otherwise. Long hours of manual labour under strict discipline must inevitably degrade a man's intelligence. Winterbourne found that he was less and less able to enjoy subtleties of beauty and anything intellectually abstruse. He came to want common amusements in place of the intense joy he had felt in beauty and thought. He watched his mind degenerating with horror … He was bitterly humiliated to find that he could neither concentrate nor achieve as he had done in the past." (333)

As Winterbourne slips "backwards" intellectually (334) in the constant battle against "confusion," "chaos," "fatigue, anxiety, and horror," he begins to find "great gaps in his conscious memory" (376). Knowing that he is "profoundly affected" by the war,

Winterbourne observes two particular psychological changes "in his life and personality": he develops what is called "an anxiety complex" and is "left with a profound and cynical discouragement, and shrinking horror of the human race…." (ellipses original 376-377). Worse still, perhaps, after killing a rat in a fit of frustrated rage (375), he comes to think that he is "a little mad" (376).

In addition to suffering physical and mental degradation, Winterbourne's emotional sensibilities are brutalized by the war, and his capacity for emotional response diminishes. For example, when leaving Elizabeth and Fanny, Winterbourne "felt no particular emotion, merely an intensifying of the general depressingness of things" (284). Shortly after, he wonders "at his own lack of emotion" (287). Later still, he undergoes a "rapid fall of spirits to a depth of depression he had never before experienced" (303).

Winterbourne is not the only soldier suffering the brutalization of war. All of the soldiers "were degenerating in certain ways, they were getting coarse and rough and a bit animal" (298). As seen in Remarque's *All Quiet*, the soldiers in *Death of a Hero* suffer a reduction to an animal existence. For example, the "N.C.O.'s yelped them on like sheep-dogs" (275), the men are "crowded … closer than you can squeeze animals" (299), the men huddle "together like sheep in a snowstorm" to keep warm (301), and the men head for dinner in an "animal stampede" (304). Later, Winterbourne is described as eating "with a sort of dog gratitude for the warmth, which was humiliating" (304). The humiliation he feels as a consequence of his debasement is further emphasized when Winterbourne worries about what "Elizabeth and Fanny would say if they saw his animal gratitude for tea and rum" (322). Winterbourne is most distressed, however, when he

hears civilians dehumanize soldiers by referring carelessly to "'three hundred thousand men,' as if they were cows or pence or radishes" (417).

For Winterbourne, reduction to a thing may be even worse than descent to animality. He notices that many of his actions are becoming mechanical (304, 406), and is horrified when he becomes a non-human killing machine: "he was merely a unit, a murder-robot, a wisp of cannon-fodder. And he knew it" (259). Further on, soldiers on the march are described as machine-like: "The hundred and twenty legs moved mechanically like one man's" (265). Here, the soldiers lose both their humanity and their individuality. This loss of individual identity is brought home to Winterbourne when he hears an officer's speech to the troops: "as individuals, it doesn't matter a tinker's damn whether you are killed or not" (259). Army training conditions Winterbourne and his comrades "to consider themselves fatally insignificant and subordinate" (269). Later, the "slow, ruthless movement of the huge war-machine" leaves Winterbourne feeling like a "tiny little cog," because the impersonality of modern warfare denies the possibility of "any individual importance" (294).

All of this degradation and dehumanization leaves Winterbourne feeling alienated from others and from himself. In particular, Winterbourne feels separated from Elizabeth and Fanny. He wanted to maintain his connection with them, "but it was useless. They were gesticulating across an abyss" (259). To Winterbourne, Elizabeth and Fanny become mere "memories and names" (322). Even when physically reunited with his friends and loved ones when on leave, he feels "remote" from others and "very uncomfortable" (399). At the same time, Winterbourne is also alienated from himself. In fact, the split between his war self and his old self is so great that, "An immense effort of

imagination was needed to link himself now with himself then" (395). This split between then and now is most evident when Winterbourne looks at his pre-war sketches and feels so separate from his pre-war self that he checks his art work for a signature to be sure that it is his own (404). Indeed, he seems to have lost his pre-war identity as an artist. He cannot sketch, because his hand shakes and he has "even forgotten how to draw rapidly and accurately" (405). So intense are Winterbourne's feelings of self-alienation that he destroys his self-portrait (404) in an act of symbolic suicide.

Unsurprisingly, Winterbourne is demoralized by the physical and mental degradation, the emotional repression necessary to survival, as well as the loss of his individual and artistic identity to a debased, mechanistic one. According to the narrator, "the doom was on him as on all the young men" (259). When Winterbourne wonders about the causes of the war, or wonders who his real enemies are, his thoughts end with "Hopeless, hopeless…" (296). In his increasing hopelessness, "something within him was just beginning to give way" (303), and he feels as though he is falling helplessly into "an abyss" (304). He is unable to think of any future beyond the "despair and death" of the war (297):

> He saw that even if he escaped the War he would be hopelessly handicapped in comparison with those who had not served and the new generation which would be on his heels. It was pretty bitter…These lost War months, now mounting to years, were a knock-out blow from which he could not possibly recover. (334)

As he falls deeper and deeper into depression (301), he feels "such an apathetic weariness" that he loses his will to live and is only able to long for a painless death (393).

When he insists on saying “Good-bye,” and refuses another officer’s “*au revoir*,” it is clear that Winterbourne intends to commit suicide (435), which he does when he deliberately stands up in the line of fire (436). Thus, as in *All Quiet*, the narrative ends ironically with the protagonist’s death mere days before the armistice. The narrative structure, therefore, supports the text’s anti-war message of hopelessness and despair.

The universality of this message is further emphasized by the epilogue’s concluding poem, in which the suffering, loss, and “helpless grief” of the Great War is juxtaposed, and in some ways equated with, those of the fall of Troy (440). For Aldington, the fall of Troy functions allegorically. In the poem, a young man visiting the fields of battle dismisses Achilles as a “bore” and the battles as “dull” (439). There is no honour, no glory, and certainly no gratitude from succeeding generations for the heroes of Troy, and therefore, by extension, none for the survivors of the Great War either. The succeeding generation is depicted as petulant, derisive, insensitive, and selfish—that is to say, utterly demoralized. By ending with this poetic allegory, Aldington turns winners into losers and suggests that those who won the Great War really lost their civilization. Hearing the contempt of the young man and his companion, the poem’s speaker contemplates the young men who suffered and died in the war and decides that it was all “useless” (440). This concluding poem illustrates the anti-war canon’s tendency to universalize; war brutalizes, dehumanizes, and demoralizes all participants, and entire civilizations regardless of which side they are on, who they are, or why they fight.

Journey's End

R.C. Sherriff's play, *Journey's End* (1929), confronts audiences more directly than any anti-war novel is able to do with familiar themes of universal brutalization, dehumanization, and demoralization. This classic British contribution to the anti-war canon sets theatre-goers in a dug-out of the British trenches near St. Quentin during the three days leading up to the massive German offensive of March, 1918. Based on the life experiences of the playwright (Sherriff served as a captain in the 9th East Surrey Regiment from1915 to 1918 and was wounded at Passchendaele near Ypres), this rather fatalistic portrayal of life in the trenches is divided into three parts. The first act, set on the evening of Monday, March 18, 1918, opens as a company of British soldiers arrives to replace another in a section of the trenches. Captain Hardy describes the company's position and the condition of their supplies to an officer of the relieving unit, Sergeant-Major Osborne (9-12). As they discuss Osborne's superior, Captain Stanhope, Hardy and Osborne reveal their concern about his drinking, which has become so excessive that Stanhope has become "a kind of freak show exhibit," so consumed by his alcoholism that he is not fit to go home on leave where his father, a vicar, would see his condition (12-13). When Mason, the officers' cook, and 2nd Lieutenant Raleigh enter the dug-out (16), there are further exchanges about trench life between Raleigh, who is new to the trenches, and Osborne, the old hand, which completes the exposition (20-21). When Stanhope does arrive, he appears as something of a self-fulfilling prophecy, angry at the state of the trenches and intent on his next whiskey (23).

As each of the characters is introduced, the audience cannot help but compare Stanhope with his brother officers. Despite his shattered nerves and his drinking, Stanhope is a caring and conscientious commander who "sticks things out." In contrast, Hardy is so casual about his responsibilities that he does not even know where his men sleep (11), Trotter is obviously more concerned about his belly than his duty and complains that the war interrupts his meals (27), while Hibbert is a shirker who tries to worm his way out of danger by angling for sick leave (28-29). For Stanhope, the unexpected arrival of Raleigh in his company is yet another burden he must suffer. He worries, not only that he will not live up to Raleigh's high expectations, but worse still, that Raleigh will report his dissipated condition back home to his girlfriend (Raleigh's sister) (32-33). The first act then ends with a distorted family vignette, as loyal "Uncle" Osborne tucks the drunkenly confused Stanhope into bed (34-35).

The second act is divided into two scenes, the first of which opens on Tuesday morning. Trotter and Osborne's breakfast conversation about the loveliness of the morning, of the coming of spring, of birds singing and of hopefulness, gardening and home serves as an ironic contrast to the horrors of trench life and seems to foreshadow the tragic ending of the play (37-39). Raleigh and Osborne's comments about sports, particularly Osborne's comparison of No Man's Land and "the breadth of a rugger field," set up a similar ironic contrast between home and the trenches (40) and make the whole conflict seem "rather—*silly*," as Raleigh remarks (42). After breakfast, Stanhope gives his orders for the day and calls for a wiring party in anticipation of a German attack (43). Stanhope reveals that there will be no reserves, and, therefore, no help, when the attack does come (44). At the end of the scene, Stanhope seizes Raleigh's letter home, so that he

can censor it for any comments about his own deteriorating condition (47-49). Raleigh's letter, rather than reporting Stanhope's true state of mind, includes, instead, a glowing description of Stanhope (49).

The second scene is set later that same afternoon, and opens with Stanhope giving instructions to the company's sergeant-major. The play's tension increases when Stanhope explains that, in case of attack, retreat is not an option (51). Then the Colonel arrives with orders to form a raiding party which includes Osborne and Raleigh (53). Later, Hibbert complains again about his neuralgia, and says he "can't stick it any longer" (55). Stanhope confronts Hibbert, going so far as to draw his revolver, threatening to shoot him if he does not stay in the trenches and do his job (55). When Hibbert breaks down in tears, Stanhope is immediately sympathetic, explaining that all the soldiers feel sick with fear and "loathe" the trenches (57). Offering to go on duty with Hibbert, Stanhope argues that death cannot be so bad, because it would mean joining "all the chaps who've gone already," and that "sticking it" is "the only thing a decent man can do" (58). The scene ends with more discussion of, and planning for, the raid (59-64).

No reprieve from the apparently suicidal raid is forthcoming when the Colonel comes into the dugout to meet with Stanhope again in the first scene of the third act, set on Wednesday, the afternoon of the third day. Tension continues to build as Osborne and Raleigh, left alone in the dugout, wait nervously before heading out on the raid (69-73). The action of the raid takes place off stage, but is represented by a series of sound effects (73). After the raid, the Colonel returns to the dugout, where he and the Sergeant-Major question the young German soldier captured in the raid (74-75). Stanhope returns to the dugout after checking on the returned men, just as the Sergeant-Major escorts the German

prisoner away. Stanhope and the Colonel share an awkward exchange, because in his pleasure about the information provided by the German prisoner, the Colonel is oblivious to the fate of the raiding party, which lost six out of ten men, including Osborne (76). Raleigh, who returns to the dugout dazed and bleeding, is ushered to the edge of Osborne's bed by the Colonel. Stanhope's voice is "*expressionless and dead*" when, in his only words to Raleigh, he asks, "Must you sit on Osborne's bed?" (77). The curtain falls as Stanhope leaves the dugout.

The second scene of the final Act opens on a festive dinner celebration in the dugout, on Wednesday night (77). Stanhope, Trotter, and Hibbert eat a special meal, drink champagne, smoke cigars, and talk about women. Raleigh has refused to join them (80). Stanhope confronts Raleigh about his absence from dinner. Raleigh cannot understand that Stanhope and the others eat and drink "to forget" that Osborne has just been killed (85). The third and final scene is set on Thursday, near dawn. Stanhope gives his last orders in anticipation of the German attack, sending his officers up into the trenches. Again, sound effects suggest the violence of battle. Stanhope soon learns that Raleigh has been hurt, hit in the back by a piece of shell (92). Stanhope tries to comfort Raleigh, who has been carried down into the dugout, as he dies. Then, Stanhope climbs the stairs out of the dugout as sounds of a shell barrage grow louder, and the candle is finally extinguished as the dugout collapses (95).

The blurb on the back cover of the Penguin Classics edition of *Journey's End* describes Sherriff's play as "a great anti-war classic," and critical readers seem to agree. In *Heroes' Twilight: a Study of the Literature of the Great War* (1965), Bernard Bergonzi ends his ninth chapter, "Retrospect II: Fiction" (171-197), with a brief discussion of

Sherriff's "famous play" (194). Though his review of the play is not entirely positive—he describes it as "glib though competent," "unpleasantly sentimental," with "artificial" characters and situations—he does note that, like other Great War texts of the late 1920s to 30s, "it glances at the issues that more genuinely imaginative writers were concerned with" (194), including the "anti-heroic attitudes to war" that, according to Bergonzi, "have become dominant" (17). More particularly, *Journey's End* meets Bergonzi's definition of an anti-war text because it explores attitudes about heroism through its contrast of "the starry-eyed young subaltern, Raleigh, with the hard-drinking, nerve shattered company commander, Stanhope, whom the boy had idealized when they were at school together." This contrast, Bergonzi argues, exhibits "the collapse of the public-school ethos under the pressure of war," and suggests "the breakdown of the traditional English values" (194). Thus, Bergonzi's reading of Sherriff's play supports his larger thesis that the Great War represents a crisis for British civilization (Bergonzi 17).

In *English Fiction and Drama of the Great War, 1918-39* (1990), John Onions, like Bergonzi, suggests that an anti-heroic attitude defines the anti-war canon. Onions asserts that the anti-war canon "set out to destroy what romantic illusions remained of battle, and was especially savage towards conventional notions of heroic behaviour" (1). While acknowledging that *Journey's End* has been praised for its "anti-heroic realism," and "frequently bracketed with *All Quiet* as a piece of truthful experience," Onions argues that the play is, in fact, not realistic and not anti-heroic, because it "asserts heroic duty" and "fails to evaluate the social values which it affirms" (92). Onions explains that "Sherriff might seem at first to be indicting the social hero as an impossible and even iniquitous ideal" through his portrayal of Stanhope, but in the end Stanhope "remains a

social hero" and the play reaffirms "heroic ideas" (93). According to Onions, like much Great War literature, *Journey's End* "veers between heroic approbation and moral denunciation, between praise of the soldier and rejection of war" (2-3).

Like Onions, Steven Trout identifies contradictory impulses in *Journey's End*. The thesis of his essay, "'Glamorous Melancholy': R. C. Sherriff's *Journey's End*," is that Sherriff's play "offered a deeply conflicted interpretation of war experience, tentatively exploring the anti-heroic themes that soon became fashionable during the late 1920s while also celebrating wartime devotion to duty and comradeship" (2). Further, Trout suggests that the play's accommodation of nostalgic recollections of front-line camaraderie is what made the play popular with audiences (2). While noting "pronounced" differences between Sherriff and other Great War writers, including Remarque (2), Aldington and Sassoon (6), Trout does not go so far as to suggest that Sherriff's play does not belong among other canonical anti-war texts.

My own reading of *Journey's End* is less concerned that Sherriff's play is not anti-heroic *enough*, because my definition of the anti-war canon is more multi-dimensional than that of Bergonzi, Onions, or Trout. Sherriff's text offers ample evidence of its place within the anti-war canon with its representation of the brutalizing, dehumanizing, and demoralizing effects of war. For example, Stanhope's alcoholism offers a graphic example of the brutalizing effects of war, and serves as one indicator of how changed Stanhope is by his experiences in the trenches. Though Trout asserts that "the play never fully dramatizes Stanhope's dissolution or confronts the logical results of such a condition" (13), I would argue that Trout is more concerned with the end results, or effects of Stanhope's alcoholism, than with the cause, which is the war. Before the

war, Stanhope was a “splendid chap,” a successful student and winning athlete (17). In the early days of the war, Stanhope continued to embody an heroic ideal by winning a Military Cross and taking command of a company before age twenty (18). Even his comrades, however, see how he has been changed by the war. Osborne warns Raleigh about it, saying, “You know, Raleigh, you mustn’t expect to find him—quite the same.” Osborne explains to Raleigh that time spent in the trenches “tells on a man—rather badly—” (19). Stanhope’s alcoholism is not the only evidence of his moral degeneration. For example, the physical change Stanhope has suffered is particularly evident when he is set against the idealizing Raleigh. Sherriff’s stage directions make it clear that Stanhope’s “*pallor under the skin and dark shadows under his eyes*” offer a marked contrast to the newcomer’s “*healthy good looks*” (22). Later stage directions offer additional evidence of Stanhope’s physical degradation: “*His hand trembles so violently that he can scarcely take the cigar between his teeth*” (85).

Stanhope’s changed mental condition also demonstrates the brutalizing effects of war. In a clear sign that he is close to breaking, he tells Osborne that he cannot “bear being conscious all the time” (32). Indeed, he is so concerned about his own mental state that he asks Osborne if he might be “going potty” (45). Stanhope’s fragile psychological state is also illustrated by his growing paranoia, which is evident in his worries about what Raleigh might report home in his letters as well as his worries that Raleigh might “smuggle” letters out (34). Even Stanhope’s perceptions are changed by the war. He says to Osborne, “Whenever I look at anything nowadays I see right through it” (45). So demoralized is Stanhope by his experiences in the trenches that he begins to lose his sense of self. Wondering about his own distorted thinking, Stanhope asks Osborne,

"D'you ever get a sudden feeling that everything's going farther and farther away—till you're the only thing in the world—and then the world begins going away—until you're the only thing in—in the universe—and you struggle to get back—and can't?" (45). Stanhope's diminished sense of self is, in fact, an early sign of his dehumanization.

Sherriff's play is particularly effective in showing the dehumanizing effects of war. For instance, Osborne hints at how trench warfare turns men into animals when he compares people watching Stanhope drink to people drawn to bear-baiting or cock-fighting (12). Similarly, Hardy's description of earwig races suggests how the horrors of the trenches strip men of their humanity. Hardy's advice to Osborne, about dipping an earwig in whiskey to "get the best pace," functions as a transparent metaphor for Stanhope's alcoholism. Like the hapless earwig, alcohol makes Stanhope "go like hell!" (15).

War's demoralizing effects are ultimately summed up in Stanhope's loss of hope in *Journey's End*. For example, Stanhope has little confidence that he will survive the war. He says to Osborne: "I'll stick it out now. It may not be much longer now. I've had my share of luck—more than my share. There's not a man left who was here when I came" (31). Osborne confirms Stanhope's demoralized state with his response: "You're looking at things in rather a black sort of way" (31). Stanhope has also lost all hope that life—should he manage to survive—would offer him anything worthwhile. In fact, he seems to long for death, because in death he would be reunited with his dead friends and comrades (58). The play also represents the loss of hope and meaning in its absurdist humour. Is it any wonder that soldiers lose faith in reason, and confidence in meaning when they see that the "thirty-four gum boots" in supplies do not add up to seventeen

pairs (12), or when Trotter must learn about events at the front from his wife's letters (25). Stanhope and Mason's nonsensical exchange about *pâté de foie gras* and the milkman also demonstrates the absence of meaning for Great War soldiers (88). Some seem able to find shelter within this absence of meaning. For example, Osborne encourages Raleigh to "Think of it all as—as romantic. It helps" (21). Lies and denial are the only bulwark against the demoralizing horrors of war.

In addition to its depiction of these brutalizing, dehumanizing and demoralizing effects of war, the play's depiction of suffering as universal also brings *Journey's End* within the orbit of other anti-war texts. The play includes several references to similarities between the British and German experience of trench warfare. For example, Osborne emphasizes the similarity between the German and British experience when he says to Raleigh: "A hundred yards from here the Germans are sitting in *their* dugouts, thinking how quiet it is" (20). Later, Raleigh remarks that, "The Germans are really quite decent, aren't they? I mean, outside the newspapers?" Here, Raleigh's growing understanding of how perceptions of the Germans are politically distorted on the home front illustrates how the disjunction between soldiers and civilians may be even greater than that between soldiers on opposing sides. When Osborne responds with a story about German soldiers' humanity and helpfulness when a wounded British soldier needed help, he affirms that the Germans also understood a sense of shared suffering (42). The scene in which the Sergeant-Major and the colonel interview the young German solider captured in the raid also displays the sympathetic relationship between Germans and British soldiers. A great deal of emphasis is placed on the captured soldier's youth, who is always referred to as, "sonny," "boy," or "lad" (74-75). The audience cannot help but

notice that the Colonel's gentleness with the prisoner contrasts with the insensitivity he displays to Stanhope in his lack of concern for the safety of the raiding-party (76). By default, the soldiers' "real" enemy is the civilian and/or the military leadership, not the "lad" in the opposite trench.

As in *All Quiet* and *Death of a Hero*, much of this text's anti-war message also depends on where the story ends. Terminating the action with Stanhope's exit from the dugout into a deadly shell-barrage supports the text's message of universal hopelessness and despair. The protagonist's death occurs at what is likely the war's darkest hour, with no indication that the British would be advancing five months later on exhausted German troops who would beat a retreat back to Belgium, where the British had lost the first battle in the war and where the Germans would now agree, after four years of fighting, to the terms of the armistice. Further, the three-part structure of Sherriff's play draws on the Christian narrative, in which Jesus died on the cross, descended into hell and rose again on the third day. According to Sherriff's ironic deformation of the plot, his despairing Stanhope reprises the role of Christ in his suffering and his harrowing of hell, but without the hope of the resurrection. While the liturgical structure of *Journey's End,* with its pattern of preparation, climax and release, does hint at a drama of transfiguration, neither Stanhope nor the audience are ever allowed to fall back on traditional models of consolation. Indeed, the play's final image, in which the candle flame is snuffed out by an artillery blast—thus figuring the death of the hero—is ultimately an image of utter darkness, the despairing vision of a war that has devoured everything, including all that "stands" for decency and "hope."

The Complete Memoirs of George Sherston

Siegfried Sassoon's *The Complete Memoirs of George Sherston* (1937) comprises three volumes of fictionalized autobiography: *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man* (1928), *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer* (1930), and *Sherston's Progress* (1936). The first book in the trilogy introduces readers to George Sherston, Sassoon's fictional alter ego, beginning with his privileged, though "queer and not altogether happy" childhood (9). Sherston, an orphan who lives with his Aunt Evelyn near the town of Buckley in Flintshire, is "shy and solitary"; the world in which he lives is small and solitary, too—limited both socially and geographically (9). The narrative of *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man* describes Sherston's ever-expanding experience of the world as a series of firsts: his first pony at age nine (15), his first solo pony ride (19), his first fox hunt (27), his first sighting of a fox (44), and his first village cricket match (47). These firsts are followed by his first invitation to stay with his new friend Stephen (117), his first stag hunt (144), his first win at a point-to-point race (170), his first hunt wearing his new red coat (179), his first invitation to visit Denis, the new hunt Master, at the Kennels (187), and his first time drinking to intoxication (213). All of these experiences of social initiation contribute to Sherston's development as a country-gentleman and sportsman.

Readers are well prepared, then, to understand Sherston's first experiences in the army as part of the same initiatory model, including his enlistment as a trooper in the Yeomanry two days before Britain's declaration of war in 1914. Excited by the "intensity" of life, stirred by patriotic fervour, and buoyed by a sense of his own heroism, Sherston is entirely innocent of the horrors of war during his first weeks' service (220-

221). In fact, he describes his early days in the army as "idyllic" and comments that he feels "safe," "relieved of all sense of personal responsibility," much as he did when he was at school (219). Despite this naïveté, Sherston does report some progress towards maturity when he identifies his increased sympathy for his Aunt Evelyn as "the beginning of my emancipation from the egotism of youth" (222). This example of Sherston's growth, characterized by increased self-knowledge, understanding of the complexities of life, and empathy for others, represents a developmental pattern that continues throughout the Sherston trilogy.

In addition to this pattern of personal growth, *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man* also establishes another pattern that will structure the action throughout the trilogy—a pattern of heroism undercut. At each stage of development, Sherston sets out dreaming of heroic triumph, but ends in humbling failure, or else he stumbles into success by sheer accident. Sherston's first solo pony ride is also the first of his humiliating failures. Though Sherston starts out with "a pleasant feeling of security and mastery," and imagines himself on a tremendous fox-hunting adventure, his dreams of glory are soon replaced with feelings of shame and anxiety when the mischievous pony, Rob, runs away without his rider, who must walk home flustered and miserable (19). Sherston's win at the Colonel's Cup offers an example of what John Hildebidle calls "accidental heroism" (114) in his essay "Neither Worthy nor Capable: The War Memoirs of Graves, Blunden, and Sassoon." Sherston begins the race merely following the others "with no sense of initiative," and describes himself as "much more a passenger than a resolute rider with his wits about him" (168). Even when Sassoon's alter ego succeeds, he does so not through any skill or action on his part, but passively and accidentally. Hildebidle points to

Sherston's success at his first village cricket match as another prime example, where, though Sherston wins the game for his team, he hardly seems to participate in his own heroic success, as indicated by the passive construction of the account: "The ball hit my bat and trickled slowly up the pitch" (67).

Sherston's identity as a humble bumbler, which emerges from a series of negative self-evaluations and confessional revelations of his mistakes, continues throughout his army career. For example, Sherston takes on his first sentry duty assignment with lofty expectations, polishing his "boots and buttons for that event" and imagining that his home-front guard duty represents heroic service to "King and Country." His dreams of heroic action are undercut, however, when he challenges a cow that approaches through the mist (223). Likewise, Sherston's career with the Yeomanry comes to a clumsy end, when he breaks his arm in a riding accident (226).

While recuperating from his fall, Sherston decides that the Yeomanry was a "false start" and that he must get to the Front as soon as possible, so, with the help of his neighbour Captain Huxtable, Sherston gets a commission with the Royal Flintshire Fusiliers (229-231). Next, the narrative records his arrival and experiences at the regimental training depot at Clitherland, where Sherston learns "how to be a second-lieutenant" (239). While in training, Sherston meets and befriends Dick Tiltwood (241). Also while at Clitherland Camp, he experiences his first loss and learns something new about mortality when he receives a telegram informing him that his friend Stephen has been killed in action (243). This loss is his first step towards a growing understanding of "the deepening sadness of life" (91).

The last part of *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man* describes Sherston's first experiences of "the real War" (244). The narrative passes quickly over Sherston's departure from London, the Channel crossing, the landing at Calais, his billets in Étaples, and his train ride to join the First Battalion near Béthune (244-245). Sherston's installation into the Battalion is a fairly gentle one, as both he and Dick are posted to "C" company, and arrive just as their division is withdrawing to a rest area (246-247). Sherston meets the men in his platoon and begins to develop friendships with the other officers in his company (247-250). After a week of work-parties near Festubert, the Battalion moves from the La Bassée sector towards Amiens, but the new billets in Montagne are still far from the battlefield, and, for Sherston, "the evenings were almost homely" (254). In fact, even night-time training manoeuvres are "quite good fun" (254), and Sherston feels "happy" (255), though he is frequently aware that his peaceful surroundings are "delusive" (256).

In January of 1916, Sherston is ordered to take on the job of Transport Officer (259). Thus, while the rest of the Battalion, including Dick, moves towards the Somme to begin its tour in the trenches, Sherston is "tucked away" in Morlancourt, "seeing the War as a looker-on" (262-264). Perhaps the only discomfort Sherston experiences during his first tour in France is the grief he feels when he learns that Dixon, his substitute father-figure, has died of pneumonia while serving as a sergeant with the Army Service Corps (267). After four months in France, most of which he spends in relative safety and comfort working as a transport officer, Sherston goes home on leave, feeling uncertain about his own abilities, and as if he is "a bit of an impostor" (269). While on leave, Sherston enjoys the comforts of home, but he finds that his old life of fox-hunting and

point-to-point races has paled, and thinks that he would rather be "back with the battalion" (270).

When Sherston returns to France, he rejoins "C" company and experiences for the first time the "loathsome" discomforts of life in the front line: the bewildering maze of trenches, foul smelling dug-outs, rats, shelling, and death (271). His suffering intensifies, however, when Dick is killed, "hit in the throat by a rifle bullet while out with the wiring-party" (273). As when he learned of Stephen's death, Sherston develops a new understanding of mortality, particularly when he watches Dick's burial: "A sack was lowered into a hole in the ground. The sack was Dick. I knew Death then" (274). These short, choppy sentences reflect both his stabbing sorrow and the disconnected state of Sherston's mind.

Sherston's reaction to Dick's death highlights another pattern that runs through the trilogy, a pattern of retaliation. In response to loss and death, Sherston feels "angry with the War" (276). And, in his anger, he seeks revenge: "I went up to the trenches with the intention of trying to kill someone. It was my idea of getting a bit of my own back" (274-275). Though he states that his "outburst of blind bravado," which followed Dick's death, "was a phase in my war experience," this pattern of angry and impetuous action in response to the death of a loved one is repeated in all three memoirs (275). Rather than accept death passively, Sherston wants to give death to those who have inflicted it.

In the last pages of *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man*, Sherston moves back and forth between the reserve trenches and the front lines. When in the front lines, he participates in a number of night patrols and trench raids. He is increasingly angry and morose, and reports, "I had more or less made up my mind to die" (280). The first book

in the trilogy ends with a despairing Sherston standing in a trench looking across No Man's Land towards an enemy he has not yet seen. In a final note of disillusion, Sherston reiterates the meaninglessness of Christianity for soldiers in the trenches when he muses that, though it is Easter Sunday, he finds "no consolation in the thought that Christ was risen" (282).

Like *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man*, the second book in the Sherston trilogy is divided into ten parts. As *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer* opens, Sherston is on his way to the Fourth Army School in Flixécourt for a month of training, which includes a lecture on bayonet use that will haunt him for the rest of his life (289). He returns from training to rejoin his battalion billeted in Morlancourt, and is eager to participate in preparations for an upcoming raid (294). During the raid, though ordered to stay in the trenches, Sherston crawls out into No Man's Land to rescue an injured raider (305). Later, he is awarded a Military Cross for this act of heroism (330).

When the Battle of the Somme begins on July 1st, Sherston finds himself once more in the role of spectator and feeling "a bit of a fraud" (334), because he watches the initial attack from the reserve trenches (331). Sherston's turn for action comes, however, when he is ordered to move forward into the newly captured trenches in front of Mametz Wood (336). Again, Sherston acts with bravery and against orders when he moves forward from the Quadrangle trenches (341). Sherston's behaviour during this action offers another illustration of the pattern in which Sherston responds to loss with vengeful anger and reckless attack. After Kendle is suddenly killed by a German sharp-shooter, Sherston reacts like a frenzied berserker in his attempt to "settle that sniper" (343-344). This incident also provides an example of Sherston as humble bumbler. He attributes his

survival of his death-defying single-handed bombing raid on a well-manned German trench to "lucky accident" and to Fernby's presence of mind, rather than to any skill of his own (344).

Memoirs of an Infantry Officer follows Sherston's movements after leaving Mametz Wood, including a Divisional rest at Camp Heilly (352), and his return to transport duty (353). While out of the line, Sherston becomes sick with fever. He is sent to hospital in Amiens (364), and then across the Channel to a hospital in Oxford (369). After a period of rest leave spent at home with Aunt Evelyn, and additional leave spent hunting, Sherston returns to Clitherdale Camp (381), where he discusses the war (386) with David Cromlech (a thinly fictionalized version of Robert Graves). Sherston is increasingly aware of how the war has changed things at home, and he expresses hostility towards war profiteers (387). Sherston's ideas and attitudes about the war are influenced by his reading of a radical magazine left behind by David (393). Thoughts about the deaths of Dick, Fernby, and Kendle, and doubts about the competency of the Army Commander lead Sherston to "think things over" in regards to the legitimacy of the war (394).

When he returns to France in February, 1917, Sherston, now marked by a new cynicism, is posted to a new Battalion (the 2nd) (396-397). Shortly after his arrival in Rouen, Sherston is diagnosed with German measles and spends ten days in a Stationary Hospital (398). With time to think, Sherston is increasingly bitter, and reports that he no longer believes in the war (401). Meeting his new platoon, he is also increasingly aware of the men's suffering as well as the decreasing fitness of new recruits (408-409). Sherston is horrified by the devastation he sees on his way to, and in the forward trenches

(427-435). During the 2nd Battle of the Scarpe, Sherston is shot in the arm and is transported home (445).

While convalescing in the hospital, Sherston states: “my second time out in France had altered my outlook” (450). His thoughts at this time are neither clear nor consistent; he is “definitely critical and inquiring about the War,” *and*, at the same time, he is pleased that his name had been “sent in for another decoration,” because he wants recognition for his soldierly bravery (454). Though he always has doubts, his anti-war sentiments are fertilized, first by radical journals he reads in the hospital (455), and later by pacifists (478), including Thornton Tyrrell (a fictionalized Bertrand Russell). Under Tyrrell’s influence, Sherston decides to take action against the war, by writing a letter of protest to be published in the newspapers and read in Parliament (475). He expects that his Soldier’s Declaration will result in his court martial, thus forcing the military establishment to “make a martyr” out of him (512). By the end of the trilogy’s second book, however, he is not arrested. Instead, through interventions with the Army Medical Board, David Cromlech manages to have Sherston diagnosed as a shell-shock victim and sent to Slateford War Hospital (a fictionalized version of Craighlockhart War Hospital). Through persuasive argument, Cromlech also manages to convince Sherston to submit to this treatment.

The final volume in the trilogy, *Sherston's Progress*, is divided into four parts. The first part takes up the story with Sherston’s arrival at Slateford Hospital, and his first meeting with Dr. W.H.R. Rivers, noted anthropologist, ethnologist, neurologist, and psychiatrist.[3] Sherston is very impressed with Rivers, whom he sees as friend, guide, and “father-confessor” (541). So great is Rivers’ influence, that Sherston attributes his

“approach to mental maturity” to his “contact with the mind of Rivers” (534). In response to Rivers’ challenges, Sherston begins to see the weaknesses in his war protest (521) and “to feel a sense of humiliation” because he, “a healthy young officer,” is safe and comfortable, while others suffer in the trenches (523). Unable to reconcile his anti-war feelings with his feelings of duty, obligation and camaraderie, Sherston concludes that “going back to the War as soon as possible was my only chance of peace,” so, in another “grand gesture,” he announces to Rivers that he will go back (541).

The second part of *Sherston's Progress* records a brief stop at Clitherland training Camp, a leave at home with Aunt Evelyn, a leave in London with friends, and a month-long posting in Ireland where he regains both his health and his “peace of mind” (564). In January, 1918, he learns that he has been posted to Egypt (566). Part three of *Sherston's Progress* presents four months of diary entries, including descriptions of Sherston’s experiences in Egypt. Unlike his posting in Ireland, this is not a happy time for Sherston, though he does experience further personal growth, becoming increasingly empathetic to the experiences of ordinary soldiers and, more generally, of “the poor” (604-606). The diary entries also describe Sherston’s return trip to France, the landing in Marseilles, the train voyage across France, his arrival in billets in Domvast (610-111), his training, then movement to reserve trenches, followed by more training (620), before moving into the front lines near the trenches where he was wounded a year before (623-624). More interestingly, the diary entries also record Sherston’s ongoing internal conflict about the war.

The fourth and final part of *Sherston's Progress* records Sherston’s climactic experiences in the war. At the end of June, 1918, Sherston and his company move north

towards St. Hilaire (630). From the reserve trenches, he conducts a survey of the front lines (634), and observes a failed raid (635). After moving into the front lines, Sherston goes out on an impulsive and reckless patrol (641)—a patrol which he undertakes not out of duty, but for reasons related to bravado and excitement (642). Again acting recklessly, perhaps even with suicidal intentions, Sherston goes out on another patrol, this time aiming to bomb a machine gun. The results of this action are "absurd, but logical" (650): he is shot in the head by his own Sergeant as he returns (647-649). Though not fatally wounded, Sherston is shipped home and hospitalized. He is shell-shocked, inwardly tormented, and "restless and overwrought" (654). In the last scene of the memoir, Rivers arrives to visit Sherston in the hospital, and to relieve him of his burdens.

A review of representative critical responses reveals general agreement that the Sherston memoirs belong firmly within the canon of anti-war texts. John Hildebidle's contribution to the anthology *Modernism Reconsidered*, for example, looks at three writers "of the modernist generation who experienced at first hand the apocalypse of the Western Front" and who, in consequence, "face unusual difficulty in achieving that 'impersonality' variously prescribed by Eliot and by Stephen Dedalus" (101). Hildebidle judges Sassoon's text as "the richest and most complex of the three memoirs" he examines, because it includes both irony *and* naïveté (114). As already noted, Hildebidle identifies a pattern of what he calls "accidental heroism," and "gently deflating humor, much of it directed at Sherston himself" (114). Pointing to several textual examples, Hildebidle illustrates a repeating "pattern of unwitting involvement, self-doubt, waiting, and abrupt and ironically 'heroic' (to everyone but Sherston) activity" (115). In addition to showing how the memoir deflates heroism, Hildebidle shows how the memoir also

undermines self-determination. For example, Hildebidle notes that Sherston is particularly susceptible to direction from others, supporting this claim by showing that a number of figures in the memoir, including Tom Dixon, Denis Milden, David Cromlech, Thornton Tyrrell, and W.H.R. Rivers "nearly take over Sherston's life" (115). The memoirs are, Hildebidle argues, carefully crafted to portray Sherston as a passive victim, effacing his role as autonomous agent.

Like Hildebidle, Alfredo Bonadeo identifies Sassoon's deflation of heroism with canonical anti-war themes. In "War and Degradation: Gleanings from the Literature of the Great War," Bonadeo asserts that "the price of heroism and survival was degradation" (409), and that soldiers who fought in the Great War were transformed "into something less than human, something 'subhuman'" (410). Bonadeo's discussion of the Sherston memoirs begins by providing details of Sassoon's life, noting parallels between Sassoon's and Robert Graves' army experiences (414). Perhaps it is this focus on the biographical that leads to Bonadeo's simple identification of Sassoon the writer and Sherston the protagonist. Again like Hildebidle, Bonadeo acknowledges the complexity of the Sherston memoirs when he observes "the presence" in Sherston/Sassoon "of heroism and degradation in the same soldier" as well as a contradictory "blend of idealism and perversion" (419).

In contrast to Bonadeo, Sister M.L. McKenzie clearly distinguishes between Sassoon, the writer and George Sherston, Sassoon's created "persona" in her essay, "Memories of the Great War: Graves, Sassoon, and Findley" (397). McKenzie is in agreement with both Hildebidle and Bonadeo, however, when she deliberately classifies the Sherston memoirs as part of the anti-war tradition. She firmly establishes this

classification by linking Sassoon to other anti-war writers, such as Henri Barbusse, Robert Graves, and Erich Maria Remarque, and by identifying the "features common to all these works," including "stark realism in depicting the horrors of conflict, an emphasis on the psychological effect on individuals, and an ironic probing of the motivation behind the war as well as of the manner in which it was conducted" in Sassoon's "semi-fictional" memoirs (395). Though her analysis is really focused on demonstrating Timothy Findley's debt and contribution to the tradition of Great War literature in *The Wars*, McKenzie's discussion of the Sherston memoirs offers some useful insights. In particular, her thematic approach to the texts draws attention to characteristic features of anti-war texts, illustrated by Sherston's loss of innocence, his loss of faith in traditional religious assurances, his tendency to universalize soldiers' experiences, and his failed Declaration, which stands as evidence of only a "vague and doubtful" potential for individual resistance to the war (409).

My reading of *The Complete Memoirs of George Sherston* also asserts that this text exemplifies the anti-war canon and encodes the canon's characteristic assumptions that war brutalizes, dehumanizes, and demoralizes all participants, so that every soldier is an anonymous victim "sacrificed in a pointless slaughter," stripped of individuality and identity, and transformed "into a pawn whose suffering and death were of little consequence to anyone, even himself" (Vance 191). The brutalizing effects of war are evident in Sherston's descriptions of existence in the trenches ("existence" not "life", because the trenches offer an "incomplete life" at best [312]). These descriptions are notable for their multiple sensory elements—the sound of the "unholy crash" of a shell, the sights of "black smoke," rats and sandbags, as well as the "smell of chloride of lime"

(312). According to his recollections, it was "the realities of bodily discomfort which made the texture of trench-life what it was." In contrast to other anti-war texts in general, and to Richard Aldington's in particular, Sassoon's text does not dwell on war's brutalizing effects on the body. Although Sherston does remark, "Being in the trenches meant among other things having a 'trench-mouth'" (276), the vague phrase "among other things" suggests a devaluation of bodily concerns. Further, Sherston asserts that the "gross physical actualities" of life in the trenches actually "clogged and hindered" soldiers' "mental activity" (276). Indeed, though they may arise out of the physical conditions, the mental effects of war's brutality are more significant, and/or more memorable for Sherston. He reports that life in the trenches is a "brain-fuddling existence which did its best to prevent my thinking at all" (562).

For Sherston, the brutalities of war are a function of army life generally, as well as trench-life specifically. On more than one occasion, he observes that army training camp does not give him "a chance to call my soul my own" (288, 294), and at best offers "an existence which suffocated all pleasant thoughts" (410). Training camp brutalizes Sherston, not just because it takes up all his time and intrudes on his privacy, but also because the training methods are inhumane. For example, long after the end of a bayonet-fighting training session, Sherston remarks that "the lecturer's voice still battered on my brain." Indeed, he is haunted by the trainer's "homicidal eloquence," particularly his instructions not to "waste good steel. Six inches are enough. What's the use of a foot of steel sticking out at the back of a man's neck? Three inches will do for him; when he coughs, go and look for another" (289-290).

If army training methods are inhumane, army discipline is inhuman. According to Sherston, army discipline "had to be enforced by brutality" (403). Sherston puts this policy into practice himself when he aims his pistol at a fearful, "cold-footed" officer and threatens to shoot during the action at Mametz Wood (340). Merely witnessing army discipline can be traumatizing, it seems. Though "nothing had been required of him except to make up the quorum of officers" trying a Court Martial, Ormand is obviously "upset" merely by his minimal participation in the proceedings in which a "poor wretch had been condemned to be shot for cowardice" (411).

Even the medical branch of the army is brutal. Hoping to move to the country for the remainder of his convalescence after being shot in the arm, Sherston must pass through an interview with a doctor famous for cruelty so severe that "officers had been known to leave this doctor's room in tears." After his interview with the "supposedly sadistic doctor," Sherston asserts: "I regard his behaviour as an example of Army brutality" (459-460).

The degradations of trench and army life produce profound changes in Sherston, threatening to alienate him from his pre-war self. For example, while sitting in a dug-out preparing to go out on a raid, he thinks: "It was not humanly possible for me to wonder what Aunt Evelyn was doing while I wrote" (301). A short while later, while on leave, Sherston feels "detached" from his civilian life, as though he is "only an intruder from the Western Front" (313). Though he observes these changes in himself, he is also aware that other survivors suffer the brutalization of war even more keenly. After reading Durley's epistolary account of fighting at Delville Wood, he labels Durley a "shattered survivor of a broken battalion" (392).

Sherston expresses similar pity for his fellow patients at Slateford, whom he describes as "the wreckage and defeat of those who had once been brave" (539). The devastating effects of war are particularly clear in his long meditation on neurasthenia:

> Shell-shock. How many a brief bombardment had its long-delayed after-effect in the minds of these survivors, many of whom had looked at their companions and laughed while inferno did its best to destroy them. Not then was their evil hour, but now; now, in the sweating suffocation of nightmare, in paralysis of limbs, in the stammering of dislocated speech. Worst of all, in the disintegration of those qualities through which they had been so gallant and selfless and uncomplaining—this, in the finer types of men, was the unspeakable tragedy of shell-shock; it was in this that their humanity had been outraged by those explosives…. (557)

For Sherston, nothing so strongly indicates the brutalizing effects of the war than the long-lasting suffering of shell shock.

Despite Sherston's continued empathy for the suffering of other soldiers, the brutalities of war significantly damage his emotional sensibilities. For instance, while watching a shell pass over-head, Sherston wonders: "Perhaps the shell has killed someone. Whether it has or whether it hasn't, I continue to scrape my puttees" (277). This bland contemplation of the shell's potentially devastating impact indicates a deadening of his emotions in response to the horrors of war. Later, readers see evidence that Sherston's emotional responses are twisted by his experiences in the trenches. In a vengeful fury over Kendle's death, Sherston is somewhat "disappointed" that his "little

bombing demonstration" did little damage, and wonders if "the discovery of a dead or wounded enemy might have caused a revival of humane emotion" (345). And, while walking through a devastated area shortly after the Battle of Arras, Sherston is clearly struggling to maintain his capacity for human emotions when he asserts "that an ordinary human being has a right to be momentarily horrified by a mangled body seen on an afternoon walk" (425). This assertion indicates both Sherston's awareness that the war leaves participants callous and unfeeling, and his desperation to hold on to his humanity.

Although Sherston is occasionally able to find some comfort in the warmth of camaraderie, he also discovers "the impermanence of [the War's] humanities" (421). Indeed, *The Complete Memoirs of George Sherston* do offer ample evidence that the war and army life are designed to dehumanize soldiers. Sherston first experiences this deliberate dehumanization, in training, when he arrives at the Royal Flintshire Fusiliers' regimental training depot on the outskirts of Liverpool: "I was in a soldier manufactory, although I did not see it in that way at the time" (235). Dehumanization further appears as a primary goal of training. During training lectures, "the human significance of the audience was obliterated then, and its outlook on life became restricted to destruction and defence." This training goal is effectively modeled to the trainees in the lecture about bayonet use. Described as "a tall sinewy machine," the instructor has "been trained to such a pitch of frightfulness that at a moment's warning he could divest himself of all semblance of humanity" (289). These images of soldiers as non-human cogs in the machine of war are repeated frequently throughout the trilogy (see for example 247, 252, 396, 422, and 653).

Animal imagery further defines and illustrates the dehumanization of soldiers. The trilogy includes, for example, a standard anti-war-text image of soldiers transported "in a cattle truck" (593). Readers are also unsurprised to find marching men compared to pack animals when Sherston recalls "trudging along behind the column with a lot of baggage mules, trudging away from Arcadia, with not much more liberty than a mule myself" (600). More shocking, perhaps, are the comments he overhears from "two men carrying a dead body slung on a pole," who are asked by another soldier, "What's the weight of *your* pig?" (625). As another example, consider the multilayered commentary in Sherston's comparison of his actions at Mametz Wood to cock-fighting:

> My courage was of the cock-fighting kind. Cock-fighting is illegal in England, but in July, 1916 the man who could boast that he'd killed a German in the Battle of the Somme would have been patted on the back by a bishop in a hospital ward. (346)

This quotation not only highlights the debasement of soldiers, but also points to the failure of a civilization whose laws prohibit animal fights but allow human massacres, and underlines Sherston's rejection of a religious tradition which celebrates murderers.

The depth of the debasement Sherston observes is strongly suggested by the numerous comparisons of humans to insects—comparisons reminiscent of the earwig races described in Sherriff's play. For example, Sherston notes that "The big-bugs back at Brigade and Divisional H.Q. … were too busy to concern themselves with the ant-like activities of individual platoon commanders" (327). For Sherston, insect imagery indicates both the insignificance and the helplessness of the individual caught up in the war: "I see myself merely as a blundering flustered little beetle; and if someone happens

to put his foot on a beetle, it is unjust to accuse the unlucky insect of having made a fool of itself" (437). Further, it seems that Sherston uses insect imagery to protect himself from the horrors he sees, such as when he recounts seeing a dead German: "there is nothing remarkable about a dead body in a European War, or a squashed beetle in a cellar" (437). Here, it seems that Sherston attempts to normalize what he sees by objectifying and dehumanizing the dead German.

Despite Sherston's efforts to escape the degradation and dehumanization of the war by taking walks in the countryside and by reading, he cannot avoid becoming demoralized by his experiences. Though he begins the war certain that "the War was inevitable and justifiable," he is soon disillusioned (230). As early as the Battle of the Somme, Sherston has "some dim sense of the futility" of the war (342). This sense grows. He "can find no meaning in the immense destruction which he blindly accepts as part of some hidden purpose" (359). He begins to feel that the war will never end (402), and to see that large numbers of men are "killed for no apparent purpose" (447), with many attacks ending in "hopeless failure" (469). Sherston's disillusionment is further shaped by his contact with pacifists. For example, after lunching with Mr. Markington, an ardent pacifist and editor of *Unconservative Weekly*, Sherston is convinced that the war is promoted by lies (472) and motivated by greed (475). Though his anti-war attitude is far from consistent, Sherston's disillusionment with the war intensifies and he comes to believe that the war is "a dirty swindle" (557).

Sherston's disillusionment with the war spills over into disillusionment with traditional religion. Shortly after Dick's death, Sherston's tour of the trenches coincides with Lent, but for Sherston, and other soldiers, the Easter season is meaningless: "This

essential season in the Church calendar was not, as far as I remember, remarked upon by anyone in my company." More pointedly, Sherston asserts that "the principles of Christianity were either obliterated or falsified for the convenience of all who were engaged in" the war (274). Neither salvation nor love of one's enemies is possible in the trenches, which, according to Sherston, "had no relation to the landscape of life" (279).

Increasingly cynical, Sherston loses faith not only in the war or "the principles of Christianity," but also in himself and his future. He no longer has any sense that his actions might make some kind of difference. Overwhelmed by the immensity of the war, he is helpless to "alter European history, or order the artillery to stop firing." Contemplating his powerlessness, he concludes, "But a second-lieutenant could attempt nothing. … Armageddon was too immense for my solitary understanding" (360). Of course, Sherston's failed attempt to protest the war with his "Soldier's Declaration" seems to prove the impossibility of independent action. In fact, the futility of his protest leads Sherston to reflect: "I saw myself as one who had achieved nothing except an idiotic anti-climax" (654). Sherston also regrets his inability to save the soldiers under his command: "What can I do to defeat the injustice which claims you, perhaps, as victims, as it claimed those ghostly others? Sitting here with my one candle I know that I can do nothing" (628). As with Remarque's Paul Bäumer, some of Sherston's demoralization is attributable to his hopelessness and helplessness in the face of circumstances.

If he is powerless to affect the course of history, or even to protect his men from the devastation of the war, he is also powerless to save himself. Having seen the way the war crushes and demoralizes others, even Kendle's cheerful spirit (328), he knows that,

“Sooner or later I should get windy myself. It was only a question of time” (310). He sees only doom and disaster in his future: “So it will go on, I thought; in and out, in and out, till something happens to me” (363). At times, Sherston’s “unreprieved awareness that the War would go on indefinitely and that sooner or later [he] should be killed or mutilated” (520-521), leads him to feel suicidal: “As for me, I had more or less made up my mind to die; the idea made things easier. In the circumstances there didn’t seem to be anything else to be done” (280).

Much like Paul Bäumer and George Winterbourne, Sherston is so full of despair that he is unable to imagine a post-war future for himself. He wonders, for example, “what occupation I ought to find for my disillusioned self” (537). In the “unlikely” event that he should manage to survive the war, he knows he cannot return to his limited pre-war life of hunting, racing, and golfing (548). Just before his last suicidal patrol, Sherston reflects:

> Having ceased to wonder when the War would be over, I couldn’t imagine myself anywhere else but on active service, and I was no longer able to indulge in reveries about being back at home. When I came out this last time I had turned my back on everything connected with peace-time enjoyment. I suppose this meant that I was making a forced effort to keep going till the end. Like many people, I had a feeling that ordinary human existence was being converted into a sort of nightmare. Things were being said and done which would have been considered madness before the War. The

> effects of the War had been the reverse of ennobling, it seemed.
> (646)

Note that Sherston's gloomy outlook for the future is applied widely, not only to himself, but to all "human existence".

Many of Sherston's observations indicate a tendency to universalize, despite his promise not to do so: "it is my own story that I am trying to tell, and as such it must be received; those who expect a universalization of the Great War must look for it elsewhere" (291). Nonetheless, Sherston claims that the discomforts and dangers of the war know no social boundaries when he observes that two officers from opposite ends of the class spectrum—"garrulous," "uncouth" Rees and "fastidious," gentlemanly Shirley—are both killed (426-27). Similarly, Sherston disallows any individual differentiation among British soldiers when, as he passes a "forlorn crowd of khaki figures," he sees "how blindly war destroys it victims" (347).

Sherston's tendency to universalize can also include enemy German soldiers. Indeed, he frequently observes parallels between British and German soldiers' experiences in the trenches. For example, while on a raid to capture a German prisoner, Sherston notices that the landscape around the German trenches is "similar in character" to the landscape around the British trenches, and that the activities of German soldiers are similar to those undertaken by the British: "He patrolled and we patrolled" (279). Further, Sherston remembers the relationship between British and German soldiers as mutually sympathetic. Not only does he express sympathy *for* "the poor old Boches," but he also discerns sympathy *from* the Germans, such as when he comments that a German working party "had no wish to do us any harm" (277), or when he concludes that the Germans did

not shoot at O'Brien's rescue party because "they felt sorry for us" (306). Sherston's universalizing habit achieves its most exaggerated expression, however, when he sees German bodies lying next to British bodies in Quadrangle trench: "they seemed as much victims of a catastrophe as the men who had attacked them" (342). For Sherston, there is no difference between attacker and defender, aggressor and victim.

Sherston's universalizing tendency goes even further, crossing national and ethnic boundaries. While in Egypt, he sees a group of Turkish prisoners, whom he describes as "straggling and hopeless—slaves of war… They too are killing time" (592). Denying individual differences or autonomy, he asserts: "Every living soul is here against his will" (592). Further on, while lamenting the war's degrading effects on "intelligent thinking," he adds: "Sensitive and gifted people of all nations are enduring some such mental starvation in order to safeguard—whatever it is they are told that they are safeguarding …" (627). Thus, the broad scope of Sherston's tendency to universalize allows him to echo Paul Baümer's and George Winterbourne's evaluation of the Great War as a betrayal of a whole generation: "I had no conviction about anything except that the War was a dirty trick which had been played on me and my generation" (655).

As with other anti-war texts, the universalizing tendency of *The Complete Memoirs of George Sherston* is sustained by its structure. Like Paul Bäumer, George Winterbourne and Dennis Stanhope, George Sherston dies at the end of the narrative and before the armistice:

> Thus ended my last week at the War. And there, perhaps, my narrative also should end. For I seem to write these words of someone who never returned from France, someone whose effort to

> succeed in that final experience was finished when he lay down in the sunken road and wondered what he ought to say. (650)

Sherston's death is not less significant because it is metaphorical. Certainly, there is ample textual evidence to support Sherston's claim that he "had a 'death-wish'" (650). Most convincingly, he describes his decision to go back to the war after his failed protest as a "renunciation of life and all that it had to offer me" (549). Later, he expresses a desire to "get free of the whole thing," and a "feeling of wanting to be killed." His desire for death becomes more active when he imagines looking at himself and "longing to bash its silly face in" (654). This self-hatred and self-alienation (highlighted by the pronoun shift here to "its", and elsewhere to "he" and "him") is so intense that a part, or version, of Sherston is destroyed. He describes the part of himself that survives the war as "a sort of intermediate version of myself, who afterward developed into what I am now" (650). This symbolic death at the end of the narrative underscores the trilogy's message of universal hopelessness and despair, because it asserts that there is no future for Great War participants, whether they have won, or lost, or lived, or died.

Narrative technique also supports the anti-war message in *The Complete Memoirs of George Sherston*. The shifting point of view, which moves from the immediacy of the present tense to the authoritative distance of retrospective commentary, creates apparent contradictions and inconsistencies, including an inconsistent attitude towards the war. Sometimes Sherston feels happy and alive while in the trenches, and he performs his military duties with skill and enthusiasm. For example, despite his own sensitivity to the brutalities of military discipline, he has no qualms about threatening a frightened officer, or two "young privates" with his pistol (340, 342). Further, Sherston seems to relish

violence, such as when he attacks a German trench single-handedly, pulling the safety-pin out of a Mills' bomb *with his teeth* (343), or when he asserts, "I definitely wanted to kill someone at close quarters" (346). Indeed, it is difficult to reconcile Sherston the warrior and Sherston the protestor; however, the more authoritative voice of the older Sherston looking back explains these contradictions and directs readers' understanding. He explains that moments of joy, or feelings of accomplishment are a confidence trick:

> That was how active service used to hoodwink us. Wonderful moments in the War, we called them, and told people at home that after all we wouldn't have missed it for worlds. But it was only one's youngness, really, and the fact of being in a foreign country with a fresh mind. Not because of the War, but in spite of it, we felt such zest and fulfillment, and remembered it later on with nostalgic regret, forgetting the miseries and grumblings, and how we longed for it to come to an end. (636)

Thus, Sherston acknowledges the contradictions within his account, and brushes them aside with the assurance that "our inconsistencies are often what make us most interesting" (636). Note how the shift to the universalizing "we" in these lines emphasizes the impossibility of individual response to circumstances, thereby supporting an anti-war message.

The voice of the older and wiser Sherston, however, does more than just brush the voice of the younger and more naïve Sherston gently aside. The retrospective narrator is so dominant that the opinions and impressions of the younger Sherston are made to seem foolish and wrong. As an illustration, consider how the retrospective narrator overturns

and corrects Sherston's early opinion of the war. Before he has been to the Front, Sherston asserts that "the War was inevitable and justifiable." The retrospective narrator quashes this view and directs readers to the conclusion that the war, "as everyone now agrees, was a crime against humanity" (230). Here, the appeal to the authority of numbers (a fallacious *ad numerum* argument) has a powerful rhetorical effect. Finally, though he has the benefit of time and distance, the retrospective narrator is unremittingly bitter, and, therefore, serves as a crowning exemplum of the demoralized victim of the Great War who has no hope of recovery.

Chapter 2

The 'Old Lie' and the 'Big Lie': False Notes in Inter-War Canadian Fiction

Though it has long dominated the literary canon, the anti-war message is not the only way the Great War is remembered or represented in literature. At the opposite end of the spectrum, a large number of patriotic and jingoistic poems and stories were produced, particularly in the years during and immediately after the war. These texts have, by and large, been dismissed or ignored by contemporary readers as sentimental romances or idealistic adventure stories without literary merit. One famous, if memorably brief, example from the patriotic school of British poets is Rupert Brooke's oft-quoted Sonnet V from his 1914 series, "The Soldier":

> If I should die, think only this of me:
> That there's some corner of a foreign field
> That is for ever England. There shall be
> In that rich earth a richer dust concealed;
> A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,
> Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam,
> A body of England's, breathing English air,
> Washed by the rivers, blest by suns of home.
>
> And think, this heart, all evil shed away,
> A pulse in the eternal mind, no less
> Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England given;

> Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day;
>
> And laughter, learnt of friends; and gentleness,
>
> In hearts at peace, under an English heaven.

The bitter cynicism and despair expressed in the canonical texts of the Great War are never heard in these lines; instead, the speaker affirms only his love for his homeland, and blissfully asserts the value of his sacrifice. Brooke, who died of an infected mosquito bite two days before the landing at Gallipoli in April 1915, did not see action and so had no reason to question the heroic ethos in ways made more memorable, perhaps, by Remarque, Aldington, Sherriff, Sassoon, and others. According to Brooke's departing soldier ("If I should die"), it *is* sweet and fitting to die for one's country, in part because the soldier's "heart" will not be lost, but will be sublimated "in the eternal mind" into an "eternal," purified form, "all evil shed away" in a still living "pulse." Sonnet V is often contrasted with Wilfred Owen's anti-Horatian ode, "*Dulce Et Decorum Est*" (1917), which angrily rejects Brooke's more noble sentiments and high-blown rhetoric as "the old Lie," told "with such high zest / To children ardent for some desperate glory, … *Dulce et decorum est* / *Pro patria mori"* (26-8). Together, these two poems might be taken to represent the two opposing poles of Great War jingoism and cynicism.

Among Canadian literary texts of this period, one finds the equivalent opposition of jingoism and cynicism, such as in Ralph Connor's *The Sky Pilot in No Man's Land* (1919), the Canadian version of Rupert Brooke, and in Charles Yale Harrison's *Generals Die in Bed* (1930), the Canadian version of Erich Maria Remarque. Poets and novelists who sought to keep faith with the war aims of the politicians and generals, along with the ancient ideal of heroism, have long been dismissed as myopic, if not misleading,

mouthpieces of a suspect propaganda machine. But are patriotic representations of war inherently more dishonest than the bitter and cynical representations of the anti-war canon? This chapter aims to compare and contrast “the old Lie” of patriotic writing with the equally motivated “Big Lie” of Great War iconoclasm.

The Sky Pilot in No Man’s Land

In *The Sky Pilot in No Man’s Land* (1919), Ralph Connor (Charles W. Gordon) tells the story of a young chaplain’s growth and development in the crucible of the Western Front. Though Barry Dunbar is in the spring of 1914 a highly idealized young man with a “clear, candid soul” (15), he is also a judgmental minister in the community of Wapiti, Alberta, who criticizes ranchers for using profane language (30) and for hunting birds out of season (32). He is also a poor preacher, who puts his listeners to sleep with his “appallingly wooden” sermons (56). Barry hears about the war while on a canoe trip “in the far northern wilds of the Peace River country, a hundred miles or so from Edmonton” (72-73), and immediately declares that he will go (81). Such fervour inspires his companions to enlist with him.

When the party arrives in Edmonton they find that news from the Western Front about German atrocities has enflamed war enthusiasm (95), and that that the city is so crowded that they must “bluff” and push their way into the recruiting office in hopes of being included in the first Canadian contingent (96). Unable to enlist in Edmonton, the group rushes to Wapiti. There, Barry is shocked and disappointed when he is pronounced physically unfit for service due to a heart murmur related to his asthma condition (102).

Though he meets with the superintendent of churches intending to surrender his appointment so that he might join the ambulance corps, Barry becomes convinced that the work of an army chaplain is both worthwhile and necessary (104-105).

As Barry takes on his new responsibilities as chaplain with an Alberta battalion, he becomes increasingly concerned about his own insufficiencies as a minister (105). Because he shares none of their interests in sports or gossip, he is unable to connect with the men he hopes to serve and support. Worse, Barry is so disgusted by the rough language and manners of his fellow officers that he storms out of his first mess in a fury of righteous indignation (118). Though a few share Barry's distaste for "that dirt stuff" (120), others see Barry's behaviour as a "breech of military discipline" and resent his "buttin' in" (122). Barry further contributes to his alienation from the men and isolation from his fellow officers with his "uncompromising attitude on the liquor question" and his constant denunciation of "demoralizing habits" (123). Later, during the battalion's transatlantic crossing, Barry does earn some respect through acts of bravery and responsible leadership (132, 137, 145). As Corporal Thom remarks, the chaplain is "a good one, ain't no quitter, and he won't let nobody else be a quitter" (147).

Despite his displays of nerve and resourcefulness, Barry continues to feel like a failure as a chaplain. He realizes that he is merely "a kind of policeman over [the men's] morals" (147), "a kind of moral prophylactic" (148). The men stop talking when he is around to avoid his remonstrations for profanity, but he has really done nothing constructive to improve their morals (148). Though he receives some inspiration and encouragement from a sympathetic older clergyman, who reminds the troubled young chaplain that the men "needed their mothers and their God, and that they needed him,

too" (152), Barry does not find his new focus until after the battalion arrives in France, where his father (serving as a sergeant major) dies from wounds. At his father's death-bed, Barry realizes that he has "been all wrong" and is transformed into an ideal chaplain: non-judgmental, loving, and loved (185).

Following a period of intensive training, the Alberta battalion marches forward for their first tour in the front-line trenches. Barry is "sickened and unnerved" by his experiences near Ypres, which are "like nothing in his previous life" (234). For Barry, comfort is to be found in reading bible passages about war heroes who "kept the faith" (239). The battalion spends more than three months in the Ypres Salient (242), where they experience heavy casualties. Barry exhibits bravery in the face of shelling and resilience in the face of personal loss. When the battalion finally moves out of the line for rest in billets, Barry uses music and prayer to lift the men's spirits, earning Barry some cheer of his own and the gratitude of the other officers. On his way to catch the leave train at Poperinghe, Barry hears that his battalion will be going back into the front lines for a big push, so gives up his leave and returns to the front (269). Rejoining the battalion at Zillebeke, Barry works through his own exhaustion serving the "continuous stream of wounded" that arrive at the Regimental Aid Post (R.A.P.) (277).

Barry finally gets leave and arrives in London. After sleeping for forty-four hours straight in the "unimaginable luxury" of clean sheets (292-293), he leaves his hotel to wander the streets of London. Serendipitously, he runs into Phyllis Vincent, a nurse with the British Voluntary Aid Detachment (V.A.D.) he had met earlier in France. Barry proclaims his love to Phyllis, and an outing to Edinburgh becomes their wedding journey. When Barry returns to the front, his battalion moves to the Somme (316). While the

battalion fights in the trenches, Barry helps with the wounded in a Casualty Clearing Station (C.C.S.) (331), where he hears more and more bad news about the battalion's heavy losses (334). Just before his battalion is set to be relieved, Barry volunteers to lead a party up the line to fetch out some wounded men (340). Soon, the battalion officers learn that Barry, their Sky Pilot, has been wounded—hit by shell fragments while shielding a wounded man with his own body (341-342). Barry's last words are to "the boys," reminding them "Never--to be--afraid--but to--carry on" (343).

The few critics who comment on *The Sky Pilot in No Man's Land* have found it too inclined towards militarism and heroic idealism to take it seriously. Thus, in his essay, "Canadian Fiction of the Great War," Eric Thompson does not include Connor's novel among Canada's "serious war literature," but, instead, categorizes it as one of the typical, "clichéd romances by authors more interested in jingoistic patriotism than honest portrayal of life at the front," keeping (disreputable) company with S. N. Dancy's *The Faith of a Belgian: A Romance of the Great War* (1916) and Robert Stead's *The Cow Puncher* (1917) (84). Thompson is as scornful of sentimentalism as he is of patriotism: "Ralph Connor exploited the sentimental idealism shown towards the War … by having his young Protestant chaplain die a sacrificial death in *The Sky Pilot in No Man's Land*" (85). Thompson suggests that the popularity of books like *Sky Pilot* is the result of "patriotic emotions" (84-85), and therefore suspect to more thoughtful readers.

In *Dubious Glory: The Two World Wars and the Canadian Novel*, Dagmar Novak likewise aims to illustrate dramatic changes in Canadian war literature between the two World Wars, particularly the shift from the romance tradition and patriotic jingoism to stark realism and irony. Not surprisingly, she echoes Thompson's words exactly when

she describes *Sky Pilot* and the mode it represents (she lists more than thirty novels of the war romance genre in her Appendix) as "conventional romances written by authors more interested in jingoistic patriotism than in the honest portrayal of life at the front." Novak, however, is slightly less scornful than Thompson when she allows that these texts cannot be entirely dismissed if they "reflect the beliefs and values of many Canadians, including those who enlisted in the Canadian forces to serve at the front." Moreover, she offers a useful definition of the war romance genre, whose texts are remarkably "similar in theme and tone and in structural framework" (7). For example, she notes that the Canadian war romances describe the war "as a learning experience, a test of resolve, and an opportunity to demonstrate acquired values and to learn new ones." "While not totally ignoring the brutality of war," she accepts their choice "to promote the positive themes of patriotism and honour, religious idealism and sacrifice" (7). According to Novak, Charles Gordon/Ralph Connor actually established the "basic formula" for war romances in Canada (12).

Though *Sky Pilot* includes some realistic depictions of the discomforts, agonies, and deaths that defined life at the front, Connor's emphasis on the refining, regenerative and instructive functions of war does make his vision rather too optimistic about its benefits. In contrast to the canonical anti-war texts, war is not portrayed as being inevitably and universally brutalizing, dehumanizing and demoralizing. Instead, the narrative asserts that those exposed to the horrors of war are neither coarsened nor broken. While in Boulogne, Barry sees a hospital train enter the station with "its freight of wounded men, mutilated, maimed, broken." The men's faces are "white as their swathings, worn, spent, deep-lined, from which looked forth eyes, indifferent, staring, but

undaunted and indomitable" (174). Similar phrasing is used in the next paragraph, which describes how the men "were being borne back helpless, bruised, shattered but unconquered and eternally glorious" (174). The significant "but" looms large as well in passages describing the physical changes in the men after months in the front lines. For example, Captain Duff's "rugged, heavy face" is described "looking thinner and longer than its wont but fiercer than ever," and Barry's "face was gaunt and thin, with hollow cheeks, but for all that, it wore a look of serene detachment" (252). In a pattern that becomes increasingly recognizable, the "but" insists that the men are essentially untouched by the war, whatever the damage to flesh and bone.

It is not merely that the men's spirits are undamaged by the war even if their bodies are scarred; it is that the war has literally strengthened them. In fact, it is army life and army discipline that protect Barry and his comrades from brutalization. After a long tour in the front lines, Barry is emotionally and physically exhausted:

> He could hardly force himself to remove his muddy, filthy clothes. He would gladly have laid himself down upon his cot just as he was, and given himself up to the luxury of his grief and loneliness, until sleep should come, but his life as a soldier had taught him something. These months of discipline, and especially these last months of companionship with his battalion through the terrible experiences of war, had wrought into the very fiber of his life a sense of unity with and responsibility for his comrades. His every emotion of loss, of grief, of heartsickness carried with it the immediate suggestion and remembrance that his comrades too were

> passing through a like experience, and this was his salvation. Weary, sick, desolate as he felt himself in this hour, he remembered that many of his comrades were as he, weary, and sick and desolate. (255)

Here, discipline does not crush the individual spirit, but supports it. Here, a sense of responsibility for others leads away from helplessness, preventing despair.

In Connor's novel, war experience seems only to bring out the best in those who are involved in it. Central to the narrative, of course, is Barry's transformation from a judgmental moralist into a compassionate chaplain. Even before Barry leaves Canada, this change is foreshadowed by the superintendent's reassurances in response to Barry's concerns about his fitness for chaplaincy work. When Barry worries that he is "not a preacher" and "not a 'mixer,'" the chaplain says, "you know not what transformations in character this war will work" (104). First, the war improves Barry's lifeless preaching. In face of the war "with its horror, its losses, its overwhelming sacrifice, its vast and eternal issues," Barry feels that "all personal considerations were obliterated," a sense that has of late "delivered him from that nervous self-consciousness" that made him a poor preacher. Thus, he delivers an earnest and arresting sermon at Parade Service (109), the effect of which "was overpowering" and exalting for his listeners (111).

Next, the war effects a more profound change in Barry's attitude and focus through his father's death. Before he dies from his wounds, Richard advises his son how to be a good chaplain to the men: ignore their swearing, remember the sacrifice they are making, and tell them about a loving God (183-184). After his father's death, Barry is transformed: "he became aware of a mighty change wrought in him during these last

three days. He had experienced a veritable emancipation of soul. He was as if he had been born anew" (188). And, because of the loss of his father, the men now welcome him more warmly: "It was as if he had passed through some mystic initiation ceremony and had been admitted into a magic circle of comradeship with the common soldier" (210). The war not only invests Barry with a new and higher spiritual nature, it also makes him a successful mixer, allowing him to connect with the men he serves. In *Sky Pilot*, then, the war is the catalyst for Barry's development and re-formation as a good chaplain.

Barry is not the only character transformed by the war. McCuaig, a man in his unit, is also improved and refined by military life and battle, changed from an undisciplined Métis woodsman into "a great soldier" motivated by a strong sense of duty and responsibility (282). In contrast to the anti-war texts, in which soldiers are dehumanized, animalized, and mechanized by war, *Sky Pilot* shows how soldiers can be made more human and more humane in war. For example, McCuaig is tamed of his "beastly ferocity," and transformed from "a hungry wolf" who is a violent, drunken brawler (130) into a warm and loving friend (283). And, like Barry, he also experiences a kind of spiritual rebirth. He is "transfigured" with "joy and surprise" when he prays with the young chaplain before slipping gently into a peaceful death (285). Thus, McCuaig stands as the example of all the Canadian soldiers who become more virtuous and more faithful as a consequence of their participation in the Great War.

With McCuaig's case as a climactic example, *Sky Pilot* affirms that war experience increases faith in God. The relevance of traditional Christianity is maintained in the face of war's horrors because the soldiers are imagined as fellow sufferers with Christ. The notion of Christian sacrifice is introduced when Barry preaches on the theme

at a Parade Service in England. In his sermon, the chaplain exhorts the soldiers to think of their bodies as “a living sacrifice” made to God (109). This identification of soldiers as Christ figures becomes most overt when Barry works to bolster Cameron, shaken by his first exposure to mass violent death, by reading bible passages about heroes who died in the faith [Hebrews 11:32-12:2] (238). Both Barry and Cameron are “swept along upon the tide of dramatic passion. They were themselves a part of the great and eternal conflict there pictured; they, too, were called upon to endure the cross” (238). In contrast to the anti-war texts, *Sky Pilot* shows that religious faith could still be a positive, sustaining force in the trenches.

Just as there is no loss of faith in traditional religion, there is no loss of confidence in traditional figures of authority. Though there are occasional expressions of indignant disgust with “the British high command, the war in general,” the final blame always falls on the Kaiser (144). The military leaders, including the “brass hats,” are treated respectfully, described, for example, as “gentle looking individuals, excessively polite, yet somehow getting men to jump when they spoke” (319). Barry praises his General as an “ideal soldier,” and another officer agrees, saying, “He knows his job and he is always fit and keen” (320). Barry is similarly impressed with the efficiency he sees at Divisional HQ near the Somme front:

> The spirit was one of controlled but concentrated energy. It was the spirit of the divisional commander, and it passed from him to the humblest orderly in the room. There was swiftness of action, alertness of mind, and with these a complete absence of hurry or confusion. Runners were continually arriving with urgent messages,

> phones insisting upon immediate answer, officers coming in with business of vast importance, but with no sign of flurry, the work of the Divisional Headquarters went swiftly and smoothly on. (335)

This continued trust in authority heartens Barry considerably.

The soldiers are consistently sustained, not only by their unwavering faith in traditional authority, but also by their sense of duty. When on leave in London, and reflecting back on his front-line experiences, Barry is amazed at the power of duty to keep him, and his fellow soldiers, from failing or giving way. He explains: "when you were over there in the midst of it all, you never once weakened. That's the wonder of it. You just go on, doing what you must do. … Thank God we have our duty to do no matter what comes. Without that life would be unbearable" (301). Thus, *Sky Pilot* includes little of the demoralization and despair common to the anti-war texts.

The soldiers are also sustained by their unwavering belief in the justice of their cause. In the morally simplistic universe of Connor's novel, the war is a conflict between light and dark, good and evil. The Germans—vicious aggressors against Belgium, Servia, and France (89) and brutal killers of women and children—are clearly identified as the instigators of the war (90). Those who fight against the "baby-killing, women-raping devils" (198), therefore, fight for the "cause of right, life and love and all they held dear" (84). In addition, the Canadian soldiers also retain an unfaltering faith that they will win the war. According to Barry's observations, despite terrible losses on the Somme front, the survivors in the allied line maintain good spirits and a "settled conviction that victory was awaiting them" (329). This belief in a "guaranteed" victory in Connor's novel contrasts with the bitter pessimism which dominates the anti-war texts (335).

In further contrast to the anti-war texts, there is no tendency to universalize the experiences of soldiers across national lines. The Germans are never described in sympathetic terms, nor even as ordinary men. Instead, they are always and only referred to in derogatory terms: "hellish fiends" (219), "Huns" (223), "boches" (225), and, at best, "Fritzie" (226). There is, however, a tendency to universalize the experiences of all the Canadian soldiers. According to Connor's text, they all fight for Britain with an unwavering commitment to Empire, regardless of who they are or where they are born. And, these soldiers are never unwitting victims of forces beyond their control, but retain their agency. In fact, the text frequently celebrates their potential for autonomous individual action. For example, when Barry sees that the men of his battalion are hungry, wet, tired and sick, he takes it upon himself to arrange for shelter and a hot meal (157). Indeed, it would seem that virtually every Canadian soldier is an extraordinary hero; for instance, Corporal Thom throws himself on a bomb to save others—what Barry calls "a splendid death!" (256); McCuaig cheerfully works his machine gun after he is seriously wounded (280); and Barry is hit by shell fragments while shielding a wounded man with his own body (342).

In the end, these self-sacrificing heroes are rewarded with painless and, apparently, bloodless deaths. Of course, much of the violence of war occurs off stage, including Barry's fatal injury, but when these heroes die in full view of an audience, there is more pathos and sentiment than suffering and fear. Richard Dunbar, McCuaig, and Barry all die away from the battlefield, and only after being given the opportunity to utter inspiring last words. Dr. Gregg dies peacefully, his "face just as quiet as if he had gone to sleep" (243). In addition to peaceful, glorious deaths, these heroes are also promised the

reward of immortal fame. When offering encouragement to Duff near the end of the battalion's tour in the Ypres section, Barry enthuses, "do you realise, Duff, that as long as Canada lasts they will talk of what you are doing up here these days?" (280). Here, then, writ large is "the old Lie" of patriotic glory that makes *Sky Pilot* so unpalatable to contemporary readers: It *is* sweet and fitting to die for your country!

The narrative structure of Connor's novel also supports its patriotic theme. The narrative does not end in despair and hopelessness with the protagonist's death, but, instead, with an uplifting and sentimental description of the chaplain's military funeral in France and the reaction of his young widow to the news of her husband's death. The grief of those left behind reaffirms the narrative's assertion that the loss of an individual *does* matter. Further, the notion of war's regenerative potential is upheld by the details of the plot and the text's final words. In particular, Barry's widow is greatly comforted when she learns that, before he died, Barry knew that she was pregnant with his child. Though Barry is dead, his life and his legacy will continue in both normal and normative ways—the war and his death are not the end. Continuity is further emphasized by Phyllis's final declaration: "I will not be afraid! God is good! I will 'carry on'" (349). Such an assertion may be valid within the blinkered framework of the novel's ideology, but unless it is confirmed by something in the world outside the text, it will always appear to be complicit in the "old Lie" of patriotic romance. For there is another war-world of grim disillusion evidently manifest outside the sustaining fantasies of romance, and it is to this world that the anti-war novel more "honestly" refers, in Canada as much as in Britain or post-war Germany.

All Else Is Folly

Peregrine Acland's *All Else Is Folly: A Tale of War and Passion* (1929) was among the first of several Canadian anti-war novels to be published in the years (1928-30) that now define the anti-war canon. Sharing features of several more famous stories of despair and disillusionment by Remarque, Aldington, Sherriff, and Sassoon, Acland's novel is made up of three parts, together with an epilogue, which tells the story of Alexander Falcon as a combatant. The obvious similarities between the author's and the protagonist's names suggest that the story is essentially Acland's own experience. Jonathan Vance agrees, calling the novel "semi-autobiographical" ("Soldier as Novelist" 26). When the novel opens, it is the summer of 1914, while Falcon is still working as a cowboy on the Bar Ninety-Nine cattle ranch located in Southern Alberta, near the town of Whoopee. The sharp duality of Falcon's nature is established early in the novel through the contrast between his physical life as a summer cowboy and his winter life as a literary-minded student at an eastern university. On hearing the news that Britain is at war, Falcon immediately decides to enlist, not because he is a patriot, or because he is an imperialist, but because he anticipates the action and glamour of fighting, and because of his family's military heritage (27-28).

Two ensuing chapters describe his experiences on board a transport ship bound for Europe and on active training in England, while continuing to develop the theme of Falcon's dual nature with frequent, overt contrasts between his physical and spiritual sides; for example, the narrative sets up an opposition between his body "built for action" and his dreamy "large, gray, meditative eyes" (37). The third chapter also provides more

information about the protagonist's romantic/sexual history, which Falcon regards as a series of discrete episodes, each one marking "the end of a stage in his own development" (38). Chapters four and five recount Falcon's experiences in the front lines near Festubert (though Acland does not include specific dates in the text, this action took place May 15-25, 1915), including his first taste of shelling, of debilitating fear, rotting corpses, sleep deprivation, mud, and lice. He also has his first experience of incompetent commanding officers, particularly the foolish Captain Augustus Rump (whose name, of course, suggests that he is an ass). In contrast to Rump's helpless bewilderment in the face of suicidal orders from HQ to dig a trench in broad daylight and under direct fire, Falcon demonstrates firm decisiveness when he refuses to carry out these "preposterous" orders (65, 67), despite the fact that he exposes the absurdity of his commanders.

After having sustained a flesh wound in the hip due to a shell explosion while marching out of the Festubert trenches (70), Falcon is out on convalescent leave for the next eight chapters (6-13). He and Captain Rump, wounded at the same time, both spend their convalescence as guests at Bendip Towers in the English countryside. During his stay there, Falcon fends off the advances of his hostess, Lady Bendip, and courts his new love-interest, Adair Hollister, the beautiful woman he had seen at the Savoy Hotel in London, who is now a guest staying at the home of Lady Bendip's neighbour, Mrs. Palmer-Jewett, at Northfield. Out of loyalty to her husband, Rifle Captain Peter Hollister who has been wounded and taken prisoner by the Germans, Adair pushes Falcon away "until after the War" (109). Suffering the sting of this rejection, Falcon gets drunk at the dinner party arranged for his farewell and must excuse himself early, feeling disgraced (131). His convalescence draws to a close at the end of chapter 13 with an incident in

which his pistol goes off while he is in his room. Readers are uncertain whether the shot was fired by accident, or in a failed suicide attempt (135-136).

Chapter fourteen finds Falcon back in the trenches, nearly ten months later, in the Vancouver Lines, "five miles back of Ypres," preparing for a raid (137). Falcon is unenthusiastic about the raid, feeling exhausted and full of dread, but he is forced to volunteer to lead the party, not only to avoid being seen as a coward, but also because he fears for the safety of the men if a less competent officer is put in charge (143). As he contemplates the upcoming raid, Falcon remembers an earlier reconnaissance mission he had led the previous August. Told as a flashback, Falcon recalls his instructions to reconnoiter a house along the Wytschaete-Messines road "to find out if the Germans still hold it" (146), his careful selection of men to accompany him on the mission (147), their slow and anxious progress through No Man's Land (148-149), their discovery of a German forward observation post / sniper nest (150-151), and their violent encounter with a German patrol (155-156). During close-quarters combat, Falcon's automatic pistol jams, and he is nearly killed by a bomb, but the entire party escapes and returns safely to their own trenches to make their report (157-159). He also recalls how he gazed at Adair's photograph before falling asleep after the reconnaissance mission, and how this contemplation of Adair had become something like a religious ritual for him (163). Back in the present, Falcon concludes that he has learned a great deal about soldiering since that night, but little about "dealing with a woman" (164). At the end of the chapter, Falcon learns that some of the men he worked with on the ranch in Alberta have arrived as part of a new draft, including Private Cud Browne and Colonel Carson, who enlisted as a private in the ranks in order to encourage recruitment (169). The raid Falcon

anticipated with dread either never takes place or is not recounted. Instead, the chapter ends with rumours of a German break-through and the expectation that a counter-attack will soon be mounted (171).

The setting shifts abruptly back to London in chapter fifteen, and focuses again on Falcon's entangled relationships with women. He has an uncomfortable lunch with Adair, a sexual encounter with Myra (a former art-student turned prostitute whom he meets in a bar), and a half-hearted flirtation with a Canadian officer's wife at a party. As part of an increasingly convoluted plot, he also arranges a lunch at which he is joined by both Lady Isabella Bendip and Beatrice Norton, a friend of Phyllis Howard. This lunch serves three purposes: it allows him to dabble with Isabella, it disentangles him from Phyllis (because Beatrice will report back about his apparent involvement with Isabella), and it distracts him from thoughts of Adair. The chapter and the first part of the book end with Falcon, now a major with a D.S.O., riding a train out of London at the end of his leave (201).

The four chapters that make up the brief second part of the novel are set entirely in the trenches, and describe Falcon's experiences in the Albert section at the start of the Battle of the Somme (July, 1916). The first chapter describes Falcon's exhaustion and despair as he marches into Albert for three days of rest out of the line, as well as his frustration at the difficulties of arranging billets. Three days later, he and his battalion march back to the front. While temporarily in charge of the battalion (a consequence of his incompetent commanding officer's excessive drinking), Falcon receives an order to conduct reconnaissance, and decides to lead the party himself. During this survey of the new trench positions, Falcon is horrified when he comes across a trench full of rotting German corpses. Back at Brigade headquarters, Falcon is involved in the planning for an

imminent attack. The third chapter describes the lead-up to the big offensive. Falcon and his men wait in the front-line trenches for more than nine anxious hours before the attack begins (264). At zero hour the covering barrage begins; after sending out the first five platoons, Falcon goes over with the last wave (268). The fourth chapter offers a vivid description of the attack, including Falcon's horror when he sees many of his men injured and writhing on the ground, his efforts to continue the advance, as well as the suffering he endures in No Man's Land after he is wounded, and his eventual arrival at a casualty clearing-station.

The third part of the novel is set well after the Battle of the Somme, summarily recalling the months of Falcon's slow recovery in hospitals, including his disappointment at Adair's silent refusal to visit the hospital, and his awe when the King speaks to him during a royal visit. A second chapter recounts Falcon's final encounter with Adair, beginning with his recovery process and his fear of how she will react to his scars. At their meeting in London, they are both disappointed by what they see. The novel concludes with an epilogue set in 1924 with Falcon in the same armory where he enlisted ten years earlier, listening to the skirling of the bagpipes. He recalls the "fun" and the pageantry of war, and thinks that he would gladly do it all over again, no matter what the cause (343). The novel ends, however, with a rhetorical denunciation of war, and a final repetition of the novel's thematic assertion that man fights "only because he hasn't yet learned to love" (345).

Critical response to Acland's text has been sparse, a fact which seems to motivate Eric Thompson's assertion that Canadian war novels "deserve to be better known" (81). Thompson's aim in "Canadian Fiction and the Great War" is clearly recuperative as he

compares and contrasts *All Else is Folly* with *Generals Die in Bed*, as well as with Philip Child's *God's Sparrows* and Timothy Findley's *The Wars*. Thompson maintains that all these novels share "common elements …, perhaps the most striking" of these "the way each novelist perceives that the bravery of the fighting Canadian soldier is founded on stoicism and an almost inarticulate commitment to endure, and the way each novelist reveals the unresolved conflicts within the hero's mind and spirit" (85). Indeed, for Thompson, one of the key features of *All Else is Folly* is its focus on the protagonist's internal conflict: "For Acland, the strain of war brings man's divided nature, his animal instincts and his spiritual being, into sharp contrast" (85). Thompson offers a socio-cultural interpretation of this internal conflict when he says that it "may … be seen as emblematic of the Canadian male's struggle to rid himself of his frontier identity (necessary in the conquest of the northern wilderness) so as to adapt himself to the social responsibilities of urban society" (85). Thompson also suggests that this conflict has its source/inspiration in literary models. In particular, he notes structural parallels between *All Else is Folly* and *The Iliad*. Like Homer, Acland "alternates scenes of war with scenes of peace as he chronicles the adventures of Alexander Falcon" (85).

To his credit, Thompson is not entirely satisfied with *All Else is Folly*. Though he is convinced by Acland's portrayal of Falcon's stoicism, which he sees as "testimony to the real-life bravery of the soldiers on whom he is modeled," and approves of Acland's focus on "the interminable foul-ups preceding offensives as well as in the hot fury of battle," Thompson is ultimately disappointed by the novel because it "is almost marred irretrievably by sentimentality and a hackneyed love-plot" (86). For Thompson, the elements that make *All Else is Folly* successful are those elements that make it an anti-

war text, but when it veers away from established patterns of the anti-war canon—Thompson lists Barbusse, Dos Passos, Ford, Zweig, Graves, Blunden, Sassoon, Remarque, and Hemingway as exemplars who avoid the pitfalls of romanticization and jingoistic patriotism (84)—Acland's text becomes "embarrassing" and irrelevant (86).

In *Propaganda and Censorship During Canada's Great War*, Jeffrey Keshen lists *All Else is Folly* as one of Canada's "most notable anti-war novels," along with Harrison's *Generals Die in Bed* and Child's *God's Sparrows* (207). For Keshen, the status of *All Else is Folly* as an anti-war text rests largely on Acland's treatment of officers. In particular, Keshen notes that "Acland demonstrated little respect for his fellow officers, writing for example, about an inebriated major blindly leading his men into a bloodbath" (207). According to Keshen, these details indicate Acland's rejection of and opposition to "stories of romance and adventure" (207).

In *Death So Noble*, Jonathan Vance agrees with Keshen's assessment of *All Else is Folly* as "an anti-war novel" (54). In the main, he grounds his evaluation on the plot, which describes Falcon's ruination by war. Vance also bases this evaluation, as Thompson does, at least in part, on the contrast between Acland's text and more traditional, nostalgia-driven treatments of the war (90). Also like Thompson, Vance comments on Acland's representation of the protagonist's dual nature, noting that Falcon is "the scholar-backwoodsman, the man who bridged that gap between the two paradigms to embody the breadth of Canadian society in a single person" (159). Falcon, who is sensitive and well-educated as well as manly and rugged, becomes a representative of the dual, if changing, character of Canadian society. Focusing on the reception history of Canadian war texts, Vance notes that Acland's liberal inclusion of trysts with prostitutes

in *All Else is Folly* would lead to rejection of his text by many war veterans, including Cy Peck, a Victoria Cross winner and Member of Parliament from Vancouver, who denounced Acland's novel for its insistence on such episodes, declaring that Acland "had put himself 'on a level with the filth-purveyors of other nations'" (191).

Certainly, there is textual evidence which supports the critics' reading of *All Else is Folly* as an anti-war text. In keeping with the anti-war models, Acland's descriptions of the horrors of war are disturbingly vivid and intentionally shocking in their realism. Like Harrison, Acland writes without inhibition about the gross physical realities experienced by soldiers at war, describing, for example, how Falcon stops to urinate during an advance (281). More shocking, however, are the passages describing corpses. In hastily dug trenches near Festubert, Falcon observes the dead in No Man's Land as "lumps of clay," with "faces and bare knees…black-green with decay" (57). Later, while leading a reconnaissance party, Falcon comes across a trench full of dead soldiers:

> And it wasn't so pleasant to find in that trench, every three or four yards, a dead man … with blackened face and outstretched stiffened hands. Big green flies buzzing busily above the eyes, nose, mouth. Nothing in that trench but dead men … Through bay after bay, nobody but the dead … So silently rotting beneath the blue sky. (245-246)

Here, understatement, ellipses, and pastoral contrast all function to increase the macabre gruesomeness of this passage. Further on, Falcon's reaction to the sight of a German machine-gunner he has killed is recorded in a series of one-sentence paragraphs:

> In the middle of the machine-gunner's back right between the shoulder-blades was a big, dark, rapidly growing stain.
>
> But the sight that held Alec, with the peculiar fascination of horror, was the machine-gunner's head.
>
> As the gray-coated body drooped forward, with great convulsive shudders, over the machine-gun, the back of the head opened up and vomited a scarlet torrent… Brains… The mind of a man! (275-6).

Sights such as these, in addition to the regular fatigue, cold, and lice that Falcon endures in the trenches leave him brutalized mentally, emotionally, and physically. As in Harrison's text, these short, choppy phrases represent the protagonist's incoherent state.

Falcon's mental degradation is particularly evident when, after undergoing two days of heavy shelling, he finds himself unable to concentrate, and even unable to read a map (215). His thinking is similarly impaired during the fear and chaos of battle: "Falcon found his mind now, as if whipped up by a powerful drug, working in flashes" (270). His emotional brutalization is just as often represented by an absence of affect, such as when he draws for command of a raiding party "without great interest" (164), or when he looks upon the death of his batman, old MacAllister, with cold indifference (61), or when he is unable to feel sympathy for a wounded fellow officer (254). In this insensitivity, he is often hurtful to others. For instance, rather than offering his men support and encouragement before a battle, he adds to their nervous distress with gallows humour; one darkly ironic toast he offers to their impending, ignominious deaths in No Man's Land leaves his fellow officers shuddering with horror (254).

Falcon is just as detached emotionally from civilians. While lunching with Adair, for example, he is haunted by his recollections of Ypres, where he saw "writhing bodies…the dying who called 'For Christ's sake, kill me!'" (174). For Falcon, war is the only reality, and, as he sits across from Adair with a forced smile on his face, he reflects: "He had looked forward for so long to seeing her … but now that she was so near, she seemed so far away. A bright figure in a world of dreams" (175). Falcon is so immersed in, and so overwhelmed by, his war experiences that he is alienated from ordinary life.

Certainly, Adair is not oblivious to Falcon's mental and spiritual degradation: "Only six months since she had seen him last, yet now he looked … middle-aged … thirty-five? forty? … he couldn't be more than twenty-five" (172). The man she sees has been drastically changed by war. "Now," she observes, he is "so grim, so tense jawed" (172), and his eyes reveal his despair: "But his eyes, so utterly weary … as if he had discovered in that last attack the whole meaning of life … and found that it was nothing…" (173).

Of course, Falcon is well aware of his own degradation, and he worries about his fitness for command: "Was it fair to these men for him to carry on as company commander when he felt all through? Just a shell of himself. Hollow. He knew he hadn't been worth a damn that last tour in the trenches" (212). Further on he remarks: "Ypres had taken the guts out of him. The Somme would do him in" (214). His self-knowledge seems only to increase his sense of futility, as he reflects that his own death means little: "Nothing mattered much that would end for him this unendurable fatigue, this life of horror… But was it fair to the men in his charge for him to carry on when he was nothing but a shell—courage, initiative, all gone?" (214).

Despite his evident deterioration, Falcon continues to "stick it," because it seems he has no choice. He is not an independent actor; he is merely a cog in the army machine. Though he thinks about giving up his responsibilities, he knows it is impossible, because "in the army you couldn't do that. You just had to keep on going" (214). During a forty-eight-hour bombardment, he watches men crawling out of the line, "dragging a broken body or a broken mind back to the dressing-station," but knows that he cannot follow them out. He thinks, "You might let a private, a non-com., even a junior officer, crawl out shell-shocked, but you, the company commander, had to keep sane" (213). There is, for Falcon, no honourable way out of the war. As he remarks earlier in the novel, "A gentleman couldn't say 'Please, send me back.'… A gentleman couldn't walk out… He would wait till he went for a ride … on a stretcher…" (176-177). He is trapped by codes of honour, duty, class and gender.

The brutality of war is most evident in the progressive destruction of his body at the Battle of the Somme. He is shot while advancing on the German second line, and his injury is reported in abrupt, breathless fragments: "In the chest. On the left side. Like a steel spike driven in by a sledge-hammer" (284). Fatalistically, he imagines his own death announcement, but he does not die. Instead, Falcon receives morphine and water from a stretcher-bearer, who also bandages the wound. He decides that he will fight to live (288). Later, when Cud Brown stumbles into the shell-hole where he lies, Falcon sends a message to his commanding officer asking for help (289). No longer caring about his image as a heroic officer, he wants only to live (291). And, no longer thinking about the success of the battle and the safety of his men, he begins to think simply of himself, passing on orders that the men must hold the line and not fall back, so that he will not be

taken prisoner—a certain death sentence in his condition (292). In contrast to his earlier belief in the inescapability of codes of duty and honour, and, perhaps, in contrast to the established pattern of the anti-war canon, Falcon begins to think as an individual acting in his own best interest.

While lying in the shell-hole he assesses his injury and realizes that, with his lung destroyed, there would be "no further career of adventure for him." Still, he does not lose his desire to live, and imagines that he might "turn to writing" as a career (293). Stuck in the shell hole all day, and through the night, Falcon knows, with mounting despair, that the longer he stays in No Man's Land, the slimmer his chances are for survival (295). At some point in the night, his head is injured when a shell lands nearby (297). Dazed, but still conscious, he reassesses his condition. His right eye, he thinks, "must be out. He couldn't see with it at all. The blood was pouring down his cheek. He put his hand to his right cheek. A gob of warm bleeding flesh hung there. He wondered if that was his right eye?" (298). The gory details fall like a series of hammer blows on readers: "The end of his nose, too, was cut. Almost cut off. The flesh hung loose… And his mouth was split in two."

This image of a split subject, horribly literalized, contrasts sharply with that previous image of the western cowboy and eastern intellectual presented before the war. It also jars with the iconic image of Falcon, standing in front of the Savoy Hotel in London, after four months of training on the Salisbury Plain, just prior to seeing action in the trenches. In this iconic image, he bears an almost god-like physique: "Everything about him seemed to be built for action," including his knees below his kilt, which are

"like columns of bronze" (37). But the war has clearly been iconoclastic in its effects, reducing his grand duality (as god-man, mind-body) to a heap of broken parts.

Despite the increasing horror of his own damaged body, Falcon persists in envisioning a future for himself: "He had heard of men with no faces. He would be like that. If he lived, he would have to live all to himself. He would see no one, not even Adair… He would live alone. And he would write" (298). Falcon maintains that his life, no matter his physical condition, should be "worth making a try for." He decides, therefore, that he must "get out of this shell-hole, or he would bleed to death, rot to death" (299). Though the savage degradation of his body is consistent with an anti-war model of the irreparable damage produced by war, Falcon does not share the despair of his fictional counterparts, Paul Baümer, George Winterbourne, or Dennis Stanhope, who all stand up to be shot. In spite of such contemporary expressions of alienation and ruination, Falcon continues to imagine a future for himself *after* the war.

In other respects, however, *All Else is Folly* hardly differs from the now familiar attitudes of the anti-war canon to the dehumanizing and demoralizing effects of war. For example, the soldiers are reduced to useless and stupid "sheep" (165), and their dehumanization continues in Falcon's contemplation of his end, should he happen to be hit by a German bomb. He imagines circumstances worse than "swift and certain death," in which he might "lie there … for minutes that would seem hours, a huddled mass of bleeding eyes, guts, testicles…" (273). Clearly, Falcon is well aware of war's potential to reduce human beings to their component fleshy parts. The brutalities of war also lead to the blunting of human and humane feelings. For example, Falcon recalls burying three

friends in three days “without wetting an eyelash,” and is horrified by his own griefless indifference (176).

Falcon’s demoralization is only increased by his sense of the futility of his own actions. After Ypres, Falcon has been rethinking “the whole meaning of life,” to arrive at a conclusion “that it was nothing…” (173). Later, during the action at Festubert, he sees that, “for him, with his handful of men, to advance straight on that trench crowded with Germans would be not fighting but self-slaughter, a gesture that would accomplish nothing,” yet he must still go forward (270). This sense of futility sometimes leads Falcon into fatalistic despair. He wonders, for example, “How long before his own turn would come?” He dismisses the question, as though shrugging off any sense of responsibility for his own fate, when he concludes, “But there was no use thinking about that” (281). As is typical of anti-war texts, Falcon’s ruination is then generalized to all war participants. In an echo of Paul Bäumer’s assertions about belonging to a lost generation, Captain Stanley Hunter claims cynically: “It’s over for most of my crowd now” (43).

The generalized demoralization of the troops is also evident in the lack of camaraderie among soldiers. Falcon never feels connected to his fellow officers. In fact, Acland’s novel frequently portrays the interactions between officers as acrimonious and contentious. The discord between officers is particularly evident in the malicious gossip Falcon overhears about himself. For example, while on board the transport ship from Canada to Europe, Falcon overhears an officer from his regiment—the fictional MacIntyre Highlanders—commenting that he is a nice fellow, “but he is too dreamy. He’ll never make a soldier”—a comment that haunts young Falcon and suggests that the relationship between officers is neither friendly nor supportive (31, 36). In another

instance, Falcon overhears his fellow officers gossiping about him when they think he has been killed during a nearly disastrous reconnaissance mission. One complains that, "he was looking for it, anyhow. Always looking for adventures, nosing around for a decoration." Another suggests that he threw away his life because he was "upset about some woman" (161). The lack of camaraderie is also seen when Falcon stumbles into Allied trenches after he has been seriously wounded. He asks a private for help and pays him with his revolver; but the private never returns. Falcon reflects: "Perhaps he had lost his way. Perhaps he had been himself injured by a shell explosion. Perhaps, having taken that revolver, worth a month's pay, he was no longer interested. At any rate, he didn't come back" (302). As Charles Yale Harrison will do the following year, Acland evidently repudiates the cheery notion got from *Sky Pilot* and other jingoistic works about the fraternity of men at arms.

Once again anticipating *Generals Die in Bed*, *Folly* illustrates the moral corruption of Canadian combatants amidst the horrors of war through an incident of intense fighting, in which surrendering German soldiers are mercilessly slaughtered by frenzied Canadian troops: "Unarmed Germans with their hands up were pouring out of dugouts. Excited Canadian soldiers were starting to bayonet them, hands up or not." In contrast to an ensuing description of a similar incident in Harrison's text, however, Acland includes an important moderating detail—one man stood up against the depravity: "But Irvine was stopping them … that warm-hearted, cool-headed giant" (278). Later, Falcon must resist the urge to shoot an unarmed German soldier, who tries to escape after being taken prisoner (280). Though Falcon exercises moral restraint and refrains from killing the "fat disgusting object," the powerful urge he feels to kill, as well

as the dehumanizing terms in which he portrays the German soldier, show the damaging effects that the war has had on every combatant's moral principles.

Acland's text also follows the anti-war model in its tendency to universalize the experiences of all the soldiers fighting in the trenches, no matter on which side they have fought. While conducting a survey of newly acquired trenches, Falcon sees a number of rotting corpses. He thinks, "Just dead Germans of course… As if *that* made a difference…" (246). He is no less horrified because they are enemy soldiers. Falcon seems similarly unaffected by considerations of national identity when he praises the courage of a German machine-gunner who sticks to his gun even after he is wounded (276). The particularity of individual soldiers in the Great War is further effaced by Falcon's reflections about earlier wars. After reading a book about "the history of tactics," Falcon concludes that "this was not the only war in which the soldiers sacrificed themselves—not to a sublime cause, but to the blunders of their superiors" (235). If all soldiers and all wars are the same, then individual suffering is entirely meaningless. Further, this conclusion undercuts the possibility of individual agency, because external forces—the actions of superior officers or chance—are the only factors which determine soldiers' fates.

Civilians are universalized, too, as ungrateful beneficiaries of every soldier's sufferings. Like the protagonists in other anti-war texts, Falcon is enraged when, on leave in London, he sees civilians enjoying a safe, carefree existence while he is haunted by the horrors of trench life (185). With no consideration for individual circumstances, Falcon resents them all. His sense of alienation from, and hatred for, civilians is also evident in his dealings with a French woman in the vicinity of Albert. While negotiating with her in

an attempt to arrange billets for his officers and men, Falcon wonders, "Had this idiot the faintest comprehension of what he and his men had gone through in the line—in part, at least, to keep the Germans out of her kitchen?" (222).

Unsympathetic women are prominent in Acland's text, if not in all anti-war novels (cf. the narrator's treatment, for example, of Gladys in *Generals Die in Bed*). As one would expect, such treatment is totally at odds with the depiction of women in the patriotic, jingoistic texts. Where every woman in Connor's *Sky Pilot* is virtuous and self-sacrificing, every woman in Acland's text is shallow and calculating. Early in the novel, Falcon abandons his devotion to Phyllis Howard, to whom he has said goodbye in Ontario. For Falcon, as Phyllis matures and becomes more educated, she ceases to be an individual woman, but becomes, instead, a representative figure of a whole category of women, the "Earnest Young Thing" (59). Falcon's recollection of his first encounter with a prostitute reveals a similar bent to depersonalize women. In Canada, Falcon had undertaken "a boyish attempt to defy convention," by engaging a prostitute, but the encounter "had succeeded only in stamping him indelibly with conventional prejudice" (46). In Falcon's mind, the prostitute becomes a type, not an individual, reduced to the category of "a good-looking, stupid Swede" (47). Further, she is dehumanized when he describes her as a "giant jelly-fish" (47). While in England for training, Falcon engages the services and companionship of Elsie. At the moment when he pays her, Falcon begins to see "Elsie not as a person, but as an institution" (39). And, though he has spent two months intimately involved with her, Falcon easily conflates Elsie and the "stupid Swede": "for all her silks and her prettiness and her charm, [Elsie] was only an exalted member of the same passionless sisterhood" (47).

Later, while recuperating from an injury, Falcon meets Lady Bendip, who, as we have seen, welcomes convalescent officers into her home on behalf of the Red Cross. Both Lady Bendip and Falcon tend to view each other in reductive terms. Lady Bendip, whose "imagination was excited by the gladiatorial virility of his body" and the sight of his "big muscular knees," thinks of Falcon as "young, unsophisticated" and "easy to bring to heel." He is not an individual, but merely a representative of a type—"a Colonial" (76). At the same time, Falcon judges Lady Bendip, not as an individual woman, but as "typical of a class he had read about but never met—the Englishwomen of the aristocracy" (73). While staying at Bendip Towers, Falcon is immediately drawn to Adair Hollister. Their relationship is impeded by her marriage to Captain Peter Hollister, who is being held in Germany as a prisoner of war (89). For Adair, divorce is impossible until after the war, perhaps, as Falcon surmises bitterly, because she values "reputation above passion," or because her pride drives her to "stern self-suppression" (163). In either event, he regards her as a slave to convention and thus reduces her to a type.

Falcon has only three additional encounters in the rest of the novel with what seem to be interchangeable women: Myra, a former art-student turned prostitute (191); a "plump waxen blonde" at a party (195); and "a handsome, red-haired girl" at a bar (197-8). These encounters nauseate Falcon and leave him filled with "utter contempt" (195), and "profound disgust" (198). In the end, even Adair disappoints Falcon when she rejects him because he is so physically damaged by the war (336). Rather than giving herself to passion—the passion called for in the novel's first epigraph in Havelock Ellis's lines, "It is more passion and even more that we need if we are to undo the work of Hate, if we are to add to the gaiety and splendour of life, to the sum of human achievement, to the

aspiration of human ecstasy"—Adair looks away from Falcon to "the cold dark sea, an endless waste of waves tossing about without purpose, without significance" (340). Of course, this stark, undifferentiated representation of women is anticipated in the novel's second epigraph which holds the title of the novel. A full quarter-century before the war, Nietzsche had offered this "useful" generalization about both sexes in *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (1891): "Man shall be trained for war, and woman for the recreation of the warrior; all else is folly." Nietzsche, in other words, had already dehumanized and degraded both sexes, reducing women and men to mere functions. The tendency of Acland's text to universalize men and women similarly erases individual difference and denies the potential for unique responses to circumstances.

As always, it is structure—above all the choice of where to end the story—which best defines the character of the anti-war novel. In contrast to the other anti-war texts, Acland's narrative does not end before the armistice, or even with the death of the protagonist. Neither, however, does it end with a comforting affirmation of continuity, of the sort we have seen at the end of *Sky Pilot.* Rather, the narrative closes with a scene set in 1924, in which Falcon returns to the armory where he enlisted, hearing the skirl of the pipes as members of his regiment go out on parade (341). Here, Falcon is caught between the illusion of patriotic jingoism and the disillusion of the anti-war position: "He hated war but he loved the pipes" (343). On the one hand, Falcon is filled with "war-lust" when he hears the call of the pipes and drums; moved by the pageantry of the parade, he recalls nostalgically that "it had been fun, marching down to the Somme—hard fun but good." He is so moved, in fact, that he thinks "with the skirling of the pipes in his ears, he would have signed away his liberty, his life, for another war. At this moment, it wouldn't have

mattered, much, what the War was about" (343). On the other hand, Falcon recalls the suffering of war, even seeing again "the gray-green faces of dead comrades…" (344). As he remembers those who died (a memory so disturbingly painful that it is left to trail off in ellipses), he vehemently renounces war:

> "Stab the drums!
>
> Slit the pipes!" (344).

Evidently, Falcon finds no lasting comfort in, nor any escape from, either of the patriotic or anti-war responses. He is unable to reject war because he has been "suckled at the breast of Sir Walter's muse," making the rejection of patriotic jingoism and the pageantry of war "too much like cutting his mother's throat" (345). Further underscoring the impossibility of individual, autonomous choice, Falcon asserts that all men are helpless against their lust for war, because they are finally unable to see through the old lie. According to Falcon, "men would never forego their lust for war until the paint was scraped off the cheeks of the drab and the pocks were revealed in all their filth…" (344-345). Thus, while the old lie of Horatian classicism—or of Scottish romanticism—may be impossible to escape, the disillusionment of the post-classical, post-romantic position is just as impossible to maintain. Neither position is tenable unless some more compelling reasons are found for rejecting the past.

Generals Die in Bed

One of the classic anti-war texts still too little known outside of Canada is a novel by the American-Canadian Charles Yale Harrison, *Generals Die in Bed* (1930). Following *All Else is Folly* by a year, and basing itself, like Acland's work, on the author's own experiences with the Canadian Expeditionary Force, the story opens in Montreal on the eve of the unnamed narrator's departure for Europe as part of a group of new recruits. Without warning, readers are thrown in the second chapter into the front-line trenches, to confront the disillusioning reality of vermin, mud, bombardments, and sudden death from afar. Chapters three through five document the seemingly endless routine of war: "Six days in reserve near the light artillery, six days in supports, six days in the front trenches—and then out to rest. Five or six days out on rest and then back again; six days, six days, rest" (53).

The sixth chapter—precisely the mid-point of the novel—offers a vivid description of a terrifying artillery barrage and a night raid on the German trenches, during which the narrator bayonets a German soldier and captures two others whom he escorts back as prisoners. After another rest period in Béthune, the narrator spends ten days' leave in London where he stays with a prostitute named Gladys, attends the theatre, takes in the sights like any other tourist, and meets an Anglican curate who enthuses (rather like the "Sky Pilot") about the positive effects of the war. Chapter nine abruptly dramatizes an ill-fated attack across No Man's Land that leaves the narrator and one other as the only survivors from their section. Following another rest period out of the line, the troops are moved to the city of Arras, which the troops loot and vandalize. The final

chapter recounts events from the summer of 1918, including the slaughter of surrendering Germans during the Battle of Amiens—an act of vengeance in retaliation for the sinking of the *Llandovery Castle*.

Canadian critics generally agree that *Generals Die in Bed* belongs in the anti-war canon and tend to see the brutalizing effects of war as its central theme. In his essay, "Canadian Fiction of the Great War," Eric Thompson, for one, contends that Canadian war novels "deserve to be better known," because "the war novel is a significant genre of Canadian fiction" (81). Though he dismisses the early Canadian war novels produced during the war years as "clichéd romances by authors more interested in jingoistic patriotism than honest portrayal of life at the front" (84), he aims to recuperate the novels of the interwar period, which have been largely ignored (85). For Thompson, the later novels, particularly those by Canadian soldier-novelists Peregrine Acland, Philip Child and C. Y. Harrison, are significant because of their "hard-hitting realism" and their representation of Canadian wartime experience (85). As he compares and contrasts these three "serious" novels (82), Thompson concludes that Harrison's is the best of these anti-war novels not only because the narrator is cynical from the start and, therefore, unsurprised by war or life, but also because *Generals Die in Bed* most closely resembles Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* in its complete lack of patriotic fervour and in its portrayal of all soldiers as hopeless victims of militarism (87-88). Thompson concludes his analysis of *Generals Die in Bed* with the assertion that "Harrison's subject is the brutalization of man by war" (Thompson 89).

Neil Besner lists Harrison's war novel among the "classics of World War I literature" and compares it to those by Remarque, Hemingway, Graves, and Sassoon.

Like Thompson, Besner counts *Generals Die in Bed* as a significant contribution to Canadian literature (165), and describes it as a vital precursor to Findley's *The Wars* (164). Also like Thompson, Besner notes a particular resemblance between *Generals Die in Bed* and *All Quiet on the Western Front*, and even suggests that Harrison's novel, portions of which were published as early as 1928, may have influenced Remarque's work (164). Besner's reading of *Generals Die in Bed* focuses on its depiction of the brutalizing and demoralizing effects of the war on soldiers, such as when he writes: "The mind-numbing brutality of the war renders the soldiers amoral, fear-haunted specters" (165). Further, Besner asserts that "*Generals Die in Bed* is one of the bleakest of the antiwar novels to appear in the 1930s in any language" (165).

In *Dubious Glory: The Two World Wars and the Canadian Novel*, Dagmar Novak offers a much longer and more involved analysis of Harrison's novel. Her careful reading of the narrative identifies many of the features common to anti-war texts, including the dehumanization of soldiers (60), the "desperation and futility" of life in the trenches (61), the debasement of soldiers to an animal existence (62), the stark division between ordinary soldiers and officers (65), the alienation of soldiers from civilian life (66), the universal suffering of soldiers on all sides (67), and the lack of individual will and autonomy among soldiers (70). Novak comes to conclusions very similar to those of Thompson and Besner when she identifies Harrison as a member of the "new group of war novelists" (58), and when she states that the novel's "central theme is the brutalizing effect of war" (60).

Contrary to Thompson and Besner, however, Novak addresses and unpacks the lies that underwrite the novel's anti-war argument. For example, she includes statistics

which reveal the lie in the novel's title and disprove the idea that generals lived in safety and died in bed: "Forty-two per cent of the Canadian generals who served in France became casualties during the war, either killed, wounded, or reported missing in action" (89). Similarly, Novak exposes the novel's other big lie when she explains that "the Llandovery Castle *was* a hospital ship, that its cargo included neither supplies nor war material, and that it carried to the bottom two hundred and thirty-four crew, medical staff, and nursing sisters." When Harrison distorts this truth to illustrate how soldiers were manipulated by propaganda, Novak argues, he is every bit as guilty of propaganda as the jingoists like Charles Gordon (Ralph Connor) (66).

Given the frequency and vividness with which Harrison depicts the physical horrors of war, it is no wonder that representative critics agree that brutalization is a main theme in Harrison's novel and a key feature identifying *Generals Die in Bed* as an anti-war text. Certainly, Harrison's novel includes at least as many graphic descriptions of war's ugly realities as any other anti-war text. In contrast to Sassoon, for example, Harrison does not shy away from the goriest details, and includes descriptions of how Brown's "slimy gray matter jiggles as it sticks to the hairy sacking of the sandbag" (63), of how the narrator steps into "the ripped-open stomach of a German" (186), of how "torn limbs and entrails" are hurled about in a bombardment (194), of how Fry runs "a few paces on his gushing stumps" before he collapses (200), and of how Broadbent's partly-amputated leg twitches a little when the last connecting "strip of skin and flesh breaks" off (262). The shock and horror these scenes evoke in readers leaves no doubt about the brutalizing effects of these events on participants.

Evidence of the soldiers' brutalization is also found in their physical degradation, such as when the narrator's nose and ears bleed "from the force and fury of the detonations" (24, 253), and when the soldiers turn "pallid with fear and fatigue" during a lengthy bombardment (94). The physical deterioration suffered in war is also suggested by the frequent images of sickness and infection Harrison uses to describe battered men and destroyed landscapes. For instance, soldiers are frequently described as having yellow or greenish complexions, and, when the narrator sees the empty landscape near Arras, he comments: "It seems as though a pestilence had swept over this part of the country" (222). Nothing illustrates the soldiers' physical degradation more convincingly, however, than the scene in which, during a long transport, they are forced to "defecate from between the bars at the side of the bouncing truck—a difficult and unpleasant task" (214). In contrast to Sassoon's reticence when writing about bodily functions, here Harrison tests the limits of realism with his effort to show the gross physical realities experienced by soldiers at war.

The soldiers also suffer from mental degradation. In fact, as in the other anti-war texts, military training seems designed to discourage independent thought. The narrator recalls, for example that, "At the base a sergeant once told me that all a soldier needed was a strong back and a weak mind" (130). Later, in the trenches, the soldiers are so disoriented after a bombardment that they "do not know what day it is" (27). Tragically aware of his own intellectual diminishment, the narrator wonders, "Who can live through the terror-laden minutes of drum-fire and not feel his reason slipping, his manhood dissolving?" (101). Like Bäumer, Winterbourne, Stanhope and Sherston, this unnamed protagonist sees his own rationality slipping away.

In Harrison's text, however, the moral degradation of soldiers is even more terrible than their physical or mental deterioration. In the central, sixth chapter of the novel, the scene in which the narrator kills a young German soldier during a trench raid, we are forced to feel, if not to understand, the causes and effects of this moral degradation. The narrator encounters a lone German soldier in a trench bay. When the German "reaches for his revolver," the narrator lunges forward with his bayonet "aiming at his stomach." "Something heavy collides with the point of my weapon," the narrator says laconically (110). Even the narrator's characterization of his action as an "instinctive movement," as well as the passive construction describing the bayonet thrust, suggest his attempt to minimize his active involvement in the horrifying situation. As a consequence of this violent act, the narrator becomes temporarily "insane" (110). Readers share the narrator's revulsion when he finds that he cannot remove his bayonet from the still-conscious German (111). Overwhelmed by these circumstances, the narrator runs away briefly, but returns when he realizes that, with his rifle stuck in the German, he is unarmed and in danger (112). After struggling violently to remove the blade, which only results in the German's "horrible shrieks" (113), the narrator finally must pull the trigger of his rifle to snap off the bayonet blade and free himself from the German (114).

And yet this brutalizing incident will not end, even so. After two German prisoners surrender themselves to the narrator (115), he must then direct them past the body of the German he killed. "I pass him quickly," recalls the narrator, "as though I do not know him" (116). One sees how the narrator tries to evade his horror and guilt by transforming the encounter into a social snub, which suggests the narrator's inability to process the harsh reality of the event. Next, the narrator has to face some of the human

consequences of his actions when one of his prisoners throws himself on the dead soldier, crying, "*Mein Bruder*" (117). As he sits watching the German prisoner grieving his brother Karl's death, the narrator reflects on the circumstances: "How can I say to this boy that something took us both, his brother and me, and dumped us into a lonely, shrieking hole at night—it armed us with deadly weapons and threw us against each other" (119). Again, the narrator avoids individual responsibility for Karl's death, instead blaming unnamed and unspecified external forces. Then, the narrator expands his thinking to consider the wider tragedy of Karl's death. As he imagines Karl's mother's loss and grief, he asks, "Who can comfort whom in war? Who can care for us, we who are set loose at each other and tear at each other's entrails with silent gleaming bayonets?" (120).

Certainly, there is no comfort for the narrator, who begins to feel the full effects of these terrible events only after he returns to his own dug-out. As the rum and the adrenaline wear off, he begins to shiver and shake, and then to sob. While his body exhibits symptoms of shock, he also suffers mental and emotional torment, wondering why he had to kill Karl, and why so many men had to die on the raid (124-125). The narrator's situation worsens when he learns that Cleary has been hit by a shell, and then sees his pal's fatal head wound on his way to the M.O.'s dug-out. After Cleary dies, the narrator attempts to shut down his sentient responses, asserting that it is "Better not to ask questions," and "better not to think" (130-131).

The narrator, however, is not the only soldier desensitized by the violence he sees and commits. For instance, early in the novel, Brown coldly plans to murder his commanding officer, Captain Clark: "I'll kill the bastard—that's what I'll do. I'm just

waiting until we get into a real scrap. I'll plug the son-of-a-bitch between the shoulder blades" (38). A similar cold calculation characterizes the narrator's graphic imagining of what he and his fellow soldiers will do when they catch a German sniper: "We will fall upon him and bayonet him like a hapless trench rat" (56). The narrator's description of this chilling revenge fantasy goes on for more than half a page, and includes details about how the sniper's pleas "for compassion and mercy" will be ignored by his remorseless killers: "And our faces will harden, our inflamed eyes will become slits and men will stab futilely at his prostrate body" (57). The fulfillment of this fantasy takes place later in the novel, when the narrator and his fellows actually kill a wounded and surrendering German sniper as he "pleads for pity." Despite the German's fatherly appearance and shrieking protestations, "Broadbent runs his bayonet into the kneeling one's throat" (187). The narrator then describes how he and some of the other men kick the German soldier's body as it quivers in death (187). The flat tone with which this scene is recounted emphasizes the soldiers' lack of pity, or conscience.

Perhaps even more shocking than this professed lack of pity for hated officers or enemy soldiers, is a serious lack of human feelings among comrades, such as when Brown is shot and the platoon, seemingly unmoved, re-divides the food rations (60). This callous response to the death of a comrade suggests the complete degeneration of the soldiers' moral and emotional capacity. The soldiers' degraded humanity is also revealed during a terrifying bombardment: "We do not think of the poor sentry, a new arrival, whom we have left on lookout duty" (96). Further on, the truth of the narrator's assertion that "Each man is for himself" (110), is clearly borne out by his actions when he abandons a seriously wounded comrade, Fry, who screams for help and clings to his legs

(201). In addition to demonstrating the blunting effect of war on the soldiers' capacity for human emotions, these scenes more generally undermine traditional notions of the compensatory function of camaraderie shared by men at arms, and more specifically mock the fraternal, redemptive ideology of novels like *The Sky Pilot*.

Harrison also represents the degradation of soldiers in a broad constellation of images that suggest regression. The narrator describes, for instance, a regression to infancy: "Sometimes to get relief we crawl, like babies, on all fours" (57). Likewise, while sheltering in a dugout during a fierce bombardment, the narrator recalls sitting "like prehistoric men within the ring of flickering light which the candle casts" (96). Shortly after, the narrator adds: "We look like men seen in an ancient, unsteady motion picture" (97). All of these images function to suggest that the brutalities of war reduce participants to an inferior stage of development.

Of course, the narrator's depictions of the looting of Arras and the slaughter of surrendering Germans during the Battle of Amiens offer the most powerful evidence of the soldiers' full moral debasement. In fact, during these two key incidents, the soldiers' actions seem to embody the warped sensibility expressed in their marching song: "To-morrow we may be dead. The world is shot to pieces. Nothing matters. There are no ten commandments. Let'er go!" (138). For these soldiers, there really is no order, no meaning, no law and no restraint. According to the narrator's account, at Arras the Canadian soldiers plunder and loot (225), commit random acts of vandalism (227), steal "gold and silver ornaments" from the local church (227), and "set fire to some houses" (228). "The streets are bedlams," reports the narrator, and all the soldiers are "madmen"

(229). The only explanation or excuse for this revelry turned nightmare is implied in an unattributed question: "Well, why the hell didn't they bring the grub up…?" (232).

A similar lack of moral restraint is seen at the Battle of Amiens, where, though hundreds of unarmed Germans plead for mercy and cower with their hands held up in surrender, there is no pity from the Canadian troops who shoot them at point-blank range (255-256). In regards to this incident, however, the text offers a somewhat more complex explanation than the soldiers' physical hunger. In this case, the soldiers are inflamed and bullied by their commanding officers. First, they are goaded into brutality by a brigadier-general's speech about the sinking of the *Llandovery Castle*. According to the general's account, the sinking of the hospital ship, as well as the subsequent machine-gunning of nurses and wounded in lifeboats, was a "wanton act of barbarism" requiring vengeance and sanctioning the suspension of "the accepted rules for conducting civilized warfare" (246). Next, a colonel adds the subtle threat of renewed hunger when he says, "if you take any [prisoners] we'll have to feed 'em out of our rations…" (247). Thus, the Canadians are primed for brutality by their officers.

Later, while waiting to be carried onto the hospital ship on the Quay at Boulogne, the narrator hears the "truth" from an orderly that the *Llandovery Castle* was carrying war materials, not just wounded, and was, therefore, a legitimate military target for the Germans. It is, according to the orderly, the staff officers who are guilty of "bloody murder," not the Germans who torpedoed the ship (268-269). Thus, the Canadian soldiers' amoral response has been provoked not simply by a tale of German atrocities, but by a *false* tale. As the narrator relives the horror of the massacre of surrendering Germans at Amiens, it seems that he is traumatized all over again by the orderly's

revelation of the general's deceit. Here, however, it is really the readers who risk being deceived, because the general's account of the criminal sinking of the *Llandovery Castle* is truthful. As Dagmar Novak remarks, Harrison, as much as jingoists like Charles W. Gordon (Ralph Connor), "is not above distorting the facts in the interests of a cause" (66).[4] Of course, there is no excuse for the killing of surrendering soldiers, but the event becomes an instance of understandable, if harsh, justice in the context of a response to the news of the sinking of the ship.

The "big lie" about the *Llandovery Castle* turns back, then, on the anti-war canon, revealing it to be as propagandistic in its own way as patriotic rant. What is more, however, is that the soldiers in *Generals Die in Bed,* like those in any other anti-war text, are so diminished—physically, mentally, and morally—that their real humanity is lost. The anti-war novel, that is to say, is just as heavily invested in the opposite sort of lie, that war denies individual agency, let alone heroic action. For example, the soldiers are more than dehumanized when they are reduced to a mechanical existence by military discipline. Disgusted by such mechanization, the narrator declares, "The salute, the shining of our brass buttons, the correct way to twist a puttee . . . a thousand thundering orders! A thousand trivial rules, each with a penalty for an infraction has made will-less robots of us all" (56). The soldiers are further dehumanized when they are compared to objects, such as when they are piled into trains for transport "like sacks of potatoes" (11), or when they stand at attention as though "driven into the ground like so many fence posts" (244).

Frequently, the narrator also sees himself and the soldiers around him in animalistic terms, such as when they "burrow into the ground like frightened rats" (24),

when they sit picking off lice “like baboons” (39), or when Fry blinks “his eyes like a rooster” (81). Similarly, the narrator notes Karl’s brother’s “doggish look” (120), and likens other German prisoners to “owls” (151). Even more frequently, the novel describes how soldiers descend into savage bestiality when they eat. For example, Broadbent “snarls a warning” when one soldier gets too close to his food (61), the men “wolf” down rations without speaking (77), and, if portions are not carefully divided, they are likely to fall on “each other’s throats like hungry, snarling animals” (92).

Much like Remarque’s narrator, Harrison’s narrator expresses contradictory sentiments about this transformation from human to animal. While away from the war and swimming, for instance, he enjoys an “animal pleasure in feeling the sun on a naked body.” In this pastoral scene, a basic, animal existence is portrayed positively when it is associated with a “feeling of security, or deep inward happiness…” (86). Further on, Harrison echoes Paul Bäumer’s ambiguous response to his descent into animality when he concludes: ““It is better, I say to myself, not to seek for answers. It is better to live like an unreasoning animal” (129). Here, Harrison’s narrator, like Bäumer, sees his own debasement as simultaneously abhorrent and necessary to survival.

Harrison employs another constellation of images, in addition to specific scenes and comparisons, to dramatize the dehumanization of soldiers caught up in the brutalities of war. In particular, a series of interconnected images of consumption work together to suggest that soldiers are no more than meat. The soldiers, for example, are eaten by rats (22) and by lice (28). A few pages later, a series of images link together a can of bully beef, a decaying foot in a boot, and Brown’s blistered heel that is “as raw as a lump of meat,” so that food and flesh are both confused and conflated (31). Further on in the

novel, two similar phrases imply that soldiers are food animals. For example, the narrator remarks, “Our food has been too good. We are being fattened for the slaughter” (83-84). Later, he observes, “The food becomes poor. We are being hardened” (243). Here is the irony of repetition with difference—there is no positive outcome for livestock no matter how or what they are fed. Of course, the least subtle expression of this complex of associations linking soldiers and meat occurs when the soldiers are being transported in a truck. “We are tossed about,” asserts the narrator, “like quarters of beef on the way to market” (219).

Unsurprisingly, all this degradation leaves soldiers feeling alienated and marginalized in various ways. The narrator reports, for example, feeling finally alienated from nature. When describing the seemingly endless pattern of army life, he comments:

> In and out, in and out, endlessly, sweating, endlessly, endlessly… Somewhere it is summer, but here are the same trenches. The trees here are skeletons holding stubs of stark, shell-amputated arms towards the sky. No flowers grow in this waste land. (53)

Clearly, the rhythms of troop movements in and out of the trenches do not harmonize with the rhythms of the seasons.

The narrator also feels detached from civilian life. After only a short time in the trenches, he is already unable to recall his homeland clearly: “I try to imagine what Montreal looks like. The images are murky. All that is unreality. The trench, Cleary, Fry, the moon overhead—this is real” (20). The narrator feels similarly estranged from civilian life while on leave in London, where he feels “out of place” (162). Like Paul Bäumer and George Sherston, Harrison’s narrator even begins to despise civilians. “I

cannot formulate my hatred of these people," the narrator observes, "their bellies are full, and out there we are being eaten by lice, we are sitting trembling in shivering dugouts…" (161, Harrison's ellipses). The disjunction between front-line soldiers and civilians is most obvious, however, in the sharply ironic encounter between the narrator and the Anglican curate. A chance meeting allows the "sky pilot" an opportunity to express his views about the war, including his belief that the war brings out "noble" and "heroic qualities in the common people." These views contrast sharply, the narrator reflects, with his memories "of how Karl died, of the snarling fighting among our own men over a crust of bread…" (172).

For Harrison's narrator, however, the greatest and most damaging alienation is that between the officers and the men. Early on, he remarks, "Clark, our captain, does not make life any too pleasant for us," and notes the symbolic contrast between the condition of the officer's uniform and the uniforms of the ordinary soldiers: "His leather is brightly polished and his equipment and insignia gleam malignantly in contrast with our seedy, mud-stained uniforms" (36-37). Though on one occasion he expresses some sympathy for the officers (who were also without food and hungry during transport—220), the narrator is bitter about the special privileges accorded officers, which contrasts sharply with the bare necessities granted enlisted men who have to fight to survive in the trenches and retain their humanity. This bitterness is heard in the narrator's comments about his army instructor: "But the instructor is at the base, safe and comfortable, and we are here in this muddy trench" (55).

The disjunction between enlisted men and officers contributes significantly to the soldiers' demoralization. For instance, Fry is angry when he sees Brown punished with

pack drill for having tears in his uniform and for "silent insolence" (37-38), because he resents the fact that punishment seems to be the only reward for surviving eighteen days of shelling and death in the line (48). His unhappiness is clearly evident when he offers a bitter rant directed at the officers: "They take everything from us: our lives, our blood, our hearts; even the few lousy hours of rest, they take those, too. Our job is to give, and theirs is to take" (49). The narrator expresses similar hopelessness, though with more resignation than anger, when he contemplates his lot: "This is war; there is so much misery, heart-aches, agony and nothing can be done about it. Better to sit here and drink the sour, hard wine and try to forget" (49). Of course, the men's demoralization is even more evident in the front line. Soaked and chilled by days of rain, the men struggle in the mud, and the narrator reports: "We are sunk in that misery which men fall into through utter hopelessness" (54).

There is no comfort for these hopeless victims of war. The narrator laments, "I can find nothing to console me, nothing to appease my terror" (26). Later he asks, "Who can comfort whom in war? Who can care for us, we who are set loose at each other and tear at each other's entrails with silent gleaming bayonets" (120). Certainly, neither God nor faith offers the narrator comfort during a bombardment. "I begin to pray," he recounts, but then adds, "I remember that I do not believe in God" (26). Later, while enduring even more violent shelling, the only divine being the narrator envisions is "An insane god" pounding the trenches "with Cyclopean fists, madly, incessantly" (96). Having experienced war, the narrator knows he will never return to faith in God. He asks, "How will we ever be able to go back to peaceful ways again and hear pallid preachers whimper of their puny little gods who can only torment sinners with sulphur, we, who

have seen a hell that no god, however cruel, would fashion for his most deadly enemies?" (101). This sentence, perhaps the longest of the novel, negates not only faith in God, but the barest possibility of a future without war.

Harrison's use of the present tense also underscores the impossibility of escape from the Great War, drawing the reader in to the soldiers' ever-present suffering as though the action is still ongoing. Certainly, the narrator and his comrades cannot break away from the war, even temporarily. While out of the line, the soldiers' bathing interlude is interrupted by the sounds of war: "In the distance the rumble of the guns is faint but persistent… I am still here, it says… I am here and you must come back to my howling madness, to my senseless volcanic fury. I am the link that binds you to your future, it mutters" (86). For these soldiers, for whom the future only offers three options—death, mutilation, or madness (58)—thinking about the future is as futile as the work they do, rebuilding sections of trench only to see them demolished the next night by a shell (28). Though they have been drilled to "carry on, carry on …," these despairing soldiers begin to think that death might in fact be preferable to their purposeless lives crawling in the trenches. "It would be better," suggests the narrator, "to dash into No Man's Land and chance death, or down the communication trench to temporary safety—and a firing squad" (55-56). According to the narrator, "We all agree that a swift death would be a pleasant thing" (59).

Phrases such as, "we all agree," and the even more fervent "All, without exception," appear frequently in Harrison's text and unquestionably assert the overwhelming negativity of war (59, 56). And, as in Remarque's *All Quiet*, the use of the first-person-plural pronoun in *Generals Die in Bed* functions not only to draw the reader

into the narrative, but also to universalize the experiences of all soldiers in the Great War. Indeed, the novel's underlying theme of the universality of ordinary soldiers, no matter what side they fight on, is apparent from the outset in Harrison's inclusive dedication: "To the bewildered youths—British, Australian, Canadian and German—who were killed in that wood a few miles beyond Amiens on August 8th, 1918."

The narrative also includes several overt pronouncements about the equality of the suffering among British and German forces, such as the narrator's statement that "infantrymen on both sides suffer, are killed, wounded" in any artillery duel (36). Further on, he explains: "Strangely, we never refer to the Germans as our enemy" (44). In contrast to the newspapers, which refer to the Germans as "the enemy" and "the Hun," the narrator and his comrades only ever "call him Heinie and Fritz." "The nearest we get to unfriendliness," says the narrator, "is when we call him 'square-head'" (44). According to one unidentified soldier, none of the ordinary soldiers—"the gravel-crushers on both sides"—wants to participate in the war (234-235).

Throughout his war experiences, the narrator consistently refuses to blame Germans for the suffering he and his pals endure. Instead, he blames a trinity of enemies: "the lice, some of our officers and Death" (43). The lack of animosity between the opposing troops is borne out by actions on both sides. For instance, Karl's brother pats the narrator's hand "in gratitude," telling him he is a good soldier (120). In turn, the narrator asks his colonel that the prisoners be well treated (122). Later, the narrator demonstrates his fellowship with all soldiers by giving "cigarettes and cans of bully beef" to a group of German prisoners (151).

The consequences of this type of universalization are exposed more clearly in *Generals Die in Bed* than in any of the other anti-war texts already discussed. Consider, for example, the narrator's comments after Brown's death: "We speak respectfully of Brown now. He is dead. He is not the awkward, stupid boy we knew. He is a symbol" (74). The particularity of Brown's life and the circumstances of his death cease to matter if he can be made into a symbol that stands for all soldiers. It no longer matters, for example, if Brown (or any other soldier) is stupid or competent, if he loved or was loved. The depersonalizing effect of universalization even extends to the narrator's rented leave companion who calls the narrator "boy," rather than by his own name (167). To Gladys, "that delightful combination of wife, mother and courtesan," all soldiers are by definition interchangeable (167), much as the narrator assumes the interchangeability of all mothers, wives and courtesans. In this way, the text demonstrates how universalization has fully and finally erased all differences, reducing individuals to an undifferentiated mass.

As in the other anti-war texts, above and beyond the impossibility of individual response to circumstances, it is narrative structure that finally and fully guarantees the universalizing message in *Generals Die in Bed.* As always, the anti-war message ultimately depends on where the story ends. In this case, the choice to end the narrative with the narrator's blighty wound, just before the armistice, supports its message of universal hopelessness and despair, because it suggests that combatants, whether they have won or lost, lived or died, are invariably marginalized, and are left outside events, without any real future. Generals may, or may not, die in bed; but it is the lowly soldier

who is doomed by "the big lie" of the anti-war canon to endless death-in-life as he exits the scene on a litter which will hold him in "Blighty."

Chapter 3: Refuting the Myth of Passivity: Social Levelling and Social Inclusivity

In the third chapter of *The Great War and Modern Memory*, "Adversary Proceedings," Paul Fussell asserts that "gross dichotomizing is a persisting imaginative habit of modern times, traceable, it would seem, to the actualities of the Great War" (75). As examples of gross dichotomizing, Fussell points to the "gross physical, moral, and imaginative" distance between the "troops" and the "Staff" (82), as well as the estrangement of the troops from civilians (86). Fussell will look in particular to Siegfried Sassoon's poetry and fictionalized memoirs for illustrations of such social dichotomies. Indeed, the disjunction between enlisted men and officers, as well as the alienation between soldiers and civilians, are absolutely central to canonical anti-war literature. These themes, however, can be marginal in, and even absent from, less well-known Canadian Great War narratives. Instead, such writings, including representative selections drawn from two memoirs and a novel—Jack O'Brien's *Into the Jaws of Death* (1919), James Pedley's *Only This* (1927), and George Godwin's *Why Stay We Here?* (1930)—are more appropriately characterized in this chapter by their balance and inclusivity.

More specifically, these Canadian texts assume a politics of social levelling. Rather than treating all members of a category alike, as happens so often in the gross dichotomizing of the anti-war narratives, individuals are evaluated on the basis of merit. Thus, these texts do not, for example, paint all generals as incompetent and indifferent "donkeys," nor do they celebrate all soldiers as brave heroes. Instead, each officer and soldier is judged according to his actions and attitudes. In addition, these texts cast a wider net, so that they are, generally, more socially inclusive than anti-war texts. Thus,

expanding on Jonathan Vance's formulation in which the soldier *is* Canada, these texts emphasize connections and similarities between soldiers and civilians (whether in Europe or at home). Taken together, the sort of social levelling and social inclusivity that one finds in these works tends to refute the myth of passivity, because such values require individuals to act autonomously, and to make independent decisions. In turn, each individual is accountable for his actions and decisions, not according to rank or social position, but in terms of his ability. More autonomous subject than helpless pawn, such an actor may (within the context of his particular circumstances) be responsible for his own fate.

Into the Jaws of Death

The title of Jack O'Brien's *Into the Jaws of Death* (1919), with its reference to a line from the third stanza of Alfred, Lord Tennyson's heroic "The Charge of the Light Brigade," prepares readers for a celebration of traditional notions of glory and honour in war. And, with its opening dedication to the officers and men of the 28th Northwest Battalion, and a foreword written by H.D.B. Ketchen, commander of the 6th Brigade—of which O'Brien's 28th Battalion (Saskatchewan) made up a part, along with the 27th (City of Winnipeg), the 29th (British Columbia), and the 31st (Calgary)—this text might best be considered in the vein of a battalion memoir. Despite its patriotic chauvinism and military enthusiasm, however, this very early inter-war text does anticipate some of the patterns common to later, more balanced, Canadian texts about the Great War. The first part of

Into the Jaws of Death offers an autobiographical account of O'Brien's Great War experiences, including his military training and tours of the front line as part of the 28th Northwest Battalion, as well as his experiences as a prisoner of war, including his multiple escape attempts, and his eventual escape into Holland. The second part of the text continues in absentia the narrative of the 28th Battalion, ostensibly as told to O'Brien in letters by his friend Bob Goddard. A final segment consists of two narrative poems/marching songs about the 6th Brigade.

O'Brien's personal narrative begins with an account of his enlistment in Moose Jaw in August of 1914 (3), of training over the fall and winter in Winnipeg (5-19), of crossing the Atlantic at the end of May, 1915 (21-23), of further training at Shorncliffe camp in England from June to the middle of September (26-44), of arriving in France (47), and of touring the trenches for the first time at Kemmel, south of Ypres, at the end of September. Here, O'Brien is introduced to trench life, including the incessant roar of the guns, knee-high mud, and heavy shelling. The narrative skips quickly over the soldiers' routine rotations out of the front line, to the support line, to rest billets and back to the front, to focus instead on more spectacular events, such as the explosion of enemy mines beneath the trenches occupied by the 28th Battalion in the fall of 1915, and the Canadians' repulse of the ensuing German attack. Similarly, after brief descriptions of Christmas in support billets (67), a "glorious" New Year's Day in rest billets (68), and several quiet winter months, O'Brien offers a more detailed account of a raid on the German trenches at the end of February, 1916 (72). The raid, O'Brien reports with some pride, "was a great success, and it was the biggest thing of the kind that had been attempted up to that time" (75).

Of more moment is the 28th Northwest Battalion's bitter battle for the craters in the St. Éloi sector in April 1916, where the battalion suffers heavy losses (84). After several tours in these "hot" trenches, O'Brien and his pal "Mac" McMurchie volunteer for temporary transfer to a branch of the Royal Engineers, seeking what they consider to be a "bomb-proof" job with the tunnellers in the Kemmel dugouts (89). O'Brien describes working on the tunnels, using pick and shovel in airless shafts with no room to stand upright (93) and with constant risk of German torpedoes (94). As partial compensation for the hardships of tunnelling work, the sappers enjoy shorter shifts and longer rest periods in quiet billets (94). "Altogether," O'Brien observes, "the work was a pleasant change when our muscles got hardened to it; and there was always something interesting turning up" (94).

Soon, however, this "fun" comes to an end when O'Brien and all the Canadians working with the Royal Engineers are transferred to the Canadian Engineers, where things were "very different" (100-104). Now, O'Brien digs "a protection sap" "only twenty feet" below the surface and mans a listening post in one of these tunnels, which, for O'Brien**,** "seemed almost like being buried alive" (104). Here, he misses the short work shifts and long rest periods he enjoyed while with the Royal Engineers (104). Things will soon get worse for O'Brien, when he and some other sappers are buried in their tunnels as the result of a heavy German bombardment. "This," O'Brien explains, "was a serious matter, for it meant cutting off our supply of air as well as our chance for escape—it would be bad enough to be killed in a fair fight, but we didn't relish being buried alive" (106-107). After eventually digging themselves out, O'Brien and a small group of sappers and infantrymen emerge from the bombed-out tunnels to find that they

are now behind German lines and in the midst of the Battle of Sorrel (110). The group is gradually diminished as they attempt to reach their support lines, dashing from one shell hole to the next, engaging in desperate, vividly described hand-to-hand fighting whenever they encounter Germans in the craters (111-114). After a series of narrow escapes, O'Brien and his one remaining companion leap into a hole occupied by a dozen German soldiers. Seriously outnumbered, the two men are taken prisoner (114).

The remainder of O'Brien's autobiographical narrative describes his experiences as a prisoner of war. Neither treated for injuries nor adequately fed, the prisoners are transported by train to a large prison camp near Dulmen in Westphalia (124). O'Brien describes the harsh conditions of prison camp life, replete with several kinds of security fences (poisoned, electrical and high wire), with segregation of prisoners by length of captivity and by country of origin), and more particularly with an enduring lack of nutritious food (124-127). He also offers detailed descriptions of the farm work he and his fellow captives are forced to do as prisoners of war (133). O'Brien's narrative frequently highlights his fellow prisoners' acts of resistance. For example, O'Brien explains how the prisoners defy their German captors by answering questions with witty mockery (121). Similarly, he describes how the prisoners "go through the motions" of planting potatoes in the fields, and then dumping all the potatoes in one large hole, thereby thwarting the Germans' aim of having prisoners contribute to their war effort through food production (134).

The prisoners also resist their German captors by attempting to escape. When their nearly completed escape tunnel leading out of the Dulmen prison camp is discovered, O'Brien and about fifty other prisoners are taken to Camp K 47, a place with

an “evil reputation” which is “known among the prisoners of war as the ‘Black Hole of Germany’” (138). At this camp, the conditions are far worse: the barracks are filthy, foul smelling, and infested with fleas (139). Worse still, the guards at this new camp “are always savage and cruel” (139). Despite international laws prohibiting forced prisoner labour, O’Brien and his comrades are put to work in the coal mines; those who refuse to work are abused and tortured (140). O’Brien describes his work in the mine, where he loads coal into a cart, which he then pushes to the main tunnel. Here, it is not just the German soldiers who are brutal and cruel, but the civilian mine managers as well**.** All the while he suffers through this slave labour, O’Brien resents more than anything the fact “that the Germans were getting so much out of [him]” (142). Again, O’Brien’s narrative focuses on how the prisoners resist the Germans, whether by filling the cars with stones that jam up the machines, or by wearing a grin on their faces even while dying under slow torture (147-150).

After O’Brien and some other prisoners are caught hiding in unused shafts to avoid work, they are sent to tend the coke ovens as punishment (156). There, the prisoners work twelve-hour shifts every day and must shovel thirty-two tons of coke apiece, except Sunday when they work a twenty-four hour shift and are required to handle sixty-four tons of coke per man. Those who are unable to fulfill their quotas are dragged in front of the red-hot ovens and forced to stand in the heat “at the point of a bayonet” until they fall unconscious (159). Fortunately, O’Brien is reunited with some old pals, Nickelson and Macdonald, at the coke ovens, and the comradeship they share makes the heat and the fumes of their hellish punishment somewhat more bearable (157). Nevertheless, under these conditions, O’Brien reports that, “The strongest men are being

crippled and broken down in health in this work (of course the weak ones die very soon)" (160).

In the spring of 1917, O'Brien and two other prisoners, Blacklock and Woods, begin making plans for escape. They acquire a map and a compass from a German civilian (167), collect provisions for their journey, and slip past the guards at shift change (169). After five nights on the run, the three escapees are caught by the military police near the town of Stadtlohn, just short of the Dutch border. They are returned to Camp K 47 where they are questioned and sentenced to ten days in solitary confinement on bread and water rations (179-182). Following the ten days of punishment, O'Brien is put back to work at the coke ovens. Five days later, he and Macdonald make another escape attempt, this time having made more careful preparations, particularly in regards to preparing clothing that will enable them to blend in with civilians. After travelling a hundred miles through fields, forests and swamps, and after surviving many close calls with tracker dogs, military police, border guards, and unfriendly civilians, O'Brien and Macdonald manage to cross into Holland, where they are welcomed and fed by their Dutch hosts. Next, they travel to the British consul in Rotterdam, and then to England, where they arrive on the auspiciously patriotic date, July 1st.

The second part of *Into the Jaws of Death* describes what happened to O'Brien's comrades in the 28th Northwest Battalion, especially those in No. 10 Platoon, after he was taken prisoner at the Battle of Mt. Sorrel in the spring of 1916. Bob Goddard's account begins with a detailed description of the platoon's journey from reserves to the front line and their work repairing damaged trenches in the St. Éloi section. The platoon's casualties are vividly described: Blair is shot through the thigh, and "Poor Scottie! his

jaw was shattered" and "blood was pouring from his mouth" (223). A few nights later, No. 10 platoon is sent back up to the front. Again they suffer casualties: Tucker is shot in the face while on a wiring party, Jack Branch gets "a shrapnel bullet through the arm" while working on trench repairs (224), and Tommy Gammon is shot in the arm while replacing a sand-bag (225).

After a period in rest billets, the 28th Northwest Battalion is sent back to the front line where they take part in the Battle of Hooge (225). Goddard describes the position of all the companies involved (227), the long march to the front through the ruins of Ypres (228), and their successful relief of the Royal Canadian Rifles (229). Goddard's account includes the text's most vivid descriptions of battle and the physical horrors of war. In this intense fighting, the battalion of one thousand is reduced to 272 men in three days. What is left of the 28th Northwest Battalion staggers back to Ypres after having been relieved by the 29th Battalion (238).

The 28th Battalion's next trip into the front lines is at Hill 60 (246). Goddard misses some of the action here, however, because he is sent out on a course where he is trained in the use of Stokes trench mortars (249). Goddard rejoins the battalion in time to return with them to the St. Éloi craters (249). There, Goddard receives a minor head wound and spends two days at the dressing station (250), before the 28th Northwest Battalion moves to the Somme (251). On the night of September 14th, 1916, the 28th Northwest Battalion moves into the front line near Courcelette. Goddard works as a runner with the Stokes gun crew during an advance on the German trenches. Though there are heavy losses, the Canadians are firmly established in the village as a result of this advance (256).

Following a period of rest, the 28th Northwest Battalion marches north to the Souchez front near Vimy. Though this section is fairly quiet, Goddard's account notes that "the mud was awful" (261). Goddard is pleased to get leave at Christmas (261). He omits all details of "those ten short wild days in London," but asserts that "it was like getting to heaven after being in hell" (261-262). Goddard rejoins his battalion in the trenches early in 1917. When not holding the Souchez trenches, Goddard takes part in the Canadian troops' extensive preparations for the Battle of Vimy Ridge (263). Goddard's account describes the Battle of Vimy Ridge and his role as a Stokes gunner in detail (266-273). After the battle, and once they are relieved, Goddard and his comrades stumble back to Neuville St. Vaast, where they get food, rum, and rest (273).

Goddard and the 28th Northwest Battalion return to the front line in time to participate in an advance on Fresnoy (274). Goddard describes the attack and subsequent German counter-attacks. He remarks without bitterness: "Fresnoy fell into their [the enemy's] hands again in spite of the fierce resistance our boys put up" (276). After another tour in the Fresnoy trenches, Goddard and the 28th Northwest Battalion are taken out and given a month's rest (278).

The 28th will not be sent back into the trenches at Lens until the summer of 1917 (278). There, the Stokes guns are positioned in the basement of a ruined house, a location that offers Goddard and the other members of the gun crew some comfort and protection (279). Soon, however, Goddard and the Stokes crew are sent into the line at Liever, where, in contrast to their safe basement in Lens, their position is "hellish," because it is subject to shelling so violent that their guns are "either blown up or buried at least twice a day" (280). In August, the 2nd Canadian Division, including the 28th Northwest Battalion,

takes part in an attack on Lens. Despite five successive German counter-attacks and heavy losses (an “awful slaughter”), Goddard describes this action as a success (282). Goddard and his gun crew participate in another attack on Lens the next night (283); but, in the confusion of the fighting, he and his gun crew advance too quickly, passing the advance party and running into “a bunch of ‘square-heads’” (284). Goddard asserts that what followed was “the damnedest scrap [he] was ever in,” and that the close-quarter fighting with those Germans was “like a horrible dream” (285). He is seriously injured in the leg by a bomb (286), and, following a frightening night hiding in a dugout with other injured men, he is carried off the battlefield on a stretcher (289).

Goddard’s narrative comes to an end with an account of his movements from the front lines to Blighty—passing through a dressing-station and then a clearing-station, travelling on a Red Cross train and in an ambulance, recuperating at a big base hospital, and crossing the Channel to “dear old Blighty”. After finally arriving in Canada, Goddard describes himself as “a civilian with fifty-six pieces of iron in my leg to remind me that I spent Two Years in Hell” (291). Two final narrative poems, or marching songs, celebrating the 6th Brigade’s courage, “The Red, Red Road to Hooge,” and “The Iron Sixth” make up the third and last part of *Into the Jaws of Death*, these final pages conjuring up the heroic patriotism suggested by the title.

ii

Such a composite text with its overt expressions of patriotic sentiment—including O’Brien’s declaration of his intense devotion to Kitchener and pride in being one of the “Britishers” (41)—may be off-putting to today’s readers, but there is no sugar-coating

whatsoever of the brutalities and horrors of war in *Into the Jaws of Death*. O'Brien's account of his first tour in the front lines unflinchingly describes the difficult physical conditions the soldiers endure: the constant rain, the knee-high mud, the inevitable lice, the disgusting rats (68-70). As in the more familiar canonical anti-war texts, a range of multi-sensory images captures much of the violence of war. For instance, the sounds of war are translated with striking clarity in this description: "machine guns were enfilading our trench—just at my feet was an old empty water can, and the bullets going in sounded as though some one was playing a drum" (229-230). Similarly, the sights and smells of war are vividly represented in Goddard's description of the 28th Northwest Battalion's march through the "mass of ruins" that was Ypres, en route to the Battle of Hooge:

> It was here that we saw the affects [sic] of war—dirty, horrible, stinking war. Hundreds of people were buried when Ypres was bombarded, and the stench of the place was unbearable … Dead horses were lying everywhere, showing that the road we were on had been shelled earlier in the evening. We didn't know what minute they would open up again. … [D]ead men were lying everywhere, and we couldn't help stumbling over them on our way in. (227-229)

Certainly, there is no glossing-over here of war's destructive violence.

Moreover, there is not the slightest pretence that soldiers are undamaged by this violence. O'Brien notes the physical degradation of combat when he observes the "poor wrecked bodies of the prisoners" upon his arrival at Camp K 47 (140). Later, Goddard describes the damage of artillery shells on human bodies. While fighting in the Ypres sector, Goddard sees nine of his comrades lying dead in their trench: "The shell must

have burst just above them, for they were full of holes, and their clothes were on fire" (233). A few steps further on, Goddard finds a body "almost entirely buried in the dirt and wire netting" of a recently bombed trench. After he and Mac dig frantically to free the still-breathing man, Goddard reports that "there was a hole in his back that I could put my fist in" (234). In another unflinchingly gory account, Goddard describes the blood "streaming" from his own leg wound (286) and how "the bone was sticking out through the side" (287). These detailed descriptions of the physical damage caused by war, much like those in the canonical anti-war texts, distinguish *Into the Jaws of Death* from the rant of heroic narratives as much as from the plaint of passive victimization.

Into the Jaws of Death also records extensively the emotional and mental damage which soldiers suffer in war. After his initiation to sudden death and horrific killing in the trenches, O'Brien reports in more traditional language**,** with considered understatement**,** that the loss of "about fifty of our brave boys … made us feel very sore" (63). More openly, O'Brien will later describe the disillusionment and brutalization so commonly found in later anti-war texts in the following description of a comrade's breakdown:

> Webster got lost and for twenty-four hours, that night and the next day, he lay out there [in No Man's Land]; in the daytime he had to lie still and at night he couldn't find which line was ours; and machine guns were spitting all ways. At last he crawled near our trench and heard the boys talking, and he came in; it was two days after when I saw him—five days before he had been a happy, daredevil sort of a boy—now he looked like a corpse with living

> eyes of coal. He never got over it, and after the Battle of Hooge was invalided home, a complete wreck. (86)

Goddard offers a similar account of a soldier's breakdown after the Battle of St. Éloi: "Fred went around looking like a ghost," for he "had never gotten over his experience in No Man's Land, his eyes were sunken in his head, and he was nothing but a wreck" (221). Further on, Goddard reports his own shell-shock symptoms after participating in the battle of Vimy Ridge: "now that the strain was over I couldn't sleep and I shook like a leaf" (273).

Brutalization and demoralization, however, are only part of the story in *Into the Jaws of Death*. In contrast to the unremittingly dark tone and singular focus on the horrors of war in the canonical anti-war texts, O'Brien also includes comic elements in his narrative. For example, he recounts an incident in which he falls into a muddy shell-hole while on a carrying party: "the boys were fairly killing themselves laughing, and I don't blame them *now*, for I must have been a pretty-looking bird; I was plastered from head to foot with mud, and dirty water streamed over my beautiful features" (60). The ability to see a lighter side persists even in the POW camp. When contemplating the dubious origins of the meat in their soup, O'Brien recalls that "the cook (who was a French prisoner) very obligingly lifted out some bones with his long spoon and showed me one of Fido's legs. That settled the question, and, naturally, I enjoyed the soup more than ever. As an extra treat, to give it a special flavour, sometimes they threw in the bark" (127). Here, and in other examples, the comic tone contrasts with the ironic pessimism common to the later anti-war narratives. Furthermore, O'Brien includes positive

recollections in his narrative. For example, his assertion that, "at rest billets we had lots of fun," is entirely un-ironic (95).

Into the Jaws of Death also presents readers with something other than the inevitable demoralization found in the later anti-war texts. Though O'Brien feels "very sore" at the loss of fifty comrades, he is not crippled by despair. According to O'Brien's account, he and his fellow soldiers resist despair even in the direst circumstances. Shortly before he is captured by the Germans, O'Brien asserts that "there was just one chance in a thousand of our getting through, but the idea of staying and giving ourselves up never entered our heads." At the same time, O'Brien avoids the false note of heroic bravado by continuing to acknowledge his genuine fear, such as when he writes: "It took quite a bit of courage to make the first dash, but at 2.30 [sic] we started out over the shell-swept ground. The shell holes were only from ten to twenty feet apart, but I assure you it seemed quite far enough" (111). Thus, *Into the Jaws of Death* finds a middle-ground between the unrelieved pessimism and despair of the later anti-war texts and the naive heroism and rampant patriotism of more traditional war narratives.

O'Brien's account of his time as a prisoner of war offers even more telling evidence of his balanced approach. For example, he dedicates many pages to detailed descriptions of the inadequacy and poor quality of the food in German prison camps, noting, for example, that "for breakfast," they received only "a small bowl of coffee made from dried acorns, and served without milk or sugar. It was so bitter as to be almost undrinkable, and there was not one morsel of food given with it." "For dinner," O'Brien continues, "we were allowed a bowl of stuff they called soup. It was made by boiling cabbage and turnips with a few dog bones" (126). According to O'Brien, the prisoners'

poor food was a deliberate plan by the Germans "to reduce our numbers by a process of slow starvation" (127), and he reports losing eighteen pounds during his first two months in the camp (130). Indeed, the physical degradation he suffered as a prisoner of war is most tellingly revealed by the before-and-after photographs of O'Brien that make up part of the text. The photo, labelled "As I looked before I saw Germany," is of a bright-eyed, square-shouldered young man in the prime of health. In contrast, the photo, labelled "As I looked when I left Germany," shows a sunken-eyed, hollow-cheeked and slump-shouldered man (213). O'Brien notes that the starvation conditions in the camps sometimes brought out the best, and sometimes brought out the worst, in the prisoners. On the one hand, he recounts the "old prisoners" generously sharing their meagre food stores with the new arrivals: "The boys had none too much for themselves and it meant a great deal to give up any of their precious food; but they knew, from experience, that we were starving" (125). On the other hand, he describes prisoners fighting "over the garbage cans for the peelings of potatoes, and cabbage" (127), and the near-drowning of one of the prisoners in the soup can when the others "crowded in on top of him" in their rush to get their share (128). By insisting on the fact that the prisoners were neither saints nor sinners, and could as easily be both heroes and degraded beasts, O'Brien's account provides a truly balanced picture of the prisoners' responses to the harsh conditions of prison-camp life.

In further contrast to the later anti-war narratives, *Into the Jaws of Death* does not portray soldiers as hapless victims of larger forces. Instead, they are represented as autonomous actors, able to make choices (albeit, within the limits of their circumstances). A pattern of autonomy and resistance to dogmatic authority is established from the outset

of the narrative. When describing the early days of his military training, O'Brien asserts that it "was hard for us boys who had been on our own hook for several years to get used to the discipline of the Army. We were used to doing exactly as we liked, and the unquestioning obedience demanded did not come easy" (8). O'Brien includes several stories about his resistance to authority—"crimes" such as deliberately staying in bed past reveille, as well as smoking and telling stories while the rest of the battalion participates in training "skirmishes" (12-14). And, in significant contrast to the unrestrained abuse of trainees by training officers seen in the later anti-war narratives, O'Brien describes the clever revenge he takes on "the old Major" who metes out particularly "stiff" punishments because he "had it in" for O'Brien (14-15). While this and other "pranks"—such as sneaking off the transport ship to see Montreal (20), taking unauthorized leave to visit London (38), or hiding in pubs while the battalion goes on route-marches through the hilly British countryside (39)—may seem petty or even childish acts, they function as precedents for future autonomous actions and demonstrate that, unlike their counterparts in the anti-war narratives, O'Brien and his comrades are not cowed and beaten into submission during their military training.

Indeed, O'Brien and his comrades will continue to express their resistance to army regulations and hierarchies even at the Front. For instance, while working as tunnellers in the Kemmel dugouts with Royal Engineers, O'Brien, his pal Mac, and the other Canadians all "had some good times together," engaging in "pranks" designed to obtain extra rations of rum or pay (99-100). According to O'Brien, the object of these pranks was not so much the rum or the money, but "the fun of getting something that we were not supposed to have" (100). The sort of "spirit" that leads O'Brien and his

comrades to engage in such acts of resistance is likely what enables them to resist fear and despair as well. Goddard's description of the beginning of the Battle of Hooge is just one telling example. Rather than wallow in helpless anxiety while waiting for orders to move up, the men of the 28th Northwest Battalion decide to sing. Goddard writes, "We thought we might just as well enjoy ourselves, so we got up an open-air concert. It certainly was a dandy, and we had no end of a time" (226).

According to O'Brien's account, it would seem that some degree of autonomy and choice is even encouraged among Canadian soldiers. When preparing for a raid, for example, the "boys" are permitted to choose their own weapons. Treated neither as automatons nor as sheep, "they were all allowed to arm themselves in any way they wished. Some carried revolvers, others the handles of our entrenching tools (these had small iron cog wheels at one end and they made an excellent shillalah), a few had bombs, and one of the boys, Macpherson was his name, armed himself with the cook's meat axe" (74). Here, the specific mention of Macpherson's name (soldiers are individually named far more often in this text than in the anti-war texts) emphasizes the individual identities of the soldiers.

Indeed, this more relaxed form of discipline, with its encouragement of autonomy and individuality, seems to be characteristic of the Canadian military**,** and is certainly in keeping with democratic notions of merit and equal opportunity. The story of Harold Rust**,** for example, supports this notion of social levelling. According to O'Brien, Harold Rust

> … had spent several years in Canada, but happened to be in England when the war broke out and he had joined up with a London

> regiment. He had been one of Kitchener's "Contemptible Little Army" and had seen considerable service in France—he had been wounded and at the time Bob met him was home on sick leave—but he had been in America too long to enjoy the discipline of the British Army, and as he said himself he was "fed up" with it. So he asked Bob if there was any chance of getting into our brigade. (30-33)

Of course, he does get the transfer to the Canadians, where his initiative is both valued and eagerly welcomed. This story not only suggests differences in the command of the Canadian and British armies, but also points to broader socio-cultural differences between the two societies, which, in turn, suggests why Canadian and British memories of the Great War would sometimes differ. The Canadian social system, based on a myth of equality and meritocracy, allows and even encourages individual will and initiative. If individuals and individual actions are valued, it is less likely that individual differences will then be effaced and ignored. In contrast, the more rigid class system in Britain limits the scope of individual initiative, contributing to a myth of helpless passivity in the anti-war texts and a narrative tendency to universalize.

Unlike the anti-war narratives, which consistently assert the universal powerlessness of individual soldiers, *Into the Jaws of Death* affirms that the choices made by individuals can and do have some bearing on the war's outcome. For example, according to O'Brien, the Germans are held back at St. Éloi, thanks more than anything to "individual pluck" (87). O'Brien most clearly highlights the crucial importance of

individual initiative in his description of a raid on the German trenches in February, 1916:

> But before they went out, two men, Conlin and another chap, stole quietly out and cut the enemy's wire entanglements—they lay there for hours right under the noses of the Germans cutting a gap for our boys to go through—I assure you it was ticklish work; the success of the whole enterprise depended on their skilful, silent work. The slightest noise, cough, or sneeze, would mean their own death and the failure of our plans, but nothing happened and they had everything ready at the appointed time. (73)

These soldiers are hardly passive sheep led to slaughter; rather, they participate in decisions and activities that have direct consequences for themselves and those around them.

While in German captivity, O'Brien and his fellow prisoners are subject to various degrading abuses and dehumanizing experiences common to the soldiers in the anti-war canon. When first captured, for example, O'Brien remarks that he and his fellow prisoners are "herded together like a flock of sheep and driven ahead" (117-118). Soon, the prisoners are so famished that they are "more like famished wolves than human beings" (126). In their red-striped prison overalls, the POWs look "like a bunch of robins" (141). As in the canonical anti-war texts, multiple animal images appear to suggest dehumanization. In *Into the Jaws of Death*, however, despite the dehumanizing effects of imprisonment, starvation, and even torture, O'Brien and the other prisoners insist on being independent and autonomous actors. Nothing makes the continued agency

of the POWs more evident than their repeated acts of resistance and successful escape attempts.

Of course, O'Brien's escape (after twice being captured, once right on the Dutch border) may well be read as national propaganda of the patriotic hero whose indomitable spirit and clever initiative serve as an inspiring example for potential recruits. In this reading, O'Brien's portrayal of himself as the ideal Canadian soldier may well be compared to Ralph Connor's creation of an idealized figure in Barry Dunbar. Without discounting the potential propagandistic function of the narrative, however**,** the fact that O'Brien and his comrades are never reduced to will-less slaves sharply distinguishes this Canadian war narrative from the canonical anti-war texts.

Structural elements also suggest a more balanced approach in *Into the Jaws of Death*. Most obviously, the plot is structured to end with homecoming rather than death. Whereas the canonical anti-war narratives frequently end with the (suicidal) death of their protagonist, *Into the Jaws of Death* ends with the return to Canada of both O'Brien and Goddard. This more hopeful outcome reflects, as well as produces, a more balanced recollection of the Great War, as does the attempt to unite the story of an individual prisoner of war together with what happens to the battalion in his absence. This corporate form will not lead, however, to a sense of collective anonymity and passivity, but to a sense of collective purpose. A collection of individuals is thus brought together in a narrative of collective heroism, not universal despair.

Smaller-scale structures also contribute to a balanced narrative. In particular, readers see the frequent use of the "but" structure at the sentence level—a pattern that will also be seen in other balanced Canadian texts about the Great War. For instance,

O'Brien describes the horrors of a torpedo attack in the "Kemmil [sic]" tunnels: "It just missed our tunnel and the concussion was so great that it gave us a great shaking up. Poor Skinny lost his hold on the ladder and fell into two feet of water. I was scared stiff, for I didn't know what had happened." A narrative in the anti-war canon might well have ended the description here. In *Into the Jaws of Death*, however, O'Brien moves readers past the horror when he continues, "but when I caught sight of Skinny sitting in the water I just roared. … I found a little loose earth knocked down—that was all the harm it did, except to give us a good scare" (94-95). Similarly, Goddard's description of the shell that struck Chappie during a German attack in the Ypres section offers another example of the "but" structure:

> Chappie was struck by a piece of that same shell, and he got it right through the lung. Oh, how he did suffer! We couldn't take him back to the dressing-station on account of the terrific shell fire, and he lay in a sheltered part of the trench slowly bleeding to death. We took turns in going to see him. "Tell my little girl that I died fighting," he said to Bink. His chum, Marriot, came rushing along—"Oh, deah boy, I'm so sorry you are hit—cheer up, old chap." He, like the rest of us, didn't know what to say. But old Chappie didn't "go west" after all. He was ill for a long time, but was finally invalided home to Canada. (233)

Here, the description of Chappie's seemingly fatal wounding, especially the last words to his daughter, comes perilously close to the sentimental pathos that frequently mars the more traditional patriotic war narratives. The insertion of the "But" saves this scene, not

only from cloying sentimentality, but also from the hopeless pessimism of the anti-war narratives.

A middle ground is likewise achieved by the "But" in Goddard's description of his feelings on returning to the trenches after ten days' leave at Christmas:

> After you have had eighteen months of hell, war is not the grand romantic thing it seemed at first. The boys feel as if they were on their way to a funeral, and the worst of it is, it may be their own. But once in France, every one seems to brighten up again, and the game goes on as before. (262)

This passage denies the "romance" of war, and yet asserts that there is still comfort in "doing one's bit" alongside those who share the same burdens and risks.

In further contrast to the later anti-war texts, *Into the Jaws of Death* expresses neither sympathy for, nor identification with, the German soldiers. While the anti-war narratives assert the universality of the experience of trench warfare across national lines on the grounds of a commonly shared destiny, this narrative draws very clear lines between "our lads and Germans" (258). According to O'Brien, the Germans are brutish thugs—cruel to prisoners (116, 118), civilians (118), and even each other (115-117). Further, they also lack "spirit" (147) and "know nothing about the first principles of fair play" (148). Finally, despite the many features which locate this work between traditional patriotic texts and the later anti-war narratives, this unpalatable anti-German bigotry links *Into the Jaws of Death* more closely to the more traditional patriotic Great War narratives, and weakens its role as a fully "balanced" text.

Significantly, the anti-German bigotry found in many traditional patriotic war narratives has much in common with the antipathy towards civilians and/or army brass found in the later anti-war texts. Officers and civilians are generally well-loved and respected in *Into the Jaws of Death*. It is such a binary opposition of "us versus them" that prevents both types of unbalanced war narratives from a full and truthful representation of the Great War experience. The more balanced war narratives avoid the either/or dichotomies that exclude an authentic middle ground.

Only This

James Pedley's episodic, even picaresque, memoir, *Only This* (1927), goes a fair distance towards gaining this middle ground in recounting his experiences as a Lieutenant with the 4th Canadian Infantry Battalion in France from 1917-1918. Following an epigraph taken from Robert Browning's *Fra Lippo Lippi* (the significance of which will be explored later), the narrative opens in November, 1917, as Pedley and a small group of fellow junior officers board a train on the first leg of their journey from Bexhill, a C.E.F. training camp in England, to the trenches in France. After eighteen months of training, including six months of waiting in England, Pedley is eager to participate actively in the war—to take part in "the great Thing" (2). Once at the Canadian base camp at Étaples, Pedley waits to see his name posted on the list of officers who will go up the line "to replace the fallen" (5). Shortly, he and some other junior officers travel to the Canadian Corps Reinforcement Camp near Calonne-Ricouart (7-10), before moving on to Chateau

de la Haie, and the First Brigade reinforcement area (12). During a week of light duties at the Chateau waiting to be assigned to a company roster, Pedley visits a nearby company mess and tours the old battlegrounds around Notre Dame de Lorette, within sight of Vimy Ridge. Like Sassoon's *Complete Memoirs of George Sherston*, much of the early part of Pedley's narrative is presented as a series of first experiences. At Notre Dame de Lorette, he sees evidence of the horrible devastation of war for the first time (15). He also experiences the sights and sounds of war for the first time when he watches a nighttime bombardment from a distant vantage point. From this distance, Pedley notes, "the scene was tragic only in an impersonal way. Its vastness, its magnificence, was the dominant note" (16).

Soon, however, Pedley is more fully immersed in the actualities of war. Along with two other junior officers, Grassett and Gordon, he proceeds to Carency, where the 4th Battalion is in reserve billets (16). As part of his account of joining the 4th Battalion, Pedley offers character sketches of the officers under, and with, whom he will work (17-20), and recalls his initial struggles to fit in with his fellow officers and to develop leadership skills (20-21). On the night of the 6th or 7th of December, 1917, Pedley leads his first working party from the support trenches into the trenches near La Coulotte (21-23). A few nights later, Pedley participates in a reconnaissance trip "up through Givenchy to the Red Line," to observe the condition of the trenches. (24-25). He enjoys reconnaissance much more than work parties, and is excited to visit the front-line trenches for the first time (25-26).

In late December, 1917, Pedley and his Company finally move up to occupy the reserve Red Line trenches for a week. He is surprised to find that the trench "seen by

daylight, was a very livable place indeed." No shells fall near them during the seven days of this first tour, and the only excitement for Pedley is his unexpected meeting with General Arthur Currie. Pedley reflects that he was "initiated very gradually" into the "fighting game" (29-30). He experiences the more serious aspect of trench warfare when he and a small group of officers visit the Sullivan Trench in preparation for taking over the sector. When the group comes under shelling, Pedley feels his "responsibilities as a British soldier surge up" in him, and he wants to behave bravely, though he feels a little "shaky" (31). Pedley recalls the remainder of the tour in the Red Line trenches as a series of work parties that allow him to meet and get to know the men he commands, including Buck Hutchinson and Chapman.

As "C" company takes over the more active Sullivan Trench, Pedley is aware of the increased danger of their position: "the star shells that had looked beautiful from Notre Dame de Lorette now were more sinister" (36). As in other Great War narratives, the narrator describes getting lost in the maze-like trench system and his fearful response to the uncanny darkness and silence of No Man's Land (38). While in Sullivan Trench, Pedley first meets two friends from training, Bill Amsden and Bill Ostic, (39), then sees "the Boche" for the first time, and takes a turn as spotter for a machine-gunner manning a Lewis gun (41). All in all, his experiences in Sullivan Trench leave Pedley feeling "a good deal more [of] a soldier" (40).

When the battalion leaves Sullivan Trench, Pedley is next sent out of line on a six-day gas training course at Hersin-Coupigny (42-43). While he enjoys the socialization, which, he notes, serves to increase and encourage camaraderie between battalions, Pedley is glad to return to his own battalion after gas school, because he looks

forward to the "binges and parties" that he will enjoy as part of a Christmas and New Year's out of the line (45).

In January, 1918, while the Battalion is out on rest in the coal-mining city of Divion, Pedley gets command of No. 10 platoon (47). He finds that his training at Bexhill has not prepared him adequately for his new responsibilities; however, his batman, Louis Morin, is very competent and is able to help. Soon, Pedley settles in to the routine of censoring letters, leading parades, drilling, and training. Later, he is pleased to see his men happy and finds some happiness himself, visiting friends billeted nearby (55). While still on rest, Pedley gets a temporary promotion to commander of the scout section.

Pedley is "very proud" of his success as he and his scout section lead the Battalion on a route march out of Divion and to St. Pierre on the 21st of January, 1918 (60). The seven days in St. Pierre are "brimming with experience" for Pedley. There, he receives his first small wound, when he is bruised by a piece of shrapnel, and he also begins in earnest his new job as a scout (61). Then, he is "ordered down the line to an intelligence school at Lillers" (66). After a week of training, he rejoins the rear details of the Battalion at Les Brebis on their way to Mazingarbe, which "was to be the battalion's new home" (69). His memories of Mazingarbe are "very sweet" because of the close friendships he develops with Bottles and John Gordon, and because he is with his own platoon where he feels "at home" (69). During the Battalion's seven-day rest in Mazingarbe, Pedley is assigned military court duties, including investigations and courts-martial, because he has had some legal training (like Godwin's Stephen Craig) (71). He also participates in some reconnaissance assignments out of Mazingarbe—work that leaves Pedley tired, but "joyful" (75). The week in divisional reserve ends "in a great

festivity," as the company welcomes Captain Jolliffe as its new commander (75). Though aware that they would soon head back to "the abyss" of war, Pedley reports that he and the rest of the battalion are "happy with our picture shows, our special dinner and our drink" (76).

Next, Pedley leads his platoon into Loos. Looking back, he notes, "it seems to me that war began for me then. What went before was prologue. I had not seen death. I had not known fear. With Loos the real play begins" (77). Pedley and the No. 10 platoon are loaned to D Company under the command of Major Stagg, and, while the rest of the Battalion moves into support lines, Pedley and his men go into the Chalk Pit (82). The Chalk Pit, Pedley explains, is "a most peculiar front line," because it lacks regular bays and traverses. Though the large dugout offers some comforts, the Chalk Pit is also a site of gory horrors: "For the pit was also a cemetery. The dead lay there thickly, with only a few inches of soil above them; one shell had killed a man—the next had buried him. What the shells bury they disinter," thereby exposing "a mouldering and dismantled corpse" (86). Night patrol in No Man's Land in front of the Chalk Pit is a particularly uncanny activity, evoking "a nascent mystic feeing of tension" (87). Before leading his first night-patrol, Pedley struggles to control his fear (88); once he clambers over the rim of the pit, however, he forgets his fear entirely, and feels instead a "surge of content" and pride that he is finally "in the front line" and filling "a man's part." At the same time, he feels the burden of his responsibility more heavily: "I was doing the thinking for twelve men besides myself and it was no mean job" (89). The rest of the tour in the Chalk Pit is described as a series of incidents: the threat of an attack that never comes, the leadership challenges of dealing with a "misfit in the line" who is unable or unwilling to stand watch

(98), the investigation of an apparently self-inflicted wound (99), the attempt to earn leave in London as a reward for catching a prisoner, and the death of one of his men, Smart, in a bombardment (102).

In the early Spring of 1918, Pedley and his platoon spend sixteen days out of the line in Braquemont. Again, Pedley is pleased to see his men's happiness while out of the line: "The men are enjoying this sunshine as they sprawl about the doorways of their billets, or throw the ball to and fro. Already the drab trenches and the dugout are forgotten" (104). Pedley recalls leading work parties and attending meetings at battalion H.Q. (105), as well as problems with Chapman's drinking, and John Gordon's infatuation with a local girl (106). He also recalls the anguish of March 19th, 1918, when a deserter was executed by firing squad. "This was," Pedley asserts, "the only execution of which I had first-hand knowledge in France" (107). Some of the time in Braquemont is lost in a blur of drunkenness (108), though he is still able to recall the good times he shared with John Gordon, and the hilarious Dumbells Concert Party (109).

Next, the Battalion does a tour of brigade support in Loos. Though he hears stories about the big push, he remains on the fringes of the tensions brought on by the German Spring offensive. While the whole world shudders "with grief and terror" on March 24, 1918, Pedley is "happy and at peace" out of the line. When Pedley is sent up to "reconnoitre a position up Hulluch way," he meets the British troops currently holding the line and is shocked to see that officers and soldiers alike are incompetent and overly casual about the war (113). The Canadians are eager and excited as they move up the line to relieve the British troops, and Pedley is inspired and comforted when he hears the men "sing for joy" (116).

While the Battalion is still in support near Loos, Pedley is sent ahead to reconnoitre Arras (122). For him, Arras seems a holy place, because it has so often been the site of strife and strain throughout history: “It has been burned over, pillaged, drenched in blood, times without number. One cannot visit Arras at any time without hearing in one’s ears the call of the past.” He is shocked to see “a great city, now dead,” “bodies of some horses, fresh killed,” shell craters, ruined buildings (123), and “dreary waste” (124). The next day, some men of the Battalion are killed and injured by shelling as they move up the line through Arras (127).

The Battalion moves into the dangerous trenches east of Telegraph Hill, and south-east of Arras, on or about April 1, 1918, where they suffer a gas attack and heavy shelling (129). Pedley recalls his frustration when a platoon in “C” company is left in a dangerous position because his observations of the landscape and the position of the line are not trusted: “no one higher in the scale than I would believe what I said, or take any stock in the neat map I drew to demonstrate the situation. Likewise no one higher up than I would go up to see for himself” (130). Even so, Pedley is sent up the line night after night to re-map the area (130). He offers a particularly vivid description of one terrifying night he spends in No Man’s Land in the rain and under heavy shelling (131-133). The experience leaves him “weary and dispirited” (133), but a shot of rum and the rising sun help to improve his spirits (134). He is, however, more deeply and more lastingly affected by John Gordon’s death a few days later. This particular loss leaves him dazed, embittered, and even suicidal (139-140). The whole Battalion is exhausted when they move out of the line and into rest billets at Bray Camp near Écoivres and Mont St. Éloi (145).

With a unique focus on battalion politics that is a characteristic feature of *Only This*, Pedley describes how, while at Bray Camp, he and his fellow junior officers are driven “into open revolt” by the “thoughtless and humiliating” treatment of the senior officers at mess. The junior officers, therefore, set up their own separate mess, which they name “The Little Puddle” (147). Together, the junior officers spend “happy days” out of the line (147), although Pedley still suffers intense grief over the loss of John Gordon (149). After a week of much-needed rest at Bray Camp, the Battalion is ordered “to move forward again, into the sector which lay astride the river Scarpe, the corridor to Arras. While the Battalion is in brigade reserve near the Scarpe, Pedley does a lot of mapping, and offers detailed descriptions of the landscape in the tone and style of a walking-tour guide (151). He also takes part in Chapman’s court martial as a character witness in his defense (152). Then, Pedley and the scouts tour the trenches in the Feuchy sector before the battalion moves forward into the front line (158).

Shortly after the battalion takes over the Feuchy trenches, Pedley inspects the German wire in preparation for a raid. Despite his report that the wire is still intact, the colonel gives orders to go ahead with the raid. Pedley describes the raid in vivid detail, including his enjoyment of the barrage against the German line and his eagerness for close contact with the enemy. He also reports his disappointment that the Germans, in expectation of the raid, had dropped back, leaving the Canadians to find nothing but empty trenches (162). Worse still, the Canadians suffer eleven casualties and leave behind one of their dead, whose identification the Germans will recover (164). On the last night before they are relieved, the 4th Battalion regains the honour it lost in the failed raid by capturing a German prisoner—a task accomplished only through a series of lucky

accidents. The battalion goes out of the line for a long rest over the summer, feeling buoyed by their success (166-170).

Arriving in St. Aubin on April 29th, 1918, the 4th Battalion stays out of the line for over two months, resting and training (171). The pastoral landscape steadies the men's nerves and improves their tempers. By the time the battalion moves to Izel-les-Hameaux for three weeks of training, the Junior and Senior officers are eating together again (174). The men enjoy their rest, especially brigade sports (175). Though he spends some time suffering with the flu, Pedley, too, recovers his spirits, even shaking off the melancholia he suffered after John Gordon's death, before the Battalion moves back up the line (176).

During a week at Anzin filled with sports and work parties, Pedley becomes so "fed up" with his job, where he has "neither proper weapons nor due recognition," that he leaves the scouts and rejoins "C" Company (178). At Cambligneul, where the battalion spends almost a month, Pedley is assigned to enforce spit and polish regulations. At first, he does so reluctantly and only "for the good of the service" (182), but soon he is pleased with the good results as he sees "the platoons becoming smarter and cleaner" (183). He wrangles a trip out of Cambligneul to the coast, where he spends a great weekend eating in restaurants and living "once more for a brief moment the unrestrained joyous life of a French city, crowded with petit poules [women]!" (184). Pedley also recalls several raucous parties in Cambligneul (185-187).

After the battalion moves into reserves at Écoivres, Pedley recalls a battalion concert party which features cross-dressing and black-face acts (188). He also recalls missing the Dominion Day celebrations on July 1st because he is sick with the flu again (190). When the battalion moves up the line north of the Scarpe, Pedley and his friend

Bill Ostic stay behind to spend a tour with the brigade's transport lines, which are grouped near Agnez-les-Duisans, "a village some three miles south of Ecoivres, near the Gy river" (192). Pedley and Ostic enjoy themselves on transport duty: "while the battalion was in the line we loafed and read, visited the picture shows and rode about the country paying visits" (192).

By mid-July, 1918, Pedley is well-rested and "happy to be up the line again" when he rejoins the 4th Battalion in some quiet, "comfortable reserve trenches" located "a trifle forward of the Amiens-Arras railway" (197). On Saturday, July 27th, his Paris leave comes through, and he is tremendously excited to "see a city, to have a girl, to ride on a bus and wash in a white enameled basin" (198). When Pedley returns from leave on August 5th, the 4th Battalion is already on the move towards the Somme and Amiens (202). Motivated both by patriotic feelings and love of his "boys," Pedley goes in search of his battalion (205). On August 6th, 1918, Pedley learns the location of his Battalion and walks to Boves Wood to join them (206). He is so determined to command No. 10 platoon in the action that he scrounges a hat, puttees, and a gas mask, and displaces Lieutenant Mills, who "took it badly" (207). Pedley records the various responses among the men waiting to attack, including nervousness, excitement, high-spirits and fear (208-212).

At zero hour on August 8th, 1918, the Battle of Amiens begins with a barrage against the Germans (213). In this exciting and action-filled section of the memoir, Pedley describes how, as the Canadians advance, German soldiers are "hunted out, running like mad before the bayonets" and being taken prisoner (213-215). He also describes the looting of bodies and how some Canadian soldiers take great risks to collect

the “spoils of war” (215-216). After their successful advance, the Canadians occupy Cayeux-en-Santerre, where they spend the night (223).

Though conscious of those who have been lost, Pedley recalls enjoying and celebrating the Canadians’ success at Amiens on the morning of August 9th before marching “south of the river to exploit the success of the Fourth Division at Le Quesnel” (224). When they arrive in Le Quesnel about noon, Pedley is surprised and impressed to see the cavalry in action, with all “the old pageantry of battle, the flash of sabers and the foam-flecked withers of galloping artillery horses” (225). As they push forward, the 4th Battalion becomes the front line of the advance (226), and Pedley’s platoon suffers heavy casualties under machine gun fire (227). Though the platoon has run out of ammunition, Pedley continues to move forward, in part because “the line must be kept straight,” and in part because he is possessed by “a sort of fatalism.” The memoir ends abruptly when Pedley is shot in the leg (229). The last lines of the memoir record his walk back to the regimental aid post (230) and an ambulance ride out of Le Quesnel sitting next to a fellow officer who has been blinded (232).

ii

Given its episodic structure, Pedley’s memoir has elicited very little critical commentary. In “‘The Bitterness and the Greatness’: Reading F. G. Scott’s War,” M. Jeanne Yardley aims to recuperate Canadian autobiographical and fictional narratives “that focus on personal experience at the front during World War I.” Following Paul Fussell’s argument that the Great War resulted in the development of the essentially ironic modern understanding, she argues that, “in Canadian literature, this development

reveals itself in the shift from the use of conventional romance language and structures in narratives published during or immediately after the war to an increasingly conscious ironic reversal of such conventions in later texts" (82). Yardley lists Pedley's memoir among those later Canadian Great War texts which reject "a romance recovery of harmony." In particular, she points to the failure to recover harmony at the end of the narrative as a deliberate rejection of the romance plot and romance conventions (98). Further, she notes that Pedley is a non-heroic figure, not only because there is no ascent for him at the end of his quest, but also because he fears death (99).

Jonathan Vance offers the only other instance of recent critical commentary on Pedley's Great War memoir in a series of brief comments scattered throughout *Death So Noble*. In the second chapter, "Christ in Flanders," Vance lists Pedley among those soldier-writers who "railed against the irony of holding church parades at the front," that is to say, those who rejected the seeming hypocrisy of organized religion in face of the horrors of trench warfare (71). In the third chapter, "O Death, Where Is Thy Sting?," Vance quotes Pedley's description of the soldiers' mocking rejection of high diction, in Arthur Currie's famous dispatch of March 1918 in response to the German Spring offensive, as the exception that proves the rule when he asserts that traditional diction and ideas about war were still valid and popular in the post-war years in Canada (101). Vance returns to Pedley again in his fourth chapter, "Accurs'd They Were Not Here," when he uses a quotation from *Only This* to support his argument about the real importance of comradeship as a sustaining force among soldiers (128). Vance offers his most sustained commentary on Pedley's text in chapter six, "Safeguarding the Past." Here, Vance identifies Pedley as one of the Great War writers "who struck the correct balance," and

calls *Only This* “one of the finest Canadian memoirs of the Great War” (189). He goes on to offer more detailed praise of Pedley’s balanced representation of the Great War:

> *Only This* is a memoir of exceptional quality, with neither the unrelieved gloom of the antiwar novels nor the wide-eyed optimism of more propagandistic accounts. Pedley is hardly the stainless warrior; he candidly recounts his own petty dislikes, drinks heavily on occasion, and admits to a conspicuous lack of patriotism. His comrades are capable of great heroism, but they also have very human flaws; they plunder German bodies for souvenirs and can be churlish, dishonest, and greedy. In short, the book captures the totality of the war experience in unusually realistic tones: the horrors of the battlefield and the grumbling soldiers who question why they are there, but also the comradeship of true friends and the riotous evenings spent in local *estaminets*. (189)

Vance also discusses the book’s positive critical reception at the time of its original publication, particularly those reviews emphasizing the narrative’s balanced portrait of trench life (189).

As Yardley and Vance both argue, *Only This* is not an idealized representation of war. The epigraph, “—Sees only this / After the passion of a thousand years,” with which Pedley introduces his narrative—immediately signals Pedley’s resistance to officially sanctioned, revisionist accounts of war that sacrifice hard realities of the flesh on the altar of an idealized version of life. This quotation from Browning’s 1855 dramatic monologue *Fra Lippo Lippi*, depicting the life of the fifteenth-century painter Filipo Lippi, evokes a

variety of associations. In the poem, Lippo describes how the figure of Christ on a crucifix in a church watches with sadness as a man at the altar shakes his fist in anger with one hand, while making the sign of the cross with the other. The epigraph, then, might be read as Pedley's simultaneous condemnation of the hypocrisy of "holy wars" and his reverence for the nobility of sacrifice. The allusion to Browning's poem may also suggests that Lippi and Pedley face a similar conflict: both men are caught between a will to create art that is true to life and external pressures to produce more idealized images. Despite direction from his Prior to focus his art on spiritual themes rather than on the material world, Lippo paints in a naturalistic style. He refuses to ignore or despise the world's physical realities, and insists on representing landscapes and people "Just as they are," because in "their colours, lights and shades" they are all "God's works" (284-295).

Early in his narrative, Pedley asserts a similar position in relation to the conflict between realism and idealism:

> I have set out to express without exaggeration and yet with all the colour that the picture holds, the life and viewpoint of one infantry officer for a short space of time on a little corner of the front. I shall not succeed utterly. To those who were not there my failure may seem entire. To those who lived as I did I shall seem to make mountains out of molehills, so eager were we all in those days to cry: 'There are no mountains, no mountains at all—nothing but bloody molehills.' Yet the sum of these so trivial incidents was life, warm, vivid and manly, in which a man could learn to love and hate. (77-78)

By acknowledging the limits of his own viewpoint, Pedley refuses to universalize his story; by recording the possibility of love *and* hate, he avoids both the cloying sentimentality of traditional romance and the incessant negativity of the anti-war canon.

Pedley shakes off any residual notions of romance that he may have held on board a ship crossing the English Channel to France: "I began to breathe with less distaste the novel atmosphere of reality. What lay ahead might or might not prove to be romance—I saw no d'Artagnon [sic], nor even a Porthos in the crowd on board" (2). Instead, Pedley begins to sense the "awful responsibility" he is taking on. Although war is not a romantic adventure, he senses that he is participating in "the great Thing," and sees himself embarking on what he considers "a man's job" (the war will serve as a test of masculinity) (2). Notions of heroism are also repudiated by Pedley's admission of non-heroic responses to danger, such as when he candidly admits feeling "shaky" under shelling and expresses eagerness to escape the danger (31).

Pedley's realistic depictions of the discomforts and horrors that define life at the front also keep it from falling into sentimentality. In particular, Pedley comments frequently on the difficult physical conditions the soldiers suffer, with particular emphasis on the quality of their billets. For example, the officers' billets in a school-house in Calonne-Ricouart are terribly uncomfortable; with its broken window, the big room is cold and windy. The small fire offers little warmth, even to those who have drawn right up to it. The lorry with the officers' kit bags has not arrived, so they have no blankets, nor any extra clothes. And, the hard floor leaves the officers feeling stiff and miserable (8-9). Pedley offers an equally vivid description of the discomforts endured by

the men he commands. After a work party, he sees his men settle into the inadequate dugouts of Sullivan Trench:

> No bunks there—nothing but the plank floor laid on moist earth and a few candles and brazier-fires making shadows everywhere as the men, filing in, dropped down in little silent groups and fell to unfastening their clothing. A feeling of intense, almost inhuman desolation. A swarm of men, smelly in the dark air, tired and empty-minded, spread about the floor like animals. (35)

The Chalk Pit dugouts are even more appalling—bloodstained, rat infested, "filthy and lousy beyond description" (88).

Gory images also distinguish *Only This* from sentimental romances. For instance, "a dead man's hand extending, fingers half-clenched, from the trench wall" offers "gruesome" testimony of the dangers of shelling in the Chalk Pits (83). Similarly, Pedley describes in horrifying detail the sight of "a mouldering and dismantled corpse" repeatedly buried and disinterred by shelling (86); the smells of "gas and chemicals […] and rotting flesh;" the "slimy water at the bottom of shell-holes;" the "ill-smelling mud" (93); the devastation of Arras (124); the "lacerated" bodies of two soldiers (128); and the swollen corpses of dead horses (210). For instance, after the first day of fighting at Amiens, he sees a soldier with his chin blown away: "Between his lips and his Adam's apple not much was left but a big dark splotch of clotted blood which swelled and contracted with his breathing" (222). Passages such as these offer a depiction of the discomforts, agonies, and deaths that define life at the front and dismiss all romantic notions of war.

Not surprisingly, those exposed to scenes of horror and gore, such as Pedley describes, are sometimes deeply affected. When he first joins the 4th Battalion, Pedley notices that some of the men who survived Passchendaele are traumatized by their experiences: "too often the boys' minds reverted to the horrors of Passchendaele. It was not hard to see that they were due for a real rest out of the line" (42). Pedley suggests the mental degradation he suffers as a result of his experiences in the trenches when he laments the uncertainty of his recollections: "My memory of this jaunt up the line is not vivid. Something of the deadness of trench life must already have taken hold of me" (30). Pedley also notices physical degradation resulting from the horrors of trench warfare. At the end of the battalion's tour in Telegraph Hill, Pedley sees one of the platoons from "A" company return from a night spent lost and wandering in the trenches, "grey-faced and stoop-shouldered," led by a lieutenant who is "looking very pale." On the way out of the line, Pedley sees another junior officer "looking very old and ill" (144). Pedley himself is shaky," dizzy, nauseous and exhausted, and comments that his "nerves were at the breaking point." In fact, he is so unwell that he is unfit to march out of the line with his men and must ride in a supply truck (145). Some men suffer shell shock in response to the brutal realities of war. Even newly arrived drafts, who have not yet seen real combat, may be affected by the stress and strain of trench life, and Pedley recalls a soldier who, on his first tour of duty in the front-line trenches, breaks down "sobbing and shaking on the shelter parapet" after ten minutes as a sentry on fire-step (98). He also remembers another man, "poor Adam Bell, commanding A Company," who "had given way under the strain and gone raving down the line" (167).

As in other war narratives, *Only This* includes evidence that war dehumanizes and demoralizes. For example, soldiers are sometimes described in animal terms: troops are packed into trains "as tight as sardines" (21), their dugouts are like "kennels" (91), and, in moments of fear and desperation, they behave "like rats in a trap" (210). Other images also depict soldiers as non-human. For instance, when filing up the trenches, the men's movements become increasingly mechanical, until they are "jolting and staggering like a line of freight cars on a siding" (32-33). Pedley's description of a barrage also illustrates how soldiers may lose their humanity: "Crump, Crump, Crump—Crump! In they pounded, the big shells turning men into things without shape or colour" (92).

War's demoralizing effects are most evident in Pedley's feelings of frustration when he encounters foolish orders from superior officers. For example, Pedley is frustrated when he learns of the "useless" deaths of four soldiers and the wounding of seven or eight more, because a marching band played too close to the German lines—the sound of the music allowed the Germans to direct their shellfire with accuracy (61). Pedley is also frustrated by tyrannical orders from Captain Davis, who assigns "useless tasks" that drive the subalterns to insubordination (70-71). There are other occasions on which Pedley reports that his "morale began to slip" (131). In particular, Pedley is frustrated by Major Stagg's hostility "to B.H.Q. in any form, and the scouts in particular" (135). As commander of the scouts, Pedley feels Stagg's disregard keenly—so keenly, in fact, that, although he enjoys the work of reconnaissance and mapping, he quits the scouts, and returns to "C" company, because the scouts are denied both resources and respect (178).

Pedley is also filled with a sense of futility when he observes men moving shells back and forth as the front line moves or changes. He recalls stories "of battalions held in reserve which were reduced to exhaustion without ever seeing the enemy through being marched forwards and back along the same road as the battle ebbed and flowed. When the time did come for action their usefulness was at a minimum" (142). A staff foul-up also risks lives when two scout sections are sent out into No Man's Land at the same time, to do the same task. In response, Pedley's and McKenzie's scouts all "join forces to curse the people behind who send out two parties to cross one another on the same job. It might well have been no joke" (161). Again, foolish commands frustrate and demoralize Pedley when brigade H.Q. orders "C" company to retrieve the body of a Canadian caught in the wire in front of the Feuchy sector trenches. It is, Pedley complains, "not only a suicide job, but a useless one, framed to cover up a set of stupid mistakes" (165). Bitter and resentful, Pedley thinks that it is "a desperate exploit […] for no good end; it was folly and nothing else. To squander flesh and blood for the sake of a phantom, a muddled message—how could that be right?" (167).

Though Pedley includes details that demonstrate war's potential to brutalize, dehumanize, and demoralize, on the whole, *Only This* is not given over to the unremitting gloom of the anti-war canon. Despite their circumstances, Pedley observes that the soldiers are generally cheerful, and expresses amazement at "the good humour with which all difficulties were met!" In all kinds of situations, he sees the men joke, argue about sports, "work steadily" and accomplish their tasks (33). Pedley, too, is generally content, and after a good rest he feels that he is "happy to be up the line again" and that it

is "not a bad war" (197). Ironic bitterness, then, is not the only "appropriate means" for writing about the Great War, as Paul Fusell would have us believe.

Indeed, Pedley records many positive memories of the war. For every battlefield danger, dugout horror, or military staff foul-up Pedley describes, he also describes at least one fun party, or hilarious joke, or battalion sports day. He records, for instance, that on the crossing to France, "the little ship's bar was jammed with officers." It was, he continues, "like a class reunion, everybody meeting old friends and making new ones" (3). On his first night in France, he remembers "the warmth and conviviality of that large ante-room at Etaples [sic]" (5). He describes the "feasting and mirth" at the estaminet where he stops in Calonne-Ricourt (8). He recalls "the pouring of whiskey into tin cups" and the "happy remembrance" he carries away after meeting the officers of the battalion for the first time (14). At Christmas he enjoys numerous celebrations: "the company dinners were had, and the sergeants' dinner, and the officers' dinner," as well as "a swank lunch with liqueurs at the officers' club" in Béthune (51-52). "The New Year's celebration" is a similarly "happy and riotous event" (52). Out on rest, sports offer an opportunity for "officers not only of the battalion, but of the whole brigade to know one another better (171). At a pig roast held in honour of Captain Joliffe's M.C., the whole battalion is so hilariously drunk that they are unable to recite grace coherently before eating (186-187). He also remembers the concert party at Écoivres with great fondness. The troops are excited, and "each hit was greeted with a storm of applause. In fact the whole show"—including female impersonators, clog dancing, a black-face act, and "an apache dance"—"got a better reception than any of its promoters had dared to expect" (188). Pedley describes fun and good times in the line, too. He has, for example, "a happy

time" while billeted in a cellar in Loos (78). He describes a party held "in a machine gun company dugout" near Lens, where "whiskey passed and reminiscences were indulged in" (111). Thus, as Vance notes, because Pedley describes the good times as well as the bad, he "captures the totality of the war experience," and offers a more balanced representation (Vance 189).

Fun times and drunken parties are not the only positive recollections Pedley has of the Great War. For Pedley, the war offers opportunities and thrills. Because he is motivated by a desire to lead, to take charge, and to exercise authority, the war is an opportunity to fulfill his "ambition" (14). He also finds fulfillment in the scouting work he does, particularly the reconnaissance and mapping (75). He is also thrilled when he has opportunities to ride in a plane (175) and on a tank (187). He knows that these experiences are rare and appreciates them. Pedley's balanced portrait of war suggests that, although individuals may be changed by their war experiences, the changes they undergo are not necessarily negative. He notes, for example, how "old ways of thinking" gave "place to new" as he continues to gain experience in his new role (2).

This description of the changes suggests that *Only This* is not so much a story of disillusionment, as it is a story of growth. The movement from inexperience to experience is not necessarily a movement towards bitter cynicism. Thus, Pedley does not enter the war as a sheep led to slaughter, or a mindless cog in the military machine, but as a man who finds meaning, and even benefit in his experiences. Indeed, Pedley points to the development of his own "sureness" and "spirit" as "the plot of the piece." The day he arrives in France, he is filled with a sense of purpose that motivates people to "do the job right." And, in France, he is free from "doubts, jealousies, aspirations, discontent," and

the restlessness characteristic of ordinary life. Further, in the line, he feels “relieved by the knowledge that” he is in “the place where the best men were doing the best work” (4). The sense of sureness he feels in France runs deep, into the very core of his sense of self, and even enables him to feel certain of his masculine identity. He is confident in the knowledge that, having fought in France, “he would be presumed to be a real man” (4).

Pedley focuses on other positive aspects of his war experiences, too. The violence and action of war are truly exciting for him. Full of the fighting spirit, he is eager to provoke the Germans in the opposite trenches by “tickling him” with machine-gun fire (41). While in the Chalk Pit trenches, he is very impressed by a violent barrage against the German line. For him it is “a magic scene.” It is, he recalls, “magnificent to hear the staccato barking of our hundreds of field guns behind us, the shrill of the shells above and the continuous roar of explosions as they burst in, around, and over the Boche trenches opposite.” Neither frightened nor horrified, Pedley wants more:

> It was not good enough to hear them, though; emboldened by the knowledge that every Fritz must have his head low now or die, we climbed to the parapet and for a few minutes took an unrestricted view of the eastern vista. Against the huge red sun and the vivid clouds the scene stood out in sharp silhouette. Everywhere over there the ground was in flux—it spouted up in huge bursts as if some unseen giant of a god were making it fly with his heels. Magnificent daylight fireworks. Crump, Crump, Crump—Crump! In they pounded, the big shells and the little, churning the earth, smashing

> parapets and listening posts and latrine saps [...] while it lasted it was incomparable. (92)

This lengthy and vivid description calls on multiple senses, and shows how stimulating the war really is for Pedley.

The single greatest benefit of the war for Pedley, however, is the camaraderie. Indeed, “the bright side of the picture,” according to Pedley, “is the friendship which sprang up among us” (71). Friendship is a “mysterious elixir” that gives Pedley strength and courage (194). For instance, he asserts that “there was no tragedy for me in my entrance to Loos,” that “sacred soil,” that “city of disaster,” because he “went in with friends before and friends behind” (77). Looking back, he asserts the lasting value of these friendships: “nothing can take away the thing that war builds inside a man, the having loved men, and the knowledge that true comradeship can be upon this earth” (78). Pedley especially enjoys the joys of comradeship with Bottles and John Gordon; together, the three are “like three great children” (78), and like “three musketeers” (79). He seems closest, however, to John Gordon, and Pedley’s love for him is as evident as his admiration: “I could not want a better friend than John Gordon was, nor could the King require a better officer. We shared the news from home with one another, and the special dainties in the parcels, and we used to talk sometimes of the big push that we hoped to be in, side by side” (109). Pedley loves and admires the men he leads, too. They are his “own boys” (36), “a likeable bunch,” and he admires them most of all because there is “not a quitter in the crowd” (152). Aside from the deep bond he shares with John Gordon, and the paternal affection he feels for No. 10 platoon, he finds that even a relatively superficial friendship may provide great comfort. On one occasion, when walking

through the trenches at night, Pedley meets a man with whom he had attended Bexhill training camp the summer before. He cannot see the other man's face in the dark, and does not remember his name: "but [they] clasped hands there […] It was a brotherly touch that helped round out an uncomfortable night" (111). Later, Pedley offers his nervous batman, Jules Lavallée, comfort just before the attack at Amiens. He is surprised that his clichéd words "seemed to cheer him up," and pleased that "all that day he stayed at my heels, showing no sign of failing courage" (212). There is no doubt that, for Pedley, comradeship is a real and valuable benefit of participation in the war.

The warm comradeship Pedley describes is not only a positive aspect of war, but also an indication that humanity and compassion are possible in war-time. Contrary to what the anti-war texts assert, not all war participants are so brutalized by their experiences that they are unable to feel more humane emotions. Pedley recalls, for example, his own compassionate gesture on a cold night spent in an improvised shelter: "Somewhere near me a man stirred uneasily and spoke in his sleep. I heard him fumbling with his covering, and knew that, like myself, he was cold. The possibility of sleep being gone from me I got up, found a candle, and by its light I tucked my coat around him over his own. Immediately he lay quiet" (119). Pedley is similarly compassionate during a gas-attack while in the trenches at Telegraph-Hill. When he hears a man "sighing and a sobbing […] wailing that he was blinded," he put his "arms around him and soothed him" (129). Pedley is not the only soldier, either, who is able to maintain his humanity. He observes how deeply the men are "moved" as they mourn the death of a long-service horse killed in the shelling (118). Even in the heat of the Battle of Amiens, he sees "sudden moisture" in the eyes of a soldier who learns that his comrade is dead (218).

Pedley's memoir also suggests, again in contrast to the anti-war canon, that the damage done to men in war is not irreversible. Though the men are "tired and empty-minded, spread about the floor like animals," "just a mass of ebbed-out energy," after an exhausting work party, their degraded condition is not permanent. They undergo an amazing and immediate "transformation" after the arrival of the rum rations, when they begin to talk animatedly in groups gathered around lit candles, "eagerly joining in colloquy, jest, or song," playing cards, eating, and reading letters. All their "cold and weariness" is soon "forgotten" (35). Pedley describes a similar transformation at the baths, where the men's strong, fit bodies are revealed, and he sees the company "transfigured, ennobled" (50). Pedley likewise experiences such dramatic recoveries. Though he is traumatized by the death of John Gordon—a loss that sends him into a suicidal depression—he emerges from his grief, happy again, and "feeling that the world was good" (176). And, like the men, he is revived by a shot of rum when he is down: "It just took a big tot of rum to drive the blues away and all I felt from then on was a lust for the adventure that increased with the paling of the stars" (212).

Further, Pedley's observations about miners serve to contextualize war's potential to brutalize and dehumanize. When passing through the hamlet of Maisnil-Bouche, Pedley buys a meal from "a crippled peasant," a man who is "a veteran, not of the wars but of that other man-eating institution, the mine." Pedley includes a surprisingly detailed description of the man. His damaged body is "lean" and "hard," (not unlike Art, who, along with the whole 19th Battalion, is "gaunt and hard" after a tour in the front lines south of Arras [190]), and he has a "withered arm." He seems, Pedley comments, "to have known little but work and trouble throughout his forty-odd years" (11-12). To

Pedley, the man is “a piece with the scene” in this war-damaged area of the French countryside, because his life is wrecked by mining, and his country is wrecked by war. The parallel established between mining and war suggests that war is not the only phenomenon that damages bodies and lives. In addition, Pedley observes and records two very different responses to these forces of devastation. While the French man is stoical and “untouched by the wreck of his life, nay the wreck of his whole country,” his wife is cheerful and “an atom of bright life amid desolation” (11-12). There is no universal response to life’s difficulties.

Pedley avoids universalization quite deliberately. He explains his approach metaphorically: “The canvas is a huge one, all sorts of pigments go into its make-up” (4). Therefore, he treats every person as an individual pigment, unique in itself and a contributing element in the larger whole. No individuals are lumped together into some faceless, nameless, undifferentiated mass and no one individual serves as the model or type of a larger group. Pedley’s attention to individual identity is evident in his frequent use of names. It is not “some soldier” or “one of his platoon” who is killed, it is “Smart” (102). Even the enemy is carefully named and identified, as “Michel Wolfsteiner, Iron Cross (Second Class) stretcher-bearer in the Seventh Company, 14th (Bavarian) Infantry Regiment Hartmann” (167). In addition, he depicts each individual with scrupulous attention to balance and fairness. His fairness is particularly evident in regards to his depiction of Captain Davis, with whom he had a discordant and jarring relationship. Pedley is hesitant to discuss Davis at all in his memoir, wishing that Davis’s reputation might be “shielded” after death, that “all trace of [his] sorry relations with him” might be erased erase from his memory, “as well as from this record.” “But,” Pedley continues, “a

true story must contain the bitter with the sweet, must chronicle petty things with important" (19). On the one hand, Davis is overly serious and overly formal, obsessive about following orders and writing reports, and an authoritarian tyrant, distrustful, envious, and fearful of his fellow-officers and cruel to those he leads (19, 37, 54). On the other hand, Pedley acknowledges reluctantly, "he had good qualities. He was a hard worker, and sincere," and "the men and N.C.O.s generally respected and even liked him" (19).

Pedley is equally fair in his depiction of Chapman, a much loved comrade: "although he had the soldier's vices, he had the soldier's virtues, too" (34). Chappie is an excellent soldier in a fight (brave, cool, skillful), but a terrible soldier out of the line (undisciplined, alcoholic, short-sighted) (152, 172). Pedley is even fair when describing the actions of H.Q. Though he frequently finds fault with staff decisions, and their decision-making process, he gives praise where it is due. For example, when his battalion takes over the Sullivan trenches, he acknowledges that "the relief had been well planned," and "quickly executed" (36). Though some individual members of the general staff may sometimes make some bad decisions individually, they are not donkeys. Pedley does not use the broad brushstrokes seen in the anti-war canon.

Structural patterns in *Only This* also function to create a more balanced representation of the Great War. Much as we see in O'Brien's *Into the Jaws of Death*, syntactical structures pivoting on "however" and "but" set up a balanced view. For example, Pedley records both the negative and positive circumstances when he recalls meeting "officers who had been through Passchendaele": they "had grim stories to tell of the wrack of the shells on the Belgian plain; but they looked both healthy and happy and

knew their mules by their first names" (15). He offers a similarly balanced description of his billets in Mazingarbe: "I think of squalor, and the smell of rotting refuse that hung around the tawdry brick houses. … And yet, my memory of Mazingarbe is very sweet" (69). In this case the horrible physical conditions are offset by the friendship developed between "the three musketeers" (Bottles, John, and Pedley).

Emplotment will sometimes serve a similar purpose, balancing the bad with the good. For instance, Pedley records a tragic story about an amputation, then tells a funny story about drinking with his pals, before describing a sombre funeral ceremony for "two boys" killed in action at Amiens. As another example, consider the alternation of good and bad circumstances in another series of incidents. Pedley remembers the happy excitement he felt when he is granted leave, the horrified dread he felt when passing by "a wayside Calvary" on his way out of the line, where the dead still lay where they were killed and where "[f]resh blood stains the earth," and the abundant love he felt when observing the beauty of dusk on the road out of Bernville (198-199). As elsewhere in the memoir, the oscillating organization of such episodes privileges balance and eschews the unremitting negativity of anti-war narratives.

Finally, extra-textual material, specifically the editorial additions which frame Pedley's narrative, serve to highlight this balanced structure of the memoir. The preface to the 1999 CEF edition of *Only This* contains explanations for the text's obscurity, justifications for republication, and biographical information about the author. In addition, the preface also incorporates background information about the Canadian Expeditionary Force, addressing topics such as recruitment, training, disposition, and the patch system for coding Divisions, Brigades, and Battalions ("crucial to the development

of morale and loyalty"). The final paragraph of the preface directs readers to a balanced representation of the Great War: "The rest of Pedley's story needs no explanation. It is the story of men at war with all their flaws and strengths." The men depicted in Pedley's memoir are neither the degraded victims portrayed in anti-war texts, nor the romantic heroes presented in traditional jingoistic narratives. And, readers are prepared to expect that Pedley's narrative will generally rely on more multifaceted patterns of both/and rather than the more two-dimensional patterns of either/or which are operative in the canonical anti-war texts. Further, the epilogue, which follows "L'Envoi" in the CEF edition, tells how Pedley was evacuated to England for convalescence, then returned to fighting in France—rejoining the 4th Battlion on October 12th, 1918. It goes on to report Pedley's movements with the Battalion, including the final advance towards Mons at the end of the war. After the armistice, the 1st Division marched into Germany as an occupying force, so Pedley did not leave for Canada until March 14th, 1919. The epilogue also notes that Pedley was awarded the Military Cross and records the complete citation. Given its final, even-handed sentence—"James Pedley, the cynic, was now also a war hero"—the epilogue takes readers out of the hopelessness of the last lines of "L'Envoi" about a blinded officer, and, instead, celebrates Pedley's heroism, thereby overturning a potentially tragic ending (233).

Why Stay We Here?

George Godwin's lightly fictionalized autobiography, *Why Stay We Here?* (1930), also presents a balanced representation of the Great War in telling the story of Stephen Craig's experiences as a junior officer in the C.E.F. in the Great War. A dedication to Ben Gray, "killed in action, April 10, 1917," functions to make the work itself into a kind of memorial for the dead. In its specificity, Godwin's dedication avoids the universalization of the more general dedications in the canonical anti-war texts. Republished in 2002 under the imprint "Godwin Books" by Godwin's great-nephew, Robert Thomson, in an effort to revive Godwin's literary reputation, the republished edition includes a number of additions: a new subtitle; a preface by Dr. Reginald H. Roy (a professor of Military and Strategic Studies at the University of Victoria) (7-8)[5]; an introduction (9-19); explanatory notes at the end of every chapter; photographs of Godwin's family, of the British Columbian locales that inspired "Ferguson's Landing," and of patients in a military hospital; as well as a copy of the front page of an issue of *Land & Water* and a page from Godwin's Officer's Field Book.

The novel/memoir, which itself comprises twenty chapters (each broken into multiple parts) and an epilogue, opens in Ferguson's Landing (a logging and farming community located along the Fraser River in B.C.) with various responses to the news that "England has declared war" (23). In a scene reminiscent of the erotically charged and highly aestheticized introductory portrait of Barry Dunbar in Connor's *Sky Pilot in No Man's Land*, Stephen Craig is introduced as the protagonist just as he is about to go for a swim, naked, with his body and his blood "flashing" (23). The first chapter describes the

changes war brings to Stephen's community, including the incessant gossip about the war, as well as new tensions between neighbours. Stephen is "unmoved" by tales of German war atrocities, because "such foul deeds did not square" with his memories of a "romantic land" and a "kindly people" recalled in a series of flashbacks about his school years spent in Germany (29-32). In February 1915, Stephen is asked to take a commission and lead the local infantry company. He agrees reluctantly, regretting that he lacks the courage to take a pacifist stand against the war, and all wars (33). Stephen, however, is rejected at his physical, because his vision in one eye is inadequate. He is told to come back later when the rules are more relaxed (33-34).

The next chapter details Stephen's struggle with poverty. He and his wife, Alice, and their two small sons, are so impoverished that they must use their last remaining funds to return to England where they can live with family. While Alice goes to live with her mother in Ireland with the boys, Stephen goes to London. After two weeks of persistent effort, he is able to petition Sam Hughes, the Minister of Militia and Defence, directly and get a commission as a subaltern with the C.E.F. (and, thereby, a source of income to support his family). The remainder of the chapter describes Stephen's training at Sandling Camp, his painful leave-taking from his family, and his departure for France (44-46).

The third chapter introduces Stephen's two new comrades, O'Reilly and Piers, and describes their first trip up to the front-line trenches facing Vimy Ridge. A footnote directs readers to a non-existent map—one of several editorial/proofreading errors in the text (47). On the way up the transport lines, Stephen sees the devastation of war: desolated landscapes, "shell-churned earth," and broken trees (48). The front is not what

he or any of his fellow officers has expected: “there was no noise, only astonishing inaction. Uncanny silence. And talk of a poker game” (47). The three newly drafted junior officers meet their commanding officer, Major MacDonald (52). Immediately, Stephen suffers under the heavy burden of his rank and responsibility; he feels awkward and insecure because he is required to lead men who “knew infinitely more about the game than he, Stephen, did” (53). During his first tour, Stephen learns about trench life. He sees the mud and corpses in No Man’s Land and narrowly escapes sniper fire (53). He experiences the discomforts of dugout existence, with its total lack of privacy, rats, short rations, and foul-tasting drinking water (55). He feels alien, isolated, and alone, and fears that no one will ever understand him in all his complexity (59).

The battalion withdraws to support trenches, where the men endure a terrible cave-man existence (61). Next, the battalion marches to Ablaine-St-Nazaire, where the men enjoy the “Ecstasy of hot water” and the luxury of clean clothes (64). From this reserve line, Stephen and his platoon are sent up to dig trenches and lay wire in No Man’s Land, in the pouring rain, with inadequate equipment (66). While not leading work parties, Stephen and Piers have the opportunity to climb Notre Dame de Lorette. From this high ridge, they survey the whole Douai plain: “ruined Arras,” the village of Ablain-Saint-Nazaire, Vimy Ridge, Liévin and Lens. It is, Stephen observes, a “desert of destruction and ruin” (73). Soon, the battalion goes back up the line, this time taking over the Calonne sector (80). Stephen, two N.C.O.s, and twenty men are assigned to the “Souchez” Advance Post. In the cold and dark of early morning, Stephen and his platoon go overland to take over this “sacrifice post” (81-83). There, the men suffer twelve hours of horror and anxiety in a “wet and malodorous” dugout, waiting to “take the shock of

possible attack" (83-84). As the Calonne sector heats up, Stephen is traumatized by the death of one of his men (96-97). Rumours fly about tunneling and other preparations related to the impending attack on Vimy Ridge (100-101).

Just as Stephen and the men come to the end of their endurance, the battalion moves out of the line and out of danger to camp in Bouvigny Wood (104). Even when they are miles behind the front line, Stephen continues to feel overwhelmed by his duties—the countless details he must oversee, and the multiple roles he must fulfill (121). In particular, he is exhausted by having to be "mother and father" to his men (121), and resentful of the spit-and-polish formality of church parade (125). While out of the line, Stephen observes the demoralization and degradation of other officers, and recommits himself to maintaining his "deeper self … sane and sweet and whole, incorrupted" [sic] (132).

Though the battalion returns to the front line (again near Vimy) "rested, refreshed, re-equipped" (138), and despite his personal vow to be "in the war, but not of it" (132), Stephen is dispirited and disillusioned. He contemplates the futility of war, noting that, for the soldiers, victory or defeat makes little difference. They are all, he thinks hopelessly, damaged by war, no matter the outcome (142). He also begins to think that all soldiers are victims, blindly stampeded into the war, "unjustly condemned" (143). Despite some thoughts about the sustaining powers of camaraderie (144), Stephen continues to feel helpless and frustrated. He blames the whole of civilization for the war, and for "imprisoning" soldiers in the trenches (147). He also blames the brass, "those minds that controlled one's life," those "dictators" whose orders always include a threat (of court martial and firing squad) (148).

Stephen at least gets some respite from his heavy responsibilities and unhappy ruminations when he and Piers are detailed for a bombing course (150). The two officers pass through a fierce bombardment as they travel towards the rear along a route running parallel to the Arras road (151). The violent shelling, the destruction of the landscape, and Stephen's imaginative contemplation of possible mutilations, are juxtaposed against the natural beauty of a verdant field, in which they stop to rest. Immediately, Stephen is refreshed and renewed by this pastoral scene. At last, he even feels free and happy (152).

While at the bombing school, Piers and Stephen enjoy the comforts of Nissen huts, and sound sleep (153). Though Stephen is sick throughout the course, he studies the bombing manuals in bed, and does well on the course (153). In fact, he does so well, that he is sent back out of the line again to the village of Lières where he takes on a job as an instructor of new drafts (154). Stephen thus becomes a temporary part of a "new-born unit" that will receive additional training in preparation for the great attack on Vimy Ridge (155). More loyal to the men he commands than to the military establishment, Stephen follows the rules only as far as necessary and does what he can to "cheat the machine" in order to improve conditions for the recruits (158).

When his friend Piers is ordered back to the front lines, Stephen must first watch Piers, then the new draft, and then his batman Pilk head to the front while he stays behind (165-168). Stephen is hollowed out by these losses, and carries on in his duties without much enthusiasm (169). When he hears reports of the massive bombardment at Vimy and about the fates of his friends (172)—Pilk and Piers both die in the attack (173)—he makes a conscious effort to summon up emotions like pity, because he does not want to

be like Major MacDonald, who is so brutalized by war that he no longer feels anything (175).

When Stephen gets leave and goes to visit Alice and his sons (178)**,** his wife notices how changed Stephen is (179). She is so concerned by his physical appearance that she presses him to see a doctor. Though he is six feet tall, Stephen weighs only 118 pounds (180)! Stephen is sent before a medical board and is passed as “fit for home service only” (181). He then reports to a training camp in the South of England where he is assigned to light duty in a Reserve Battalion. Alice moves to a cottage close enough that Stephen can now visit on weekend leaves (181). Because he had some training as a lawyer, Stephen is assigned to duties at district courts-martial, where he “prosecuted without enthusiasm” and “defended men … acting as prisoner’s friend, fighting obstinately for acquittals” (190).

Though only assigned light duties, Stephen does not shake off his illness (190), and is hospitalized shortly after the armistice for pleurisy and tuberculosis (195). He is deeply affected by the suffering of other patients in the hospital, particularly those with facial mutilations and multiple amputations (196-199). Soon, Stephen is “boarded and marked for transport home” to Canada (199). Though Alice and the children stay behind, Stephen sails out of Liverpool on a hospital ship (200). Again, he is deeply affected by the suffering of the other patients on board (201-203). The ship docks at Portland, Maine, and after a six-day train trip, Stephen arrives in Vancouver. There, he spends a year in hospital recovering (205).

The novel ends with an epilogue set five years after Stephen had first left Ferguson’s Landing and one year after his arrival back in Vancouver (207). As he walks

towards the orchard he had abandoned, Stephen expects to see evidence of five years of neglect, but he is pleasantly surprised to see his "young orchard in full blossom." The new orchard, grafted to the old Gravenstein that is now dead and cut down, is, for Stephen, "a symbol of life, and of death. It was the symbol of birth, growth, and decay; and, thereafter, of rebirth and renewal" (210). The sight of his flourishing orchard reassures Stephen that those who died in the war are "not dead" (210).

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A rare recent estimate of Godwin's novel does appear in "Christ in Flanders," the second chapter of Jonathan Vance's *Death So Noble,* where the book is represented as "a bitter and powerful tale" (43). In support of this analysis, Vance points to the soldiers' loss of faith in the notion of a loving God, and asserts that *Why Stay We Here?* "is full of protest against the use of religion in war" (43). In place of traditional religion, Vance argues, soldiers often took solace from a deeply felt connection to the figure of Jesus Christ:

> Godwin had clearly agonized over the relationship between Christianity and war and had concluded that there was no place for organized religion in the carnage at the front. There was, however, a place for Jesus. He, like the soldiers, had been condemned to suffer for the sins of others. Christ, then, was the quintessential symbol of the man at the front. (43)

Later, Vance most clearly misreads the novel when he writes:

> Godwin concludes his novel by admitting that the soldiers were universal victims like Jesus; in the final chapter, he leaves us with a powerful image: 'what were these marching men as, if not as Christ, Archetype of all suffering, sacrifice? … A battalion of Christs bearing the sins of the world along a northern road of France.' (43)

The image of Jesus as victim is nothing like the concluding image of Godwin's novel. Instead, Godwin ends his story with images of renewal and rebirth—images more closely associated with the risen Christ.

In another context, Vance will return to Godwin's work in his fifth chapter, "The Soldier as Canada." Here, he highlights Godwin's assertion that the Canadian soldier's relationship to Britain is that of a son to his mother. According to Vance, "maternal symbolism" evoked comforting feelings of "stability in turbulent times" by personifying tradition and by affirming the continuity of Canadian history (150). Vance quotes passages in Godwin's novel that emphasize the analogous correlation between mother and son/Britain and soldier to illustrate the development/construction of the myth of the soldier as Canada.

Pierre Berton would soon second Vance's assessment of *Why Stay We Here?* in his characterization of it as a "bitter novel" (301). In *Marching as to War: Canada's Turbulent Years 1899-1953* (2001), Berton divides books of the post-war period into two categories: "what might be called the Holy War school of authorship and the Obscene War school that followed" (300). Drawing attention to vividly realistic passages in which Godwin describes a military hospital and soldiers' mutilations, Berton puts Godwin's *Why Stay We Here?* firmly in the anti-war camp (301). Similarly, Michael Rogers's

recent book review categorizes *Why Stay We Here?* as an anti-war text when he calls it Canada's "answer to *All Quiet on the Western Front*" (134). Only Wesley C. Guvstavson comes close to acknowledging the novel's more balanced approach, particularly in Godwin's recounting of the diverse motives which led men to enlist (including one officer who "declares his enjoyment of the war and his desire for it to continue"), but also in his view of the sustaining power of comradeship. Finally, however, Gustavson lumps *Why Stay We Here?* with the anti-war canon because of its overriding "cynicism and fatalism." In his evaluation of supplemental text, together with the editorial notes included in the new edition, Gustavson does praise the utility of both the preface and introduction, though justly observing that the "editorial notes are at times idiosyncratic," and that the entire "work could have benefited from more alert proofreading" (198).

As Robert Stuart Thomson argues in his introduction, however, *Why Stay We Here?* is both too "complex" and too "rich in empathy for the terrible suffering, both military and civil," to be dismissed "with one damning word: 'bitter'" (14). Indeed, Godwin's text offers a more balanced representation of the Great War than those found in either the traditional stories of heroism or the canonical anti-war texts. In part, Godwin's journalistic style serves to quash any accusations of sentimentality that might arise from his concluding scenes of "resurrection." Aside from a few lyrical passages, his prose is characterized by simple, direct sentences. Sometimes his short, staccato sentences function mimetically, such as this description of a woodpecker pecking: " High up on the mottled alder is a green woodpecker. Tap, tap, tap. Hard bill on bark. Tap, tap, tap" (99). Content, however, is what most obviously distinguishes Godwin's narrative from sentimental romances. In contrast to anodyne or bowdlerized tales motivated by patriotic

jingoism, Godwin never glosses over the harsh realities of war. He includes, for example, lengthy passages about the horrors of trench life, such as this vivid description of rats:

> Rats are everywhere. Not apprehensive marauders ready to run at a sound. No. It is man who is on sufferance here. The line is the metropolis of the rodents, their Canaan, their happy hunting ground. It is their kingdom, reaching from the Channel to the Argonne. There never were such times, never such endless feasting! Yes, life goes easily with the rats. They have built this unseen realm underground, a honeycomb of runs, and each one leading to a grave. You may have seen their beaten tracks, and sometimes at night watch them migrate, moving shadows. Battalions of rats, brigades, divisions, whole army corps of them: silent, stealthy, wise. They slide over the parapet and flash black against the earth into their holes. They sit, beady-eyed and insolent, returning stare for stare. Fat, oh monstrously fat, they are! Like cats, some of them. And others are diseased, with gaping ulcers on hairless flanks. (88-89)

Such anthropomorphization of the rats contributes a suggestion of the uncanny to the passage, while the shift to the second person pronoun, “you”, draws the reader into this disturbing scene.

Romantic notions and illusions of heroism are similarly excluded in Godwin’s vivid descriptions of rotting corpses encountered in the “wet and malodorous” dugouts (84). A man who dies in the trenches is not honoured and feted as a warrior, but, instead, is buried in a shallow grave where his body rots and putrefies in the mud, causing “a

stench more vile and stronger than all stinks put together." For Stephen, the smell is unforgettable: "For this stink is death. The distillation of corruption. Abominable" (88). Clearly, Godwin is not interested in protecting his readers' delicate sensibilities from war's most repugnant realities.

As seen in other war narratives, *Why Stay We Here?* further breaks the rules of propriety by including the protagonist's musings about bowel movements. Stephen describes the difficulties of defecation in the front lines: "It is a humiliating ordeal, for it is necessary to crouch or take the risk of a sniper's bullet. An ordeal to be got through, somehow. Mud, chlorine of lime, corruption." It is an ordeal that leaves Stephen retching, and its inclusion in the novel leaves no doubt that Godwin's text is not meant to be heroic romance. Stephen juxtaposes his recollection of the front-line latrines with recollection of civilian life: "In the open, in the privacy of the bush, the office of nature is without offence; an act of humility, an acknowledgment of the bond with Mother Earth. Soon decay will be cleansed, made sweet again. Manure" (89). As elsewhere in the novel, the language can be highly poetic, as in the repeated "o" sounds of "ordeal," "chlorine," "corruption," followed by "open," "office," and "offense," which function to call attention to the contrast between trench life and civilian life.

Unlike jingoistic war narratives, and more like canonical anti-war narratives, *Why Stay We Here?* offers abundant evidence of the damaging effects of war. Stephen notes these effects on the French landscape when making his way to the Kellett line facing Vimy for his first tour:

> Here was desolation. All sign of green was gone from the landscape. And soon there was only the uniformity of a shell-churned earth, and

> ochreous yellow, or deeper dun. Tree stumps, here and there, stood like witnesses to man's crimes against the earth and the life thereon, and the sweetness thereof, and the fullness thereof. (48)

Again, Godwin's use of poetic language calls attention to the differences between the imagined pastoral beauty before the war and the war-damaged landscape. Here, the alliteration of "green" and "gone" emphasizes the contrast with the "deeper dun." In addition, the mournful assonance of the "o" sounds in "ochreous yellow" reflects the protagonist's dismay. As a farmer, Stephen is particularly sensitive to war's negative effects on what was once productive land. Stephen also observes changes to the natural order in the Calonne sector, where "Grass and wild flowers were gone, birds and rabbits had withdrawn, and in their place the rats had come, monstrous rats that slid, fat and obscene, about well-beaten tracks" (80). Similarly, Stephen notes that pastoral farmhouses have been "defaced by military occupation" (153). For Stephen, the evidence of war's violence and brutality are writ large on the scarred and deformed landscape.

Later, Stephen witnesses the devastation of shell fire as it happens. This vivid description of a bombardment calls on multiple senses to evoke the intensity of war's violence:

> A shell whined its way towards them, stung the air with a bitter snap above their heads, and passed emitting a descending scream. Its trajectory ended on the road above them, a splitting and a rending. Hot metal hissed about them and fell in the trench, spluttered in the mud, disappeared. Little rotating, jagged fragments

> traveling at high velocity; little crumbs and splinters of hot steel.
> (151)

Though no one is injured in this bombardment, Stephen is horrified when he marches through the devastated landscape, and laments, “How desolate it was now to look upon!” (151).

Of course, the damaging effects of war are not limited to the landscape. Stephen is also well aware of the physical damage caused by war. He thinks of all those who have been wounded and carry scars, including the amputees who use artificial limbs, and the blind, who “grope their way” (142). He notes that many men are utterly changed by the war, and that there is sometimes “no resemblance” between a damaged man and his pre-war photograph (196). He is particularly sensitive to the plight of those who suffer facial injuries, including “those so mutilated as to need masks” (196), and he contemplates the future of these men with horror:

> Dear God! Where would they go, these men with metal faces? How will their children greet them, coming for kisses? And their sweethearts, their girls? Where will they hide away? And how will it be with them ten years hence? (197)

This passage reveals Stephen’s deep anxiety, not only about mutilations suffered in the war, but also about the long-term effects of this damage.

Though he is afflicted with none of the horrible mutilations he fears, Stephen does suffer physical degradation in the war. His extreme exhaustion is first evident when he arrives at the bombing school and collapses (153). While at the school, Piers diagnoses Stephen’s shell shock when he asks, “[W]hy d’you suppose you are speechless half the

time if there's nothing wrong with your throat?" (166). The military hierarchy likewise recognize the extent of Stephen's deterioration, because, despite a desperate need for experienced officers in the front lines, they deny his request for a transfer out of the training school (167). Like Piers, Alice also notices something wrong with Stephen's voice. It is husky, his throat is sore, and he loses his voice periodically. He explains to her that, "It's been queer for some time" (179). A visit to a doctor reveals that he has been running a fever for weeks, and that, though he is over six feet tall, he weighs only 118 pounds (180). Even after a long period out of the line, Stephen still has a "rasping voice," his face is "white and drawn," and he is merely "the ghost of the man he had been" (190).

In addition to this physical damage, Stephen and other soldiers also suffer mental, moral, and emotional degradation. For Stephen, "freedom of mind" and a sense of wholeness are not possible in the trenches (104). The war's power to curtail free thinking even reaches beyond the trenches. What Stephen calls "the war spirit" enables friends who turn against friends to feel virtuous about it, and steals "a man's judgment away, and, along with it, reason and heart" (131). Stephen notices, for example, how "easy" it is (for soldiers and civilians alike) "to think of Germans as 'Huns,' as the outcasts of an outraged civilization" (132), because of the poisonous influence of war propaganda. "The thought and feeling of the war mood," Stephen asserts, is "tainted and tainting" (132). According to Stephen, then, hatred and bigotry are both a cause and an effect of war.

Stephen notes that even those without visible wounds bear "the scars of memory, the wounds upon the soul, unhealing, unhealable" (142). Certainly, Stephen's own soul is wounded when, for the first time, he sees a man under his command die. In fact, he is brutalized by Martens' death: "Stephen looked at the body and the sight of it made him

bleed inside, made his soul bleed." He is so devastated that he is filled with anger and hatred for the enemy, and, for the first time, longs to "destroy him" (96).

Piers, too, shows signs of emotional damage in refusing to talk about his war experiences:

> When Stephen tries to draw Piers about his life in the ranks, a mask falls upon that lean face. He shrinks into himself like a mollusk before a probe. Piers was at Festubert, and on the Somme as well; in many raids, in many dirty places. (109)

As with Stephen, Piers's shell shock becomes clearly evident when he is out of the line. While attending bombing school, his eyes, "listless, remote and filled with a sadness," reveal the depth of his trauma (153). Later, Piers manifests additional evidence of his brutalization. Because his emotional responses are so blunted by the horrors of war, Piers asserts that he has seen "so many stiffs … that the sight of 'em doesn't trouble me any more" (176).

War degrades in other ways, too. When the battalion withdraws from the front lines in the Kellett sector, the conditions in the support trenches are so terrible that Stephen observes a kind of regressive devolution: "[H]ere the century was no more. These billets would have grieved a cave man" (61). Here the men are reduced to a primitive or animalistic state. Their sandbag shelters are "like a pigmy village," or "sties," or "igloos of mud," and finally, "kennels" into which the men must enter "on all fours, like dogs" (62). Similarly, when Stephen compares the Great War to other wars, and thinks about the horrors of the Crusades, he concludes that "war has always made men the same; probably would always make them the same. Savages" (161).

In Godwin's most "bitter" illustration of war's brutalization and degradation, Major MacDonald appears to be so traumatized by his war experiences that he is incapable of thought: "After two years of heavy campaigning his critical faculties slept [...] soundly" (94). "The Somme," Stephen notes, "had stunned his brain, and it was still stunned," leaving his thinking "slow and dull" (175). His emotional faculties are equally degraded. By the time Stephen arrives in the trenches, Major MacDonald has already seen so much death that "it means nothing to him now." According to Stephen, MacDonald "had forgotten how to grieve. His emotions were entombed in a dark sarcophagus before which a great stone had been rolled. He could not feel" (175). Though he is sometimes disappointed by the Major's unfeeling responses to death and loss, Stephen acknowledges that MacDonald's emotional shutdown is necessary for his survival. It is a "mercy," Stephen reflects, that MacDonald is emotionally numb: "For in war the tender heart must be closed to overmuch compassion lest it break. So pity sleeps" (96).

Patently, the Major is changed forever by the war, particularly by his experiences at the Somme. "For him," Stephen remarks, "the battle is, as ever, near, a vividly-remembered yesterday. It will be as yesterday with him ten years hence" (108-109). Indeed, Stephen observes that "The Major's life is divided into two parts, and they are cleft by the Somme" (109). As a result of the war, the Major is "spent," "dry, dry and empty. He had poured himself out" (175). A year after the armistice, when Stephen meets the Major back in Canada, he is still a broken man: "a neurasthenic, pitiable and tragic, returned from the war to be promoted down in his civilian job, broken, yet pensionless, uncompensated" (207). MacDonald's damaged and degraded condition is all

the more noticeable when Stephen compares the Major to his brother Andy. "Andy," thinks Stephen, "had been wise," when he decided that the war had nothing to do with him and stayed home. In contrast to his brother, Andy is now a successful blacksmith, "A man at useful work" (207).

Godwin's portrait of the dehumanizing effects of war does seem to qualify it for inclusion in the anti-war canon. In particular, the intense fear induced in war often reduces soldiers to an animal state. Stephen hears one young lad whimpering in terror and notes that the sound he makes is not human, but "a sound like the grief of an animal" (68). When Martens is fatally wounded, his eyes reveal the "reproach of a gentle animal struck down" (96). Stephen, too, is dehumanized by fear during a bombardment, when "the whiplash of the passing shells made Stephen wince like a nervous horse" (152). Similarly, he is reduced to an organism under heavy machine gun fire: "Under such fire he was no longer Stephen, but one vast genital" (113).

Groups of soldiers are similarly described in animal terms. As the battalion moves into the Calonne sector, they appear as "the shadowy forms of strange beasts" floundering in the mud (80-81). Men in a khaki column marching out of the line move "like a worm" (118). Prisoners of war held in a wire enclosure are described as "Moving about and looking out like animals in a zoo" (128). When Stephen wonders why men fight in the war, he concludes that they do so because they are "herd" animals and that they fight because "the herd had stampeded" (142). Later, Stephen even calls the soldiers "Gadarene swine" on their way "to destruction" (an allusion to the demoniac possession of a man in Matthew 8:28) (143). All of these references to men in animal (or even devilish) terms highlight the dehumanizing effects of war.

Even more discomfiting might be the reduction of humans to mechanisms in Godwin's novel. For example, when Stephen and his patrol are assigned to a forward post, "a sacrifice post," where they will be hidden all day, waiting "to take the first shock of possible attack," they function as "human signals" (83). No longer individual men, they are merely tools, or instruments of war—entirely expendable and utterly depersonalized. For Stephen, this incident is particularly disillusioning, because it makes him wonder why men travelled all the way "across the world for this" (83). Considering how he has been affected, Stephen temporarily concludes that war "had made an automaton of him, a cog in a vast soulless machine" (131). Later, he repeats these observations when he complains about the depersonalizing effects of the war "machine," in which he "was no longer an individual, a man […], but a cog in the machine, responding to the command as the machinery answers the orders of the master switch" (156). Further, Stephen notes how military training is designed to dehumanize. It is a "machine that ground up human souls, snuffing the flame of enthusiasm, setting up in its place a mechanical obedience based on fear; the obedience of mechanical men." Training, thinks Stephen, makes men into "manikins" (156).

Perhaps the only thing worse than the deliberate dehumanization of training would be the dehumanization of violent death. When Stephen sees a rotting corpse in a shallow grave, he contemplates how a man has now become "it": "*It?* This was a man a while ago. And now all there is to tell you so is that clot of scalp tufted with black hair" (88). Stephen is similarly offended when he thinks about how the wounded men transported home on ships are reduced to "human freight" and treated as though they are "the débris of the war" (201).

All of this dehumanization can contribute to a breakdown of traditional moral codes. According to Major MacDonald, war means the end of morality and provides the ultimate excuse for any bad behaviour: “the rules of life that prevailed in peace did not apply here or now. Everywhere it was the same. Men kicked aside the Ten Commandments. And they shrugged: ‘It’s the war’” (69). Certainly, the Major’s own behaviour has undergone profound changes. Though he had been brought up in a strict Presbyterian home, where he had never used tobacco, and had “never tasted alcohol before the war,” he now both smokes and drinks (70). Piers notes the erosion of moral principles when he watches soldiers searching corpses for souvenirs: “‘Frisking the stiffs,’ they call it. It’s pretty foul isn’t it? But I suppose when a man has been in the line a year or so he hasn’t any sensibilities left” (73). Stephen observes the demoralizing effects of war, too. He argues that war tears “up the covenants of humanity,” sweeps aside “scruples, honesty, honour,” and degrades participants, turning them into “a brute force fighting to survive, to survive at all costs, and in its frenzy casting away all pretence, all hypocrisy.” Indeed, Stephen is well aware of how he has become unmoored from moral certainty, noting that he “had ceased to think, to care. He had become a drifter” (131). For Stephen, the once definitive act of choosing right from wrong “now appeared inconceivably remote and of little consequence, like something once read in a book, seen in a play” (132).

Though he had entered the war with few illusions about glory and honour in war, Stephen still experiences the disillusionment commonly described in the anti-war texts. He is worn down by nagging frustrations as much as by the dangers of war. For example, writing reports in the correct military format is a daily and sometimes humiliating

irritation. In fact, when the Major rejects Stephen's first report because he neglected to record wind direction and speed, Stephen feels deeply "ashamed" (54). His embarrassment contributes to his feelings of incompetence. Because he knows that military training has little in common with actual trench life (65), and that the men he commands are more experienced and more knowledgeable than he is, Stephen's confidence wanes (66). Bureaucratic foul-ups also contribute to his malaise. Digging trenches in the pouring rain with no gumboots and inadequate supplies is a misery (66). In the face of growing feelings of hopelessness and helplessness, Stephen comes to doubt the possibility of his own survival and expresses frustration at his own impotence: "It was impossible that one could escape death for long. Stephen felt an impotent rage surge through him, a blind fury that nothing could be done by way of retaliation, that all one could do was to flop ignominiously and endure!" (67).

Stephen also understands the disillusionment of others. For example, he is sympathetic when he sees men slacking on work parties, because he understands how men who once took pride in their work become "contemptuous of this niggling work messing with wire and corkscrew stakes," always suspecting that their work is largely futile and purposeless (66). Instead of the glorious "fighting and gallant deeds" they expected, the soldiers he commands must endure a wearing, "day-to-day monotony, waiting for some menace that never comes along," as well as "routine, dirt, lousiness and, now and then, a bawling out for neglect of duty … a dirty rifle, a stubbly chin" (85). Some of these young men are more profoundly shaken by their disillusionment. Martens feels, for example, that "things don't fit in," and that "he has been deceived." His faith in God is shattered by what he sees (93). Some officers, including Bob England, lose all

their initial war enthusiasm, and are just "sticking it out because there was nothing else to be done," though they are entirely "fed up" (186).

Stephen's own demoralization deepens after the battle of Vimy Ridge. In particular, he is devastated when he learns the details of Piers's death at Vimy, following foolish orders from H.Q. to lead men in an impossible attack that meant "the sacrifice of his platoon without any possible gain." Worse still, Piers died "knowing his own death inevitable, and inevitable the annihilation of his platoon. And knowing, O bitterness! the futility of the sacrifice" (173). Stephen's bitterness over Piers' death ripens into despair that soon poisons all pleasures. Even the arrival of the Spring of 1917 loses "all savour for him," because it reminds him of past adventures with Piers (175). Stephen is similarly embittered when he hears about Pilk's death, also at Vimy. Pilk was "shot in the groin" and bled to death, like many others, because "they could not get them back to the advanced dressing stations fast enough" (173). For Stephen, the battle of Vimy Ridge is "no miraculous battle, after all, but like all other battles: paid for in blood, in sacrifice, in suffering, agony of body, agony of mind." Further, Stephen sees that the pain and suffering does not end when the battle is over; instead, the suffering is endless: "For the price of victory was like a funded debt, bearing interest in suffering from year to year, long after the last man wounded had passed, after the last widow had stood, dry-eyed, beside the wooden cross of an ordered cemetery" (174). Spring, victory, and even the future are all blackened for Stephen by a deep-rooted despair.

And yet, while *Why Stay We Here?* offers as vivid a depiction of the brutalization, dehumanization, and demoralization of war as anything in the canonical anti-war texts, a larger impression of Godwin's narrative is not the unremitting gloom and bitterness of

these better known texts. For one thing, Stephen does find friendship, kindness, and generosity in his fellow soldiers. He is greatly comforted by the close relationship that develops between himself, Piers and O'Reilly, and is full of wonder when he contemplates how three men, "strangers a month or more ago, were now more confidential than schoolboys" (78). Stephen is, in fact, shaped by the sustaining power of comradeship, and, as he watches the battalion march up the line, he is impressed that the men are so "patient" and resigned (79). He sees that, though the men may be disillusioned, they are not embittered: "The war has turned out so differently from the war of their imaginings; and they have either forgotten or forgiven those fierce patriots who first fired their ardour and enlisted their chivalry by pen or spoken word. They are so far away." He observes with pride how the men take life as they find it, cursing, joking, and holding on to "the comradeship that makes all things endurable" (79-80). He is proud to be included in the comradeship of the men he leads. After six months in the line, Stephen is a "fairly seasoned officer," and is pleased that he had earned the men's respect and that they "had admitted him to their fraternity, a close fellowship, on terms of equality. And this was sweet" (144).

At this point, readers attuned to Wilfred Owen's scathing exposé of "The old Lie" might well hear a corrective echo of Horace's famous phrase about how sweet it is to die for one's country. Men die, this line asserts, not for their country, but for their comrades. Indeed, the comradeship Stephen shares with Piers is powerful enough to make him request a transfer from the safety of a job in a training camp to the dangers of the front-line trenches, so that they can stay together. Stephen explains his decision: "To go back would be hell. But hell with friends, and so, no hell after all. […] What was friendship if

not eagerness to share all things both good and evil?” (166). What so embitters Stephen after Vimy, then, is not the futility of sacrifice but his inability to share the evil with his comrades. Contrary to the anti-war texts which reject the notion of camaraderie as bunk, a bald lie meant to lead hapless young men to their doom, Godwin’s text celebrates the sustaining power of camaraderie in the worst of circumstances.

In addition to camaraderie, the men in Godwin’s text are also supported by hope and the spirit of the battalion. The power of hope, Stephen notes, is “invincible.” For example, hope for the future fills Grant with optimism and takes away his fear (80). The “spirit of the battalion” is an indefinable “something more” that sustains the soldiers. According to Stephen, the battalion “is a soul. The corporate soul of all the men” in its ranks, whether they live or die, lead or follow. It is eternal, “incorporeal and mystic,” “made immortal by sacrifice and suffering” (141). The men in the battalion partake in this immortality and are heartened by the sense of continuity.

Godwin’s text also avoids the overwhelming negativity of the anti-war canon by refusing to universalize the war experience. Though focalized through one protagonist, Godwin’s narrative includes multiple points of view and multiple voices. For example, *Why Stay We Here?* records a wide range of motives for enlistment, including patriotic duty, heroic fantasies, and herd instinct. Major MacDonald, Stephen surmises, may have been motivated by “piety: Love of mother projected into love of country” (116). One young lieutenant has clearly joined up to escape, and now enjoys the war as a release from his unhappy life with a bullying wife and as an opportunity for male comradeship: “O’Reilly was not a free man enslaved, but an enslaved man set free. Like a schoolboy out of school he was, his spirits rising triumphantly over danger and discomfort” (94).

"Grant the hedonist," Stephen muses, enlisted for "the fun, the excitement, the stimulation, the unusualness of it" and finds "fulfillment in the game of slaughter" (98). More practically, Stephen seeks a commission as a subaltern with the C.E.F., not because he hates the Hun, nor because he wants to serve his king, but because he will receive "a generous allowance for his wife and children" (41-42). This wide range of reasons for going to war contrasts with the assertion in anti-war texts that all participants were similarly pressured into enlistment and led to slaughter like sheep. Further, O'Reilly and Grant—who find some happiness in war—demonstrate the falsity of the anti-war narratives, which ignore or else deny the potential pleasures of violence and of righteousness. *Why Stay We Here?* can then provide a more balanced representation of war because, while never denying the horrors of war, it does allow that not all participants are victimized by their suffering and that soldiering does not induce trauma in all combatants

Godwin's narrative also avoids universalization because it acknowledges that any individual can have complex, and even contradictory, responses to war. For example, though Stephen enters the war reluctantly while still holding pacifistic ideals, he also understands the rush of pleasure associated with violence and the potential satisfaction in killing another human being (54). Indeed, Stephen's "multi-faceted" nature serves to illustrate the lie of universalization. He imagines himself as an "infinity of Stephens," including "the Stephen of the trenches, conscientious, matter-of-fact;" Stephen "the husband and father who broods apprehensively in secret;" Stephen "the objective observer of the other two […] a spectator with understanding heart;" Stephen the "philosopher who pondered the inverted moral values of a world at war;" Stephen the

“rebel who protested impotently;” and Stephen the “mystic who brooded apart, sensing vaguely behind this obscenity the veiled splendours of a world elusive and unseen, yet very real” (59). Given the complexity of Stephen’s responses to war, neither his, nor any other individual participant’s response to the war can be universalized to represent the experiences of all.

Its acknowledgement and celebration of individuality and autonomy also differentiate Godwin’s text from those in the anti-war canon. Though the narrative includes evidence that the military machine effaces individual identity (167), it also includes evidence of efficacious individual action—action in the service of humanity rather than the military machine. For instance, Stephen bends regulations to let a man in his platoon send a letter to his pregnant wife uncensored. Because he is a father himself, Stephen understands the couple’s need for privacy (63). In another example, Stephen breaks army regulations in order to maintain morale within the ranks. Though the training camp commander has forbidden it, Stephen continues to allow his men to participate in sports, even during times when they ought to be drilling. Here again, Stephen’s autonomous decision is in direct conflict with authority (159). In addition to circumventing regulations for the benefit of his men, Stephen also acts independently to solve a dilemma. When he learns that a deserter being held in the training camp is stuck in a kind of military limbo—what Stephen calls a “Morton’s Fork”—(because he is infected with syphilis and must report to hospital for treatment before he can be tried, while the hospital refuses to treat him because he is under arrest), Stephen writes a letter that settles the issue. By taking independent, autonomous action, Stephen arranges a reasonable solution that solves a problem that had stumped the regulation-bound Medical

Officer (188). In contrast to the anti-war canon, which denies the possibility of any effective, autonomous action, Godwin's narrative demonstrates that war participants not only maintain their own independent will, but are also able to exercise it to achieve positive results.

Godwin's narrative is also differentiated from the canonical anti-war texts by its inclusion of details about civilians and the home front. In fact, one of the more unique features of Godwin's text is that it invites readers to consider other kinds of participation in war. Early in the text, for instance, Stephen notes that the women of Ferguson's Landing are contributing to the war effort through their participation in the Red Cross Society (28). This activity is recorded without the bitterness of blame and alienation so often found in the anti-war texts. The involvement of women in war is further highlighted by Alice's role as the primary reason for Stephen's enlistment. Evidently, he needs the salary that comes with a commission: "One wanted money because one had none: one wanted it, not for oneself, but for one's wife" (39). And, when the Craig family travels across Canada, through New York, and to Great Britain, Stephen is very concerned about his wife's feelings, worrying that, because they must "go home to mother," Alice will have to take "second place, no longer mistress, placating others, keeping these two active children quiet" (36). He acknowledges that she, too, carries heavy burdens and that "long thoughts" worry "her patient heart" (45).

Indeed, there is little evidence in *Why Stay We Here?* that soldiers in the trenches are alienated from civilians at home. The ongoing connection between the battlefront and the home front is particularly evident in scenes describing the arrival of mail in the trenches. As they read their mail and open their parcels, the soldiers are imaginatively

transported home and reunited with loved ones. When they gaze out over the parapets, they are no longer seeing No Man's Land, but are instead "seeing little shacks in clearings, steamy kitchens, young orchards, or merely the silent bush, still and green, or a river, silver in the sun." And, their thoughts are not about "war, but of the problems of the old days that are still unsolved," issues related to farm management and family life (86). When he reads Alice's letter, Stephen is able to escape the boredom of inactivity in the trenches as he "envisages her daily life" in Kent where she is living with the boys (87). For the soldiers, these letters are not "Mere hieroglyphs," but "living, breathing creatures," bringing warmth and cheer. O'Reilly, for example, finds "tenderness, loyalty, love" for the first time in his life through letters from a London woman he met on leave. Piers listens "to the Scots accent of his favourite sister" as he reads her letter. Similarly, Major MacDonald is comforted by the calm and even tones he hears in his wife's letter. O'Reilly is thrilled with the attention from women back home, particularly the parcel of socks he gets from the "local women's war committee," which he admires, saying, "They surely are wonderful women" (95). Surprised when he receives an unexpected parcel from home, Stephen gets a lump in his throat because he knows the sacrifices Alice must have had to make in order to be able to send him something (96). There is, for Stephen, a great deal of similarity between his sacrifices and Alice's. They are both part of all those "Folk sucked back into the vortex of that old whore, Europe" (36). Here, readers might hear an echo of Ezra Pound's long poem "Hugh Selwyn Mauberly" (1920), and the lines that express Pound's outrage at the Great War: "There died a myriad / And of the best, among them, / For an old bitch gone in the teeth,/ For a botched civilization" (1.5.3-4).

With this conflation of Stephen's and Alice's fates, *Why Stay We Here?* evidently broadens the definition of participation in war.

Similarly, Stephen's ongoing concern for widows, orphans, and other relatives of those in the front-line trenches also suggests a broader understanding of the victims of war—victims who are usually ignored, if not blamed and resented, in canonical anti-war texts. For example, Stephen is well aware that his fate and that of his family are inextricably linked. Military service requires that Stephen give up his home, leave his family, "surrender liberty," "smother personality," obey those in authority, "accept all bodily risk, and, if necessary **...** die in the process or suffer mutilation" (39). Similar lists lamenting the suffering of soldiers are found in the anti-war texts. In contrast to these texts, however, *Why Stay We Here?* more inclusively acknowledges the sacrifices of others. Stephen notes: "my wife, who makes her sacrifice without protest, and my children who are too young to know anything about the matter at all, are also partners to this contract" (39). And, when he finally wrangles a commission with the C.E.F., Stephen is pleased that he has secured an income with which to support his family, but knows that this financial security is tenuous: "They were at once a sheltered family, and a family exposed: they had sure bread, but a bread-winner without secure tenure of life" (44). In other words, if his life is in jeopardy, so are theirs; if he is a victim of war, then so are they.

Of course, Stephen's sympathy for women on the home front extends well beyond his own wife. He is especially soft-hearted when he thinks of all the pregnant women worrying about their men fighting in the trenches: "Little women somewhere over there waiting for their babies. How damnable to keep their men from them at such a time" (63).

But, he thinks of *all* the women left behind, even when the men he commands do not. Acting as their conscience, he nags the men under his command who shirk writing letters home, because, "They will be causing hours of anguish to women far away, to little old women, maybe, or to women young and unfulfilled; waiting women, girls" (85). Stephen is always conscious of the larger tragedy of war, and resents the wilful ignorance of the politicians and the General Staff: "Oh, it did not need a battle every day to make a tragedy of war. It needed no battles at all. These broken homes: were they not tragedy enough? And yet after all, but a side issue; an aspect overlooked by those who weighed the cost of it all" (86). Godwin's text, then, offers a more complex, more complete picture than is found in canonical anti-war texts, which are more narrowly focused on the individual soldier and his private pain.

Stephen is also sympathetic towards those who have already lost a loved one at the front. This sympathy is particularly evident in his long, poetic musing about the Boot. When he and Piers climb Notre Dame de Lorette, from which they have a panoramic view of the whole Douai plain, Stephen finds a boot containing a skeletal foot. His initial reaction of horror is transformed into a lengthy, highly aestheticized contemplation of the Boot's life. He imagines in detail the women who might mourn the Boot, beginning with the Boot's mother—her life, activities, thoughts, and prayers (74). His imaginings are so vivid, that Stephen's eyes fill with tears as he imagines the Boot's mother mourning her son (74). Next, Stephen imagines the Boot's sweetheart and the couple's courtship (75). These thoughts are so chilling that Stephen is overwhelmed when he considers that the Boot is just one among thousands of lost men, mourned by thousands of grieving women—victims of war uncounted by the General Staff (76). He is similarly horrified,

both by the extent of the loss and the General Staff's blindness to the consequences, when he hears reports after the battle of Vimy Ridge: "Good God! Is that all that has come out of that cataclysm? How many men have died to secure those few odd yards of ground to gain that crater, that stinking hole in the ground. How many men? How many widows? How many orphans?" (111). This outward expansion of sympathy, moving from the men to the women and families, is repeated often enough that it becomes a kind of signature movement of inclusion in Godwin's text.

Godwin's text also calls for a broader concept of "war victim" when he considers the fate of women who prostitute themselves when times are hard. He notes that a woman is "a fellow creature while her shared provisions lasted," but a degraded whore "when her body became the price of liberty" (50). Later, Stephen describes an ugly scene in a town where the battalion is billeted while out of the line, in which little boys, using pidgin English and crude gestures, pimp their sisters to the soldiers (119). These women are victims of the unfortunate combination of "*Malheur!*" and "profit" that are by-products of war in towns and villages behind the lines (118). Rather than focusing only on the dehumanizing effects of war on an individual combatant or group of soldiers, Godwin's text widens the scope of a war narrative by including the many people with whom soldiers come into contact, thereby presenting a more balanced representation.

Frequent literary allusions in *Why Stay We Here?* also point readers towards a more inclusive reading of the Great War. The title refers to Christopher Marlowe's *The Tragedy of Dido Queene of Carthage* (1594). An excerpt from the play is included on the title page:

> The Grecian soldiers, tired with ten years' war,

Began to cry: "Let us unto our ships;

Troy is invincible; why stay we here?"

This excerpt is a first indication of the artfulness of Godwin's text, pointing to a register of literary allusion that links *Why Stay We Here?* to a wider literary canon of war literature. It also suggests the greater inclusivity of Godwin's narrative, because, in contrast to other narratives related to the fall of Troy (Homer's *Iliad* and Virgil's *Aeneid*), Marlowe's play focuses on a woman's story.

A second epigraph from Euripides' play *Phrixus*, "*Who knows but life be that which men call death, / And death what men call life*?," introduces a larger theme developed throughout Godwin's text—the notion that death and life are part of an ongoing, cyclical process. The lines from *Phrixus* also introduce the notion of noble self-sacrifice. According to William Bates' synopsis of the lost Greek tragedy, when his people are suffering, Phrixus "resolves to die voluntarily to save his country." Readers are thus invited to recall a more positive outcome resulting from what Bates describes as Phrixus' "manly and generous conduct" in ensuring the safety of his people. Given that Phrixus, like Stephen, still manages to escape death (282), it would appear that the modern story can be read in a similarly noble light. Like the reference to Dido, the reference to Phrixus further promotes Godwin's interest in inclusivity since Euripides' play also focuses on strong women characters.

Godwin seems to expect a high level of literary knowledge from his readers, because, in addition to allusions to ancient Greek literature, his narrative also includes allusions to various other literary texts. For example, while watching cattle driven through the streets of a village, Piers quotes lines from Ralph Hodgson's "The Bull," a

narrative poem about an old bull contemplating his lost youth and vitality as he waits for death (164). Later, Stephen sees a French railway guard reading Émile Zola's *La Terre* (178). Zola's novel, which describes the breakdown of a rural nineteenth-century family as a result of changes to agricultural laws, ends, like Godwin's story, by affirming the cyclical nature of life and death: "Des morts, des semences, et le pain puissait de la terre" (552). All of these allusions function to connect Godwin's narrative to a larger web of stories, suggesting that Stephen's experience of the Great War is just one thread in a larger historical and literary tapestry.

In addition to its inclusivity, its allusiveness, and its cyclicality, Godwin's representation of war is more balanced than those found in canonical anti-war texts, due to its structure. The anti-war texts insist that brutalization, alienation, and death are the whole/only story of the Great War, and, therefore, end with their protagonists' deaths. Godwin's plot, which ends with the protagonist's return home, offers other possibilities. Though Godwin acknowledges that death and suffering make up a large part of the story of the Great War, particularly through the description of Piers' and Pilk's deaths, as well as in the ongoing suffering of shell-shocked soldiers such as Major MacDonald, Stephen's survival and recovery of health at the end of *Why Stay We Here?* indicates the possibility of more positive outcomes.

More compelling, however, is the pattern of mythic imagery related to rebirth and renewal with which the novel ends. As appears in the anti-war texts, *Why Stay We Here?* makes its own identification between the suffering of soldiers and the suffering of Jesus, most particularly when an exhausted Stephen watches the battalion marching by and thinks, "They were victims, suffering for offences of which they were guiltless. And in

this, what were these marching men as, if not as Christ, archetype of all suffering, sacrifice?" (143). Godwin, however, does not end his story with images of the suffering, sacrificial Jesus, any more than the Christian narrative ends with the crucifixion. Instead, as though moving from Good Friday through to Easter Sunday, Godwin includes images of the soldiers identified with the risen, triumphant Christ. When Stephen tours his abandoned orchard, a year after his return home, he visualizes the men living again, "born of the darkness, born of the death of other days." Like Christ, they have triumphed over death and suffering. They are the fruit "upon a bough" of "the Tree of Life, of life eternal, of life and renewal" (210). Frank Kermode's axiom that fictions are "end-determined" (*The Sense of an Ending*) is immediately borne out in this Great-War novel where Godwin affirms the possibility of hope and continuity, and life after war, by ending his story on a note of resurrection.

Here too, smaller-scale structures contribute to a balanced representation of the Great War, as they do in *Into the Jaws of Death* and *Only This*. The use of the "but" formula at the grammatical level of structure once again insists on qualification. For example, Stephen complains about gunners who evoke "intense," even murderous, hatred from their fellow soldiers, because they cause trouble by inciting the enemy and killing their own comrades when they fire short. They "deal death to friend and enemy with supreme indifference. They are sons of bitches. They are bastards," according to Stephen. The bitterness of this invective is similar to that found in many of the anti-war texts, but the difference is immediately apparent in the next line, when Stephen tempers his anger to consider the gunners' from another perspective: "Yet these gunners have their troubles too." Stephen knows that gunners are particularly targeted by planes searching out their

nests in order to direct deadly artillery to them (112). The “yet” signals, as much as it invites, a shift to a more complex, more complete understanding of the circumstances.

A similar complexity is evident in Stephen’s contemplation of the relationship between prostitutes and soldiers. He starts from the thought that French women are mostly “virtuous.” Next, he acknowledges that some are not:

> True, there were prostitutes to be found. But they were few up near the line. The shortage of supply was shown by the evidence of demand: at Lillers one might see men in a line, in a waiting queue, outside the house of the single prostitute who served them. Horrible? Revolting? Yes; but there it was, a fact not to be denied, explained away. Men had their bestial moments. Yet, they were not beasts. (139)

Stephen’s thoughtful, even philosophical, analysis of the situation, including two “buts” and a “yet,” exemplifies a structural pattern that both supports and reflects the text’s central ethos, which privileges balance over negativity.

Similarly, Hicks’ discipline of a young, inexperienced soldier who failed to care for his rifle serves as another example of this more balanced approach. Hicks is stern, even harsh, with the hapless young man. “But,” Stephen notes, “the rough voice was a kindly one, for all its roughness.” A further complexity appears in Stephen’s surprise that it is Hicks who is offering guiding “counsel” to the new recruit, because he is well-known as “the scallywag of the battalion” (140). Even when recording the terror of a violent bombardment, Stephen’s description reaches for balance. He describes the shell fragments as “death and mutilation; blindness, severed nerves, lacerated bowels. But they

fell harmlessly enough" (151). Here the "but" allows the possibility of survival and good luck—a possibility most often denied or ignored in the anti-war texts. Similarly, when Stephen notices that his young son does not remember him when he visits on leave, he includes both the negative and the hopeful: "They were strangers, but strangers bent on rediscovering each other again" (179). Stephen's description of his illness also avoids the incessant negativity of the anti-war texts. Though he describes himself as "the ghost of the man he had been," who is unsteady on his feet, coughs at night, and suffers sharp pains in his chest, he also looks forward to time with his family, saying, "But there was always leave. He lived for it" (190).

This qualifying "but" structure is also employed in the last images of the novel, when Stephen visits the orchard he abandoned when he went to war. Though he expected to find the orchard looking neglected, he is pleased to find, instead, a "young orchard in full blossom." As he walks among the trees, he sees both destruction and continuity: "the whispering grass parted before his feet, and after them, bruised but living, rose again." Stephen notes that the old Graventstein has been cut down: "The old apple tree was dead but it lived yet, for in the sap of this grassy orchard was the sap of the old Gravenstein, renewed " (209). Here, the final "but" allows Stephen to regret the end of what he knew and loved, and, *at the same time*, to embrace a future full of fruitful promises. Of course, we might have anticipated such a conclusion from Stephen's much earlier observations that, for the men of the battalion, there would always be disillusionment "And hope" (79), that there was both exhausted collapse and incredible resilience (105), that there was both cowardice and courage (115), and that the future represented both "a menace and a hope" (138). In this pattern of both/and, it turns out, there was always a more

balanced representation of the war than the familiar pattern of either/or given to us in the canonical anti-war texts. In some respects, Godwin's *Why Stay We Here?* then represents, in the largest possible scale, the historical continuity of a civilization in conflict with itself, even as it provides, in minute detail, the social inclusivity and individual responsibility of a meritocracy that refutes the myth of passivity among Canadian combatants in the Great War.

Chapter 4

The Continuities of History in Will Bird's *And We Go On* (1930)

In its assertion that the Great War is but one thread in the larger historical tapestry, as well as in its climactic imagery of rebirth and renewal, George Godwin's *Why Stay We Here?* already undermines Paul Fussell's doubt in *The Great War and Modern Memory*, that "the Great War was perhaps the last to be conceived as taking place within a seamless, purposeful 'history' involving a coherent stream of time running from past through present to future" (21). For the tenor of Fussell's whole argument is that the Great War marks a decisive rupture in history, splitting us off from an older, traditional world. Will Bird's historical memoir, *And We Go On* (1930) offers a similar challenge to Fussell's argument that modernity was born in the mud of Flanders and the Somme, not least in the way his title evokes his faith in historical continuity.

The very form of Bird's narrative likewise implies a sort of historical continuity. As Philippe Lejeune insists in *On Autobiography* (1980), the memoir makes it possible for the self to extend through time. Lejeune's insistence on identifying the author with both the narrator and the protagonist of the narrative as essential elements of autobiography—the so-called autobiographical pact—thus rests on a continuous (historical) identity of the author. By writing under the authority of his own name, Bird presents the text of his soldier's story as continuous history, not fiction.

As an historical narrative, Bird's work also functions to enact a sense of historical continuity. In *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (1987), Hayden White has explored the relation between narrative

discourse and historical representation in terms showing how historical narratives "imitate," as well as describe, the historical events they describe (178). Following Paul Ricoeur, White suggests that "narrative discourse does not simply reflect or passively register a world already made; it works up the material given in perception and reflection, fashions it, and creates something new" (178). In this sense, the historical narrator must clearly act in concert with the historical actor to perform a similar act, if at a different moment in time and from another perspective. Historical narratives necessarily record and create the history they name, thereby enacting a continuous link to events in the past. The continuity of the form, we might say, is always, already antithetical to the idea of historical rupture.

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And We Go On (1930)[6] is Bird's personal account of his experiences among the "Other Ranks" fighting as a member of "D" Company with the 42nd Battalion, Royal Highlanders of Canada (Black Watch) in the Great War from 1916 to 1919. Like other balanced texts, it records the horrors of war, including the mud, rats, lice, violence, mutilation, and death, as well as more positive aspects of war, such as European travel, breath-taking adventure, male camaraderie, and boyish amusements. The rich vitality of this text derives ultimately, however, from its astonishing vision of historical continuity, its abiding concern for justice, and its sophisticated exploration of ethics and morality in the crucible of war.

The memoir's preface opens *in medias res*, recording Bird's recollections of a night in the trenches near Vimy Ridge. An exchange between a young soldier, newly

arrived at the front, and a war-hardened sergeant introduces the memoir's governing philosophical debate about the shifting forces of chance, fate, and free will (3-4). Bird then steps out of the dramatic moment to announce his reasons for publishing a work like *And We Go On*. He wishes, he says, to reveal "the psychic effect [the war] had on its participants" (4), but also, as he announces more explicitly, to offer a counter-point to the growing fashion of anti-war texts that are "putrid with so-called 'realism.'"[7] In the last lines of the preface, Bird demonstrates his full and abiding commitment to historicity by including multiple assertions of the factuality of his memoir, such as his declaration that all the "psychic experiences" described in his work are "actual fact" (6).

Chapters one through three of the memoir outline Bird's initiation to trench warfare. The first chapter, "France and Vernon Crater," is largely non-chronological. In a flashback, Bird recalls his three failed attempts to enlist. Though he finally manages to enlist with the Nova Scotia Highland Brigade in the fall of 1915 (11-13), Bill is plagued by deep and lasting bitterness as a result of the previous rejections. As part of this flashback, in which Bill justifies his activities since the outbreak of war, he describes his first sighting of his brother Steve's ghost (Steve went to France in September, 1915 and was killed in a trench on Hill 60) (13). The narrative skips lightly over Bill's military training, noting only that his training in Canada over the summer of 1916 is difficult, because, due to his "soured frame of mind," he was "often in trouble with officers and non-coms" (14). On October 13th, 1916, his draft sails to England on the *Olympic* (14).

After six days of leave in London, touring historic sites, and attending theatre shows, Bill gets a ride by chance with an officer touring the English countryside (16-17). A supernatural impulse prompts him to stop at the Black Boar Inn, where he meets

Phyllis, a girl who knew Steve and intuitively recognizes that the two men are brothers (18). Then, after a brief wiring course, and a few further days at Camp Witley in Surrey, Bill is slated to go to France to join the 42nd Battalion of the Black Watch (14). But his lasting "bitterness" returns with a vengeance when bad teeth take him out of the draft. He only gets himself put back on the list by taking another soldier's place in line to see the dentist (14). After finagling his way onto the draft, Bill feels he has a right to celebrate his success. Returning late to camp after a last night of dining, bathing and music, however, he goes to France in late October, 1916 under open arrest (15).

In camp at Le Havre, waiting to be sent up the line, Bill forms close friendships with a group of men in his draft, especially Tommy. One day, while Bill and his pals hide in empty tents to avoid training in the "Bull Ring" (10), Freddy tells them about his prophetic dream in which "a woman in white" points out six doomed men from the group (9-10). Bill and his pals are deeply affected by the gloomy prediction. Following a final medical inspection that is both useless and humiliating, the men are happy to leave Le Havre (19).

Once the draft joins the 42nd Battalion at Neuville St. Vaast, they are quickly initiated into the discomforts of army life, the frustrations of military (mis)management, the instant hostility of the "oldtimers" (22), and the usual horrors of war (25). After participating in several working parties, they finally move out of the front line to billets in huts at Mont St. Éloi (26). In the first week of January, 1917, after one month in France, Bill and his pals go up for their second trip in the line. By the time they move back to Mont St. Éloi again, they feel more experienced (29). After days of parades and a welcome march to the baths, they head back up the line where, for four days, Bill and

McMillan man a Vernon Crater sentry post, located less than fifty yards from the German lines (29-30). On the second night, Bill sees an "uncaptured German" for the first time, and has his first close call with death, when he is nearly shot by friendly fire (31). Saved only by a new arrival's poor marksmanship, Bill is left feeling "shaky" (32). On the third night in the sentry post, Bill and McMillan see more Germans (32), and, with their heads filled with "visions of special leave and medals," they prepare to capture the enemy patrol. Their dreams of glory fizzle, however, when their rifles and bombs prove to be frozen. Not only are they incapable of catching any Germans, they are sitting ducks for a counterattack (32). Then, on their fourth day in the sentry post, a visiting officer steps up on the firestep to look over the trench and is shot between the eyes. Laconically, Bird says, "It was the first death I had witnessed" (33). After the battalion is relieved and sent out of the line, returning to the damp, musty caves at Neuville St. Vaast (35), Bill and three others are sent to Mont St. Éloi for six-days at bombing school (36).

At the beginning of the second chapter, "I Shoot a German," Bill has come back with the bombers to the crater line at Vimy, visiting trench posts and firing grenades at the Germans (38-39). When he is sent on an errand into La Salle Avenue trench, he has another close call when a shell explodes near him, leaving him slightly concussed (42). When the Battalion is next in the front lines, they prepare for a raid on the German lines between Durand and Duffield Craters, scheduled for the morning of February 13th (43-44). The preparatory barrage, the raid itself, and its results are all described in vivid detail (44). Afterwards, the 42nd Battalion is relived by the "Van Doos," and the battalion marches away to Divion.

While out on rest in Divion, the Battalion bombers are disbanded, and Bill is glad to return to his own platoon (45). The next day, he reports sick (still feeling the after-effects of his close call with a shell explosion), and has his first experience with a seemingly incompetent army medical system. In a tragicomic mix-up at the medical hut, the doctor insists on inspecting Bill's feet despite his attempts to explain that he is suffering from a concussion (45). For the rest of their stay in Divion, the battalion trains for the Vimy Ridge attack (49), before moving to Dumbell Camp, "a miserable swamp in a wood near Villers Au Bois," where they are wet, cold and hungry (50). "From that mess," the battalion is rushed to a point near the Durrand crater just destroyed by a German mine (50). While digging new front-line trench under heavy machine gun fire, Arthur tells Bill about his psychic premonition that he will be killed, and that Freddy's prophesy will be fulfilled (51); a short time later, he is shot through the head (52).

Soon after his friend's death, Bill is transferred to the sniping section, having demonstrated his skills on the shooting range (54). After two days in the line without targets, Bill scores his first hit, as well as his second and his third. He then refuses to shoot the fourth and fifth Germans who present themselves as targets. Sent out of the line the next morning, sick with the mumps (60), he ends up, through a series of mishaps, at a British field hospital near St. Pol, where he lives in a cold, wet tent and receives no medical attention (61-62). While there, Bill is haunted by his experiences as a sniper (63). He also thinks about "the boys in the trenches up in the crater lines, waiting for the morrow" when they are to participate in the attack on Vimy Ridge (64). Here, the memoir records Bill's lengthy discussions with fellow patients on topics such as patriotism, propaganda, military discipline, religion, and life after death (67). On the morning of

April 10th—the second day of the attack on Vimy Ridge—Bill wakes to find the hospital tent filled with wounded German soldiers (68). Helping out in the hospital, he tends German patients (68) until he decides, after sixteen days at the St. Pol field hospital, to walk away. When he finds his own platoon, however, he recognizes only two survivors who remain (69). The names of more than a dozen men killed or wounded in the action are listed (70), as well as changes in those who do remain (71).

Chapter 3, "The German Officer," opens with the Battalion's withdrawal to support lines in Vimy village. Soon, Bill is wakened from sleep by Steve, who leads him out of the bivvy just before a big shell hits it, killing those left inside (72-73). Two days later, Steve visits again, and his guiding touch helps Bill lead his patrol out of No Man's Land and back to safety (75). Matter-of-factly, Bill turns with Tommy, Melville and Mickey to the next matter at hand—a wiring job—before the battalion makes a difficult trip out of the line to Villers Au Bois (76-79). While out on rest, Bill is transferred to the scouts and learns new skills (79). When the Battalion returns to the Ridge and prepares for a June 8th raid on the German front line, it is Bill who is sent to observe the front and to "report all that the Germans did as they returned to their trench" (82). From his observation post, Bill locates three German dugout locations as well as a possible German listening post, and estimates "the strength of the trench garrison" (83-84). On another scouting trip, Bill observes a German officer crawling to a forward observation post; though he has a clear shot, Bill does not shoot him or take him prisoner (84-85).

The Battalion is finally relieved by the 58th and remains out of the line until July 2nd. When they return to the line, the front line has moved to Avion (86). Bill now takes part in more scouting missions and feels pride in his good work (88). During a rest period

when they move to billets in Chateau de la Haie (89-91), Tommy and Bill return to the Vimy crater to look over the old battleground (91). Next, the Battalion moves to Berthonaval Wood [sic, Berthonval Wood], where Bill receives additional scout instruction. Still out of the line in Lozingham, Bill enjoys a "vacation," good weather, and chumming with pals (92). When the Battalion marches to Cité St. Pierre and does "a short trip in at Hill 70" (95), the sector is very quiet, though the men must endure "the terrible stench from unburied bodies in August heat" (96). Their next trip, at Fosse 10, is also uneventful, "a routine tour" (96).

The next three chapters take us into the nightmare realm of the Ypres Salient in Belgium. Chapter four, "Passchendale [sic]," begins with the Battalion's move to "the trenches in front of Mericourt" (97). While out on a night patrol, Bill meets and befriends "the Professor," a "quiet-voiced" man who "held an important position in a college" (98). Bill is deeply affected by the philosophical discussions he has with the Professor. In particular, he reflects on the role of innate character traits in relation to choice and free will (100). Then, out of the line in Magincourt, Bird recalls rumours about an impending move to Passchendaele and large numbers of troops moving towards Ypres (104).

Soon, he and his pals are bound by train for Hazebrouck (108), where the Battalion marches off into the Salient to relieve the 4th C.M.R.'s in California Trench (112-113). It is here that we face an onslaught of gruesome details of the mud and gore of the notorious Salient, as well as vivid descriptions of the violence and shelling endured by the men (112-114). Relieving the R.C.R.s in the Abraham Heights section of Broodseinde Ridge, they dig in before moving up Gravenstafel Road at night to take over the shell holes occupied by the 49th Battalion (117). Bill is glad when he is ordered on

patrol, because action is better than “helpless waiting” (118). Sent forward to “capture a strong point, a Farm ruin called ‘Graf house’” (119), however, they suffer many casualties without attaining their objective (119-123). The survivors spend a bad night waiting for relief and/or orders that never arrive (124). Finally, an officer from another platoon collects them, and sends them back to Ypres, and the 16th Battalion arrives to relieve them (124). The “long drag back was a hideous nightmare” (124). Out of the line in the Watou area, a big draft re-fills the ranks of the 42nd (124), before the Battalion returns in November to Passchendaele, and to California Trench. Wet and cold in the freezing rain, and haunted by the horrors suffered on their previous visit, the men are “almost despondent” (125). This trip is even worse than the last. The narrative fully captures the horror and gore of the scene, as well as the terror and indignity suffered by the men (126-127).

The fifth chapter, “Thou Shalt Not Kill,” begins with an account of a foray into No Man’s Land during which Bill and an officer are to lay tape marking the area where the company will dig in. When the officer panics and runs away, Bill is so enraged that he picks up his rifle and shoots at the fleeing man. He misses, and before he can take a second shot, he is stopped by Captain Grafftey (129). The Captain helps Bill complete the task of laying the tapes. The men dig in quickly, but sustain casualties nevertheless (130). From this position, Bill and the company are ordered to join the Battalion in an attack on a German pill box. The raid is particularly successful because they catch the Germans in the midst of a relief (131). The next day, Bill has another close call with death when a shell explodes nearby, leaving him buried under mud and debris (132-133). Despite his shell shock following this incident, Bill joins in another attack on the Germans (133-134).

While engaged in close fighting, Bill makes his “first and only” bayonet kill. He is deeply affected by this traumatic act (135), even before the Battalion’s relief turns into chaos under heavy shellfire. When Mickey is killed, the memoir records his final words about the futility of war, and Mickey dies in Bill’s arms (136-137). The shell-shocked men struggle out of the line until they finally reach tents behind the lines (138). The next afternoon, the Battalion is bussed to Bourecq. They have sustained such heavy losses that the “company did not muster the strength of a platoon” (139). After a few days on rest in Bourecq, the men begin to recover, though those who “had endured Passchendale would never be the same again” (140). But the revolving door of war ensures that the Battalion’s ranks are once again replenished by a new draft (140).

Mercifully, Bill is given leave after the horrors of Passchendaele. While waiting in Boulogne for the leave boat, he is humiliated on his tour of the city by a vain officer whom he fails to salute (141-142). In London, after finding a clean place to stay, he takes a hot bath, visits a barber, and eats a good meal in a restaurant, and begins to feel “like living again” (144-145). He tries to visit Phyllis at the Black Boar Inn again, but learns from the innkeeper that, having intuited Bill’s arrival through “some mysterious sixth sense,” she has gone to London to meet him. There, it is she who is killed by a German bomb (146). Returning by train to London, Bill takes another train to Retford in Nottinghamshire, where he visits his fiancée’s family and tours local historical sites (148). Later, in Bramshott, he visits his brother, Hubert, and his fiancée’s brother, Stanley, who is eager to return to France after having been wounded at Vimy (148).

When he rejoins the Battalion at Bourecq (148), they soon move to Lieven to relieve the 16th Battalion. Here, Bill and his pals spend Christmas Eve, 1917, in a cellar

under a ruin, where the men distract themselves from the cold and their hunger with louse races (149-150). He next spends "New Year's eve on a listening post, cold and hungry, watching Very lights trace their patterns in the sky, wondering what 1918 would bring" (151). When the Battalion is relieved and moves back to Souchez, they are billeted in miserable huts, but Tommy and Bill make them more comfortable by scrounging a stove and other supplies (151). During their next trip into the line, Bill and his comrades inhabit "underground passages and concrete chambers" at Cité St. Theodore (153). When next out of the line, Bill enjoys chumming with his pals while they are billeted in Noulles mines (154). Then, on March 6th, 1918, the Battalion relieves the 116th Battalion in the line near Avion, where Bill and five others are positioned in a listening post in the midst of the flooded landscape of No Man's Land (156). After six days, the Battalion moves back into support lines and quarters in the La Coulette brewery (157). To the men's great displeasure, instead of going back to rest in billets, the Battalion enters the front line again (158). There, they can hear the sounds of a tremendous bombardment at the Somme. Amid rumours about the Germans breaking through, they prepare to repulse an attack (160-161).

Chapter 6, "The Longest Trip," opens with a vivid account of three patrols in the Vimy section (162), with a positive evaluation of the new reinforcements (163), and with a detailed description of the trench positions (164). Subsequent to a period in support line billets at La Coulette, they move to the Lens area where the battalion relieves the Staffords (165). With another man, Bill is sent out to observe the German front and to watch for German patrols. Thanks to another warning visit from Steve (166), Bill narrowly avoids being killed by a shell. He has yet another close call when a German

patrol nearly stumbles across him and his wiring party (168). When the Battalion moves into the front lines in the "Minnie House" sector, Bill goes out on patrol with a sergeant who embellishes the results of their work (174). By contrast, he has to rescue a group of men who had been forgotten in No Man's Land by their foolish officer (175). After fifty-five days in the front, never further back than the transport lines, the Battalion is finally relieved and withdraws to a French village (180). Following "a wonderful vacation" out on rest in St. Hilaire, the men begin to recover their spirits (185). The chapter ends soberly, however, with the depiction of an encounter between Bill and his pals, and a broken French soldier (186).

Chapter 7, "In a German Trench," returns to the episodic structure of the early chapters. It opens in an estaminet near Bourecque, where there is animated talk among soldiers about military incompetence and injustice (187-189). The memoir also records Bill's reflections about injustices related to the awarding of military medals (190, 202), and forced church parades (192). After a period in the front lines at Bellacourt (191), the Battalion is moved to support trenches at Neuville Vitasse—a quiet sector where the men enjoy warm weather and easy work parties (193). After another brief spell at Bellacourt, the Battalion relieves the C.M.R.'s at Mercatel Switch (196). While out exploring this section of No Man's Land, Bill has yet another close call when he steps into a trench in the darkness and cuts his eyelid and eyebrow on barbed wire (197). Despite worries at the aid station that his eye is damaged (198), the doctor stitches up the wound and Bill returns to the trenches (199). After a period of rest at Wailly, the Battalion begins a long march, which takes them through Amiens to St. Fuscien, where they find billets (206-207). Bill and his comrades disobey orders by looting from gardens because they have no

rations (208). On August 6th, the Battalion marches southeast towards Boves in the Somme (209). In Gentelles Wood, they wait for zero hour for the Battle of Amiens to begin, when they will cross the river Luce to attack the Germans (210). Both Christensen and Eddie say good-bye to Bill, certain that they will be killed in the fighting (213-214).

Chapter 8, “Parvillers,” describes a new, action-packed type of trench fighting on the Amiens front which is characterized by bombing and rushing. After crossing the river Luce under heavy shellfire, the Battalion achieves their objective at Hill 104, and then pushes forward to Claude Wood where they settle in for the night (215-220). From there, Bill watches a cavalry charge, and his vivid recollection of this spectacle is one of the most exciting episodes of the memoir (220-222). The next day, the Battalion moves to Folles Village (223). Pursuing the retreating Germans the next day, Bill narrowly escapes a deadly aerial bombardment, thanks to another warning from Steve (223).

When the Battalion arrives in Parvillers to relieve the King's Own Scottish Borderers’ regiment (224), the scene is gory and horrific (224-225), with the Germans holding a tactical advantage in a series of confusing trenches (225-227). The memoir offers vivid descriptions of Bill’s actions during the close fighting in this warren of trenches, including a number of kills, as well as an encounter with a fatally wounded German officer for whom he fetches water (227-235). Bill heeds another ghostly warning when Steve taps him on the shoulder (236), and, as the rest of the company settles in for the night in newly captured trenches, Bill goes looking for Tommy. Once together, they exchange stories of the day’s fighting, including Tommy’s accounts of Waterbottle, Earle, Lockerbie, and Barron’s exploits (236-240). As Bill moves through the trenches that night, he finds Siddall dying and sits with him until he dies. He also finds the

wounded German officer still alive, and brings him more water (241). The chapter ends with a disturbing account of the murder by one of the 42nd of a wounded German prisoner whose groans were keeping him awake (242).

The next day, the men are on the move before dawn as chapter 9, "Jigsaw Wood," begins. Bill is lucky to survive a suicidal frontal attack on two machine gun posts (243). Immediately afterwards, Bill and Tommy are sent to a forward post and then out on patrol (244). Here, a number of close calls and tense encounters end in a series of false alarms when German prisoners are mistaken for attackers (244-246). The next day, the battalion moves to Hamon Wood, a "glorious spot" (247) for a rest. While out on rest, Bill and Tommy walk a long way to visit friends in the 85th Battalion. Starving for rations, they break into the Y.M.C.A. tent (248-249), which turns into an episode of French farce. After an "easy" inspection and a pleasant nighttime singsong, the Battalion next marches towards Arras (249), passing through Arras at night and taking shelter in some ruins on the outskirts, where they come under strafing (250). Thanks to another visit from Steve, Bill escapes a catastrophic explosion in the cellar where his platoon has taken shelter (251). Many vivid descriptions of Bill's adventures follow, as "D" Company pushes forward after the retreating Germans, including encounters with German resistance, fighting at close quarters, and hunting for souvenirs (252-259). When relief finally arrives, the exhausted men straggle back towards Arras.

After only two nights out, the Battalion moves up to the front line again. But now Bird observes that the conditions of war have changed. Rather than following the rhythm of six days in and six days out of the trenches, they are doing "'over the top' work, charging Hun machine guns, killing around trench bays with bomb and bayonet," and

becoming accustomed to the sight of German prisoners and wounded. Bird also notes that, in contrast to the conditions of static trench warfare, the lines now separating friend from foe are no longer clear, making it more difficult for him to find his way on patrol (267). While in support lines, Bill and Tommy go to a nearby village where they loot blankets (needed to keep warm on cold September nights) and a dozen bottles of wine from a priest's house (268). Tommy and Bill are disappointed when they have to confiscate the bottles from their pals who misuse their "treat" (268).

Chapter 10, "The Student," describes Bill's last patrol of the war, during which fifteen of the company are injured by gunfire, shelling, or gas (269). The next morning, Bill acts as a guide when the Battalion moves back to a cave near Vis en Artois (269). In early October, 1918, while still out on rest, the Battalion's ranks are filled by another draft, and Bill is made a corporal (274). Just before entering the action at Cambrai, Bill meets and befriends "the Student" (275). Each is glad to talk with a kindred spirit, and they engage in a long philosophical discussion about heroism, fate, and the morality of war (277-279). When Tommy joins them, he rants bitterly against the brass (280-281). Now, their forward progress in the face of German resistance is also recorded in vivid detail (284-288). While digging in for the night on the outskirts of Cambrai, Bill once again feels Steve's warning touch on his shoulder and moves out of the way just in time to avoid being shot (288). In the morning, the Germans can be seen building emplacements between the Canadians and their next objective, before three battalions arrive and charge the German positions. The Germans are overrun, and those who surrender are put to work digging trenches (289). When they are relieved, the men of the 42nd move back to shelter near Bourlon Wood, where they spend a week getting some

much-needed rest (291), before rejoining the pursuit of the fleeing Germans. The Canadians are warmly welcomed in the newly liberated villages through which they pass. And, they see terrible things indicating the hardships the villagers suffered under German occupation (292). By late October, the Battalion reaches the edge of the Raismes Forest, still in close pursuit of the Germans (295).

The penultimate chapter, "Raismes Forest," opens with lengthy rants from the Student and Tommy about the futility and injustices of the war (297). In contrast, Giger maintains an enthusiasm for the war, and proclaims his ongoing hatred for the Germans (298). After a dangerous and frightening day in Raismes Forest, the men bivouac at a woodcutter's cabin. That night, Bill and the Student discuss more philosophy, and the Student reiterates his anti-war sentiments (302). Trying to counter the Student's bitterness with a more balanced view, Bill recalls positive memories from the trenches and recalls humorous stories (302-303). The next day, the Student is killed by a sniper, while Bill is saved once again by Steve's ghost (304).

In another exciting episode, Bill and his pals disobey orders to sleep in the comfort of an empty house in the village, from which they barely manage to escape after waking the next morning to find Germans on the street just outside the door (308-310). A more disturbing incident follows when Bill and Sambro spend the night in the cottage of a "queer old crone" who shows them the body of a beheaded German officer in her cellar (311). The Battalion continues pushing forward after the retreating Germans, passing through Valenciennes (311) and Quivrechem [sic, Quiévrechain], on the Belgian border. On November 9th, they march through Thelien, and into Jemappes on the outskirts of Mons (312), where the men hear rumours of an impending armistice (312-315). On

Sunday, November 10th, Bill's platoon joins the Battalion marching towards Mons (317). After a hard day of fighting, the Germans are pushed out of Mons (322).

In the memoir's final chapter, "And We Go On," his comrades celebrate in the streets of Mons while Bill finds peace and comfort in the home of a Belgian couple who offer him a bed (324). "[S]eized" by "inexplicable bitterness" and haunted by vivid memories of the war, Bill nonetheless finds sleep difficult (325-327). Throwing off his bitterness, he helps a young German hiding in his bedroom to avoid mob violence in the streets by disguising him in old clothing (327-328). Reporting to barracks the next morning, Bill is named orderly sergeant and ordered to round up the men (329). Frustrated by the injustice that allows officers to be fêted and entertained, while "other ranks" are ordered to be "in their beds by nine-thirty," Bill helps "the boys" escape the barracks to enjoy themselves and sneak back in before morning (329-330). While he is grateful that his leave comes through, the idea of leave seems "an irony now" (331).

On the boat back to France, Bill meets Jock, a gunner with money to spend, who invites Bill to join him on a tour of France (332). The tour, which begins on a southern sea shore, is described in detail as they revisit all the major battlefields, including the Somme and Ypres (333). The Captain and the sergeant-major say nothing when Bill reports in at Genval, fourteen days late from leave (334). Soon after Bill eats his third Christmas dinner in France, he is surprised to be awarded the Military Medal for "courage and devotion to duty" during operations at Mons (334). In February of 1919, Bill gets another leave, "the final battalion leave." When he visits the Black Boar Inn one last time, he discovers that the old man had died on November 10th. At the waterfall where he first met Phyllis, he has a vision of her with Steve, and "their eyes were full of

pity" (335). Throughout the rest of the winter of 1919, Bill feels bitter and alienated while billeted at Bramshott Camp (335). Tommy is even worse, often wishing for death (336). He soon gets his wish, because he dies of influenza in a British hospital (337-338). Shortly after Tommy's death, Bill boards the *Adriatic* at Liverpool (338). During the last night on the transport ship home, the men are emotional and exuberant, then quiet and reflective (340). Unable to sleep, and eager to catch their first sight of Halifax, a group of men gathers on the deck, and they stand shoulder to shoulder, contemplating what they are leaving behind and what they will face in the future (343).

ii

There has been very little recent critical commentary about Bird's Great War memoir. Jeanne M. Yardley makes a passing reference to *And We Go On* in "'The Bitterness and the Greatness': Reading F. G. Scott's War," an essay which, essentially, extends Paul Fussell's argument that irony is the only appropriate mode for writing about the Great War, by testing it against Canadian Great War narratives. Yardley lists Bird among those writers whose works indicate "the shift from romance to irony in interpreting the war" (82). More particularly, Yardley lists Bird, along with Peregrine Acland and James Pedley, as a writer who rejects the romance plot—specifically the romance plot's recovery of harmony at the end of the narrative (98). She also points to Bird's "grief for friends who are killed" as evidence of the "more developed and overtly portrayed instances of irony" characteristic of later Great War narratives (99).

In contrast to Yardley, Jonathan Vance consistently uses *And We Go On* to undercut Paul Fussell's arguments. For example, in his second chapter, "Christ in

Flanders," Vance quotes a passage from *And We Go On* to disprove Fussell's assertion that the association of dawn with resurrection did not survive the war. The passage Vance quotes shows that dawn continued to be viewed/invoked as an image of hope and promise in a number of Great War narratives (48). In his fourth chapter, "Accurs'd They Were Not Here," Vance next quotes Bird to illustrate the sustaining power of comradeship. In opposition to Fussell, who asserts that the war fostered a habit of gross dichotomizing, including ongoing division between staff and troops, Vance argues that social differences (such as those based on wealth, education and appearance) tended more often to be effaced by the bonds of comradeship. Using Bird's text for support, Vance shows that a soldier's conduct was the only measure of worth that mattered in the trenches (128).

Vance's longest commentary on Bird's memoir appears in his sixth chapter, "Safeguarding the Past," where Vance names Bird as one of Canada's "best soldier-writers" (177), and reframes the critical reception of Harrison's *Generals Die in Bed* and Bird's *And We Go On* in terms of the general preference of Canadians for balanced war books (192-193). Vance quotes from the preface to demonstrate specifically that Bird "wrote *And We Go On* as a corrective to war books that were 'putrid with so-called "realism"' (194). In particular, Vance points to Bird's denunciation of depictions of the soldier as degraded and debased—a common stereotype in the anti-war canon. Vance also notes important similarities between *And We Go On* and *Generals Die in Bed*, including incidents that highlight the tragedy, irony, and horror of mechanized warfare. Though Bird's memoir "has every bit as much mud and grime as any war book," Vance reports that it "received sparkling reviews," because it is "clean in a metaphorical sense" (195). "Bird's soldiers," Vance continues, "remain pure" of soul and spirit: "They are

decent, clean-minded, and good-hearted. Whatever misdeeds they occasionally commit, they are not brutalized or dehumanized by war. Their violence is shed when they leave the trenches" (196).

Ultimately, Vance exhibits a finely-tuned "sense of an ending" with respect to *And We Go On*, which closes with reflections about the warmth of camaraderie that, "for Bird, would be the legacy of the war. He knew his bitterness would eventually give way to something precious": memories of shared experiences, food, comforts, support, secrets, and faith (196). Indeed, the historian understands better than the literary critic why the "average reader" was so receptive to a Great War memoir like Bird's:

> He had captured the horror and degradation that punctuated the antiwar canon but had not allowed himself to wallow in it. Instead, he had crafted a memory of the war that recognized the gifts it conferred on those who took part. This sense of balance made Bird the quintessential articulation of Canada's war: obviously knowledgeable, certainly credible, and, most important of all, optimistic. (196)

Vance concludes his passing commentary on the memoir by asserting that it was well received by readers, because Bird's vision matched the memory of the Great War that the public wished to uphold (197).

It should be clear by now that Bird does achieve a balanced position, in part, by marking out the differences of his memoir from jingoistic texts and heroic romances. For example, early in the memoir, when some of the men discuss their reasons for enlisting, Howard proclaims, "I come to fight for my country, for the flag, and for the right."

Immediately, Tommy challenges him and his fervent patriotism, asking, "how in heck do you know you're in the right?" Howard's response, if he gave one, is not recorded. Instead, the memoir goes on to describe Howard's fate:

> He went to the trenches, and shortly after made close acquaintance with a five-nine shell. He was not seriously damaged, but his patriotism received a blow. He got back to England and held forth there on the glorious crusade on which we were embarked. It was much safer across the Channel. (21)

Tommy's response, as well as Howard's fate, wrapped in the mocking tone in which it is reported, point to Bird's rejection of fervent patriotism and traditional notions of war as a heroic struggle.

Later, the inclusion of a bitter rant against patriotism (it means nothing), loyalty (a word to be sneered at), and discipline (an incurable "canker"), seems to offer another clear rejection of these traditional bellicose notions (65). However, the authority of this rejection is also qualified by the attribution of this rant to an unnamed soldier. Indeed, interpretation of Bird's politics is frequently complicated by this kind of authorial evasion. Though the unnamed soldier goes on to deride "the caste of the nation," and to curse "the propaganda passed out by preachers, editors, staff officers and platform patriots of both sexes," this position is only partially endorsed by Bill who merely "humoured him" because he "seemed emotional" (65). Bill and the man do agree that, although so-called patriots ought "to be detested," war is their "duty" (65). Similar rants are attributed to the Professor (107-108), Tommy (109, 149, 192, 270, 297-299) and to the Student (297). As before, Bird does not deny such anti-war sentiments, but instead

offers softening explanations and comforting responses, if he does not outright change the subject (109, 302). Whether or not Bill advances or supports these anti-war rants, they are fully supported by the text, in which they are given a generous amount of space.[8]

Later still, Bill would appear to offer another qualified rejection of patriotism. On first meeting Bill, the Student is surprised that "a grizzled oldtimer" refuses to "discourse on the glory of fighting for King and Country" (277). Bill explains to the Student that such sentiments are found only "in the piffle of the war correspondents": "They tell you how happy we are to die in battle, how hard it is to restrain us in the big attacks." Although he rejects the propagandists' lies, he admits to the Student that he does feel loyal to his regiment, that he is inspired or encouraged when he hears the sound of the bagpipes, and that he is moved by the "bugle blowing Last Post, or a trumpeter sounding an evening call" (277). The complexity of Bill's balanced response to the pull of patriotism is particularly evident when contrasted with Alexander Falcon's more extreme response in *All Else is Folly*. Though he adamantly hates war, Peregrine Acland's protagonist is similarly moved by the pageantry of the regimental band and the call of the pipes and drums. In contrast to Bill, who accepts his own contradictory responses, however, Falcon cannot cope with the inner conflict and wants to "Stab the drums! Slit the pipes!" (343-344). The violence of Falcon's response is clearly less sophisticated than Bill's.

Much less complicated is the narrative's treatment of anti-German sentiment. Bill's disapproval of the "way some of those platform shouters had ranted about the Germans, and their 'hate'" is clear and overt. Soldiers may joke about "Heinie," Bill admits, but "the German was seldom mentioned in billets." Further, he reflects that a

soldier might express some anger or even desire for vengeance after “a dirty night at the crossroads or an undue strafing in the trenches,” but the same soldier would likely offer a German P.O.W. “a cigarette and a grin” the next day (66). Later, Tommy complains that he will never convince his mother “that the Germans aren’t horned devils” (336). Thus, ferocious hatred and vilification of the enemy is ultimately propagated by preachers and politicians, not the soldiers themselves.

Traditional notions of honour and glory in war are undercut ironically in the memoir. In particular, Tommy stumbles across a “dreadful spot” near Souchez, where he sees a large number of “unburied dead, mostly Sengalese [sic], rotting, rat-picked bones, with fezzes, faded red sashes and brass-studded belts among the skeletons” (92). Here, the description juxtaposes the horror of rotting corpses against the glamorous embellishments of military uniforms (92). The worth of embellishments is similarly contrasted to the worth of human life when Tommy mocks the Battalion’s “red hackles,” a new battle honour the 42nd are now “privileged to wear” (141). Snorting derisively, he exclaims, “What are they to us! What about Mickey and the Professor and Melville and all the boys? Red hackles, bah!” (141).

To some extent, Bird’s memoir might support Fussellian irony by questioning traditional ideas of heroism. In contrast to jingoistic texts, there are no fearless heroes in the trenches. The professor, for example, confesses: “I’m so frightened that I could jump up and bolt like a wild thing.” He wonders how the others “stand it” (98). Tommy also admits “that his heart was in his mouth as he crawled into the region between the wires” (99). Bill himself admits to “a sickening sense of fear” (319). *And We Go On* is further distinguished from heroic romances by its rejection of the chauvinistic idea that the

British are “haloed champions of Christianity” (336). There are for Bird no super-human heroes in the trenches, only ordinary men.

Without doubt, his unflinching depiction of the horrors of war does differentiate Bird’s memoir from heroic romances. *And We Go On* not only includes “as much mud and grime as any war book” (Vance 195), but the soldier-writer demonstrates his commitment to vivid realism from his first view of No Man’s Land. Under the illumination of a Very light, he sketches a war-ravaged landscape:

> Jumbled earth and debris, torn earth, jagged wreckage; it looked as if a gigantic upheaval had destroyed all the surface and left only a festering wound. Everything was indefinite, and ugly and distorted. (26)

This passage also illustrates Bird’s skill with language. The repetition of the “j” sounds in “jumbled” and “jagged” suggests the magnitude of the devastation—the damaged landscape seems to go on and on, repeated over and over. At the same time, the sentence fragment suggests the protagonist’s inability to completely comprehend, or coherently describe, what he sees. Further, the description of the damage to the landscape as a “wound” personifies the land to arouse readers’ sympathy. Such highly crafted language, including multiple poetic and rhetorical devices, is used throughout the memoir.

And We Go On also captures how men struggle in, and against, this terrible landscape. For example, Bird depicts the landscape of the Salient as a “flat world of mud and water, a desolation racked by explosions, fetid with [the] slime of rotting things, gray and gruesome beyond description” (112). Despite the supposed difficulty of description, Bird adds considerable detail—grotesque detail. As the men wallow in the mud up to

their armpits they know that “the only thing solid underfoot was a dead man or his equipment.” They cannot avoid the sight of the “heads and heels and entrails” of horses and mules “shoveled into the mire” (113-114). Despite his oft-expressed doubts that words “could paint” the horrors, Bird is endlessly able to supply more vivid details of “obscene slimy places,” including Ypres, which he revisits after the armistice:

> The fearful stench of death was there, hovering, clinging, and along the old used ways there were stiff legs sticking from the mire, and bloated bodies of mules not entirely sunken in the muck. Old stubs like jagged spikes still toothed the skyline. It was a cesspool of human desolation, shaking into abominable rottenness, a succession of stagnant, discoloured, water-logged shell holes, cankering the dead crust of a vast unhallowed graveyard. (333)

Bird’s use of such verbs as “toothed,” “shaking,” “cankering,” hint at an ongoing destructive force that persists even after the violence of war is over, as though the landscape itself has become an active, malignant agent.

Bird also includes disturbing descriptions of pests infesting the trenches. For instance, he recalls having disturbed a bunch of “snaky”-tailed, “malevolent”-eyed rats on a patrol in No Man’s Land. The encounter becomes particularly horrifying when he remembers “what they were seeking” (98). Even out of the line, rats torment them:

> Rats were everywhere, great podgy brutes with fiendish, ghoulishly-gleaming eyes. They came at night on the parapets and startled one so that he thrust at them with his bayonet, or crawled over him as he

> lay under his blanket in his bunk trying to “shiver himself warm.” (38)

And then there is the ever-present, never-ending plague of lice:

> The vermin were everywhere. We could wash and change our shirts as often as we liked; within a few hours we were lousy again. Men squatted in their bunks beside candles and picked the seams of their clothing, sought the crawlers, always fought them, but never […] conquered them. (41)

Like the rats, the lice are portrayed as dangerous enemies, which the soldiers fight, but cannot defeat.

In addition to the mud, the rats, and the lice, Bird evokes other extreme conditions the soldiers face, including poor shelters that leave them exposed, cold, and wet. For instance, he describes California Trench as “a dreadful ditch with makeshift shelters,” and “considerable shelling from all angles” (112-113). The men spend tough nights sitting “in such shelter as [they] had […] soaked by constant dripping, chilled to the bone” (113). Conditions are just as “dreadful” on the Avion front. Though the weather is more comfortably warm, the men are “cooped in a small space” in a “foul” smelling cellar full of flies. The air gives them headaches, and the drinking water is “unfit to drink” (157). Even out of the line, the soldiers continue to endure terrible discomforts, including cold, wet shelters, and inadequate rations. Bird’s unflinching treatment of war’s unpleasant realities removes it utterly from the drivel of sentimental romances.

The lack of sentimentality in Bird’s gory scenes also saves him from the taint of patriotic rant. On one of their first work parties, Tommy, Arthur and Bill are sent to

repair an emplacement, recently destroyed by heavy shelling. When they arrive, they are immediately confronted by a "peculiar odor," and the sight of men's bodies "shredded to fragments." Their task, which required them "to pick up legs and bits of flesh from underfoot and from the muddy walls, place all in the bags and then bury them in one grave," proved to be a "harsh breaking in" for the newly arrived draft, and quickly quashed any notions they may have had of war as heroic romance (25). A recollection of the first death Bird had witnessed is equally vivid. When an officer is shot between the eyes looking out over the parapet, "brains and blood were spilled all over the front of my overcoat and on my arms" (33). The horror of this scene is prolonged because he must sit beside the dead man all day, covered in gore, waiting for dark when stretcher-bearers would collect the corpse (35). Bird also recalls Dundee's terrible injury when he is shot in the head as he looks over the parapet: "The bullet had gone in his cheek on one side and out his eye on the other. He threshed about in agony and blood poured from him" (34). Bird recounts another shockingly gory incident when he tells the story of tipping a tank with Melville and Tommy, hoping to find a place to sleep. As they rock the monstrous machine back and forth, "a head squeezed out in the muck, a face without eyes, the skin peeled as though from lard, a corpse long dead and frightful" (114).

These horrors, as well as lack of sleep, poor nutrition, hard work, and nearly constant danger, exact a terrible price on the men. Bird offers abundant bodily evidence of the negative effects of war, including Pete's physical degradation. Pete "had been an athlete, was a splendidly proportioned man, but had lain too long in the water and slime. He was racked with fits of coughing, was too weak to go on parades, and finally they sent him down to hospital" (151). Bird also records Sambro's physical deterioration:

> He had not missed a turn in the line since coming to France and his health was not good. Our stay in the line without hot meals, and the lack of a bath had its effects. He developed some skin disease and was covered with sores. The medical officer sent him down the line and we did not see him again for months. (167)

Bill's sympathy is even more intensely evoked when he sees a soldier brought in to the field hospital at St. Pol "whose face was so swollen that he could not speak. He had crawled in mud from a listening post, unable to walk, and his hands were raw discoloured hooks." Speechless and without hands, this man seems to have lost much of his humanity. He is "absolutely worn out with crawling in the mud, back and forth from post to trench, without enough to eat, and suffering all kinds of exposure." In fact, this man's suffering is so great that, when he dies, Bill feels "rather glad that the poor chap was through with all the mud, and the rain and snow, and rats, and lice, and discipline, and discomfort; he could rest a long, long time" (64). These detailed descriptions of the physical damage caused by war, much like those in the canonical anti-war texts, clearly remove *And We Go On* from the rank of traditional heroic narratives.

It is also noteworthy that Bird includes "discipline" among the causes of this latest man's suffering (64). Much as one finds in genuine anti-war narratives, such as Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front*, Sassoon's *The Complete Memoirs of George Sherston*, and even Godwin's *Why Stay We Here?*, Bird's narrative accumulates instances in which soldiers are brutalized by the military machine. Bird comments that inspections are often "degrading," especially "to men of spirit," because they are treated like animals: "You were herded like cattle into fields or yards and there stood to await the pleasure of

some be-ribboned personage who gazed at one as if he were really lower in worth than a good horse" (22). Here, Bird's shift to the second-person pronoun intensifies readers' identification with the front-line soldier, drawing them into the experience.

Of course, the damage suffered by soldiers in war is not just physical, but also emotional, and mental. Thus, Bird observes various kinds of damage among the soldiers returning from the Battle of Vimy Ridge:

> They sat in the dugout that night, […] each man suffering from bodily fatigue, and crawling vermin, and the clammy chill of mud-caked clothing, their faces brooding, enigmatic, even Mickey's curiously odd, only their eyes moving. They would not talk about the fighting and seemed utterly worn. Six months ago we had marched to Mount St. Eloi, eagerly, bravely, our tin hats askew and with a cheeky retort for every comment, hiding whatever secret apprehensions we had, not knowing the heavy ominous silence that follows the burst of big shells—and the cries of the wounded; not knowing what it is to scrape a hasty grave at night and there bury a man who has worked with you and slept with you since you enlisted. (71)

In addition to such emotional devastation, war's violence leads to mental degradation. Bird recalls crouching with his platoon in a hastily dug pit, under heavy shelling, "staring, dazed, wondering, our brains numbed beyond thinking by the incessant explosions" (126). Later, a combination of fatigue, violence, and difficult circumstances, including the "head-splitting hours in that foul cellar, the tense atmosphere about the

trenches, the heat," make Bill "forget" what he is doing when he takes his mocking revenge on the foolish peacock officer lost in the trenches (159-160).

In some cases, the brutality of war not only leads men to make poor choices, but also to limit or block their ability to make any choices at all. For instance, Bird describes a man so terrified by a bombardment that he "shook as with ague and crouched in the mud, groveling and making almost animal noises" (127). He also observes an officer so overwhelmed by fear while in No Man's Land that he runs "away like a wild thing" (129). The disturbing sight of a soldier undone by terror is in and of itself terrifying: "Fear had relaxed the muscles of his face and it had become like dough; his mouth dribbled; I could not look at him" (127-128). Some men, as Bird observes, are dehumanized by their war experiences.

If only a few are reduced to gibbering idiocy, most of the men depicted in *And We Go On* do suffer some degree of shell shock. Silence and listlessness most often appear in the memoir as the tell-tale symptoms of shell shock. For example, Bird describes how, while digging trenches under fire in the Durrand Crater, Arthur sits down in the mud and refuses to speak (51). Then, after Arthur is shot, Freddy "got so that he would not talk" (52). Similarly, during a heavy bombardment in the Salient, the men of Bill's company sit "in the dark, unmoving, without speaking," their "brains numbed by the awfulness of everything." (114). Melville falls into a lengthy silence, too (116, 119). In California Trench, the men are so silent in their grief that Bird describes them as "mud-swathed phantoms" (125). And, while still at Passchendaele, Bill encounters a man so exhausted that, even when spoken to, "he did not nod or speak" and he "never changed expression" (136-137). At Jigsaw Wood, Sedgewick does not even recognize Bird, and Jimmy is

"taciturn, gloomy, smoking by himself; did not care what the battalion did or where they went" (267).

In addition to such emotional withdrawal, many of the men are portrayed as suffering from sleep-disorders. While out of the line, billeted in a barn, Bill hears some of his men "muttering in their sleep, turning, twisting, straining" (139). He adds: "Twice I woke and found a man on his hands and knees, gazing about him, wakened by the horrors of his own mind, unable to comprehend that at last the Salient stench had left his notsirls [sic]" (139). Later, in the Lens sector, there will be more night sweats:

> […] the night was filled with sudden wakenings. We would start up, bathed in perspiration despite the slight chill of the air, again facing the Huns, again watching a potato masher come sailing for us. Each hour some man cried out and ground his teeth and muttered curses. (247)

Such nightmares are likened to torture when Bird recalls seeing "men twisting and writhing in their sleep after big battles, tortured by visions that held them on a rack, by screams and shouts and the sounds of fighting that still echoed in their ears" (339). In all these descriptions of disturbed sleep, it is the sensory details, calling on senses of smell, touch, sight and sound, that best evoke the intensity of the recollections.

Like his comrades, Bill is haunted by his war experiences. He is particularly brutalized by two experiences while fighting at Passchendaele in November of 1917. First, Bill kills a German with his bayonet:

> I flourished my bayonet, intending only to bluff the German into surrender—for I had always a dread of such fighting—the fellow

> drove headlong at me. He tripped over his [fallen] comrade as he came, but I seemed paralyzed. I could not move to avoid him. I tried to ward his weapon and then instead of tearing steel in my own flesh I felt my bayonet steady as if guided, and was jolted as it brought up on solid bone. My grip tightened as my rifle was twisted by a sudden squirming, as if I had speared a huge fish. (135)

Though intensely graphic, this description serves to evade personal responsibility for the kill. As in *All Quiet on the Western Front*, where Paul Bäumer's only bayonet kill is depicted as merely an automatic, trained response (Remarque 193), this face-to-face kill is recalled as being more like a clumsy accident than a willed action. This impression is corroborated by Bill's assertions that he was not a rational actor: "I had not meant to kill the German, had not wanted to do anything" (136). As well, one notes the dehumanized image of the German soldier as "a huge fish"—seemingly another evasion of the horrible truth of this event. There is a kind of disassociation from the scene, even in the moment, when Bird comments, "It had been all like a bad dream to me. I was too sick of the mud and dead men and lack of sleep to realize what I was doing, and I had kept with the officer." Here, the excuses pile on: conditions, fatigue, and—the usual suspect—following orders (135). Despite (or because of) such evasions, Bill is deeply affected by killing at close quarters, which leaves him "weak with the shock of excitement," and barely able to "answer the officer as he asked me questions" (135). Even much later, he re-experiences this traumatic event in his nightmares and visions (139, 326).

Almost immediately after his "first and only kill with cold steel" (135), and during the same action, Bill endures additional trauma when Mickey is fatally wounded

by shrapnel. The memoir records Mickey's last words as he is dying, nestled "like a child," in Bill's arms. First, Mickey expresses disappointment that he never earned glory or honour in battle. Then, Mickey asserts his own innocence and anti-war sentiments: "I didn't want—to kill people. I hate war—and everything." Next, Mickey focuses on those he holds responsible for the war, asking, "Why did they do it—why—did—they?" Here, the repetition and the dashes, which signify Mickey's struggle to speak, also highlight the unanswerable nature of his questions, thus increasing the pathos of this scene. Although similar pathos colours Bird's report of the death of "poor little Johnny who was just making his second tour to the trenches, his first in the front line" (198), there are, thankfully, few such slides into sentimentality in the memoir. Bird reports, though he does not record, Mickey's long anti-war rant, in which he talks about war as an exercise in "futility" and "endless repetition." Finally, in an unfortunately sentimental eponymous moment, "[l]ittle white-faced Mickey" shrills, "And we just go on and on […] Doing things because—because—." With his dying breaths, he repeats "…and we on—on—on—on" (137). Rather than dwell on his own grief, Bird becomes a type of camera eye, describing Hughes's reaction to Mickey's death. Hughes, who is nearly catatonic, is, Bill notes, "in worse condition than I had supposed, for he had thought the world of Mickey." Though Bill, too, had always felt a particular affection for Mickey, he is able to function by taking Hughes roughly in hand and leading him away (138). Again, despite—or perhaps because of—his repressed response, Bird is haunted by this event. He recalls waking at night, soon after Mickey's death, "bathed in perspiration […] seeing Mickey's white face close to mine, while his blood seeped from him and warmed my knees" (139).

Much later, he still feels Mickey's "white face," feels the weight of Mickey's body in his arms, and experiences the dread despair of Mickey's "hopeless, gasping surrender" (327).

Though silent withdrawal and vivid nightmares are highlighted, other shell-shock symptoms are noted. Bird observes that some of the men suffer loss of appetite (173, 219, 274), or else suffer edginess, and restlessness (54). They are "jumpy, too watchful, too quick to take alarm." This excessive nervousness sometimes has serious consequences, such as deadly incidents of friendly fire resulting from over-strained nerves (180). Some soldiers become overly boisterous, some begin to drink more (103-105, 180), and some become "querulous" (138). Mickey becomes "shrill" (105), his hands shake and he smokes continually (106). Luggar becomes "temporarily insane" when his skull is grazed by a German bullet (120). Bill himself sweats profusely (138). Bird's attention to all these shell-shock symptoms functions to undermine traditional notions of glorious heroism in war, and clearly differentiates *And We Go On* from sentimental romances and/or jingoistic texts.

Indeed, a careless reader could get the impression that the type of alienation that some soldiers suffer in Bird's memoir is prima facie evidence of his memoir's contribution to the anti-war canon. For example, Bird presents Jones, who, after thirty-five months in France, with half of that time being in the front lines, finds himself deeply alienated from his life before the war. "I feel sometimes," he confides to Bill, "as if I didn't know anything else but war, as if I had been born here. It's hard for me to remember anything at home." Bill agrees, adding, "Home seemed a thing remote, something we had once known. It was to me but a hazy picture, vague, indistinct, something like childhood, passed out of our reckoning; I could not grasp the fact that it

still existed" (314). Even after the armistice, the men feel a similar disconnection. Bird records, for instance, that he and Tommy were "like strangers in a wild country" (335). Tommy suffers most deeply from alienation, not only from home (336), but also from himself (274). In fact, Tommy becomes alienated from life itself, and descends so deeply into despair that he wishes for death: "I wish—oh how I wish—that I was under one of them white crosses. I don't want to go back and leave the boys" (330-331). Bird's portrait of Tommy's disillusionment and descent into despair would not be out of place in any text from the anti-war canon.

The description of a young French soldier, wounded at Verdun, ultimately encapsulates everything that is alienating about the experience of war. White-haired and unsteady on his feet, the man's "eyes once seen could never be entirely forgotten. They were dreadful, blue orbs, distended, unwinking, and staring with horror that startled us." Perhaps what startles Bird and his fellows most is that, while they see him as an alien, they also see themselves in this broken figure: "We could see that he had been Tommy's twin in physique but it was difficult to believe that he had once the same red cheeks and impetuous, high-held chin" (186). Simultaneously strange and familiar, the French soldier fills Bill and his pals with the anxiety and discomfort aroused by the *unheimlich*.

Though Bird's memoir includes other features commonly found in anti-war texts, it incorporates a multitude of signs that also signal its difference from the anti-war canon. Not least, Bird orients the reader as early as his preface that he intends to make a corrective response to the anti-war texts. One of the targets of Bird's corrective response is the nigh-universal, mythical image of soldiers as "sodden cattle." The sober discussions he has with fellow patients in the field hospital at St. Pol show, for example,

that soldiers can be deep thinkers and, therefore, much more than a bestial herd (67). Indeed, Bill is pleasantly surprised to discover that the Professor is very well educated and intellectually curious. In turn, the Professor is equally surprised by the gentility exhibited by Bill and the rest of the company, noting that this group of soldiers is "as fine a group of men as he had ever met" (99).

As further evidence that soldiers are not merely "sodden cattle," Bird documents their interest in and ongoing appreciation of beauty. For example, as the Professor observes, Bill is "interested in [sunsets], and at the same time intent on killing [his] fellow men" (99). Clearly, these men are more complex than the anti-war canon allows. Similarly, the Professor continues to be touched by the beauty of sunsets and dawns, contradicting long before the fact Fussell's assertion that, "Dawn has never recovered from what the Great War did to it" (63). Again, sensitive complexity, rather than bovine stupidity, is the order of the day when Bird offers a richly poetic description of No Man's Land seen by the flickering light of flares: "The red glows made some small pools of water look like big blots of blood, and the green lights gave everything a ghastly, corpse-like sheen" (98). While the similes evoke depths of horror, the alliteration and assonance also serve to aestheticize the scene, creating a sophisticated juxtaposition, like that of the Professor pointing "out the incongruity of a star gleam in a stagnant pool" seen in front of the Mericourt trenches. Expecting everything in, or near, the trenches to "be horrible, distorted, repulsive," the soldier continues to appreciate beauty (99).

Bird also shows that the men in the trenches are not mindless "sheep" driven to war by false ideals and misleading propaganda. In fact, he provides evidence of the soldier's own enthusiasm for war and his eagerness to fight. When asked his reason for

enlistment, Tommy identifies “adventure” as his primary motivation (21). Some men are eager to join the war so that they might have new experiences; for example, Bill enjoys sightseeing and “many of the soldiers were curiously eager to see a live Hun” (168-169). Even after some harsh war experience and a brutal “breaking in” (25), Bird can still find excitement in war. Listening to a story about a successful raid on an enemy post on Patricia Crater, Bill reports, “I was thrilled as I listened. What adventure! Tommy could hardly remain still, and he whispered to me about it after the lights were out” (27-28). When manning an observation post in Vernon Crater, Bill and McMillan become excited by the possibilities when they see two Germans crawling towards them: “We had visions of special leave and medals—if we could capture those two prowlers” (32). Later, in the maw of the Salient, when Bill and his pals hear machine gun fire, they rush forward toward the sound, plunging “through the mud excitedly” (131).

Close fighting arouses some soldiers, too. When given an opportunity to engage the Germans in hand-to-hand combat, “four or five men [of the Black Watch] seemed very anxious to get at them with bayonets” (135). Even after having been wounded at Vimy, Bird’s fiancée’s brother, Stanley, is eager to return to France (148). Likewise, even after experiencing the horrors of Passchendaele, Bill still feels enthusiastic about war. On his way to rejoin the 42nd Battalion after a leave, Bill experiences “an inexplicable thrill in being back again in dark, smelly confines and frost-bound trenches, where only Death was sure of his billet” (149). Similarly, though Tommy nearly breaks down in terror during a patrol in the Vimy sector, he gets “hold of himself again, was glad he had gone” (162). Bird also describes a successful attack on a German post, during which the “boys” fought “so fiercely that not a prisoner was taken” (199). Further, he recalls Sparky’s

exuberance after making his first kill near Parvillers (217), as well as Tommy's pride in pals like Waterbottle, Earle, Lockerbie, and Barron who accounted "for over fifty Germans, killed and captured" in the trenches there (240). At Jigsaw Wood, some soldiers are incited to move forward by thoughts of the easy capture of the Germans (261). These soldiers are evidently eager to get to the front, eager to fight the enemy, and even eager to kill—hardly the hapless sheep, in short, which populate the anti-war narratives.

Bird's vivid descriptions of battle action also reveal an undisguised enthusiasm for war. His depiction of the cavalry charge near Claude Wood is a particularly good example. Calling it "one of the finest spectacles, if not the finest of the whole war," he recalls "the Royal Canadian Dragoons, the Fort Garry Horse, the Strathconas, riding like mad, sabers flashing, lances glittering, all in perfect formation." In tone and content, Bird expresses only admiration when he describes the horses and men cut down by German machine gun fire, the German soldier beheaded by a horseman, another German gunner pierced through by a lance, three Germans "beaten to earth under the horses' hoofs," and a gun crew crushed by a tank. Bird contradicts the anti-war canon's assumption that war is without redeeming features, not least by labeling these sights not as horrors but as "thrills" (220-221).

Men who are autonomous actors, able to make choices (within limits of their circumstances), and even to resist dogmatic authority, also give the lie to the anti-war canon's mythical image of soldiers as "sodden cattle," or mindless sheep. On several occasions, small groups of soldiers take the initiative to plan and execute military manoeuvres. For instance, after multiple attempts to lay wire in No Man's Land fail

because flares and machine gun fire send the men back into their own trench, “Tommy, and Melville and Mickey and I told the officer that we would put up the wire without a covering party or any one else out there. He agreed eagerly and we went out.” The men complete their work successfully and return safely to their trench, thereby illustrating the value of autonomous action (76). A small group of men is similarly successful when they find a way to take a machine gun post (239). Bill also takes individual responsibility and achieves his goals when, on his own initiative, he destroys two German machine gun posts in Mons with little more at hand than rifle grenades. As an independent actor, no one tells Bill what to do and he never tells anyone what he has accomplished (321-322). Thus, Bill and his pals are not passive sheep; instead, they participate in decisions and activities that have meaningful consequences for themselves and others.

And We Go On offers a more overt response still to the anti-war texts that “portray the soldier as a coarse-minded profane creature, seeking only the solace of loose women or the courage of strong liquor” (5). In particular, Bill demonstrates that the men of his draft, in contrast to the “old ‘hard’ men,” are good, clean, and decent. His response is quite specific when he notes that they “did not seem to care for hard liquor or the red light” (56). Even while out of the line, Bill is pleased to note that he “had not seen a dozen drunks in our billets” (99). Later still, he reports that “there was very little drinking, and not over three drunks came in all the time we were out on rest” (184). The honesty of the soldier at war is illustrated when Bill and Earle leave money to pay for food they take from a Y.M.C.A tent in the night (179). This scene seems to offer a direct response, for example, to the many scenes of wanton looting and vandalism in *Generals Die in Bed*.

Another target of Bird's corrective response is the anti-war canon's characteristic assumption that combatants are inevitably and permanently brutalized, dehumanized, and demoralized. Bird counters this assumption, in part, by asserting that the men are not necessarily and fundamentally damaged by war. He shows that, despite the horrors of war and discomforts of trench life, Bill never descends permanently into despair and hopelessness, but maintains a healthy will to live: "Each hour had grown to be a grim possession, something held precariously" (127). Likewise, Bird's moral sense survives war's brutalizing effect. Clearly his humane feelings are intact when he feels guilty about killing a German soldier who had been about to surrender (217-218). Bird's capacity to sympathize is also evident when he recalls how he "wanted to stop and help him" (218).

Aside from demonstrating his own resistance to war's damaging effects, Bird also affirms that not all the dramatic changes undergone by soldiers at war are negative:

> The war had changed men, changed them mightily. Down in the dugouts where there was hardly room to breathe, men who had come from comfortable homes moved without complaints to their fellows. All grousing was reserved for the higher-ups, the 'brass-hats' and the 'big bugs' responsible for everything. The men were unselfish among themselves, instinctively helping eath [sic, each] other, knowing each other, each with a balance and discipline of his own. (41)

Further on, Bird comes close to agreeing with the notion promoted by heroic romance narratives that battle functions as a purifying crucible, when he remarks that, "no

artificial imposition could survive in the ranks where inherent value automatically found its level; all shams of superiority fled before such an existence of essentials" (100).

Throughout the memoir, Bird records positive memories that lift his narrative out of the unremitting gloom of the well-known anti-war narratives. Interestingly, many of Bill's positive memories involve his successes as a soldier. For example, Bill enjoys his six-days at bombing school, not only because he is pleased by the short hours and plentiful rations, but also because he is delighted by his own learning and success in the course (36). Of course, Bird also records his hatred of endless talks and the many "silly" regulations he encounters at the school. And, though he enjoys the benefits of working on the bomber crew, Bill is also well aware of its moral shortcomings. In particular, he is haunted by the sounds of Germans screaming after he shoots a grenade: "The sound of the report had not died away before a long-drawn yell sounded. The voice seemed that of a mere boy and his agonized screaming could be heard all long the crater line. I had the sound in my ears all the next day" (39).

Nevertheless, the inclusion of positive memories such as his success in acquiring scouting skills (79, 84-85) does hint at a narrative of growth, or at least of education. Bill is deeply satisfied, for instance, when he uses his scouting skills to bring a lost covering party safely back to their trench (175). He also takes pleasure in successfully putting up wire (along with Tommy, Melville, and Mickey) after multiple failed attempts by other soldiers (76). There is deep delight in a successful raid in which there were no casualties and thirty prisoners taken (82), or in the ability to monitor enemy movements and accurately direct shellfire from an observation post (88). Not least to consider is his confident action as a bomber in Mons where he single-handedly takes out two machine

gun posts and kills several Germans with perfectly aimed rifle grenades (321, 322). Clearly, being a good soldier is important to Bill; it is even a deep source of satisfaction.

Bill also takes pleasure in being helpful and generous, such as when he enjoys attending to the needs of the German patients in the St. Pol field hospital (68), or when he allows a German to escape in a sap near Avion (84-85). He is just as delighted when he helps his drunken pals to their beds (106), or when he leads blind "Old Bill" back to shelters (116), or when he listens supportively to a new officer who is "scared stiff" and unable to get over the parapet (201). The same can be said when he shares looted cake with his pals (219), or when he fetches water from a dugout for a wounded German officer in the trenches near Parvillers (228), or when he sits next to Siddall until he dies (241). Likewise, when he distributes a dozen looted bottles of wine to his pals (268), or when he helps a German escape out of Mons, disguised as a Belgian in old clothing (328), or when he helps "the boys" escape the barracks to enjoy themselves (329-330), he is at his best in playing the role of an elder brother, or even pater familias. These incidents comprise good memories for Bill, the memories to which he clings (302).

Bill also manages to enjoy other, smaller pleasures, particularly the pleasures of nature. He records, for instance, how "I liked the keen damp air of the mornings of September" (101). Even morning stand-to is recalled in these positive terms:

> The east would shoot with crimson. Birds would twitter. Then, like magic, the sun would glitter on the dew-covered weeds and wet wire. There would be mists in the hollows, often extensive, so that the distant slag heaps would appear dark islands in a woolly sea. Gradually the sun would gain strength, and the vapors would

> dissolve. Then we went back to our shelters and odors of tea and
> bacon made each man happy. (101)

Well ahead of Fussell's argument that the Great War forever transformed the "vague high hopes" of dawn into "a daily routine of quiet terror" (Fussell 60), Bird clearly preserves a more traditional sense of dawn as a magical time, preceding homey pleasures. Later, when he cannot sleep at night, Bill goes outside, "drinking in the moist air, looking at the moon-bathed fields and hedges, picturing the same night across the water" (104). Here, as elsewhere, he finds a traditional form of comfort in pastoral scenes (thereby ironically confirming Fussell's argument that the pastoral functions as a contrast to war and as protection against it—235), as well as in home thoughts (thereby, refuting the anti-war canon's assumption that soldiers are alienated from civilian life).

Out of the line, there is even opportunity for rejuvenation. Periods out on rest are most often cheering, restorative, and like a "vacation" from the war (79, 92, 140, 185). While on leave, Bill takes particular pleasure in tourism. He describes his tour of Bruay, Ferfay, and Olhain Chateau as a "wonderful treat" (80). When Tommy and Bill return to the Vimy crater as tourists, they are amazed as they look over the battleground (91). On leave after Passchendaele, Bill first tours Boulogne's historical sites (141), and then the Roman and medieval sites of Nottinghamshire, where he visits his fiancée's family, and has a "wonderful time exploring the villages, especially Gainsborough and Lincoln." He remarks, "The old Roman wall in Lincoln, and the cathedral, were marvelous to me" (148). While out of the line near Lozingham, Bill and Earle take the opportunity to tour the countryside (184). After the armistice, Bill and Jock tour most of France, including "lovely sea shore places, where the war had not reached" (332). He enjoys this

sightseeing so much that he is fourteen days late returning from his leave (334). “At every opportunity,” he also enjoys visiting pals, including several visits with his brother Hugh, and his fiancée’s brother, Stanley (89, 148). Thus, the memoir never lets the reader forget that war is also a form of tourism that does produce beautiful sights, quiet moments, and talk with pals “of home and things near the heart” that are “never to be forgotten” (91). Clearly, Bill is never so brutalized by war that he fails to be an avid tourist whenever an occasion presents itself.

Bird also relieves the gloom of war by collecting details of pranks, jokes, and humorous incidents in his memoir. For instance, he offers a comic lesson of how he removed and hid a Lewis gun to teach a gun crew not to fall asleep on post (40). He tells another story about how he and his pals let their beards grow to mock a company commander who complained about cold shaving water (48). Bird also recalls the prank Tommy pulls by frightening Bunty with a dud shell (90). Like the comic scenes in a Shakespearean tragedy, there are a number of comic stories about how the platoon deliberately botched a drill competition to gain the second-place prize of a day’s leave (95); about how Melville, Ira, and Bill convinced Gordon to pay their estaminet bill (111); about how Bill threw a rat into the open mouth of a snoring soldier (182); and about how a German prisoner was so convincingly dressed as a woman that a British major fell for the disguise (205).

Balance is also achieved through Bird’s well-shaded portraits of the men he encounters in the war. Despite the consistent use of the second-person plural pronoun, men are always treated as unique individuals, allowing the narrative to transcend the dishonesty and inaccuracy of universalization. For instance, Bird records multiple and

various responses among men who witness an officer's death. Though the officer's brains and blood spill all over Bill, he remains "strangely calm." MacMillan, in contrast, "was as white as paper and trembling" (33). Old Dundee "was like a wild man. He cursed the Germans and proceeded to clean his rifle, swearing vengeance" (34). Similarly, Bird's description of Jimmy, who "had a hard time at Passchendale," "and was very thin and nervous," is balanced by his description of Brown, who, after the same battle, "was as genial as ever" (194). The men also respond in a variety of ways to the increased tension before a big battle. For example, before going into action at Amiens, Tulloch hopes for a blighty, Thompson hovers by Tulloch "like a brother," Batten, Ted, Rees and Harvey roughhouse like "youngsters," Russell blusters, Thornton hums happily, Sykes and Christensen read, Honor sings, Eddie is serious, others clump together in groups, while some prefer to be alone (207). Such variety precludes the universalizing notion that war brutalizes, dehumanizes and demoralizes all participants inevitably and similarly. Even Bird's roll call of names insists on individuality, making universalization impossible.

There are also multiple responses by the same individual to a single situation. While scouting in the Vimy sector, Bill observes a German officer crawling to a forward observation post; though he has a clear shot, Bill does not shoot him or take him prisoner (84-85). Afterwards, Bill feels "bewildered," and alternately "sorry or thankful that [he] had let him go" (85-86). Prior to a raid, Bill feels a similar internal conflict, when he does and does not envy the men chosen to take part in the action (170). Bill's inner conflict demonstrates greater complexity than the idea of a herd mentality allows.

Though Bird sometimes notes parallels or similarities between British and German soldiers that suggest universalization of war experiences for all participants

regardless of what side they fight on (26, 31, 68, 218, 328), the enemy are invariably treated as individuals, too. Much as he describes his comrades, Bird records a variety of German reactions to each situation. When he sees injured Germans in the field hospital at St. Pol, Bill recalls: “They stared at me, some of them friendly, some indifferent” (68). After the successful capture of a number of prisoners during the fighting at Parvillers, Bird allows that some of the Germans are in a “helpless nightmare stupor,” while others are active and helpful (219). Bird’s fairness in his treatment of the enemy is also evident when he makes admiring comments about them. For example, Bill admires a German soldier’s fortitude, when he keeps fighting (managing to throw three bombs) even after Bill has shot him in the chest several times (234). Similarly, Bill recalls the ethical response of a German officer who stopped his men from bayoneting wounded Canadians (238). Thus, in contrast to the chauvinism of traditional narratives and to the universalization of the anti-war canon, Bird maintains a focus on individuality, even among enemy soldiers.

Bird’s memoir also offers a balanced representation of camaraderie. Though he celebrates the warmth and support of his comrades (107, 116, 128, 180, 199, 278), he clearly does not idealize his pals. Freddy, for example, whose prophetic dreams predict death for his platoon-mates (9-10), before he descends into despair, “was not a cheerful tonic” (37). Slim and Joe are the pariahs in the company, because they are uneducated, socially disconnected, and dirty (51). Old Bill, in contrast, is well-liked by all because he is “a man of very clean habits, careful of his personal appearance,” who also “had a nice tenor voice” (79). Even Bird’s best pal is portrayed with unflinching honesty. Though he sometimes finds Tommy’s blunt observations “refreshing,” more often Bill finds his

friend's bitter cynicism too much (41-42). Similarly, though Bill appreciates Tommy and the Professor's vigorous banter, making the argument that the war is "a mess of grotesque murder," he sees the harmfulness of this negativity on other soldiers, especially Mickey, and does what he can to stop it (108-110). Later, Tommy will come under critical scrutiny again, when he makes an excuse to get away from the dying Morris (239). When Tommy abandons Morris, he is shown to be a less devoted pal than Bill, who sits with Siddall until the end (241).

Cleanliness, cheerfulness and loyalty are not the only measures of a good comrade. A good soldier and good pal must also exhibit discipline, control, and humanity. The Student exhibits many of these qualities of a good soldier:

> He was not a blood-thirsty fighter, but he kept pace with those next to him and never flinched or took cover before they did. When he helped bandage a boy who was bleeding to death, and when he had to help drag dead Germans from a post we wanted to use, I saw him go white and tremble, but he never shirked in either case. He had grit that spells control. (292)

Despite this general approval of the Student, Bird does not hesitate to criticize his bitter negativity. Bird is, not surprisingly, more critical still when he reports several episodes in which poor soldiering led to friendly-fire casualties, such as those due to accidental rifle discharge (55, 252, 253). And, though he records incidents in which men showed restraint against surrendering or captured Germans, he also records incidents of merciless and unnecessary killing. In particular, Bird recalls Peeples' coldblooded murder of an unarmed German (230), and Batten's brutal bayoneting of an injured German whose

moaning disturbed his sleep. For Bill, this murder "was a sickening thing," somehow made more appalling by the contrast between the horrendous act and the sight of Batten's "boyish face," sleeping peacefully "like a child" afterwards (242). In such diction, there is no indication that Batten's action is the result of brutalization or demoralization.

Bird's memoir also offers a more balanced representation of camaraderie by including various incidents that reveal divisions among the men who fight together; yes, camaraderie sustains and supports soldiers in difficult circumstances, but it has its limits. There are, for instance, interpersonal conflicts that deflate aggrandized notions of comradeship. For example, Tommy and Morris are so antagonistic that they come to blows when forced to share a bivvy (194-196). As another example, Bill is so resentful of the official recognition heaped on Russell, whom he considers an obnoxious braggart, that he does not answer Russell's calls for help. In this case, Bill's unhelpfulness is contrasted with Rees's efforts to guide Russell back to safety and assist him with his tasks (287). There are also larger conflicts, such as the tension between the bombers and regular infantry. Because the bombers would hurry away after sending over their grenades, they escaped any retaliation; thus, the bombers are "unpopular" among other soldiers who could not leave their posts (39). Similarly, the regular infantry resent the snipers because of the special privileges they enjoy. Bird complains: "all the while we had been dragging our souls out through the mud and sleeping in the mud, without proper food, the snipers had been in their warm dugout having it much easier than we" (54). Later, the snipers and the men of Bill's company also exchange foul racial epithets (55).

More frequently, Bird recounts incidents that uncover the division and rivalry between men of different drafts. For instance, he records unequal treatment of the

"umpty-umps" (Bill's draft are cold and miserable in a horrible cellar dugout), and the oldtimers (who are comfortable in a heated dugout) (23). "Many of the 'oldtimers' resented us," Bird asserts, "for in all the company competitions our men were easily outstanding." This resentment is so intense that it leads to an eruption of physical violence between the men of Bill's draft and the "oldtimers" (55-56). Even after months of living and working together, Bird recollects that "[t]he veterans seemed to resent our intrusion. They held aloof from us and would not talk with us at all" (84). Bird goes so far as to describe the ongoing conflict between different drafts as a "private war" (91). Though the memories of the friendships he forges are among the positive memories Bird wants to preserve from his war experiences, there is no room for sentimental notions of *esprit de corps* in the memoir.

Bird's depiction of the officers he meets is equally even-handed. Certainly, he does not shy away from recording unflattering stories about his superiors. He is particularly unforgiving when describing officers whose drunkenness negatively affects their performance. For instance, he recalls finding one officer so "helplessly drunk" that he was unable to leave the post to participate in a raid (82); then there is the officer who is so drunk that he salvages a German machine gun from a latrine and does not notice the smell (244); nor should one forget the soldier who is unable to give Bird necessary instructions because he is "too drunk to talk straight" (322).

Incompetence is another potentially deadly flaw among bad officers. Bird is horrified and astonished when an inexperienced officer orders the platoon to number off and form fours when under heavy shell fire (73). Another time, Bird's life is endangered by a foolish officer who reveals the location of their observation post to the Germans by

talking loudly and standing in the open (89). Still another incident has Bill collecting a party of men who have been forgotten in No Man's Land by their inept officer. Afterwards, he is so angry that he must leave quickly so as to avoid hearing the officer's explanation (176). Later, Bill criticizes an incompetent officer, who "had no experience in France but a great deal of tactical work on parade grounds and in lecture halls." With more knowledge of theory than practice, the officer foolishly orders the men of fourteen platoon forward, straight into machine gun fire (239).

Vanity is one of the more dangerous characteristics of bad officers in Bird's book. His description of inspection illustrates the dehumanizing effects of one officer's pompous condescension: "the mighty one and his retinue goes down the line, and then a cold, supercilious face is before yours, and with creaking, shining leather and immaculate khaki they pass as you try to thrust back at them a gaze of impenetrable indifference" (22). The shift to the second-person-singular pronoun makes readers feel part of the scene. Vanity is also the cause of some of the more inhumane punishments meted out by officers. For instance, Bird recalls "Men, volunteers, spread-eagled to cart-wheels, tied there for hours in a biting, bone-chilling wind, all because the fellow had not shined a button or given some snobby officer a proper deference" (66). Bird has a personal encounter with one such officer, recounting how, while on leave and sightseeing in Boulogne, he was so engrossed in his guidebook that he failed to notice the officer and his female companion. The peacock of Boulogne, as Bird calls him, is so vain that he punishes Bill for failing to salute him: "Four times I had to pace backward, advance and salute that smirking monkey, a weak-chinned lieutenant" (141). Bill is even more outraged when he sees that the officer wears Canadian badges; he feels particularly

betrayed because the foolish officer who abuses him to impress a woman is one of his own countrymen (142).

Nor does Bird shrink from exhibitions of cowardice in officers. In one incident, an officer becomes so nervous when working in No Man's Land that he becomes disoriented, resists Bill's good advice, and then runs away "like a wild thing." When he sees the officer overcome by his fear, Bill is so angered that he tries to shoot the fleeing man: "I snatched up my rifle and fired at him, forgetting in my rage that I might shoot some of my own fellows, forgetting everything." Fortunately, the Captain arrives in time to stop Bill from firing a second time (129). Taken together, these stories delineate the characteristics of a bad officer: drunkenness, incompetence, vanity, and cowardice.

Good leaders, by contrast, are sober, experienced, and down-to-earth. He finds these characteristics more often in officers who have come up through the ranks; for example, he admires Lt. Cave, who returns to the Battalion after his promotion to officer, and greets Bill "as kindly as ever" (267), and another man, an ex-sergeant from the 73rd, who is "a good man" (285). Bill also prefers officers who are not bound by military rules, but are compassionate and sensible. He appreciates it, therefore, when, while out of the line, there is no "asinine drilling in muddy fields," "only necessary parades," and "no shining of brass and buttons" (39-40). For Bird, those who treat drilling seriously "and bawled us out in harsh language" are bad officers, while those who are "very calm" and happy to see the men "lying on the soft gray banks and contemplating skylarks" are good officers (185). Thus, he is impressed when an officer speaks softly to a soldier caught sleeping at his post, rather than punishing him harshly (40). Bill receives similarly gentle handling from Captain Grafftey, who speaks quietly to him when stopping him from

firing on the cowardly officer, and who “did not threaten me nor reprimand me for what I had done” (129). He is similarly admiring when another officer does not punish Bill and pals for taking off their wet clothing, despite orders to keep their boots on at all times (154). For Bird, then, good officers manage “without frills or foolishness” (306), and do not make the men “do monkey tricks” (338).

Bird also approves of officers who are “conscientious,” lend a hand and participate actively (149). For instance, he is bitter when he sees an officer do nothing to help the suffering Germans in the St. Pol field hospital (68), but grateful when Captain Grafftey pitches in to help Bill lay tape in No Man’s Land (129). Similarly, he is sarcastic when he comments that officers are rarely seen in the trenches (27), but he is pleased when the Captain is conspicuously present before an attack, calming the men, and speaking respectfully to them (125). Bill is also pleased to see the Captain “himself” arrive when the company gets into trouble and sends for help near Parvillers (232). He is most impressed when the Colonel leads his men in an attack, going over the top, with his revolver in his hand:

> It was an inspiring thing to see him, disregarding all bullets that sang and crackled around, all the stray shells that crashed near. He stopped the retreating men with harsh orders, halted them and reformed them, then he came over and our remnant of ‘D’ Company got out of the trench and we went over in an attack for the third time in three days. (289)

Bill also considers General Lipsett a good officer, because he is “often seen,” he is “nearer to us than other brass hats,” and he is “often in the trenches.” Respect for Lipsett

is also evident in Bill's grief upon learning of the General's death in action (292). The highlighting of the General's death, as well as comments about other officers' deaths in action (208-209, 289), thus offset Tommy's complaints about Generals "Dugout" and "Awayback" (280), as well as refute the title of Charles Yale Harrison's anti-war text.

Because Bird is conspicuously fair in his representation of officers, one gets a balanced portrait of them, as well as a strong impression of Bird's own reasonableness. For instance, when other soldiers complain about the officers, Bill counters with stories of "good heads." He argues that officers are "exactly the same as the men, good, bad, and indifferent." When a group of men complain that the brass do not face the same dangers as the men, Bill acknowledges that he saw only one officer during the worst days at Passchendaele, but adds a lengthy explanation that admits the limits of his own knowledge and experience:

> Perhaps they were in as dangerous positions as we were. I do not know. Yet, given the same chance, many of the men, probably the majority, would do just the same as they. Officers were simply men in uniforms designed to make them look better than the privates, and they had responsibilities that we did not realize. I never envied them, hated them, nor regarded them any differently than any of the other men. Some were of much finer intellect than mine, most of them had come from finer homes—at least those in the 42nd had—and still there were some I regarded as my inferiors. (142-143)

Bill offers a similar response to Tommy's complaints that officers do less dangerous work than the men, but enjoy more privileges. Bill refutes and excuses Tommy's

argument, saying, "[H]e doesn't mean it all. There are mighty good officers as well as men, and you can't blame them for having as good as they can get. Tommy's been out here a long time, and …" (281). In both cases, Bill's response seems particularly fair in contrast to other, more extreme opinions.

Bird is strikingly even-handed following his own conflict with an officer, even when noting the officer's faults. He reflects, "I never understood what had made him so ugly that night. He was a good man in the line, better than ordinary, but at times he seemed to carry a grouch" (151). Bird's evaluation is complex, rejecting a black or white evaluation that would label an officer either good or bad by offering a specific judgment based on specific circumstances. Bird offers a balanced representation of his favourite and most admired officer, too. Though his portrait of Captain Grafferty has been glowingly positive, his admiration for the man does not prevent Bill from complaining that, "he did not know anything about myself or Tommy, that he had never been aware of our work on patrols or in the trenches." Bill excuses the Captain's ignorance in two ways. First, he notes that "he did not have opportunity," and then he observes that the Captain is no worse than anyone else, including himself: "We did not mix freely with the men and I had little in common with sergeants" (334).

Bird's evaluative judgments of officers not only reveals his reasonableness, but also offers evidence of his personal development over the course of the war. Early in the narrative, Bill demonstrates his lack of tolerance for cowardice when he shoots at an officer fleeing work in No Man's Land. Later, he encounters another officer who is "scared stiff." Although the officer is so frightened that he is unable to get over the parapet to check on the listening posts, because he makes no excuses and is honest, Bill is

sympathetic and supportive, talking with him until he "gradually conquered himself" (201-202). As he talks with the officer, he learns that he enlisted out of a sense of duty, and that "he had been held back by different circumstances." Bill comes to understand that "it took more from him than for another man to go into battle" (202). In another incident, Bill, Watterbottle, and Tommy find their officer and his batman hiding under a tank to avoid the action at Cambrai. Whereas Watterbottle and Tommy are furious, Bill sees that the officer is "shaking badly" and feels "sorry for him." "He had not the physique a soldier needed," Bill observes, "and he was new to the front; no one had told him anything definite and he had simply stumbled his way in over dead Germans and Canadians" (290-291). The first incident incites Bill to murderous rage, but the later incidents evoke his sympathy. Yet, the difference between these incidents seems to have less to do with the frightened officers and more to do with changes in Bill. When he shoots at the fleeing officer, he acts out of anger, irrationally, and without control. His later responses are, by contrast, elevated, rational, and controlled. He seems to have learned to see the second and third cowardly officers as individual men, stuck within the limits of their individual circumstances and/or abilities.

As promised in the preface, Bird's memoir does indeed deliver "a balanced perspective" on the war (5). The narrative achieves its other objective, as well, "to reveal a side of the war that has not been given much attention, the psychic effect it had on its participants" (4). In various premonitions and other psychic phenomena he experiences during the Great War, Bird finds astonishing evidence for survival of the individual beyond death. First, a number of soldiers have premonitions that come true. In particular, Freddy's prophetic dream gradually comes true, as each of the "fatal six" (Herman, Ira,

Melville, Arthur, Sam, and Mickey) is killed. Similarly, Charley's premonition that he will die also comes true (54), as do Christensen's matter-of-fact assertion that he will "be killed" (213), Eddie's prediction that the action at Parvillers will be his "last trip" (214), and Sparky's conviction that he is "for it" (255). Such premonitions are not uncommon in Great War texts. Far more unusual, however, are the multiple visitations from Bill's dead brother Steve (13, 72, 75, 166, 223, 235, 251, 288, 304, 335). In fact, Bill's first vision of Steve pre-dates his own arrival on the battlefield, occurring while Bill is still working on a farm in Saskatchewan. Three days after his encounter with this apparition, Bill receives a message by wire that Steve has been killed (13). The next eight visitations are more timely interventions that save Bill's life.

The first of these supernatural warnings can serve as a model for the rest. One night, while on a working party in the Vimy sector, Bill is wakened from sleep by a forceful tug on his arm. He sees Steve! "I could see him plainly," Bill recalls, "see the mud on his puttees and knees." Without speaking, Steve gestures for Bill to exit the bivvy and he leads Bill away. After Steve fades away, Bill falls asleep in a nearby ruin. In the morning, Bill learns that a big shell had exploded over the shelter he had left, killing the two men inside (72-73). The next day, Bill thinks about how he "had been saved" and resolves: "if ever again I saw Steve I would do exactly as he motioned; he had saved my life" (73). In subsequent visitations, Steve's ghost will come to save Bill from shells, airplanes, machine gun fire, stray bullets, and sniper fire. On each occasion, Bill is amazed by the vivid clarity of his vision; for example, he notes details of Steve's appearance, such as "the buttons on his tunic, the way his belt was loosely hooked" (304).

To Bill, Steve's visits are more valuable than mere warnings (even life-saving warnings). For Steve's continuing presence gives him faith in an unseen world:

> It was not physical courage that carried me, far from it, but a state of mind that words will never describe. Each night when I slept I dreamt of Steve, saw him clearly, and when awake, in the trenches at night, out on listening posts, FELT him near. In some indefinable way I depended on him. Ever since he had guided me in from that foggy unknown stretch at the back of Vimy I would go anywhere in no man's land. I knew, with a—fanatical, if you like—faith, that a similar touch would lead me straight where I should go. In the trenches, on posts, in any place, I was always watching for him, trying to sense him near me, and in the doing I missed the tensity [sic] of dragging hours, and easy fears that seized the unoccupied mind. (100)

Later, Bill repeats the assertion that his link with Steve protects him from fear, as well as from physical danger (319-320). These psychic experiences, therefore, demonstrate the truth of Bill's assertions in the preface, that "mystic and supernal" perceptions are often the "sole support" for men in the trenches (4-5).

Further, Bill's psychic experiences become a substitute for traditional religious beliefs and practices, which, as in other Great War narratives, have been seriously challenged, if not entirely debunked, in the memoir. Among Canadian Great War narratives, George Godwin's *Why Stay We Here?*, James Pedley's *Only This*, and Philip Child's *God's Sparrows* stand as major examples of texts which protest the use of

religion to promote war, and demonstrate a loss of faith among combatants in traditional religions. In such a vein, *And We Go On* includes a number of warnings against mixing religion and war. For instance, Christensen refuses to report for church parade, even though he will be crimed for it (46), and Tommy rants at length against forced church parade (192). In fact, Tommy illustrates the damaging effects of the Great War on traditional religious practice when he explains to Bill: "I was a member of the Methodist Church. Now I don't know or care about anything connected with it." "Preachers and padres," Tommy continues, have "lost their hold."

While Tommy may have rejected organized religion, he has not lost his faith in God. In fact he affirms an ongoing, personal connection with God, saying, "It's all going to be between Him and me, and no preacher is going to have anything to do with it" (300). Bill, too, feels bitter when he contemplates the ironic inconsistency of war and Christianity (148). Later, he argues that any religion that supports or incites war is a "sacrilege" (314). For Bill, it seems as though the war dead are the central focus of his personal spirituality. This focus is evidenced not only by his ongoing connection with Steve, but also by his spiritual response to war graves near Sanctuary Wood (336).

Bill's final vision of Steve takes place in February, 1919, when Bill goes back to the Black Boar Inn, and returns to the waterfall where he first met Phyllis. There, he has a vision of Phyllis and Steve standing together: "they were indistinct save for their faces, and it was as if they were lighted by a glow" and their eyes "were full of pity" (335). Here, in addition to compassion and pity, Bill finds further reassurance of an afterlife. In fact, all of the "psychic experiences" related in the narrative suggest continuity—a

comforting continuity between this world of the living and another world of the dead, between the past and the present.

A sense of continuity is also suggested by the memoir's frequent allusions to history and historical events. For instance, the memoir's epigraph—"Nothing except a battle lost can be half as melancholy as a battle won"—which is taken from a letter written by the Duke of Wellington from the field of Waterloo, establishes a pattern of references to previous wars, or catastrophic events, each of which functions to place the Great War and the individual soldiers who participate in it, within a larger historical framework.[9] Past armed conflicts are similarly brought to mind when Bill tours historic sites related to Joan of Arc and William the Conqueror (19).[10] The depth of history is also suggested when Bill reads to Tommy about Mont St. Éloi from a guide book about a "seventh century church occupying the site of an abbey built ages ago by the bishop of Noyon, whose name was St. Eloi" (20). This archeological image evokes a strong sense of the multiple layers of history. The Great War, such references suggest, is just one of many historical cataclysms. Likewise, Bill reads from his guidebook about invasions of France by Julius Caesar, Attila, and King Edward. German invasions, he notes, are "nothing new." There is no reason, Bill argues, to see the Great War as "an original catastrophe" (108). Again, a longer historical perspective is called for when Bill reads another passage from his guidebook:

> Yet this landscape of mild earth, so lovely in an aspect of repose, has been the theatre of almost all the sanguinary wars which from time to time have desolated Europe; that luxuriated crop has been manured with the best blood of the brave, the gay, the virtuous;

> those sleeping groves have responded to the storm of slaughter—and
> may yet again. (112)

This passage contrasts sharply with the insistent present tense of many anti-war texts, particularly Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front*, because it looks both backwards to the past and forward to the future. The Great War, therefore, is nothing like a wedge that separates the traditional world from the modern one as Paul Fussell has suggested. Instead, the Great War is conceived as part of a long chronology, part of a continuing, unified narrative.

A sense of continuity is also evoked by elements of epic style and structure, which serve to contextualize both the Great War among other wars, and Bird's memoir among other war narratives. Homer's *Iliad* immediately comes to mind when Tommy wishes that those responsible for the war be dragged by their heels around Passchendaele (298), but, *And We Go On* also includes other characteristics of classical epic: the action is set in a period of upheaval; the subject or theme is announced in the opening lines; the narrative begins *in medias res*; it tells of a descent into a realm of horror and death; it includes long speeches; it includes supernatural agencies that interfere, or are involved in human affairs; and it focuses consistently on a protagonist who is nearly indestructible, and who, in many ways, embodies the cultural ideal.

In fact, Bill shares many characteristics with traditional epic heroes. For instance, he embraces his duty, exhibits endurance and cunning like Odysseus, values fair play and selflessness like Beowulf, represents, like Achilles, superior virtue in his abstinence, and avoids, like Siegfried, dishonorable combat and killing. Further, the memoir's twelve-part structure follows the Virgilian model, in which the first three chapters describe a fall into

an underworld and initiation, chapters four through six describe confrontations with adversity, temptation, and despair, chapters seven through nine describe the protagonist's acceptance of fate and continued demonstration of right behaviour, and chapters ten through twelve describe the protagonist's thrilling escape and return home. It is noteworthy that, while the memoir's overall structure functions as an allusion to ancient conflicts and the narratives that commemorate them, the memoir's ending, with Bill's sighting of the lights of home and anticipation of recovery, also functions as a corrective response to the unrelenting negativity of the anti-war texts, which generally end with their protagonist's death.

Initially, it may seem that the longer historical view suggested by the memoir's multiple allusions to historical and literary precedent leads to fatalistic despair. One of the Student's anti-war rants, for example, resists this long view of history in order to argue that the war is futile:

> This whole ghastly business is futile in the extreme, and that's what makes it so illimitably cruel. It doesn't matter who wins the war, because the underdogs will remain in their places, the top ones will be at the top, and after a few years there'll be more wars, just as senseless. Our leaders know it, all history is full of lessons on its futility, yet we go on. (297)

The Student and Tommy go on to talk about "the cycles in history that seemed to chain mankind," noting that, "Every period had its wars, now one nation, now another, getting its life blood drained without hope of betterment" (297). Here, the image of helpless imprisonment reflects their sense of powerlessness in the face of historical forces.

Tommy even extends his prophetic predictions of future wars, saying, “there will be another war inside of twenty years. There was the Civil War and the Spanish War, and the Japs and Russians, and the Boer War, and now this mess. There’ll always be wars just as long as the sheep are ready to jump around when the big fellows give the word” (316). For the Student, however, “a cyclometry form of existence” is utterly hopeless, because it entails the meaninglessness of all human endeavors. “What’s the use,” he asks, “of building or learning new things if we are carried mercilessly into another era of destruction” (302). In his despair, he suggests that the only possible response to cyclic history is to escape from civilized life altogether, to live “on berries and nuts,” and “just sit and watch the birds and squirrels” (302).

Bill sometimes feels a similar despair. On one occasion, he appears to share the sense of imprisonment expressed by the Student and Tommy. Standing shoulder to shoulder with other men while traveling home aboard the *Adriatic*, Bill is overcome by negativity:

> Prisoners! We were prisoners, prisoners who could never escape. I had been trying to imagine how I would express my feelings when I got home, and now I knew I never could, none of us could. We could no more make ourselves articulate than could those who would not return; we were in a world apart, prisoners, in chains that would never loosen till death freed us. (342)

After this moment of despair, during which he worries about his own inarticulacy, and the long-lasting effects of war damage, Bill shifts to more positive thoughts:

> But I warmed as I thought of all that the brotherhood had meant, the sharing of blankets and bread and hardships, the binding of each other's wounds, the talks we had had of intimate things, of the dogged simple faith that men had shown, flashes of their inner selves that strengthened one's own soul. (342)

Finally, the longer view of history is comforting to Bill. That same night, still aboard the *Adriatic*, he contemplates the stars, and comes to see himself and the war from a new perspective. He thinks of the stars as "the greatest marvel of all creation," and recalls how the sight of them had often cheered him while in trenches: "I felt lifted away from all the foul and cruel existence that we knew." It is not the sparkling beauty of the stars that cheers Bill, but their permanence. He reflects, "It came to me as I watched them that even the war, the greatest catastrophe this world knew, was but a momentary episode, that Time and Space were limitless. And we go on." Looking at the stars, he gains a new, long-term perspective, and sees himself as an insignificant part of a much larger cosmic design (340). In turn, this new point-of-view enables Bill to see beyond his immediate situation, and to evaluate his war experiences in a much more objective, more balanced way. He allows that:

> Perhaps when my bitterness had passed, when I had got back to my normal self, to loved ones tried by hard years of waiting, I would find that despite that horror which I could never forget I had equalizing treasure in memories I could use, like Jacob's ladder, to get high enough to see that even war itself could never be the whole of life. (343)

In contrast to the protagonists from the anti-war texts, Bill can see beyond the war, including more possibilities for the future. For Bill, the war will become an event that marked his life, but not the only defining event.

In part, Bird is able to avoid the Student and Tommy's bleak despair, because he balances fatalistic determinism with a belief in free will and justice. The debate between determinism and free will is set out early in *And We Go On,* thanks to the inclusion of two quatrains in the preface from the *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*.[11] Recalling a night in the trenches near Vimy Ridge, Bird records an exchange between a young soldier, newly arrived at the front, and a war-hardened sergeant. When the youngster learns that the sergeant has survived in the trenches for sixteen months, he is comforted by the idea that everyone has "got the same chances" (3). The sergeant responds to the young soldier's naïve optimism by quoting the Persian poet Omar Khayyám (1048-1122 A.D.):

> The Ball no Question makes of Ayes and Noes,
> But Right or Left, as strikes the Player goes;
> And he that toss'd you down into the Field,
> *He* knows about it all -- HE knows -- HE knows!

These lines would appear to deny, or at least limit, the possibility of free will. Certainly, the quatrain the sergeant quotes suggests a deterministic universe, in which the fate of individual "players" is foreordained by a deity. After the young soldier's cheerful trust in the equality of "chance" is ironically overturned when he is killed by a "chance bullet" after only "two hours in the line," the sergeant quotes several more lines from "his favorite poem": "And many a Knot unravel'd by the Road; / But not the Master Knot of Human Fate" (4). While these lines threaten to diminish the significance of the

individual, they also affirm that what really matters is the larger community of all humanity. Thus, though two positions are articulated in the preface, the survivor gets the last word, thus confirming the value of a longer perspective.

Like the sergeant, Bird seems to accept the premise that external forces govern the universe and human affairs. In particular, he seems to accept that the past determines the present when he says, "It's all the same through history," and adds, "There has always been war and will be. We can't change things, we just go on." In part, the Bird family's tradition of military participation may explain his acceptance of the inevitability of war. After all, his father, as he mentions in the memoir, was an officer in the 93rd Regiment (50). Later, Bill reiterates the role of a deity when he quotes the first verse from Alfred Noyes's "The Loom of Years." The poem echoes the determinism of Khayyám's quatrains in its reflections on the communion of all creation as part of one tapestry, and assertions that God is "the Weaver, that weaves the web of years" (279). Bill tempers Noyes's assurances that God controls human destiny, however, when he asserts human responsibility for the war (279). Thus, *And We Go On* expresses a balanced view in which both fate and choice play a role in human destiny.

And We Go On further endorses a model of choices made according to a moral code that is often at odds with military rules. In several cases, Bill and his pals choose to do what seems right to them, rather than to follow orders. For instance, Bill disobeys orders "that no one was to leave the post in daylight," in order to fetch help for Dundee. Despite his evident disapproval of Dundee's behaviour (the man is shot because he is drunk, angry, and out of control), it is wrong to "let old 'Dundee' bleed to death" (34). Similarly, Bill and his pals resist work that they consider unjust or unreasonable, such as

when they hide in empty tents to avoid training in the “Bull Ring” (10); or ignore orders to take part in parade, drill, or inspection while out on rest at Bourlon Wood (291); or refuse to “attend parades or stay with the company” while billeted at Bramshott Camp (335). Bill and his pals are particularly indignant when they are wakened to do road repairs the morning after a long night march out of the line: “A working party!” Bill exclaims (269). All the men grouse and complain, especially Tommy, who rants about the injustice: “We’re worse than dogs. Anybody in the army is used better than the men who do the fighting” (270). Disobeying orders in support of his men, even at risk of serious consequences (including possible court-martial), Bill takes them off the roadwork detail and sends them in groups to the ‘Y’ canteen for food and hot drinks (271). Later, the value of Bill’s autonomous action and resistance to injustice is demonstrated when the Captain expresses regret to Bill about how “the boys had been used,” asks for their forgiveness, and transfers the officer who had reported Bill (272). Bill’s sense of justice also motivates his disobedience when he helps “the boys” escape the barracks to enjoy themselves and sneak back in before morning after the armistice (329-330). He is disgusted that the men “would be crimed for having a good time, for daring to wish for pleasures that were arrayed for men no better than they who happened to be wearing a Sam Browne” (330).

Bird’s sense of justice is also evident in his treatment of looting. Looting is perfectly acceptable behaviour, according to Bird, but more so when it serves to meet the soldiers’ basic needs. For instance, taking carpets, beds, and other materials from abandoned French homes is allowable because it makes otherwise miserable dugouts more comfortable (86). Similarly, looting from gardens in the village of St. Fuscien,

despite strict orders not to, is justified because no rations had come up and the men were hungry (208). On various occasions, Bill recalls looting German dugouts, prisoners and dead (218, 219, 220, 227, 261). This behaviour is acceptable not only because he shares food and parcels with his pals (219), or sells looted items to buy food from the Y canteen for his men (264-265), but because he earns what he takes. According to Bill's code, rewards go to those who dare, so Bill refuses the sergeant who asks him for one of the pistols he has taken, telling him, "those who went first would get them" (260).

Central to Bill's sense of justice, then, is his belief that credit and reward must be earned. Consequently, he is frustrated when an incompetent officer receives credit and praise for the good work done by him and his pals (89), and when he sees an officer—who had arrived only weeks before the end of the war—showing off war trophies to women in Mons after the armistice (338). Likewise, his sense of fairness is rankled when he sees his pals passed over for medals, while fresh, new men from privileged backgrounds are awarded V.C.s (187, 295). Bird observes:

> Valiant men in desperate battles performed prodigious feats of valour and endurance, were killed and forgotten; others survived, with only a few comrades knowing just what they had accomplished. Few men gained Victoria Crosses without exhibiting extraordinary courage, *but* their equals fought, unadorned, in every company on the western front. (190)

Russell's case offers a particularly illustrative example of the kind of injustice that embitters Bill. Russell, Bill recalls, who "had always shouted his worth about the company," but has lost his nerve "completely" in No Man's Land on at least one

occasion, receives two decorations for bravery (287, 292). Bill concludes: “It was a tragic farce sometimes, the awarding of medal ribbons” (292).

The memoir frequently highlights the deep differences between Bill’s moral and ethical code and that of the military. Even within the inherently violent context of war, Bill asserts that there are good and bad, right and wrong ways to kill. For example, when under attack in the trenches near Parvillers, killing enemy soldiers is good and right. Bill’s deadly quick shooting at a party of Germans results in a fair kill, because it saves him and his pals. When he fires again and scores a second “easy kill, bringing down a short, fat goose-stepper,” he feels no regret (231). In the same action, Bill shoots at another German who dropped two “bombs in the trench as he ran,” and “by good luck drilled him fairly” (234). Again, it is a justified kill and Bill feels no regret. In contrast, Bill regrets some of his grenade kills. In particular, he seems to consider bombing, where he runs away so as to “escape any possible retaliation,” as unfair and inappropriate. He and his partner Sammy agree “not to play such a game” (39). He also regrets killing three German officers “from behind” with bombs. It was, he thinks, “a ghastly thing no matter what the rules of war” (228). According to Bill’s personal sense of justice, a face-to-face kill-or-be-killed fight is fair and just, but an attack from behind is fighting dirty.

Late kills may or may not be fair. For example, Bill does not object to Williams’ killing of a German officer who puts his hands up *after* shooting at Williams three times (258), but he does lament the futility of a German sniper’s killing of the Student, which served no purpose because the German had no chance of escape (258). Similarly, revenge killings may or may not be just. Neither Bill nor the other witnesses blame the German soldier who kills Giger with an axe, after Giger has bayoneted an “unsuspecting Hun”

with his hands up in surrender. According to Bill, Giger's act is a "ghastly, merciless" act of "brutal savagery" (306). There is no question for Bill that Giger's action was wrong, and that his fate was deserved. Bird also records a second-hand story about "a German major killed in the street by infuriated women." After having been taken prisoner by the Fourth Division, the man is escorted through the village of Quiévrechain, where he had been a Commandant, and the villagers attack him with clubs. The sight of the man's body, beaten to a "formless pulp," is "hideous to see," but it seems that his fate was just, because "he had ruled harshly, being an arrogant bull-headed type who elbowed old women from his path and kicked dogs and children." Clearly, the justice of the Commandant's death is easily recognized by the soldiers of the Fourth Division, who do nothing to prevent his being seized by the angry mob, and choose to do nothing to "interfere" or rescue him (312). Mob justice also seems acceptable when a Belgian man strikes a fleeing German on the head with a sledgehammer, "crushing the German's head like an eggshell," as, neither Bill nor the any of the other witnesses "rebuked" the Belgian man (324).

The question of justice is sometime murkier, however, as in the case of the old French woman who shows Bill and Sambro the body of a beheaded German officer in her cellar. Once again, Bill is sickened by the sight, but it is not clear whether he condemns or approves her revenge (311). The case-by-case evaluations in *And We Go On* contrast sharply with the blanket condemnation of war, violence, and killing expressed in anti-war narratives, because, in the futile, meaningless world of anti-war narratives, ethics and morality are utterly irrelevant. In this respect, Bird's manifest concern for ethics and morality in war gives the lie to the nihilism and despair that have become normative in

discussions of the Great War canon. And, at the very least, *And We Go On* appears to offer readers a much richer representation of the Great War than is readily available in the kind of historical flattening that has become a regular feature of too many contemporary discussions of Great War literature.

Chapter 5

The Continuity of Organic Society in Philip Child's *God's Sparrows* (1937)

Like Bird's *And We Go On*, Philip Child's novel *God's Sparrows* (1937) assumes an ideology of free will and responsibility, but Child's narrative is presented under the sign of fiction, not history. Hayden White undercuts some of the traditional differences between history and fiction in his seventh chapter of *The Content of the Form*, "The Metaphysics of Narrativity: Time and Symbol in Ricoeur's Philosophy of History." While the writing of history and literary fiction are often defined in oppositional terms, where one is "factual," and the other is "fictional," Ricoeur, and, subsequently, White, focus more on the resemblance between the two discourses. Though Ricoeur "does not erase the distinction between literary fiction and historiography," he does blur "the line between them by insisting that both belong to the category of symbolic discourses and share a single 'ultimate referent,'" which is temporality, or "the human experience of time" (175). Therefore, because historical discourse and literary fiction are both concerned ultimately with "the structures of human time," Ricoeur asserts that any resemblance between the two narrative forms is "a strength" which ought never to be viewed as an "embarrassment" (175,179-180). "It does not matter," for Ricoeur, "whether the events that serve as the immediate referents of a narrative are considered to be real or only imaginary; what matters is whether these events are considered to be typically human" (180).

In contrast to Bird's memoir, Philip Child's novel clearly enjoys the privilege of invention and creative transformation. Therefore, Child's expression of faith in free will

and expressive freedom has wider scope, and is more fully enacted, because the novelist is not as closely tethered to fact and to the evidence of history. Indeed, though Child's narrative does not pretend to Bird's claims of historical truth, the freedom gained in throwing off the constraints of factuality do allow Child to celebrate in a profound way the values of readerly choice and thus to enact an even broader notion of continuity—a continuity that persists beyond the bounds of history.

i

Child's *God's Sparrows* is evidently fictionalized autobiography, drawing on Child's experiences of growing up in Hamilton, Ontario (which is thinly disguised in this novel as "Wellington"), and of serving as a subaltern in France with a Canadian Field Artillery battery. Though focalized mainly through the perspective of his fictional alter ego Daniel Thatcher, *God's Sparrows* (1937) is about the whole Thatcher family's experiences in the Great War, both at home and on the battlefront. In this family saga, the lives of Dan, Alastair and Joanna Thatcher, their parents Penuel and Maud, their cousin Quentin, their uncles Charles and Murdo Burnet, their neighbours Cynthia and Beatrice Elton, as well as other members of their family and community are all thrown asunder by the outbreak of the Great War.

The novel is divided into four parts, with each of these parts subdivided again into chapters and sections. Each part is followed by a poem, ostensibly taken from Quentin's battlefield notebook. Throughout the novel, various ideological positions are explored, ranging from patriotism to pacifism, jingoism, spiritualism, and existentialism. Thus, in

contrast to more one-sided anti-war texts, Child achieves a balanced portrait of the war by including and valorizing multiple perspectives.

The first part of *God's Sparrows*, "The Seed and the Soil," describes Daniel's family and his childhood in the family home, Ardentinny. Divided into three chapters, this part outlines the tensions running throughout the novel, especially those between the Thatchers and Burnets, between modernism and tradition, and between responsibility and freedom. The first section also describes the children's early education, first with a tutor, and later at St. Horatius boys' school. After much foreshadowing, readers finally learn the truth about the childhood accident that left Joanna an invalid and Dan responsible for her future care (39). Immediately after the accident, when he is still overwhelmed by fear and guilt, Dan runs away from home to join the gypsies who live on the outskirts of Wellington (40-43). Before his parents come to get him, Dan's spiritual kinship with the gypsies is evoked (43). As the novel progresses, Dan grows up, courts Cynthia, and attends college, while the threat of war in Europe looms darkly (65-69). Part one ends with seventeen-year-old Dan enjoying the golden summer of 1914 (73).

The second part, "The Wheat," opens in August of 1914, when the Thatcher family learn that war has been declared (75). Throughout this part of the novel, Dan struggles with his decision about going to war. His Uncle Charles joins immediately as a Captain in the Wellington Battery, and, through the fall, the number of Dan's college classmates shrinks as more and more undergraduates, including Quentin, "exchanged the gown for a uniform" (77). Alastair enlists, knowing that he will get a commission in the same battery in which his Uncle Charles serves (82). Dan takes a job as a labourer with the steel company rather than return to college after the Easter break (84). As he

continues to struggle with his decision about enlisting, Dan neglects Cynthia, who begins going out with Alastair (85). The social pressure to enlist continues to intensify, but Dan is duty-bound to care for Joanna. Due to mutual misunderstanding, Dan and Cynthia break off their relationship (91-96). After receiving a telegram informing them that Great-aunt Joanna is dead, Pen and Dan travel to Beulah, Connecticut for her funeral and to settle her affairs (96-97). When they return to Wellington, Cynthia and Alastair have married and Alastair is boarding a troop train (97-98).

As it is for Dan, the war is a time of struggle for his father, Pen Thatcher. He is hard hit by the war, which he sees as the failure of civilization (81). In order to dissuade Dan from enlisting, Pen tells him that the war "isn't romance," or "a page out of the Iliad" (76), and reminds Dan of his responsibilities to Joanna (81-82). Increasingly troubled by the war, and influenced by his reading of Thoreau, Pen decides to stop paying taxes to a government "that waged war" (84). Having received no satisfactory answer from the government bureaucracy, Pen writes a letter to multiple newspapers announcing his refusal to pay taxes in support of what he considers an evil war (86-87).

The last chapter of this second part includes a letter sent by Quentin from the front, in which he describes bayoneting Germans as they exit their captured dugout (103). Quentin is traumatized by this "butchery" and considers becoming a conscientious objector (103). Dan is offended and angered when Quentin admires what he thinks is his pacifistic decision to "stay out of the war" (103). Feeling frustrated and embittered (his brother has stolen his girl and now his cousin calls him a pacifist), Dan goes out to get drunk. On his way home, a chance encounter with a gypsy, Jobey Loversedge, leads to a renewal of former acquaintance and a new sense of kinship—Dan is part gypsy and is a

restless soul (104-106). Later, Dan and Joanna get caught up in a crowd attending a reception for a Victoria Cross winner (109). There, they hear a recruitment speech which uses jingoistic language to enflame patriotic sentiments (110). After an interruption from a bitter veteran, the V.C. winner rejects "the death and glory" theme, and vividly describes the horrors and discomforts of the trench conditions (111). The crowd is deeply affected by the emotional pull of this speech (112). Joanna, as deeply moved as the rest of the crowd, gives Dan permission to go—in fact, sends him—to war, thereby jeopardizing her own security and well-being (113). Dan decides he will enlist in the same battery with Uncle Charles and Alastair if he "can manage it" (115).

Part three, "The Sickle," is set in the spring of 1917, and opens with Dan riding a troop transport train heading north out of Amiens (117). Of course, he has managed to secure himself a commission with the Wellington Siege Battery alongside his uncle and brother (118). While waiting for an escort to the front lines, Dan meets another officer from the battery, Dolughoff, a contradictory, slightly mad figure (119). Uncle Charles, arriving to take Dan up to the battery, gives Dan some advice about his fellow officers (123-127). Soon enough, Dan meets these officers himself: Lynch, Imbrie, Currie, Kinney (the Egyptologist), and Jeoffrey [sic, Geoffrey] "Jiffy" Trip (an old boy from St. Horatius) (127-133). When he recognizes the gypsy Jobey Loversedge in the ranks, Dan appoints him his batman (134). His own first tasks as an officer include digging pits, building platforms, and positioning howitzer guns (136). Almost immediately, Dan experiences heavy shelling for the first time and sees a man crushed under a large wooden timber support beam (137). Soon, the battery is moved north to the Salient,

joining the Canadian Army in time for the 3rd Battle of Ypres near Passchendaele (138-141). The 1917 fighting in the Salient is vividly described (143-145).

The narrative now shifts abruptly away to the Home front, describing dramatic changes in civilian life by focusing on the activities and thoughts of each member of the Thatcher clan at Ardentinny (Pen, Maud, Joanna, Fanny, Euphemia, and Tessa), as well as the editor of a local newspaper (151-156). Similar attention is focused on Beatrice and Cynthia Elton living and working in London as V.A.D.s (156). With another abrupt transition, the narrative focus returns to Quentin. It is October 12th, 1917, and Quentin is in handcuffs, waiting for a train along with other conscientious objectors. He has been arrested and held in Army custody after refusing to obey an order. He wonders about Dan when he sees some soldiers from the Wellington battalion on the train platform (164).

The ensuing chapter describes Dan's experiences leading a work party up the Zonnebeke Road to the front line to take over a forward observation post (165). As he moves up the line, Dan wrestles with the problems of responsibility, morality, and divinity, including God's existence (165-166). A ferocious barrage begins just after Dan and his men arrive at the O. P. (168). The handful of men who survive the barrage and the attack (including Alastair who is wounded) are trapped in a pill-box. While waiting for death or rescue, Dan and Alastair reconcile (180). When he returns from his tour of duty at the O.P., Dan reads a cable telling him that his father is dead (182). A letter Dan writes to Beatrice explains the details of Pen's death, which had resulted from shock and exertion when a mob, angered by Pen's pacifism, broke into Ardentinny (184).

After a brief shift to the home front, where Alastair, who has been sent home to convalesce, becomes increasingly intimate with Tessa (his uncle Daniel's much younger

wife) (185), the narrative focus returns to Dan, who gets ten days' leave (186). Walking in Trafalgar Square, he meets Quentin, now back in uniform and on his way to France (187-188). The cousins reconcile over their earlier quarrel about pacifism (188). While on leave, Dan contacts Beatrice and they arrange to meet (190). Seeing each other through new eyes, they flirt and find happiness in each others' company (191-198). Their romance does not run smoothly, however, and Beatrice rejects Dan's offer of marriage, because she still feels "empty" after her fiancé's death (201). While walking through a heavy fog, the couple visit Mr. Teti, who advertises himself as a "*Psychologist and Spiritual Life Reader*" (202). With a mix of artistic performance and quotations from ancient Egyptian religious texts, he advises them to live life to the fullest while they can (206). Back at the hotel, Dan rejects Beatrice's offer of sex, leaving them both hurt and angry (212). Later that evening, Dan feels so restless that he goes out on the streets during an air raid, where he meets a young woman—a prostitute who calls herself "Gipsy," but whose real name is Lily (217). She takes him to her apartment (218). When Lily leaves the room to comfort her younger sister, Daisy, Dan rushes out of the apartment. On reaching his hotel, he finds a cable saying that his mother is dead (219).

The fourth part of the novel, "Wind in the Stubble," begins in the winter of 1917-1918: "Late in February the Wellington Battery was moved out of the Canadian Corps and down to the Third Army front south of Arras" (221). As Dan and his comrades wait for the Germans' deadly Spring Offensive in March of 1918, he and Beatrice exchange letters in which they reconcile and pledge friendship (222-224). The German army's attack is narrated as a series of incidents time-stamped in relation to zero hour. *Kaiserschlacht* (Kaiser's battle) begins March 21 at 4:40 in the morning with a

tremendous bombardment. Five hours after zero hour, Jiffy Tripp dies heroically and horrifically (229). "At zero plus twelve hours, at an advanced dressing station," Dan's Uncle Murdo Burnet, who recently joined the Royal Army Medical Corps, is frantically busy, switching back and forth between his roles as minister and doctor as he attends to the wounded (229-230). Also at "zero plus twelve," Lieutenant Dolughoff snaps. He climbs out of the trenches, holds up his arms like "a policeman halting traffic," and commands the opposing armies to stop (231). When the Canadian army surges past him in a counter-attack, he shoots himself in the head with his revolver (232). At zero hour plus four hours, when the Germans break through the British lines south of Arras, where the forward section of the Wellington Battery is positioned, Charles Burnet blows up a bridge, and himself, to slow the Germans' progress (233-235).

The vivid description of the German Spring Offensive is interrupted by a lengthy return to the home front, where Alastair and Tessa are dining out, feeling saddened by Charles's death (235-236). The couple agonize over their sordid romantic entanglement (236-238). Tessa insists that Alastair meet with Cynthia, who has left her work as a V.A.D., and tell her about their affair (239). Alastair is unable to tell Cynthia the truth, though she immediately suspects something is wrong and quickly learns about the affair from Fanny Burnet (241). When Tessa and Cynthia meet for tea, Tessa announces that she will be moving to Washington with her husband (242), allowing Cynthia and Alastair to reconcile (245). Tessa confronts her husband, and threatens to kill herself if he will not give her the child she desires, even though a pregnancy is likely to kill her. She compares herself to a soldier, willingly risking her life (246-248).

The next chapter returns to Dan in France. By the summer of 1918 there are fewer familiar faces in the battery (248). Exhibiting symptoms of shell shock (248-252), Dan is now a concern for Quentin and Jobey Loversedge (253). When a shell destroys the battery light car he and two other officers are riding in, Dan is suddenly tossed into a shell-hole and covered with dirt, and Imbrie is "unspeakably mutilated". Ordered out on rest (256-258), Dan returns from leave to an uneasy reaction from brother officers who try to protect him from "'sticky' jobs" (261-262). Asking for a more responsible assignment as Forward Observation Officer (262-263), Dan is about to put himself in harm's way when a letter informs him that Beatrice is dangerously ill with the flu (263). At the Base Hospital at Abbeville, where she has been working as a V.A.D, he finds Beatrice, seriously ill, in the house where she is lodging (265). At Dan's request, Murdo arrives to marry them (266-268). After the wedding, Beatrice recovers her will to live and her health begins to improve (269). Dan returns to the battery in time for the upcoming action. Joining Dan in his billet where they discuss the coming attack, Quentin is certain that he will die, but is cheerful and at peace (271).

The night before the battle (though the narrative does not include a date, it is likely the August 8th attack southeast of Amiens, Ludendorf's "black day" of the German Army), Dan has a long, complicated dream (277-307) which marks the climax of the novel. A rather odd dream with a "five-part structure" (Middlebro 598), the first part is set in Trafalgar Square, where Dan's dream-self and his cousin/friend Quentin walk among a swarming crowd (including many dressed in khaki), all moving faster and faster toward a "whirling centre of commotion" into which they disappear (277). In the second

scene, Dan and Quentin are standing in an empty street dominated by “a vast erection of clockwork” that “ticks somberly”:

> Planets dance about it in ordered rise and fall. With each revolution of the second hand the planets complete their orbit; and with each revolution an unseen choir chants a metrical foot. … The ticking stops abruptly, the voices cease in mid beat, the planets are arrested in their orbits. The clock rusts and presently disintegrates into debris; the planets dissolve into space. (278)

In the third part, Quentin meets Mr. Zero (279), who could represent “the soldier stripped of all humanity, the precise empty killer” (Middlebro 598), but more likely serves as the personification of death, or the Grim Reaper (279).

The fourth and longest part of the dream is set in a “colonnaded building, darkly isolated, menacing in its obscure solidity: the War Office.” Dan and Quentin enter the building and watch as soldiers and civilians queue up, fill in forms, and follow messengers into the dark hallways (280). Quentin argues with the warrant officer at a desk just inside the door about how to fill in the forms (281). Together, Dan and Quentin wander the corridors of the War Office. The things they see evoke many of the major themes of the novel: free will versus determinism, thinking versus action, emotions versus reason (282-285). When they arrive at God’s door, Quentin demands to be allowed to see “*the Commander-in-Chief concerning certain defects in the cosmos*,” and is told that he faces a court-martial (286). During the dream court-martial, Pen Thatcher, Geoffrey Tripp, Dolughoff, Charles Burnett, and Quentin are each brought forward to be judged. Each is treated with compassion. The court-martial scene ends with the General’s

pronouncement that there is a will that guides human affairs: “Out of eternal flux comes everlasting creation. Our reward is to share God’s joy in creating” (290-299).

In the final part of the dream, Dan has a vision of an “island surrounded by a fathomless sea: a sea unchangeable, continuous, vast, still, and empty as primal chaos.” Here, Dan sees men “engaged in a desperate struggle to build a dike against time and the great sea.” “Some sing,” Dan observes, while “some pray, and some curse.” Sometimes they work together harmoniously, but sometimes they fight one another. When they fight, the dike crumbles and the water begins to seep through, destroying chunks of the small island and carrying off some of the workers (300). He also sees that “each figure is bound to another. What seems like a cord, bright and transparent as light, stretches from each man to another and from the other to another still until all are joined so that they look like insects struggling in a dewy cobweb glistening in the sun” (300). Before the dream ends, Dan sees a great disaster, but the island’s men build the dike “stronger and higher” (301). The workers gather to plant and grow a field of wheat and to create “new souls to live and work in that beauty, better men than we are, but part of us” (301). This vision of unified humanity, and of humanity unified with the creator, brings Dan great joy (302). The feeling of joy lasts even after Dan is wakened by Jobey Loversedge (302).

In the final pages of the novel, Dan leads his men up to the front (305), en route discussing with Jobey how the men “stick it” for the sake of their chums, rather than for the sake of justice or for fear of punishment (305-306). Waiting to go over in the second wave (307-8), Dan wonders at the intense feeling of being alive so near to death. He imagines how the soldiers will be remembered by a “sour and cynical world,” and how even the survivors will forget (310). Sixteen minutes before the attack, Dan finds comfort

in fatalism: "Why worry? If a shell had your number on it it got you … otherwise it didn't" (311). Then, learning that Quentin was killed the night before, he is taken by Billings down the line to see the body (311). Billings tells Dan that Quentin died because he called for a group of young German soldiers to surrender, when he "should have shot or bayoneted them forthwith," and "one of the kids threw his bomb and managed to smash Thatcher and himself too" (312). Dan recovers Quentin's personal effects, including his notebook, which includes poems and notes for future poems (313). As the bombardment begins, many of the men exchange fear for battle lust (315). Dan and Jobey arrive in a German trench (317) where the latter throws himself on a stick bomb thrown by a wounded German soldier (317). When Dan climbs out of the German trench to send a signal, he is hit and "knew no more of that battle" (317). He is found many hours later by a couple of stretcher bearers, who argue about whether to pillage his body (317). They toss Jobey's corpse into a pile with the other "stiffs" (318), the last action before the narrative ends in a poem, ostensibly taken from Quentin's notebook, titled and addressed "To a Poet Fifty Years Hence." The poem insists on the kinship between generations and exhorts a future poet to live life to the fullest (319).

ii

In contrast to most Canadian war novels, Child's highly enigmatic narrative has generated vigorous critical response. While his first two novels, *The Village of Souls* (1933) and *God's Sparrows*, were largely ignored by readers preferring traditional modes (28), William H. Magee is surprisingly receptive to the former and critical of the latter, arguing that its characters are insubstantial and static (30-2). Though he praises Quentin

as a character who has been invested with "the vigour necessary for the dramatization of his ideas," Magee says that "Child's success is limited, however, even in the most memorable characters, and the minor characters succeed even less completely," because "they show no convincing development" (32). Magee is similarly unconvinced by the plot of *God's Sparrows*, elements of which he criticizes as "vague" (33) or "fantastic" (34). In particular, Magee rejects Dan's vision of judgment at the end of *God's Sparrows* because it is inconsistent with the realism in the rest of the novel (34). Undercutting praise with criticism, Magee admires Child's cool, controlled perspective only to complain that this objectivity inhibits "the customary loose flow of easy narration" (34). Magee is similarly inconsistent when discussing *God's Sparrows* as a war novel. On the one hand, he admires the battle scenes as highly memorable; indeed, he asserts that *God's Sparrow's* "contains the most effective scenes of the First World War in Canadian fiction" (29-30), and that Child "has produced the one noteworthy novel of the First World War" (36). On the other hand, Magee ignores the historical reality of the war, regarding it is as only a "test for the intellectual conflict which opposes two family groups to each other" (30), or an incidental setting "necessary to dramatize the inner agony of thinkers like Dan and Quentin" (33). Furthermore, Magee makes no effort to locate *God's Sparrows* within the historical context of other Great War narratives.

Desmond Pacey's single paragraph in *The Literary History of Canada: Canadian Literature in English* is even less positive. In fact, his brief summary and thematic analysis ends with a dismissive evaluation of Child's writing style, which he considers "too didactic," because Child "preaches his Christian humanism too obviously" (197).

Pacey regards the novel's treatment of the war as more symbolical than historical, failing, like Magee, to see *God's Sparrows* in the context of other war narratives.

Dennis Duffy provides more commentary on *God's Sparrows* in his four-part essay, "Memory = Pain: The Haunted World of Philip Child's Fiction," ending in a Jungian analysis of Child's fiction as the working out of recurrent themes of "guilt and suffering, psychic fragmentation, and sexual disturbance" (41). These themes, Duffy asserts, do "not always buttress the Christian humanist message of the books" (41), but they do offer evidence of the ravages of modernism on the human psyche. More largely, Duffy sees these dreams as mechanisms by which antagonistic forces of modernism and Christianity may be integrated and calm may be restored (42).

For Duffy, the guilt that "permeates" *God's Sparrows* is evidence of "the frailty" of Christian Humanism, the supposed ideology of Child's novel. In fact, Duffy argues, "the author deals with a post-Christian world in which neither religious liturgies nor private prayers serve any longer as modes of purgation." Thus, the only mode of release from guilt for Child's characters is "suffering-as-expiation-for-crimes-and-guilt" (43). Even enlistment and heroism are gestures driven by "a primitive urge to affirm one's identity through suffering and annihilation" (44). Though traditional religion no longer offers any comfort, and heroism in the novel is impossible, Duffy ignores the ways in which *God's Sparrows* historicizes this problem. Instead, he chooses to focus on the family drama as he traces the tensions between the Cavalier hedonism of the Upper Canadian Burnets and the Roundhead idealism of the New England Thatchers (45). Tracing these tensions in the figures of Daniel and his various doubles, or "substitute selves," especially Quentin, Duffy sees Child as reconciling the genteel tradition with

self-destructive modernism (or roving gypsy life, i.e. "poetry," with respectability, i.e. "pragmatism") in "some sort of psychic wholeness" that "occurs only during Daniel's lengthy dream of Chapter XIX" (47). Given that "sexuality appears largely as a destructive force" in the novel, and that an "inability to accommodate themselves to their sexual natures provides one of the forces producing the frequent splits within Child's characters" (51), Duffy is forced to conclude that these forces are pulled "into some sort of compatibility" only through dreams and visions (51). Oddly, however, he dismisses Daniel's dream as "too long", too derivative ("it owes a little to Kipling's 'On the Gate: a Story of '16'") (52), and ultimately too ineffectual, since it fails to accomplish a lasting reconciliation of opposing forces or wholeness for Daniel (53).

Equally ahistorical is the view of Tom Middlebro that "the centre of interest" in *God's Sparrows* "remains the effects of the stresses of war on the human spirit" (597). Only in his emphasis on the home front does Middlebro see the novel's historical dimensions, though he will soon turn from historical "treatment of the stresses of wartime" to the Egyptian-gypsy theme, the significance of Daniel's dream, and the failure of traditional Christianity in the modern world. Once again, a Jungian archetypal analysis takes the place of historical understanding, as Jobey becomes "a romantic literary type" (597), Mr. Teti a "wise fool" (597), and Quentin "the spokesman for Daniel's self-doubt, an inner quest" (598). So the Great War has to be "more than a historical phenomenon. It is a symbol of the enduring condition of man, doomed to warfare throughout life with the pressures of time that separate him from the creating love" (598). In such fashion, a period novel turns into a medieval *Everyman.*

In contrast, Jonathan Vance sets *God's Sparrows* firmly within its historical, cultural, and generic contexts. Recalling the positive critical reception and popularity of Childs' Great War narrative in Canada during the inter-war period, Vance builds his cultural history *Death So Noble* on the premise that the anti-war canon was not always, nor universally, admired. Child's novel serves as a case study of intense social debate about how the Great War ought to be remembered in Canada. As Vance comments, "For Philip Child, the only valid memory of the war was his own. Anything else was the product of deceit or amnesia" (3). More particularly, Vance demonstrates how Child specifically addresses and refutes the dominant anti-war view that participants in the Great War were either innocent victims or amoral killers.

In his second chapter, "Christ in Flanders," Vance links Dan Thatcher's mess table with the Round Table of Arthurian legend (38). While this scene in Child's novel is full of irony, the comparison of soldiers to holy crusaders in other texts and art forms, as Vance insists, is often sincere (38). The very idea of Canadian soldiers as "soldiers of Christ" is a common representation in Canadian Great War texts and memorials—a representation that was well received by Canadian audiences in the post-war period (39).

Again in his fourth chapter, "Accurs'd They Were Not Here," Vance uses *God's Sparrows* to illustrate the powerful social forces pushing men to enlist. He notes that Dan Thatcher receives a white feather in the mail. For Vance, this scene is representative of the kinds of criticism and shame men like Dan were subjected to on the streets, and even in their own homes (112). Vance also refers to the scene in which the recipient of a Victoria Cross speaking at a patriotic meeting tells the audience they will always regret it if they do not enlist (114). Vance argues that many Canadians shared a feeling that those

who participated in the Great War would always be set apart from the rest of society as remarkable, even fortunate. Further, Vance points out that the VC winner's battlefront experience authorizes him to speak about war. For Vance, the attentive silence of the crowd listening to the veteran illustrates his point that those with first-hand knowledge of the war "became its only legitimate chroniclers" (127).

More positively still with respect to its aesthetic qualities, Dagmar Novak calls *God's Sparrows* "one of the most interesting and complex of the novels written during the 1930s" (77). Like Vance, Novak specifically locates *God's Sparrows* within the context of Canadian narratives of the Great War, but, in contrast to Vance, she reads *God's Sparrows* as an anti-war text, along with *Generals Die in Bed* and *All Else is Folly* (78). Strongly influenced by Paul Fussell, Novak suggests that Child's narrative is successful only insofar as it is anti-war. Thus, she applauds Child's representation of Penuel Thatcher as one who belongs to a tiny minority of heroic pacifists. According to Novak, the figure of Penuel is one of the redeeming features that differentiates *God's Sparrows* from early Canadian War novels, which celebrate idealistic patriotism.

Throughout her discussion, Novak insists that *God's Sparrows* is a narrative of disillusionment, brutalization, and degradation. She notes, for example, how Dan and Quentin find it "increasingly difficult to reconcile tradition and duty with the brutal realities of the front. Like the characters in *Generals Die in Bed* and *All Else is Folly*, they are revolted by the conditions they encounter and the trauma of trench warfare" (78). Further, "What Child seems to appreciate more so than any of his predecessors is that those who engaged in the war underwent a fundamental change of personality or identity" (78). These changes in personality are due primarily, Novak asserts, to the

soldiers' "sense of enclosure, and the realization that they are powerless to control their own destinies" (80). Given the conditions at the front, Novak remarks, it is to be expected that "the characters in *God's Sparrows* lose sight of any purpose or meaning in the war" (82). Novak quotes a lengthy passage describing Dolughoff's final madness and suicide in No Man's Land to illustrate war's damaging effects, noting, in a universalizing gesture common to the anti-war texts, that "his fate is little different from that of the other characters" (84). Her strong bias in favour of anti-war texts is clearly evident when she writes: "In the context of Canadian war fiction, Dolughoff appears as a curious anomaly. In the awful reality of the trenches, however, his personal disintegration is far from unique" (84). She also follows the universalizing tendency of the anti-war canon when she describes Dan's condition at the end of the novel as "symbolic of the broken souls and personal disintegration which accompanied the Allied triumph in Europe" (88).

While Novak does note details in Child's narrative that fail to support her anti-war reading, she explains them away. For example, when she comments that "there is little criticism of the staff in *God's Sparrows*," she explains that, "unlike Harrison and Acland, Child's experience at the front was limited to the last year of the war," and that this late arrival to the front means Child would have seen fewer poor decisions, because tactics had improved by this time (90-91). Novak does allow, however, for some variation from the canonical anti-war template. In particular, she accepts Child's narrator's assertion that the names of battles may well be considered "sacred" (88), and allows that heroic self-sacrifice and/or a sense of duty may explain why some fought: "Despite the brutalities they encountered and the conditions they endured, the cynicism of Harrison's narrator was not the only emotion those on the front experienced" (88).

Near the end of her book, Novak returns to *God's Sparrows*, aiming to show that Fussell's application of Northrop Frye's theory of modes can also be usefully applied to Canadian war narratives. Novak argues that *God's Sparrows* nearly completes the cycle of modes, because it "manages to look back to the romantic and heroic first stage and even, to some degree, forward to the ironic third," but finally "belongs to the low mimetic modes," because it is not ironic enough to represent completion of the cycle (158-159).

Despite her narrow ideology, Novak is right to find similarities between *God's Sparrows* and the canonical anti-war texts; she is not mistaken in her assertion that it "is not the sentimental melodrama of Child's literary predecessors" (88). It occupies a genuine middle ground between the anti-war texts and the jingoistic romances in its socially-inclusive narrative of the Great War. Child, as Novak insists, dwells on realistic details of difficult physical conditions, horrors, and brutalities of the Western Front—descriptions which serve to distinguish Child's narrative from sentimental/ jingoistic romances. As in other Great War narratives, *God's Sparrows* captures the nightmare of the Western Front by calling on our embodied response. Dan's first experience of high velocity shell fire, for example, calls on the sense of hearing:

> Simply a sharp, vicious crack, like a bursting tire, on the hap of stones at the edge of the gun pit (close this time!) followed immediately by the rushing sound of the shell's coming and last of all by the crack of its firing miles away behind the German line; this was one that had travelled faster than sound. No one was hit. But the sudden unheralded explosion had startled the men on the pit side of the balk, so that they had let go their grip on the levers and drag

> ropes with which they had been easing it into place, and the huge timber began to slither slowly, then faster down the slope of the pit like an unwieldy hippopotamus taking the water, and landed with a sickening *whumpf* athwart the wet floor of the pit. Someone uttered a scalding shriek, and went on shrieking. And in the midst of that horrible outcry another shell arrived *crack—whish—sh—boom*. Not quite so close, but they could hear the splinters whining over their heads and striking the earth above the pit with a thud. (137)

Sound dominates this passage, thanks in part to the literary devices, particularly the multiple instances of onomatopoeia and alliteration. It is also worth noting the simile in the first line comparing the (for most readers) unfamiliar sound of shell fire to the more familiar sound of "a bursting tire". Child's frequent use of similarly homely comparisons throughout the narrative may indicate an intended audience of non-veterans, and/or reflect a consistent focus on connections between the battle front and the home front.

The nightmare of the Western Front is also represented through appeals to the sense of touch. For instance, tactile details capture the misery of rainy and muddy conditions for soldiers marching up the Zonnebeke Road towards Hell Fire Corner:

> Mist and drizzle, Salient weather, soaked them to the skin, getting beneath the neck and armholes of leather jerkins, compressing the night into a drumming opaqueness that enclosed and isolated their little section of the artery that carried life blood to the front. The pavé petered out and was replaced by a plank road of beechwood laid over the liquid mud; the planks squelched and tip-tilted under

> them. The debris of caissons, of horses, of G.S. wagons, of rusted tanks with their treads twisted up and out like a wounded man flinging up his arms, of what had once been men, lined the road like sea wreck. (141)

Alliteration, such as the repeated "l" sounds in the phrase "laid over the liquid mud", and the final simile emphasize the challenges of the environment. Tactile details also add vividness to the description of a barrage in the Spring Offensive of 1918, when Dan feels the ground beneath his feet "tilting this way and that." He senses the walls of his foxhole "shaking from the impact of shells" and, "through the soles of his boots," he feels "the vibration of the earth" (227).

The sense of sight is also invoked to depict front-line conditions. For instance, a barrage is described as a "spray of multi-coloured lights," a "beautiful firework" that "slipped the leash from a straining pack of upthrust, sleek steel muzzles," and "swooped down the air on steel wings," until it "gored the earth with self-destroying roars, blasting it and tossing it upwards in great fistfuls," with "spouts of smoke and mud […] dancing a hornpipe" on every side (168). As expected in a balanced war narrative, descriptions may include a mix of positive and negative; however, these aestheticized visual images may take Child's novel closer to jingoistic heroic romances than to canonical anti-war narratives. There is, for example, no mention of mangled bodies to testify to the deadly results of this barrage. Instead, Dan is "astonished to find that two of his men had quietly crumpled up at his feet" (169). With no screaming, no blood, and no guts, the quiet deaths of two unnamed soldiers do little to distinguish *God's Sparrows* from more sentimental narratives. Later, Dan views another barrage, describing it as "the most

terrible and beautiful sight he had ever seen." Comparing the German artillery to the northern lights, Dan sees beauty in "the flowering of a multitude of jets of fire wherever shells were falling" (228). As before, this description relies on visual details to create a vivid impression. This aestheticized description, however, is followed by an account of the bombardment's terrible, gory results, including Jiffy Tripp's final, pain-filled moments "crawling through a thin stream of blood at the bottom of a saucer-shaped muck heap," and death with a German "bayonet point in his throat" (229). Overall, then, the vividly realistic, multisensory descriptions of the battlefront distinguish Child's narrative from sentimental/jingoistic romances.

Child's narrative also includes its requisite share of gory and horrific scenes—descriptions that, in further contrast to heroic-romance narratives, do nothing to protect readers' sensibilities. For instance, the brutal intensity of the fighting during the German Spring Offensive of 1918, is made real for readers through images of "Lynch's puttees and boots […] oozing blood, saturated with [blood that is not his own]" (233), not to mention a soldier "holding in his intestines with his hands" (231). Other battles are equally horrific, and Dan is haunted by the image of Sergeant Watt "lying beheaded at Passchendaele, [and] the infantry officer who liked fishing disembowelled before his eyes" (252). No Man's Land is no less gruesome:

> A familiar sight. Pockmarked, weedy, wire-sown, with here and there a bloated figure swollen and black, staring with opened mouth and empty eyes—at nothing in particular. Just going back to nature. For seasoned soldiers there was no longer any horror in the sight; it

> had become simply an accepted part of one's environment, like insanity, slums, and prostitution in civil life. (309)

Even if Dan claims to have become inured to the horrors of No Man's land, the vivid details of this description are sufficiently disturbing to separate *God's Sparrows* from the whole trash heap of heroic romances. In addition, Child's comparison of the horrors of the front lines to horrors of civil life continues an already established pattern by identifying clear and significant parallels between soldiers' and civilians' lives.

God's Sparrows also presents an unflinching record of the damaging effects of war. In part, these effects are revealed through depictions of the devastated landscape. For example, Dan observes a village that has been reduced to "paleolithic rubble":

> The landscape was significant of nothing and the significance of mere emptiness was appalling. To see so vast a tract of fruitful earth pulped into a cancerous girdle made one feel uneasy in that part of one deep down that never feels secure because it belongs to the earth and fears to be reduced to the primitive element of mud into which human clay and man's machines have been absorbed. It was a landscape. It was a raped landscape, naked, raw, and expiring… (142)

This description indicates war's power to trigger a kind of regressive devolution, while the final ellipses suggest the inadequacy of language to fully represent the devastation. Reflecting *God's Sparrows*' achievement as a balanced text, however, this grim landscape is followed immediately by a description of a dispatch rider "whistling cheerfully." According to Dan, "[h]is appearance in that place and in that mood was

ridiculous and inappropriate—and reassuringly human" (142). The juxtaposition of the devastated landscape and the cheerful rider surely complicates this representation of the Great War. Good cheer *is* possible even in the face of war's devastation. Also in direct contrast to narratives belonging to the anti-war canon, *God's Sparrows* asserts that the landscape of the Salient may be "grim," but the memory of the battles fought in 1917 is "sacred," not foul.

God's Sparrows also records the damaging effects of war on participants. For Novak, the most striking evidence of war's brutalization and demoralization is seen in the figure of Dolughoff, whose madness worsens as the narrative progresses. Upon first meeting him, Dan notes that Dolughoff is at once "combative" and "dangerous," and "sensitive" and "delicate," both "defiant and yet oddly eager" (119). Dolughoff is, as Charles says, "a bundle of contradictions," as devoutly religious as he is offensively smutty (124). Later, Lynch supports Charles' assessment of Dolughoff's contradictory nature, adding, "he can't make up his mind whether he is to be a priest or a pimp; he rather thinks he can have it both ways," and he is "quite sincere in all of his 200 different personalities" (132). Despite his difficult and contradictory nature, Dolughoff is tolerated and even respected because "he's a daredevil and the best subaltern in the battery" (124). In fact, he is so successful as a soldier that he has been awarded both the M.C. and the D.C.M. (119).

As the war progresses, Dolughoff's mental condition deteriorates from mild paranoia to messianic delusions. Indeed, Dolughoff exhibits many of the classic symptoms of a messianic complex, including a grandiose sense of self-importance, fantasies of power, lack of empathy, and need for admiration (146-149). Dolughoff's

delusional state is, perhaps, most obvious in his proclamation that he does not fear shells: “They won’t touch me till I’ve delivered my message. I’ve been put into this blasted war to do a special job. And I’ll do it. You’ll see” (146). Dolughoff’s fellow officers are increasingly troubled as his actions become more and more erratic. For example, Alastair reports to Dan that Dolughoff “is clean off his rocker” and has been put “under open arrest”:

> We had a bit of a stink you know, trench mortars mostly, and Dolly wanted to climb up on the parapet and take off his clothes to show them how little he thought of them. I’ve never before seen him go into a tailspin with rage. … Usually when he gets mad, you know he is simply putting on an act. (167)

Immediately, however, Alastair’s concern about Dolughoff is transformed when he tells Dan, “The O.P. is a crazy idea. The fellow that chose this place for one, ought to be shot!” (167). In the trenches of the Western Front, madness is a relative term.

Soon, Dolughoff descends still further into madness, becoming a kind of berserker. During a bombardment, he slips into enemy lines where he assassinates the German gunner who he believes has been targeting him, and “cut his heart out.” When he shows off the bloody organ, which he has carried back in his haversack, an infantry subaltern turns white and says, “He’s gone off his chump” (174). That same day, as though to offer further evidence of his madness, Dolughoff “crept out into No Man’s Land with an unsheathed bayonet between his teeth” (175). Twelve hours after the start of Kaiserchlacht, Dolughoff sees a soldier next to him fatally wounded, “holding in his intestines with his hands.” At that moment, “something snapped inside his mind.” He

throws down his rifle, climbs over the parapet and stands in No Man's Land, shouting for the armies to stop. When his commands have no effect, he shoots himself in the head with his revolver (231-232).

Child's representation of Dolughoff's descent into madness and eventual suicide may seem similar to the representations of Paul Baümer, George Winterbourne and Dennis Stanhope, who all stand up to be shot. Child's treatment of Dolughoff differs notably, however, from the treatment of these other protagonists. Most significantly, Child's text raises doubts that Dolughoff's madness is caused by the war. In fact, the text suggests that he may have been mad with or without the war. Months after Dolughoff commits suicide, Dan continues to wonder about him, uncertain whether he was "sanely mad or madly lucid" (222). Sometime in the summer of 1918, he writes to his Uncle Murdo to ask his medical opinion of Dolughoff's mental condition. In reply, Murdo writes: "No, I do not think the war made him insane. War does not *create* insanity, it simply brings out what was there before" (250). Given Murdo's position as a medical authority, his assertion directs readers to reject the notion—a notion frequently espoused/endorsed in the anti-war canon as well as by critics such as Fussell and Novak—that war leads inevitably and universally to madness.

The figure of Quentin also seems to offer evidence of war's brutalizing and demoralizing effects. In fact, Quentin's experience of the war shares some striking similarities with George Sherston's story in Sassoon's anti-war narrative, *Sherston's Progress*. In particular, Quentin's decision to leave the trenches as a conscientious objector and then return to the trenches closely resembles Sherston's decision to publish his declaration and later return to the front lines. Like Sherston, Quentin adopts his anti-

war position after having been severely traumatized by his front-line experiences. Specifically, Quentin is traumatized by the "butchery" he witnesses and participates in when German soldiers are systematically bayoneted as they are routed from their dugout (103). Quentin also shares Sherston's ongoing internal conflict about the war. Even after he has decided to return to France, he longs for a "mind that's not divided" (190). Contrary to Sherston, however, Quentin rejects the idea that soldiers in France are "poor dumb driven sheep"; his pacifism is not sustained by the idea that he is a hero sacrificing himself for them (188). And, unlike Sherston, Quentin eventually achieves peace of mind. While waiting for a German attack, Quentin explains to Dan that he has "finally chucked overboard a whole packful of useless illusions" (271). What distinguishes Quentin from characters in both jingoistic romances and anti-war texts, however, is his statement to Dan that he both acknowledges his brutalization and takes responsibility for his actions: "I'm only twenty-two, Dan, but I'm tired. I've seen too much and thought too much and struggled too much. I've seen a lot of horror—yes, and done it too" (274). He is neither the untarnished hero nor the innocent victim.

As the central protagonist, Dan's response to the war provides a more definitive view of war's effects on a participant. In the face of the horrors of the Western Front, especially the violence, noise, and chaos, Dan reports feeling "like a cork in a hurricane" (169). His mind is profoundly affected by a violent barrage: "Dan's mind was working queerly—shakily; it was abnormally lucid, but alarmingly separated from the body; it had suddenly become an instrument you were not quite sure of." In response, Dan tries to downplay the violence and to reframe his fear: "He attempted to put it in its place by mocking it with a phrase of pedantic precision. 'This,' he informed himself, 'is a barrage

of no ordinary magnitude […] This is a—an experience!' It was an experience. One learns things" (169). In addition to this mental re-labelling, Dan also finds "the other human beings beside him and round him—an immense comfort" (170).

Initially, Dan is surprised at how steady he remains: "He was astonished to find that he was actually becoming adjusted to a world of noise and violence. For instance, he felt sure that he could manage himself" (170). Later, however, Dan's experiences grow more disturbing and his responses to them become more and more intense. During a German attack, for instance, Dan feels himself breaking apart as the barrage "hammered and disintegrated the personality into crazy fragments of thoughts, desires…" (176). Such fragmentation and disintegration are immediately mitigated, however, by direct engagement with the enemy: "Action lifted his spirit and cleared his mind of the poisoning thoughts that formed like a cesspool while you were waiting to be blown to fragments" (176). In fact, Dan undergoes a profound change as he throws bombs at the attacking Germans: "He felt neither fear, nor rage, nor pity, only the release of power" (177). His spirits are also lifted when he sees survivors of the bombardment fighting, too. Using diction that recalls the jingoistic patriotism of more romantic narratives, he calls these men the "devoted few," but he returns to patterns familiar to the more balanced war texts when he notices the multiple and very individual responses of the men "firing, cursing, or singing, or simply firing as coolly as if they were at the butts" (177).

Dan's condition worsens over time, and the narrative traces the gradual progression of Dan's shell shock. During another barrage, he experiences intense and debilitating fear: "For a moment terror took him by the throat. He was alone. About him were nothing but blind forces, without soul. 'Must I go on? … Mustn't think, mustn't

think, mustn't think.' He ran on pounding out the phrase to a crazy rhythm—lurching from side to side" (228). Here, Dan seems to be suffering the paralysis associated with more severe shell shock. Again, though, he finds release in action; when he calls for the gunners and the crews respond, Dan feels "exultant, intoxicated with the power he felt over himself. 'I can do anything!'" (228). Though Child depicts men suffering in the trenches, war's brutalizing effects are neither universal, nor inevitable, nor irreversible.

By the summer of 1918, Dan "no longer thought of the war as an adventure," and, feeling thoroughly deracinated from his life before the war, he longs for "stability" (248). Despite his disillusionment, he still finds comfort in sights of normal life, such as when he sees French peasants "going about their business" (248). Further, he never falls into the dark despair associated with thinking that the war is utterly futile. In fact, he pointedly rejects the cynicism of this position: "People will forget why men were willing to die. They'll think our chaps went west for nothing. It will be a sour, cynical world; take heroes of a different sort to live in it decently, very likely" (310). Here, as elsewhere, the narrative offers a direct counterpoint to the anti-war canon.

Dan's worsening shell shock is also evident in his growing worries about his capabilities as a soldier:

> At times Dan again felt acutely that first horror of shedding blood which a good soldier soon learns to repress, since he must inflict with indifference on his fellow-men injuries that he could not perform on the bodies of dogs and cats without repugnance. He still had perfect confidence in his physical courage. But something, he

> could not tell what, had shaken him morally and disturbed the single-mindedness of a soldierly point of view. (248-249)

In addition to his serious and growing doubts about his mental toughness, his ability to "stick it" (250), Dan's shell-shock symptoms also include increasing irritability, constant anxiety, nightmares, depression, paranoia, and a tic. There is even a suggestion that Dan's shell shock is so severe that he may be suicidal, as when he describes "watch[ing] himself as a warder watches a prisoner who might kill himself." To control his symptoms and to hide them from others, Dan begins drinking heavily (251-253). Notwithstanding a great deal of evidence indicating his worsening shell shock, he still appreciates the rush of battle: "We'll never be nearer death, and never so much alive as we are now" (310). Thus, though Dan is brutalized by the violence and horror of war, he never descends to the absolute despair depicted as inevitable and unavoidable in the anti-war canon.

This same resistance to absolute despair is also demonstrated by other soldiers. For example, Dan realizes that soldiers advancing through "porridge-like mud" under heavy shelling suffer, but are not beaten: "Often men sat down and cursed and sobbed and then got up and stumbled on" (143). "Somehow," Dan notes, "many of them existed and survived." He acknowledges that "they were not the same men afterwards, for they had seen more than death, they had faced corruption of the soul, and despair," but he also remarks that the British soldiers emerged "triumphantly" from this test, and that "each member of the mess still seemed to be himself, only more essentially so" (143). Dan is reassured to see that, despite the horrors and violence of war, a soldier's essential self remains intact.

The issue of whether and how the war changes people is, in fact, a central concern of the narrative. While home on convalescent leave, Alastair evaluates his own condition; he admits to Tessa that his injury "has shaken [him] up a lot." He tells Tessa:

> I don't seem to know myself at all these days. Want to do the craziest things sometimes. … I'll wager you wouldn't have guessed from the calm way we've talked together before to-day, that my nerves are shot to bits. Pitcher went down to the well once too often, you know. (185)

Tessa agrees with Alastair's self-evaluation. When she looks at him she sees that he is "Thin, pinched, his eyes restless." She thinks to herself: "This is what [war] has done to Alastair, to him of all people" (185).

In contrast, Charles is changed only superficially by the war, which has left his face "sterner and sharper" (123), but his spirit untouched. Dan is "astonished […] to find his uncle, though now a soldier, so very much himself." Dan wonders, in fact, "whether Uncle Charles had really noticed the war," particularly when he sees Charles, "heedless of mortality," chant "poetry about the splendour of the nightingales" while under enemy observation and in the range of their guns, in a voice so "melodious" that he "defied the devastation" of the front lines (125-126). Later, before the launch of the German offensive in March, 1918, Charles confirms Dan's observations when he asserts, "I get a kick out of playing the *beau rôle*. And I will say that the war has brought out my best. […] I have always been myself" (226). For Charles, who celebrates his identity as a "mountebank," fighting the war offers him his "chance" to express his true nature (77). He revels in the grand adventure of war, as well as in the smaller pleasures: the

estaminets, the wine, the music, the food, the “binges” (310). His heroic death is neither forced, nor wasteful—it is both the natural and the ideal exit for such a character.

Jobey Loversedge offers another example of a soldier who refuses to be fundamentally changed by war. He resists being caught up “in something bigger” than he is, and asserts, “I’m still a free man. It’s inside you, freedom is” (178). Of course, he acknowledges that the war has affected him, commenting that it “made a different man of me,” but continues to assert his freedom up to his last minutes (305-306). Jobey, along with Charles, also illustrates the possibility of genuine heroism. When he throws his own body on a German stick bomb, saving Dan’s life, he does so in an altruistic act of self-sacrifice (317). He is one of “the best chaps,” “brave on [his] own initiative,” as Dan explains, “going out of [his] way to do brave things beyond the line of duty” (189). Jobey, then, is a figure who valourizes individuality, autonomy, and choice.

Throughout the novel, further possible responses to front-line warfare are explored, including Dolughoff’s messianic delusions, Quentin’s conscientious objection, Dan’s worsening shell shock, Charles’s heedless enjoyment, and Jobey’s gypsy autonomy. As Charles explains to Dan: “Takes all kinds to make up this civilian army; you’ll find some queer ducks in it that were never in the books of Charles Lever or G.A. Henty” (125). Of course, readers are prepared for this emphasis on individuality. Specifically, the novel’s title refers to a New Testament passage which upholds the worth of the individual: “Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows” (Luke 12:6-7; see also Matthew 10: 29-31). If, as Murdo explains, the biblical promise that “God loves them and will care for

them even as he does for every sparrow," has lost some of its power to comfort, when men in the trenches "know that a shell can kill a lot of sparrows" (230), he nonetheless suggests an alternative parable. Leaving aside the traditional teaching, Murdo would like to preach "that a loving God will disinter the spirit from the debris of the body," just as fellow soldiers would "dig clear the body of some comrade buried under the earth of a shell burst" (230). Murdo's alternative version emphasizes a personal relationship with God, and asserts the value of the individual—the comrades through whom God works (231). Later, the comfort of God's promise to love and care for each individual is restored by Dan's dream. Likewise, the dedication to W.G. Harvey (presumably a relative on Child's mother's side), asserts the importance of the individual in ways that the more general dedications in the canonical anti-war texts, for example, *Generals*, do not.

More overtly, Child rejects universalization when he writes:

> The thousands went into battle not ignobly, not as driven sheep or hired murderers—in many moods doubtless—but as free men with a corporate if vague feeling of brotherhood because of a tradition they shared and an honest belief that they were doing their duty in a necessary task. He who says otherwise lies, or has forgotten. (140)

Here, Child inserts his own voice into the narrative, pointedly denying the anti-war canon's charge that all soldiers in the Great War were hapless victims or villains. He emphasizes the individuality of those who fought and affirms the sustaining power of camaraderie. Child's authorial intrusion introduces a retrospective view and allows him to comment not just on the war, but also on how it has been remembered by others.

The variety of soldiers and their responses to the war is further emphasized by shifting points of view, such as the abrupt shift away from Dan to the perspective of an infantry subaltern who reflects on Dolughoff's madness (174), or into the thoughts of an infantryman who thinks that he can stand the discomforts of war so long as he can have a cigarette (178). Perhaps more significantly, the narrative also shifts abruptly at times out of the trenches. For example, the narrative focus shifts from Dan's to Pen Thatcher's consciousness. In this way, Pen's courageous pacifism, including his argument that war is "unchristian" and represents a reversal of all civilization's accomplishments, is not denied, but neither is it privileged (152). And Pen's death, following the mob's attack, is depicted as noble and brave—as heroic as any of the battlefront deaths (184). Thus, Pen's pacifist position is upheld as a legitimate and moral choice. This valorizing of choice, and thus of free will, through the inclusion of differing positions clearly separates *God's Sparrows* from the either/or binary oppositions of the anti-war texts.

Indeed, a notable feature of Child's narrative is its inclusivity. *God's Sparrows* depicts a wide variety of responses to war and records multiple perspectives. Earlier in the narrative, we are shown the perspective of the mayoral candidate James Elton, revealing his apathetic response to the war and his indifference to the fate of young men, whom he dislikes. Though he lacks any real feeling about the war, this calculating and manipulative man delivers a rousing speech cribbed from recruiting material supplied by the government and based on traditional themes of glory and honour (110). Then, the bitter words of a wounded veteran are recorded as he parodies a well-known British recruiting poster, and attacks the politician: "Elton, you old bitch, what did *you* do in the Great War?" (111). While these opposing positions complicate the narrative, neither

Elton's nor the veteran's positions is valorized as Pen's is. Elton's apathy and the veteran's bitterness lack the passion and thoughtful consideration of Pen's pacifist stance.

The narrative also enters the minds of women residents of Ardentinny, and records their various responses to the war, just as it did with the men at the front. For instance, Fanny reflects that she is touched "very little" by the war, "except that it made life interesting by giving her a great deal to do; committees, boards, auxiliaries, bazaars, and still more committees" (151). The war also brings new intensity to her emotional life, because she feels deep concern about her brother, Charles (153). For Euphemia, "the war had entailed several changes of religion." It also convinces her "of life's sanctity" (152).

Child's representation of these two sisters offers more evidence of *God's Sparrow's* position as a socially-nuanced war narrative. In sentimental romances, by contrast, women characters are highly idealized; every woman in Connor's *Sky Pilot in No Man's Land* is virtuous and self-sacrificing. In canonical anti-war narratives, all women are degraded; for example, every woman in Acland's *All Else is Folly* is shallow and calculating. Child's women, however, are both more complex and more human, including positive and negative characteristics. Thus, Euphemia's changes of religion may make her seem ridiculous, but her enlarged sense of the value of life indicates character growth. Beatrice also grows and develops over the course of the narrative. At the beginning, Beatrice is constantly afraid (78). Following the death of her fiancé, Matthew Wilmot, she "seems to have lost her balance" (88), and falls into despair. In the depths of her grief, she thinks of herself as having died "on April the twenty-fourth, 1915 when her fiancé fell in the battle of St. Julien," and reflects that, "To want life is an obscenity" (159). She works through her bitterness and anger, however, until she is able

to accept Dan’s love. Similarly, the war forces Tessa to grow, because it shows her how limited and constrained her life is (154). By the end of the narrative, Tessa opens herself to life by risking a dangerous pregnancy.

In contrast to most anti-war texts, which emphasize the deep divide separating soldiers from civilians, *God’s Sparrows* asserts that there is little difference between them. Joanna, for example, sounds very much like a soldier preparing to go over the top when she sends Dan to war, saying:

> Why should men be the only ones to sacrifice anything for their country. If I want to risk my security—and that’s the only thing I can risk—why haven’t I the right to? […] I couldn’t live if I didn’t think I could make my sacrifices too. I’m not afraid. (114)

Tessa also draws close parallels between her decision to risk pregnancy and men’s decision to go to war, when she asks, “Why should a woman be less willing to risk dying to give a life than a soldier is to take one” (247). In a letter to Beatrice, Dan affirms the broader effects of the war when reflecting on his father’s death: “Anyway everyone is in the same boat and in some way or another the war is bound to get us all in the end” (183). The text also insists on the parallel condition of soldiers and civilians when Dan sends a cable home to let his family know that he is out of danger and on leave in London: “Joanna and his mother had a right to their ten days’ leave too” (186).

As in other balanced war texts, particularly Godwin’s *Why Stay We Here?*, *God’s Sparrows* differs from the anti-war texts because it adopts a broader notion of “participant”. Rather than drawing a sharp distinction between those who fought in the front-line trenches and everyone else, Child’s narrative acknowledges the suffering

endured by civilians on the home front. This inclusivity even stretches to encompass the German home front. When thinking about his role as a gunner, Dan imagines the possible consequences of his decisions and considers "the shock of news of death to a wife causing a miscarriage and a deformed child, who, perhaps growing up un-loved in some orphanage becomes a criminal and kills…" (249). The trailing ellipses indicate Dan's unwillingness to go further with this train of thought. He takes some responsibility for the consequences of his actions, but will not follow this line of thinking into paralysis. Here, as elsewhere, the text suggests that responsibility must necessarily be balanced with forgiveness, including self-forgiveness.

Indeed, the theme of forgiveness is developed throughout *God's Sparrows*. In particular, Dan reconciles with both Alastair (180) and Quentin (188). This theme also emerges in Dan's climactic dream, when all those brought to face court-martial accept responsibility, and are treated with compassion by the presiding Colonel. For instance, Quentin admits his failure to maintain his pacifist position before the court, and is told to "Contemplate [his] failure for a time, but not forever" (299). This instruction from the Colonel also hints at the notion of reincarnation, which had been introduced previously when Jiffy Tripp is forgiven for "*liking* to kill". An officer on the court-martial panel suggests that Tripp be given "a little imagination next time" to counter his base, animal instincts (293). The phrase "next time," suggests that a "higher" form of Tripp will be born again to live in the world.

A *carpe diem* theme is also repeated throughout the narrative. For example, Mr. Teti tells Dan and Beatrice to live life to the fullest (206, 208), and this message is also repeated by an unnamed civilian on a London bus who tells Dan and Beatrice to "make

the most of your time together and don't worry about the future" (207). Beatrice has clearly taken this message to heart when she offers to be sexually intimate with Dan (211). Quentin offers similar life-affirming instructions, when, knowing that he will die, he asks Dan to "enjoy life" for him (273). Murdo gives Dan similar advice, charging him to "remember that those who come through the war have their lives loaned to them with a debt to pay. See that you pay it, Dan …" (270). These repeated exhortations to embrace life are also reiterated in Dan's dream, particularly when Dan, along with other dream-figures, is called to participate in creation by planting and harvesting wheat, as well as by making "new souls." Dan is filled with "inexpressible joy" by these creative, life-giving activities (301).

God's Sparrows may even assert a fraternal, redemptive ideology, similar to that of heroic romances like *The Sky Pilot*. This theme appears throughout the narrative in repeated affirmations of the sustaining power of camaraderie. In Dan's dream, the interconnectedness of every individual is supported through the image of a cord of light that "stretches from each man to another and from the other to another still until all are joined" (300). And, the interdependence of these individuals is underscored by images of the dike walls crumbling whenever the dream figures fight with one another (300). It is only through mutual aid and support that the dream figures are able to construct and maintain a dike that holds back obliterating flood waters (301). Taken together, these several themes of forgiveness, of living life to the fullest, and of human interconnectedness and interdependence function to set *God's Sparrows* far apart from anti-war texts.

Even its structural elements underwrite the more hopeful ideology of a socially-inclusive war novel. The farming metaphor of the four parts ("The Seed and the Soil,"

“The Wheat,” “The Sickle,” and “Wind in the Stubble”) suggests the cyclical nature of planting and harvest, life and death. This notion of cyclicality is linked to the images of resurrection and/or reincarnation in Dan’s dream. A similar agricultural metaphor and a promise of new life are also seen in Godwin’s *Why Stay We Here?* Such affirmations of continuity contrast sharply with the cataclysmic obliteration emphasized in the anti-war canon, even as they preserve the notion of an organic society.

As in other Great War texts, the meaning of *God’s Sparrows* is most evident in its ending. The end of *God’s Sparrows* may recall canonical anti-war narratives where a protagonist is carried from the battlefield on a stretcher, without any sign of recovery or expectation of homecoming. But the final image of Dan’s condition at the end of the novel is hardly “symbolic of the broken souls and personal disintegration which accompanied the Allied triumph in Europe” (Novak 88). Even as she holds to the universalizing tendency of the anti-war position, Novak fails to note how Dan’s broken body is not the last image or the final word in Child’s text. Instead, the final words of the narrative come from Quentin’s notebook, in the form of a poem (319).

The speaker of this three-stanza, twenty-two line poem, “To a Poet Fifty Years Hence,” asks future generations not to judge the Great War generation too harshly for their “shabby modes and worn out times,” but to see them as the source of the future generations’ identity. The speaker also asks to be remembered as living, breathing, feeling beings—“Like you”. Finally, the speaker exhorts his reader to “*Close up the book*” in order to participate in life and to connect with others. *God’s Sparrows* ends, not with the image of a broken body and a cry of despair, but with a quiet affirmation of continuity, a plea for understanding, and a call to action.

Conclusion

By this point, it will be obvious that one of my deepest concerns about Paul Fussell's *The Great War and Modern Memory* relates to its dogmatic reading of literary history, and the limiting effect which this dogma has had on readings of Great War texts. For Fussell, it would seem that the only admissible war book is an anti-war book, characterized by its unremitting focus on details of destruction and gore, and its dramatization of the brutalizing, dehumanizing, and demoralizing effects of combat on front-line soldiers, with the arc of the narrative filtered through an ironic lens—the only "appropriate means" for writing about the Great War (3). Any text diverging from this pattern is rejected as being little more than sentimental, "recruiting-poster rhetoric" (249).

This damaging dogmatism is writ large not only in Fussell's text, which has often been criticized for its narrow selection of texts, but also in other critical responses to Great War literature which make a priestly orthodoxy of the model, rendering all but heretical any deviation from the "norm." Canadian followers of Fussell, for example, such as Evelyn Cobley and Dagmar Novak, are far too eager to rehearse the interpretation of the war as a futile tragedy directed by donkeys. While this anti-war position is hardly a complete and total misrepresentation of events or representations of the Great War, it is clearly selective and partial. Reading outside the constraints of this model should allow for a full and more fair consideration of other texts and ideological positions, and should demonstrate that Canadian literary responses to the Great War were neither unanimous nor unambiguous.

Beyond the work of cultural historians of the period, such as Jonathan Vance and Jay Winter, further justification for my decidedly non-Fussellian reading of Great War fictions and memoirs by Canadian combatants can be found in what I see as a "control group" of Canadian women's writing from the home front, covering in almost identical terms the same broad spectrum of responses by Canadians to the Great War. For instance, Nellie McClung's *The Next of Kin: Those Who Wait and Wonder* (1917) is an early "home front" response to the war that bears striking similarities to Ralph Connor's *The Sky Pilot in No Man's Land* (1919) in its tone, its content, and its structure. Each of the sixteen chapters in McClung's novel offers a moral lesson, delivered in an overtly moralistic tone, meant to demonstrate the improving effects of the Great War on English-speaking citizens of the Empire. Just as Connor traces the transformation of Barry Dunbar into an ideal chaplain, and of McCuaig into an ideal Canadian soldier, so, too, McClung relates a series of conversion stories, including several about women who abandon their selfish ways to embrace new lives of political activism and patriotic devotion. Thus, both Connor and McClung call for greater personal responsibility and sacrifice, and focus on the positive aspects of war as a learning experience and a crucible for moral purification.

Another striking parallel between Connor's and McClung's patriotic novels appears in his identification of Canadian soldiers with Christ, and her call for women to take on Christ's role by becoming "healers and binders who will not be appalled at the task of nursing back to health a wounded world" (240). And, like Connor, who voices some fairly derogatory comments about "Huns" (223), McClung disparages the enemy and reiterates the usual propaganda when she describes the Germans as "a race of people

who cut hands off children, and outrage women" (134). Despite their similar animus against all things German, both texts still merit critical interest because they reflect attitudes and experiences particular to the years during, and immediately after, the war. Finally, both texts are structured to end on an uplifting image that affirms the continued significance of individuals, of regeneration, and of social and historical continuity. More particularly, *The Next of Kin* ends with echoes of a biblical covenant in a shimmering rainbow and a glorious sunset, both of which give "promise of a good day tomorrow" (255). These parallels between *The Sky Pilot in No Man's Land* and *The Next of Kin* show that responses from the Western Front and the home front may be equally invested in the "Old Lie" that underwrites jingoistic romance narratives about the war.

Though also written from the perspective of a woman on the home front, Francis Beynon's *Aleta Dey* (1919)—a semi-autobiographical account of the development of a pacifist from childhood to martyrdom and, more particularly, from a passive to an active opposition to the Great War—contrasts sharply with McClung's staunch support of the British Empire and her firm belief in the justness of the War as a defense of civilization. Indeed, *Aleta Dey* seems to respond directly to *Next of Kin* on several points; for example, Aleta's rejection of the "claim that women pay the highest price in war" (153) takes aim at McClung's glorification of the sacrificial mother. Aleta's rejection of all forms of tyranny—any "majority thinking" that restricts personal liberty—suggests a similar indictment of McClung's more conservative politics. Beynon's indictment of schools, churches, and the state is remarkably similar to the rejections of tradition and authority heard in Acland's *All Else is Folly*, when Falcon decries the codes of honour, duty, class and gender that trap him in the trenches (176-177), as well as in Harrison's

Generals Die in Bed, when the narrator mocks an Anglican curate who asserts his belief that the war brings out the more "noble" and "heroic qualities in the common people" (172). Overall, *Aleta Dey* has much more in common with Canadian anti-war texts than with traditional romance narratives.

In contrast to a more traditional narrative like *Next of Kin*, which allows only one possible response to the Great War, Beynon's text also seems to be a more open text, registering a variety of morally acceptable responses to war. For instance, Aleta's lover, McNair, enlists immediately and this choice is valorized when his patriotic sentiments are not demeaned. Even more significantly, Aleta herself expresses mixed feelings about the war: "If the war party had been completely dominated by this callous, brutal, unimaginative selfishness it would have been a simple matter to oppose them, but mixed with the spirit of profiteering, and bloodthirstiness, and the lust for revenge, and the furious hate there was great devotion and unselfishness and the most frightful suffering" (162). With its inclusion of various possible responses to the war, *Aleta Dey* moves away from the single-mindedness of the anti-war canon and towards the multiplicity of what are clearly more balanced Canadian Great War texts. This textual openness is ultimately compromised, however, by the overly sentimental ending of *Aleta Dey*, in which Aleta becomes a Christ-like martyr for the cause of pacifism. Fair treatment is here cast overboard, and readers are coerced every bit as much as they are by the "Big Lie" regarding the *Llandovery Castle* in *Generals Die in Bed*. Because this manipulative ending undermines Beynon's free-speech agenda and resistance to tyranny, *Aleta Dey* may best be read as a home-front version of *Generals Die in Bed*.

In between such extremes of jingoism and pacifism, L.M. Montgomery's *Rilla of Ingleside* (1921) stands as an example of a more balanced home-front war narrative. The novel covers all fifty-two months of the Great War—from the assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand to the soldiers' return after demobilization—if almost entirely from the perspective of women on the home front. According to Jonathan Vance, *Rilla* represents an "entirely traditional view of war's impact on a small Canadian town," and is merely an unsophisticated reflection of wartime propaganda and myth (237). In contrast, Amy Tector argues that, rather than degenerating into a chauvinistic tract for Canadian support of Great Britain in the Great War, *Rilla* contains subversive elements that are meant to challenge contemporary attitudes to the war. Instead of taking one side or the other of this argument, I suggest that this more balanced home-front text gives sufficient space to both positions to allow for more readerly choice. As an illustration, consider the figure of Mr. Pryor (Whiskers-on-the-Moon). Does Montgomery's at times villainous, at times comedic, portrayal of Mr. Pryor undermine his pacifistic stance? Or, does Pryor's pacifist speech at the town prayer meeting introduce anti-war sentiments into Montgomery's text? Like readers of Bird's *And We Go On* and Child's *God's Sparrows*, readers are given a fair amount of latitude, especially when it comes to accepting or rejecting these anti-war sentiments.

Allegorical readings of *Rilla* also encode multiple possible readings that call for readerly choice. This story of a young girl who grows from girlhood to maturity in the years of the Great War may be read as a metaphor for the story of Canada's development into maturity as a nation. In *Rilla*, Canada's involvement in the War is initially defined within an imperial context, such as when Jem explains that Canada is one of the "cubs"

who must support the "old grey mother" (30). According to Vance, this view of the Mother Country was typical in the popular culture, and central to Canada's memory of the war. He discusses the importance of the metaphoric relationship between the soldier, Canada, and Great Britain in chapter five of *Death So Noble*, "The Soldier as Canada," noting that the idealized image of the Canadian soldier was characterized in part by "his youth and his attachment to a mother figure [, which] paralleled the nation's relationship to Mother Britain" (136, 147). In Montgomery's novel, Rilla becomes a figure for filial Canada, just like the young soldiers, and, as it progresses, the novel traces how Rilla and Canada earn maturity and recognition through their painful ordeal. On the one hand, Rilla's romantic coupling with Ken in the last pages of the novel, and, particularly her final lisping "Yeth" to Kenneth, do suggest a regression to childhood dependence and may well be a prophetic sign of women's loss of rights after the war. On the other hand, Rilla's lisping affirmative to Kenneth might also be read as a nostalgic look back to the babyhood left behind by both the girl and the nation, or even as a gentle reminder to the reader of how far both Rilla and Canada have come.

Allegorical readings offer more choices still when one takes into account Susan's story of growth and development. Initially, Susan sees herself as a drudge, whose value comes only from her lower-class function as a worker (14). Additionally, Susan submits unquestioningly to patriarchal authority, such as when she states, "your father says…" (57). By the end of the novel, however, Susan gains new confidence, takes up public speaking, learns to care about suffrage, becomes discerning in her judgments, and regularly defies patriarchy by challenging the *pater familias*, Gilbert, even in regards to war matters. Susan's attainment of fulfillment in her spinster life, evidenced by her

rejection of a marriage proposal and the "honeymoon" trip she plans, likewise anticipates the future liberation of women out of the events of the Great War.

Further, Susan's story points to changing views of citizenship and community. At the opening of the novel, Susan is only interested in the gossip column of her local newspaper, but she becomes immersed in world events as the novel and the war progress. Susan's coming-of-age story, therefore, can be read as both a local and individual reflection of the transforming effects of globalization attending the First World War, as well as a growing awareness of Canadian national identity, and an enlarged sense of Canada's role on the international stage, as was acknowledged at the time in her place as a signatory to the Treaty of Versailles. The contrasts between Rilla's coming-of-age narrative and Susan's story of growth and development leave plenty of room for political allegory, as well as for readerly choice.

Montgomery's novel also carries echoes of the balanced version of Canadian combatant narratives in the way it, too, ends with a vision of renewal and continuity. In *Rilla,* the Great War is frequently described in terms of birth, such as Reverend Meredith's affirmation that, "We are witnessing the birth-pangs of a new era" (166). Like Reverend Meredith, who is sure that "a country whose sons are ready to lay down their lives in her defense will win a new vision because of their sacrifice" (51), Rilla's brother, Walter, also believes that some good must come from the blood sacrifices of the Great War. For Walter, those who survive the War will enjoy a "better happiness," a happiness that has been "*earned*" (124). Further, in a letter home, Walter writes about how he has "helped to make Canada safe for the poets of the future, the workers … the dreamers…" (191), and imagines that the "'red rain' of Langemarck and Verdun" will

bring "forth a golden harvest" (192). These positive visions of the future, born out of pain and sorrow, are likewise the sort of vision which tends to conclude more balanced Canadian combatants' texts. Most particularly, Walter's vision of a "golden harvest" is closely echoed in the last images of George Godwin's *Why Stay We Here?*, when Stephen returns to find evidence of rebirth and renewal in the orchard he had abandoned when he went to war (209). Similar affirmations of regeneration and continuity are found in the long view of history that comforts Bird at the end of *And We Go On*, and in the organic metaphor of the four-part structure of Child's *God's Sparrows*, beyond the images of resurrection and/or reincarnation in Dan's dream.

Even a brief survey of this literary "control group" ought to suggest that Canadian women's writing from the home front covers the same broad spectrum of responses to the Great War as does writing by combatants. Women's writing shows similar patterns of development from the "Old Lie" of patriotism, through the "Big Lie" of the anti-war camp, to the hope of regeneration and continuity found in the more balanced texts. And, Great War literature from the Canadian home front is just as socially inclusive as these balanced texts, frequently providing a variety of opinions among civilians, just as combatant literature records a variety of opinions among soldiers. There is no unanimous, and, certainly, no single "appropriate" response to the war.

With the disappearance of the last of the first-hand witnesses of the Great War, the era has lately transcended the boundary of lived memory. And yet living traces of this memory may still be found, among other sources, in our literature about the Great War. It falls, in part, to literary critics to give a voice to all who speak, and to embrace multivocality, rather than a single, reductive, orthodox vision of the Great War. In some

respects, written texts may then perform the same functions as the culture's own rituals of remembrance. Like the recitation of poems at Remembrance Day solemnities, reading these narratives connects us as readers to the living experience of our forebears, and creates community across time and space. Reading and responding to these texts is its own answer to the solemn injunction reiterated in many of these texts, to remember, and, at the same time, to take up the torch.

Appendix

Will Bird's 1930 memoir, *And We Go On*, published by Hunter-Rose, was substantially revised in 1968 and republished as *Ghosts Have Warm Hands* by the Toronto publisher Clark, Irwin, & Co. In 2002, a third edition, still titled *Ghosts Have Warm Hands*, was published in Ottawa by Norm Christie's CEF Books. Systematic comparison of the three different versions of Bird's memoir reveals a variety of minor and major changes, some of which result in significant shifts related to emplotment, character, meaning, and audience. The revision of *And We Go On* (*AWGO*) and its metamorphosis into *Ghosts Have Warm Hands* (*GHWH*) also suggests the lasting power that the Great War had over Bird. He was, it seems, still haunted by his memories more than forty years after the war. Some of his revisions hint at a continuing compulsion to relive traumatic events. Some other of these revisions show how his memories of the Great War had been and continued to be readjusted over time.

What strikes one first is how the memoir has been divided differently in all three versions. The 1930 edition begins with a preface and is then divided into twelve chapters. This structure evidently echoes the twelve books of Virgil's *Aeneid*, which in and of itself suggests continuity, both historical and literary. Additionally, this structural echo prepares readers for a triumphant outcome. In contrast, the 1968 version of *GHWH* begins with an entirely new preface and is divided into four parts, and an epilogue. Each part is subdivided into relatively short chapters. Part 1, "Baptism: July 1916-August 1917" includes ten chapters; Part 2, "Stalemate: August 1917-August 1918" is also made up of ten chapters, while Part 3, "Pursuit: August 1918-November 1918" has seven

chapters, and Part 4, "Armistice: November 1918-March 1919" includes five chapters. Here, the divisions emphasize different phases of the war as experienced by Bird. This new five-part structure, less evocative of classical epic than of Shakespearean tragedy, transforms the memoir from a narrative of communal identity into a narrative of the individual hero.

Given Bird's death in 1984, the CEF edition of 2002 does not reflect his final intent, even though it begins with the same preface as is found in the Clark, Irwin edition of 1968. This third edition divides the memoir into eight chapters: "Chapter 1: Getting There"; "Chapter 2: The Crater line at Vimy"; "Chapter 3: The Avion Sector"; "Chapter 4: Passchendaele"; "Chapter 5: Winter-Spring 1917-1918"; "Chapter 6: The Battle of Amiens"; "Chapter 7: Arras and Cambrai"; and "Chapter 8: Mons." These chapter titles focus more on geographical location, which may reflect the interests of Norm Christie, the war historian, publisher, and tour guide leader, who is responsible for the current edition. Following the epilogue, which is identical to the one in the 1968 version, the CEF edition adds a biography of Will R. Bird, as well as a Glossary of Names. Interspersed through the text, the CEF version also adds four military maps, "The Western Front," "The Crater Line, Vimy Ridge," "Passchendaele, the Attack on Graf House," and "The Battle of Amiens, the Actions at Parvillers," which highlight the locations of battalions, battle lines, and direction of troop movements. Aside from the structural changes described here, and the addition of the biographical material and the maps, there are no other differences between the 1968 Clark, Irwin edition and the 2002 CEF edition, aside from a number of typographical and printing errors in the third edition. Much of the discussion that follows, therefore, will focus on the variety of

differences between the original *AWGO* and the later *GHWH* (with references to the 2002 CEF edition).

In terms of Bird's own changes, there are significant differences between *AWGO* and *GHWH* in the presentation of the protagonist. There is, for example, a noticeable shift from the second-person pronoun, "we," in *AWGO*, to the first-person pronoun, "I," in *GHWH*. "We bandaged" (A121) becomes "I cut the skin" (G57), and "Old Bill, Tommy, and I" (A252) becomes "I" (G118). In *GHWH*, Bill's individual action is emphasized, resulting in a portrait of Bill who now appears less as a member of a collective group, and more as a heroic individual. Further, this shift from "we" to "I" also means that both of the later versions no longer respond directly to Remarque's second-person-plural narrative, *All Quiet on the Western Front*. In *AWGO*, Bill is also more likely to accept suggestions or to obey orders from others. In both revised versions, it is usually Bill who gives orders and suggestions, or makes decisions. For example, in *AWGO*, it is Tommy who suggests to Bill and the others that they "not go to the bull-ring to-day" (10), but in *GHWH*, the suggestion is attributed to Bill who "spoke quiet words to Brown, Belliveauy and another" while in camp at Le Havre (A6), and the phrase "orders came that we were to …dig in for the night" (A308) becomes "we felt it would be sensible to stop…for the night" (G141). These changes not only enlarge Bill's role by making him the central actor, but also increase his autonomy and illustrate his leadership skills. In fact, there are numerous instances in which his revisions transform Bill from a passive, obedient soldier, to an autonomous, authoritative leader. For instance, the phrase, "Three of us were detailed," in *AWGO* (A168) is revised to "I took two men" in *GHWH*

(G78); similarly, "We were moved" (A266) becomes "Brown and I decided to stay" (G126). [See also (A113) (G49); (A224) (G102); (A244) (G113).]

In addition to his increased autonomy, the revisions in *GHWH* make Bill over in other ways. In particular, *GHWH* makes him more humble by omitting his vainglorious desire for medals (A32) (G11), makes him more generous by adding an incident that highlights his selflessness (A74) (G30), and makes him more courageous, by adding scenes in which Bill demonstrates his bravery, such as maintaining his position when others flee (A42) (G13), or in highlighting his courage in the scene where he steals a rain cape from German trenches (A102) (G44-45). The same effect is achieved by omitting scenes in which Bill was first portrayed as being fearful (A32) (G11); (A107) (G47); (A170) (G79); (A309) (G142); and (A319) (G149). Other revisions in *GHWH* also augment Bill's resistance to unreasonable authority, such as in the addition of a scene where Bill refuses to go on guard duty because the colonel's written orders excuse him (G2), and the amplification of a scene in which he refuses to participate (or have his platoon participate) in a work-party (A269-270) (G128-129).

While Bill's role expands, Tommy is virtually written out of *GHWH*. Though he is Bill's closest friend and constant companion in *AWGO,* he is downgraded to a minor character in the later editions. As a result, some of Tommy's words in *AWGO* are attributed to others in *GHWH*. For instance, Tommy's "Let Royal gents do the worrying" (A22), is now attributed to Brown in *GHWH* (G8). A more significant result of Tommy's virtual exclusion from the newer editions, however, is the calculated omission of all of Tommy's anti-war rants, such as his comment that there will always be "sheep" "ready to jump around when the big fellows give the word" (A316) (G147). [See also (A41) (G13);

(A301) (G139).] Similarly, “the Professor” and “the Student” disappear from the later versions of Bird’s memoir, in all likelihood because of their political congruity with Tommy. As a result, there is a significant decrease in dialogue about the war (its causes and effects, as well as its morality) because all of their discussions and arguments are omitted, including the Professor’s rant against God and his call for pacifism (A107) (G47), much less the Student’s observation that the participation of large numbers of non-professional soldiers makes the Great War worse than other wars (A299) (G139).

Commentary and debate about war is also diminished in other ways in the revised memoir. In *GHWH*, much evidence of the men’s despair is omitted, while evidence of their continued hopefulness is added. For example, a lengthy description of “helpless waiting” with “swooping Death” hovering overhead is left out of *GHWH* (A118) (G55). There are dozens of similar revisions in which despair, helplessness, grief and futility are omitted from *GHWH.* At the same time, hopefulness is increased in the revised version, such as when Bird reports in *GHWH* that, “Hopes rose each time we neared the end of a tour” (A174) (G80). Anti-war sentiment is further suppressed through the omission or decrease in content depicting the horrors of war. For example, *GHWH* omits the horror of a detached arm that Mickey must toss over the parapet (A106) (G47), and trims the description in *AWGO* of a downed pilot’s legs “almost severed with machine gun fire” (A220), which is reduced to a more euphemistic description of the pilot whose “legs had been hit” (G100). In the same vein, a great deal of content illustrating the symptoms and effects of shell shock are also left out of *GHWH*. Thus, *GHWH* offers a more sanitized representation of the Great War, which diminishes considerably the memoir’s

inclusiveness. *GHWH* also adds more humour, thereby decreasing the negative impression readers might get of the Great War.

In related ways, *GHWH* also eliminates scenes or reduces naïve dialogue demonstrating combatants' enthusiasm for war. For instance, the thrill Bill feels when he first arrives at the front line (A24) is omitted from *GHWH* (G9). Similarly, evidence of many combatants' eagerness to fight and to kill is left out of later editions. Given that both jingoistic as well as anti-war sentiments are edited out of *GHWH*, the later version of Bird's memoir is less inclusive than *AWGO*, offering a more unified, singular vision of the Great War, rather than the full spectrum of perspectives found in *AWGO*. Whereas *AWGO* presents a wide range of potential responses to war, thus inviting readers to choose from among various arguments and to participate in the production of meaning to at least some extent, *GHWH* takes a more directive, or authoritarian approach, limiting the conclusions readers might reasonably draw about the war.

A more direct, less ambiguous, approach in *GHWH* is also evident in its erasure of tension and/or differences between Canadian soldiers. While *GHWH* presents an unqualified celebration of camaraderie, *AWGO* presents a more balanced portrait that includes both benefits and challenges. For example, *GHWH* emphasizes the benefits of camaraderie by adding details about how men shared their Christmas parcels at Mont St. Éloi (A19) (G7). In *AWGO*, Bill records the arrival of Christmas parcels (A19), but makes no mention of sharing the parcel contents with those who had nothing, as *GHWH* does (G7). Revisions to *GHWH* also function to tone down tension and conflict among the men. For instance, the incident in which Tommy threatens the cook with violence, when he refuses to give them food, is much more vague and the threat is more veiled in

GHWH (A28) (G10). Likewise, the unpopularity of the bombers is omitted from *GHWH* (A39) (G12-13), as are various negative observations Bill records about his comrades. More significantly, the ongoing tension between "originals" and the men of Bill's draft is entirely omitted from *GHWH*. Taken together, these changes indicate a more enthusiastic, and seemingly less honest, celebration of camaraderie. Again, these changes have a flattening effect on the narrative and reduce the role of readerly choice.

Other changes in content include a greater interest in souvenir hunting in the revised edition, as well as the addition of numerous humorous incidents. Revisions in *GHWH* also involve a decrease in attention to soldiers' alcohol consumption and a marked decrease in sympathy for the Germans. *GHWH* also deletes thoughts of home, and most of the references to history and historical events found in *AWGO*. More significantly, the preface in *GHWH* is significantly different from that in the original version. The newer preface briefly outlines Bird's efforts to enlist, but omits detail about Bill's activities leading up to the war, including many of the details about his efforts to enlist, and more interestingly, details about his life in Canada before he goes to war, such as his harvest-work in Saskatchewan. *GHWH*, therefore, seems to follow the anti-war text example by suggesting that there is no life before (or after) the war.

The replacement of the long preface in *AWGO* with a much shorter one in *GHWH* means that the quatrains from the *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* and the philosophical debate they introduce are missing from the later editions. Bird's statement of purpose—to offer a counterpoint to the anti-war canon, and to validate soldiers' psychic experiences—is also left out. Somewhat surprisingly, given the change in title, *GHWH* omits most of the supernatural elements that are so prominent in *AWGO*. In particular,

GHWH leaves out Steve's promise (before he leaves for France) to "whisper" in Bill's ear (A13), as well as Bill's long-distance, psychic reaction to Steve's death while working on the farm in Saskatchewan. And, though three of Steve's ghostly warning visitations are included, some are changed to reduce or even to eliminate the supernatural content, while some of these incidents are left out entirely. For instance, Steve's second visit takes place at midnight in *AWGO* (A72), but at sunrise in *GHWH* (G27). This shift in time seems to decrease the Hamlet-like theatricality of a ghostly appearance at the witching hour. In another case, *GHWH* changes an incident to omit the supernatural, so that a touch from Steve is replaced by the sound of harmonica music from German lines, which serves as a warning to Bill (A166) (G77-78). Phyllis and her "sixth sense" and uncanny intuition are also deleted from the later editions. Similarly, several of Bill's intuitive impulses are left out of the later editions, as is his faith in "a different sphere of existence" where coincidences and intuition are "natural" (A18). *GHWH* also omits an element of predestination in Freddy's prophetic dream about a white ghost woman who identifies the "fatal Six" who are doomed to "never see Canada again" (A9), and the unfolding of this fatal plot as each of the Six are subsequently killed in war. For instance, Arthur's last words, "Freddy was right," are omitted from *GHWH* (A51) (G19). Other supernatural content is also omitted from *GHWH*, including Bill's vision of his dead pals (A207) (G93), Christensen's spiritual awakening (A213) (G97), and Sparky's premonitions (A255) (G119).

In 1968, of course, Bird was no longer addressing fellow combatants, as he was when he first wrote *AWGO*, and a number of changes in his diction point fairly directly to this change in anticipated audience. For instance, the change from "the Pats" (A35) to

“the Princess Patricias” (G12) might be helpful for a less expert audience—that is, an audience that did not live through the Great War. Similarly, “the Salient” in *AWGO* (A105) becomes “Ypres” in *GHWH* (G47), likely because Ypres has more meaning for non-participant readers. Likewise, “Mills bomb” (A120) becomes “grenade” (G57), “Gothas” (A145) becomes “sky ships” (G67), and “VC” (A106) becomes “Victoria Cross” (G47). Some additions to *GHWH* might also be explained by the anticipation of a less knowledgeable reader, including the addition of geographical information about Quivrechem [sic, Quiévrechain] (A312) (G145), and about “Thelien” / “Thulin” (A312) (G145) for readers who had not fought there. Note, too, how place-name changes in *GHWH* reflect a shift to local spellings, rather than Anglicized spellings, so that “Passchendale” in *AWGO* becomes “Passchendaele” in *GHWH*. Names of persons are also changed in *GHWH*. Anonymous actors in *AWGO,* perhaps since deceased, are now clearly named in *GHWH*. For instance, “our sergeant” (A29), becomes “Stevenson” (G10), and “we” (A29) becomes “Roy McMillan joined me” (G10). Similarly, nicknames are replaced by given names, such as the change from “Smaillie” (A30) to “Sellars” (G10), and “Sambro” to “Brown”. It stands to reason that the passage of time between 1930 and 1968 made anonymity unnecessary.

At times, changes in diction also reflect changes in sensibilities. In particular, a number of racist slurs have been removed from *GHWH*, so that, for example, the use of the term “white” as a positive evaluation of an officer as “a ‘white’ man” (A24), becomes “a very decent sort” (G8), or is omitted entirely (A64) (G25), (A93) (G40). References to “herring chokers” (a slur against a person from New Brunswick, based on the stereotype that people living in the Maritimes only eat fish, or herring in particular); “soup eaters” (a

derogatory term for French Canadians); and “squaws” (a racist and sexist term for First Nations women) are omitted, too (A55) (G21); (A206) (G92). A description of Chinese labourers, comparing them to “school girls” and asserting their inferiority to white men, is also omitted (A183-184) (G85). Similarly, *GHWH* omits the scene in which Bill declares the superiority of men of British descent over all others (A332-333) (G157). Statements tainted by class prejudice are also omitted from *GHWH*, including Bird’s preference for men of “good birth” (A296) (G139).

In addition to changes in diction, there are also some noteworthy changes in style between the two versions. In syntax, one notes a shift from frequent use of multiple conjunctions (polysyndeton) in *AWGO* to the use in *GHWH* of short, simple sentences with no co-coordination or subordinating conjunctions—a reportage style employing asyndeton to suggest confusion and incoherence. Fragmentation and mental dislocation are endemic to this style of choppy reportage; given larger structural changes as well, the later version of the memoir is now distanced from traditional, heroic epics. The omission of poetic language in *GHWH* is a similar move away from traditional narratives. For example, a descriptive passage employing a simile comparing men to “mud-swathed phantoms” is dropped from *GHWH* (A125) (G59), as is an alliterative passage describing the end of an impromptu piano concert in the ruins of a French house: “As the music ceased it seemed as if something sinister, throttling, had swooped down and was all about us” (A283) (G133). *GHWH* also distances itself from traditional literary work by omitting quotations and allusions, including the quatrains from *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* quoted in the preface of *AWGO*, the reference to “Pilgrims Progress” (A169) (G79), and the quotation of Alfred Noyes’ poem “The Loom of Years” (A279) (G133).

Taken together, all of these stylistic changes move *GHWH* away from the poetic and towards the journalistic—a shift that, like the changes in diction, seems to reflect a change in anticipated audience.

Notes

1. Benedict Anderson proposes the notion of "unisonance" in *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1983/1991) as part of his discussion about patriotism, and the profound, even self-sacrificing love that nations inspire. He notes that language, more than anything else, "connects us affectively to the dead," and that the repetition of well-known phrases has the power to create "a ghostly intimation of simultaneity across homogeneous, empty time" (145). Anderson goes on to explain that "the recitation of ceremonial poetry," or the singing of songs, particularly national anthems, "provide occasions for unisonality, for the echoed physical realization of the imagined community," and create, as Anderson explains, "a special kind of contemporaneous community" (145). In a note, he further clarifies the idea of "unisonance" by contrasting the experience of singing a national anthem "with the language of everyday life, which is typically experienced decani/cantoris-fashion as dialogue and exchange" (n. 145).

2. See, for example, an online BBC News article reporting the death of Harry Patch, the last British survivor of the trenches: "WWI Veteran Patch dies aged 111." Ongoing interest in the disappearance of Great War veterans is also suggested by the regularly updated lists of remaining veterans, which are available on Wikipedia at "List of last surviving World War I veterans by country."

3. Unlike Bertrand Russell, Robert Graves, and H.W. Massingham, W.H.R. Rivers is a recognizable figure from Sassoon's life whose name is not changed, most

likely because Rivers is the only one who died before publication. Thus, Sassoon honours the memory of the dead while protecting the identities of the living.

4. In a footnote to *Canadian Expeditionary Force 1914-1919: Official History of the Canadian Army in the First World War*, Col. G. W. L. Nicholson describes the sinking of the *Llandovery Castle*, "a British merchant vessel serving as a Canadian hospital ship," which was "torpedoed on 27 June 1918, while returning to England from Halifax. Of a Canadian crew and medical staff totaling 258 all ranks, only 24 survived. Among those who perished were the fourteen Canadian Nursing sisters aboard" (398n.). Mable Clint also presents an account of the sinking of the *Llandovery Castle* in *Our Bit: Memories of War Service by a Canadian Nursing Sister* (1934). She acknowledges that attacks on troop transport ships were "legitimate warfare," but calls the sinking of a hospital ship "foul murder" (107). Quoting excerpts from various official accounts found in the War Records Office, she includes details about the German submarine ramming, shelling and sinking the lifeboats, and deliberately targeting survivors in the water in an effort to destroy "all trace of his [sic] despicable crime" (Clint 166-167). Referring to *The Borden Papers*, Dagmar Novak asserts that the ship "*was* a hospital ship, [and] that its cargo included neither supplies nor war material" (66).

5. The preface to the republished edition of *Why Stay We Here?* includes much of the same material found in the preface to the 1999 CEF edition of Pedley's *Only This*: explanations for the text's obscurity, justifications for republication, and biographical information about the author.

6. Thirty-eight years after the publication of *And We Go On*, a revised version of the memoir was published by Clark, Irwin, & Co. with a new title, *Ghosts Have Warm*

Hands. Later still, in 2002, CEF Books published a third edition of Bird's memoir, still titled *Ghosts Have Warm Hands*. Aside from some relatively minor structural changes (the chapters are restructured and renamed), and the addition of maps and a biographical sketch, there are no significant differences between the 1968 Clark, Irwin edition and the 2002 CEF edition. There are, however, a variety of differences in content, tone, and style, as well as in structure, between the original *And We Go On* and the later *Ghosts Have Warm Hands*. These differences are enumerated and discussed in the appendix.

7. Bird does not shrink from the realist's hope of objective depiction, but from the tacit biases of literary naturalism, with its emphasis on moral decay, and its portrait of "the soldier as a coarse-minded profane creature, seeking only the solace of loose women or the courage of strong liquor" (5).

8. Here, I am supposing a distance between Bill the soldier and Bird the memoirist—a difference similar in kind, if not in degree, to that between George Sherston and Siegfried Sassoon.

9. Because Wellington expresses regret over the loss of friends, companions and soldiers, despite his victory, this quotation seems to echo the pessimistic and universalizing message of the anti-war texts—war is inevitably disastrous, regardless of the outcome. A larger excerpt from the passage, however, reveals a different message. Wellington continues: "The bravery of my troops has hitherto saved me from the greater evil, but to win such a battle as this of Waterloo, at the expense of so many gallant friends, could only be termed a heavy misfortune, but for the result to the public" (Creasy 448). These additional words emphasize the positive aspects of war, an avoidance, in this case, of "the greater evil," and a beneficial "result to the public". The larger passage,

therefore, takes a broader view, which acknowledges that war and its losses are terrible, but also allows for positive outcomes, if not for individuals, then for the wider community.

10. Similar references to other wars are found in other Great War narratives, such as Raleigh and Osborne's discussion about ruins from the time of William the Conqueror and Roman artifacts in Sherriff *Journey's End* (71), as well as the reference to the Battle of Balaclava and the Crimean war implicit in the title of O'Brien's *Into the Jaws of Death*.

11. The *Rubáiyát* is a collection of some 150 Persian quatrains written by Omar Khayyám, an 11th century Persian mathematician and poet (1048-1122), and translated into English by Edward FitzGerald. The first edition, published in 1859, was followed by four additional editions, in 1868, 1872, 1879, and 1889 respectively. Bird is working from the second edition (1868). In "Forgetting FitzGerald's *Rubaiyat*," Erik Gray presents evidence supporting his assertion that, at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, Edward FitzGerald's *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* may well have been the most popular long poem in English (765). In a note, Gray points to the many editions of FitzGerald's translation, including pocket-sized wartime editions issued for soldiers. Thus, it is not surprising that a sergeant would know and quote Persian poetry, and Bird could be reasonably assured that his readers would also be well acquainted with this work.

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