

# The War Poets

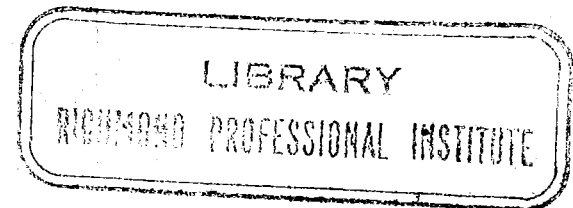
*An Anthology of the War Poetry  
of the 20th Century*

*Edited with an Introduction by*

Oscar Williams

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## Introduction

*This book is not about heroes. English Poetry is not yet fit to speak of them.*

*Nor is it about deeds, or lands, nor anything about glory, honour, might, majesty, dominion, or power, except War.*

*Above all I am not concerned with Poetry.*

*My subject is War, and the pity of War.*

*The Poetry is in the pity.*

*Yet these elegies are to this generation in no sense consolatory. They may be to the next. All a poet can do today is warn. That is why the true Poets must be truthful.*

—WILFRED OWEN

*(in a preface to the book he never had time to prepare for publication)*

If it were the privilege of an editor to dedicate an anthology this collection of verse would be dedicated to Wilfred Owen, who was the greatest war poet of World War I. His influence upon contemporary poets has been marked and his own poems are as true a commentary upon World War II as upon the war in which he gave his own life. His lesson that "the Poetry is in the pity" has been well learnt by poets of a later generation even though that lesson has been ignored today, as in his day, by those in power editorially as well as politically.

The true modern poets are poets of compassion. The pity that Owen so deeply felt for the soldier in the trenches has been extended by them into compassion for all who suffer everywhere, not only in combat, but from the evils of poverty and social pressures intolerable to human beings. Long before 1939 the poets were writing poetry of warning, foreseeing the battles, the falling of bombs, the abysses of cruelty. That poetry is familiar to many who will read this anthology.

But I do not address this introduction to those who are well-

acquainted with the best contemporary poetry. I address it to those for whom this may be the first large collection of good contemporary verse brought to their attention.

There are many who, because they are unfamiliar with the publications in which good modern verse is likely to appear, believe that World War II has not produced fine war poems. Often, in the popular press, the cry is raised "Where are the war poets?" The war poets of this war have been writing since 1929; the trouble is that the popular press is not "where" real poetry is to be found. The general run of periodical editors fears to print anything but sentimental versifying on the premise that good poetry is over the heads of their readers. Book publishers succumb to the same temptations of gross circulation as do editors; therefore we have the situation in America that, while Rupert Brooke is always in print, the work of Wilfred Owen is unobtainable at the present writing. Resistance to good poetry in general is intensified when it has war or the problems of war as its subject matter.

This resistance to true poetry at the time that it is still contemporary is often blamed upon the technical innovations of creative poets, upon their departure from traditional forms, or upon their "private" language. Actually the important contemporary poetry adheres much more closely to the great English poetic tradition than does sentimental versification (such as the countless empty and bombastic imitations of Whitman), not only in craftsmanship, perception, and subject matter, but in form as well. Technical improvements and experiments have always been characteristic of poetic greatness. Further, the best living poets, far from being more private in language than poetasters, fully use speech-terms and images drawn from daily contemporary life, whereas the poetasters luxuriate in obsolete language (and now pretentious sentiments) copied from the poets of past times, surely much more of a private academic lingo than the normal vocabulary of daily life.

The unpopularity of the true poem and, conversely, the popularity of the false poem, could be much better explained in psychological terms. In the case of war poems, patriotic bombast generally confirms the reader who likes it in a false concept either of himself or of social circumstances, or both. It eases him of responsibility and guilt in the matter of acquiescing in sending young men to death to protect himself. This kind of "escape" is also given by certain popular poetry which is accepted as "good." For instance, lines like Rupert Brooke's

*"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 . . ."*

divert the attention of the reader from any mental image of the soldier's mangled body to the concept of the soldier's placid acceptance of being a bit of soil "for ever England"; Alan Seeger's "I have a rendezvous with Death" conjures up a picture of the soldier's easy death in a cloud of noble ecstasies, which effectually prevents the death rattle from being mentally heard. (The poet who gives his life in battle most certainly has the privilege of writing such verse. But has the civilian reader exactly the same right to confine his thoughts of war to such sentiments? Rather, I think such a reader is accepting an intellectual and emotional sacrifice of the soldier, as well as his physical sacrifice. It is much as if a soldier wrote home to his mother that he was safely behind the lines when he was really in action, in order to save her from worry. But published poetry does not have the same latitude as a private letter; it is always better when it is strictly truthful.)

In definitely bad patriotic versification (usually written by civilians) this characteristic of giving the reader's conscience and humanitarianism a rest is much more pronounced. A close inspection of today's magazine "war poetry" leads one to believe that both writer and reader, while deeply concerned over ravaged towns in Belgium or Czechoslovakia, are peculiarly callous about what the neighbor's boy is going through on the beachhead. I should not like to believe that they are really callous. But most people do not have the courage to face honestly the facts of others' intense suffering. It is easier to have the attention diverted, conscience soothed, and the guilt of responsibility converted into a conviction that the suffering is justified since it is in a noble cause.

For example, Edna St. Vincent Millay, in her "Thanksgiving, 1942" (*New York Times*, November 22, 1942) says, "Give thanks: that men well-clothed, men well commanded, / Well-fed . . . Now take the avenging path . . ." which slurs over the real sufferings of the men with the soothing, but irrelevant, idea that the men are well-clothed, well commanded and well-fed and, by the use of the bombastic "take the avenging path," obscures the meaning of the sentence which is that we are to give thanks that our men are fighting in dangerous combat. Neither Miss Millay nor her readers could

probably stomach the plain statement. Further on she says, "Let us give thanks that we/Although surrounded by so many hands enslaved, are free. . . ." which in plain language would read "Let us give thanks that we are so much better off than the other fellow" an attitude quite divergent from an honest "There, save for the grace of God, go I. . . ."

Now that is a sentimental piece of verse written by an American civilian, designed to be read by American civilians, people themselves out of danger because they are protected by a wall of living young flesh, much of which will be mangled. I very much doubt if any serviceman who has seen combat would enjoy reading it. I very much doubt if any close relative of such a serviceman would enjoy it. (Although I have called sentimental verse "popular" it reaches the general masses no more than does true poetry since the majority of the American public avoids reading anything at all that looks like verse. I sometimes wonder if this avoidance of "poetry" could not be blamed upon the very fact that sentimental verse, rather than the reality of poetry, is published in the popular press, and its falsity is instinctively felt by those who sample it, thereby giving them a distaste for the form.) Those interested in making a complete analysis of "Thanksgiving, 1942" will, when reading the complete poem, see that the above quoted lines do not improve in meaning when given in full context. And this "poem" is typical of hundreds that are widely published. A sham patriotism cloaks the real statement which amounts to either acquiescence or rejoicing in the fact of war. But with true poets the poetry is in the pity and the statement is in the honesty with which the poet explores his own heart.

As a contrast to the poem examined above, I ask the reader to study closely a war poem peculiarly fitted to illustrate my present thesis. It is also written by a woman, a civilian. "In Distrust of Merits," by Marianne Moore, is the direct communication of honest feeling by one ready to search her own heart to discover the causes of war and accept her full share of responsibility for its effects. Those able to read and experience such a poem expand their own capacities for compassion.

A true poem is always an honest poem. The honesty contributes to that precision and unity which are characteristic of poetry that will live. And, in order to understand such a poem, the reader must be equipped with a like honesty. He must seek neither an anodyne for the ache of conscience nor escape from full responsibility. It is

a social as well as a moral misfortune that, as Robinson Jeffers says, "Truly men hate the truth, they'd liefer/Meet a tiger on the road."

When the poets warned of the approach of war, before its outbreak, they were most strongly accused of using "private" language. But, after the event, what could seem clearer than these lines from W. H. Auden's "Spain":

*"Yesterday the theological feuds in the taverns  
And the miraculous cure at the fountain;  
Yesterday the Sabbath of witches; but to-day the struggle.  
Yesterday the installation of dynamos and turbines,  
The construction of railways in the colonial desert;  
Yesterday the classic lecture  
On the origin of Mankind. But to-day the struggle."*

or George Barker's statement in his "Munich Elegy No. 1":

*"The tragedy is Time foreshadowing its climax.  
Thus in the stage of time the minor moth is small  
But prophesies the Fokker with marvellous wings  
Mottled with my sun's gold and your son's blood."*

or John Peale Bishop's philosophy in "The Return" written in Germany in 1932:

*"We did not know the end was coming: nor why  
It came; only that long before the end  
Were many wanted to die. Then vultures starved  
And sailed more slowly in the sky."*

Yeats, too, in "The Second Coming" wrote even earlier of the war to come:

*"Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,  
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere  
The ceremony of innocence is drowned. . . ."*

Such language was as open as the catastrophe to come was public. The critics who called it "private" were themselves so blinded by their private concerns that they could not sight the event of which the poets warned. Even since Pearl Harbor the false writers have remained blind, ignoring the changes of now which must be faced if the problems of peace are to be rightly solved.



I have included in this collection only such poems as seem to me written with an emotional comprehension of all that war implies. There are no sham patriotics; there are poems of sensitive patriotism, such as that of Gervase Stewart who offered his life willingly for an England which he wished to be better than the old, while he yet honestly expressed his fear that the desired social changes might not come to pass.

In the first part I have placed poetry written during or about World War I. All of the poets except Hardy and Yeats were in uniform during that war and four were killed in action. I consider the work in this section contemporary for a number of reasons. World War I was the opening phase of World War II. Wilfred Owen's book, written in the midst of battle, was not published until 1920 and his great influence has been upon poets now alive. Others whose poems appear in this section are still actively at work: E. E. Cummings, Robert Graves, and others. I have reprinted Rupert Brooke's "The Great Lover," partly because it helped to establish him as one of the important poets of that war, partly to show the difference between his handling of the theme of love and the more realistic and sensitive approach to the subject of the poets in Part Two.

The second part, the largest in the book, is devoted to poems by poets in the armed services, American and British. I have included what I consider the best of a great deal of good work that came to me from all parts of the world. It may well be that I have missed the most important poet of World War II; his work may not yet be written, or, if written, it may not have come to my attention. But extraordinary talents are here represented, such as those of Roy Fuller, Julian Symons, F. T. Prince, Henry Treece, Karl Shapiro, Dunstan Thompson, Randall Jarrell, all of whom show fine accomplishment as well as great promise. John Manifold, an Australian, has a lyrical brilliance and rich solidity of greater value than the works of Rupert Brooke and Alan Seeger combined. It is to be regretted that we shall have no fulfillment of maturity from Timothy Corcellis, Alun Lewis, Sidney Keyes, Bertram Warr, Gervase Stewart, and others, whose splendid promise died with their bodies killed in action.

In the first and third parts I have limited the subject matter to themes directly or indirectly related to war, but when the poets were in the armed services I allowed a wider range, including poems of love, parting, social consciousness and local legend, since

the poems were written while the poet was directly pressed upon by the exigencies of war. It is interesting to note that there are fewer poems of apprehension and guilt (and more of freedom) in the second than in the third part. This may be due to the fact that much of the work written by civilians was produced before the final flare-up of the war, or to the more objective life of men in uniform, or, perhaps, because those in the services are so busy facing the facts with their bodies that they have to let "all the duties of their souls go unperformed," as one of them says. I have not been too strictly critical of every poem in this section; perhaps some of them, if taken out of the context of 1945 and placed in the Golden Age of Literature or the Westminster Abbey of Perfection would seem thin. But today they are poems for us. Even an irrelevant spiritual remark by one who has pledged his life is of import. Each has been included not because he is a soldier, sailor or airman, but because he is a poet who happens to be in uniform. That all of these men have managed to write in spite of full hours of regimentation, active duty and risk is our good fortune.

The third part is made up of the work of important contemporary poets who are not in uniform. It might have been fairer to the English civilian poets to have included them in the services' section since they have endured as much danger and engaged in almost as much defensive battle action as the military, but some kind of arbitrary division was necessary.

This civilian section contains those poems which I believe most certain to communicate the realities of this war to the generations to come. It includes those remarkable poems which began to appear in 1929, warning of the imminence of war and revealing the social situations that must inevitably bring war upon us. We are deeply indebted to W. H. Auden for much of this human recording. His "Spain," "August for These Islands" and "September 1, 1939" are such great documents of the fact of war that they alone would make him the major war poet of the first half of the century. Indeed, the poetry of George Barker, Stephen Spender, Louis MacNeice, Herbert Read and other British poets, and of E. E. Cummings, Wallace Stevens, Robinson Jeffers and Marianne Moore among the Americans, combine in perhaps the best documentation of the approach of war that any literary period has produced. When we realize that these same poets have continued, and are continuing, in the production of poetry of like major quality dealing with the human essentials of the catastrophe and again warning

us of the dangers and necessities of the coming peace, we realize our indebtedness to them individually and as a group.

This book makes no pretense of presenting the best work ever written by the poets included, but only those poems which can be considered war poems since they are written either about the causes of war, the approach of war, the particularities of the poet's situation in war and like subjects. It is only in the part devoted to work by men in uniform, as I have said before, that I have allowed the poet full range of poetic matter, whether related to war or not. All of the poets included are poets of compassion, therefore I have called them THE WAR POETS, for only those who feel the tragedy of the occasion show the full meaning of war and thus deserve the title. Too, I have confined my choices to poems written in English although there is much excellent war poetry in other languages. But proper representation of World War poetry in all tongues would have required so long a time for compilation and presented such difficulties of translation and choice, that it was out of the question.

Immediately following is a symposium of commentary upon poetry and war, written by the poets themselves. Not all, or even half, of the poets have contributed. Some who were queried felt they could add nothing to the subject that was not already said in their poems; some felt that, as civilians, they should leave such comments to the poets in the armed forces; others could not be reached in time for publication. But on the whole it is an indicative cross-section of what poets think of poetry and war and how they reconcile man's noblest thought with his worst action. The comments available are so various and illuminating that they may be taken as representative.

At the same time the almost unanimous opinions of the poets can be examined as a means to understanding some of the main human issues of war. It may be wondered that the poets, each without consultation with the others, should so closely agree in opinion. It is rare for any group of people, of diverse occupations, ages, countries and experience, to hold an opinion in common upon any controversial subject. In order to understand why the poets do so, we must understand the nature of a poet, that in which he differs from the rank and file of other human beings. The poet is a poet because he is blessed (or cursed) with exceptional sensitivity to the truth. A real poet is always, in some sense, a prophet or seer. And the truth would not be *the* truth unless it were a real and unchange-

able factor, at least in its own period of time. The poet has, in place of opinion, perception, clear in accordance with his degree of insight into reality. Hence each poet arrives at the same conclusion, no matter from what milieu of circumstance he may start. This collection of commentaries is a kind of Gallup poll of the soul and we receive a hint of the accuracy of the statements from the fact that the poets are in fundamental agreement. I am sure that it is a far better preface to the poems than these notes of mine.

The poet's poem has always outlived the names of battles, generals and statesmen; our war poetry as a whole is perhaps the document of our time that will outlive all the rest. It is the essential White Book of that realm, the human spirit, a statement of the case for man as an individual, the real recording of our suffering, our defeat and our victory.

—OSCAR WILLIAMS.

New York City,  
December 31, 1944.

## Comments by the Poets

*E. E. CUMMINGS:*

IS SOMETHING WRONG?—"Is something wrong with America's so-called creative artists? Why don't our poets and painters and composers and so forth glorify the war effort? Are they Good Americans or are they not?"

First: are they Good Americans. . . .

when I was a boy, Good Americans were—believe it or don't—adoring the Japanese and loathing the Russians; now, Good Americans are adoring the Russians and loathing the Japanese. Furthermore (in case you were born yesterday) yesterday Good Americans were adoring the Finns; today Good Americans are either loathing the Finns or completely forgetting that Finland exists. Not even the fact that twice during my lifetime Good Americans have succeeded in disliking the Germans can convince me that any human being (such as an artist) is a Good American.

Second: why don't they glorify. . . .

when you confuse art with propaganda, you confuse an act of God with something which can be turned on and off like the hot water faucet. If "God" means nothing to you (or less than nothing) I'll cheerfully substitute one of your own favorite words, "freedom." You confuse freedom—the only freedom—with absolute tyranny. Let me, incidentally, opine that absolute tyranny is what most of you are really after; that your so-called ideal isn't America at all and never was America at all: that you'll never be satisfied until what Father Abraham called "a new nation, conceived in liberty" becomes just another subhuman superstate (like the "great freedom-loving democracy" of Comrade Stalin) where an artist—or any other human being—either does as he's told or turns into fertilizer.

Third: is something wrong. . . .

all over a so-called world, hundreds of millions of servile and insolent inhuman unbeings are busily rolling and unrolling in the enlightenment of propaganda. So what? There are still a few erect

human beings in the so-called world. Proudly and humbly, I say to these human beings:

"O my fellow citizens, many an honest man believes a lie. Though you are as honest as the day, fear and hate the liar. Fear and hate him when he should be feared and hated: now. Fear and hate him where he should be feared and hated: in yourselves.

"Do not hate and fear the artist in yourselves, my fellow citizens. Honour him and love him. Love him truly—do not try to possess him. Trust him as nobly as you trust tomorrow.

"Only the artist in yourselves is more truthful than the night."

*GEOFFREY GRIGSON:*

WAR—You ask about war: one must be self-deluded, if one simplifies something so muddled as a 20th century complete war into causes, either good or bad. The only clear thing that I can see is that humanity has walked into a mess: the only clear duty is to endeavour to regard the mess as clearly as possible, and to endeavour to be as honest and as unmessy as one's powers allow. Nothing new has happened in this war. Men have been tortured, women have been murdered, explosives have exploded; and I am in debt to a letter of Rilke's in which he said that the whole possibility of human suffering has already been, and is always being, experienced. It is the quantity, not the quality or depth of suffering, which has been increased by this war. That helps one, not to be indifferent, which is impossible, but not to be taken in by surprise and by the lewd rhetoric of a war, and to keep at least that degree of sanity one had before Chamberlain's voice announced over the air that England was fighting with Germany.

Should one's poems before have been about roses, and now about blood? Or shouldn't the blood and roses, the mortality and life, have been mixed, as they always have been, at the times when a writer was most deeply possessed by life?

In this country, the Black Militia of the Pen ask where the war poets are; and they only mean, where are the thumps on the tub, the morale poems. They don't mean, where is Goya saying "I saw this," or Whitman recording a fight under the eternity of the moon, or Wilfred Owen saying "Red lips are not so red." If one moves among the dying and bewildered as Goya did, or Owen, or Whitman, one may write about those direct experiences or draw

them. If a war pushes one into a civilian job (as it has pushed me), one is still in the midst of life. A war may numb you, as Rilke was numbed, or it may complete your sense of life. You must believe in the value of men, and war means that you must not weaken in that belief. If there is such a thing as a War Poet, it must mean someone whose vestigial heart swells only when vast quantity of suffering mills all around him, a poet normally indifferent to the intensity and quality of individual suffering. So only Peace-time Poets matter at all. Pity, or *saeva indignatio*, is not only to be caused by an air-raid or a concentration camp.

Captain JOHN MANIFOLD:

WAR, POETRY AND THE INDIVIDUAL—I don't think I've much to say about them. You can only do three things about a war—fight in it, protest against it, or ignore it. I'm not capable of ignoring it, as Yeats ignored the 1914-18 war. *Pour moi, le monde extérieur existe*. And, idiotic as it is, I don't protest against it, or rather not basically. Opposition is probably a better attitude for preserving one's "poetic integrity" in, but while people are being shot at I'd sooner be in the danger area. The process of fighting a war isn't very different from living in an alleged state of peace. Not from the way I am living, anyhow. I'm still nomadic, exposed to rather more boredom and rather more danger, surrounded by fewer friends of fewer different nationalities, subject to the same alternative of inactivity and furious concentration. The war has confirmed more of my beliefs than it has destroyed. I still think that the human race is on the average rather likable, that nationality is no more important than class or occupation in making people likable or not, that authority is bad for the soul and responsibility good for it, and that once a thing becomes official it's dead and damned. The war has given me a lot of experience that I share with other people, which is one of the real bases of poetry, and has considerably influenced my style and vocabulary, which is another. I like using precise words and phrases which have not had the meaning dulled out of them, and military vocabulary provides plenty of them—"reser-tion," "defilade," "échelon," "revetment," for example, all good lively words fit for metaphors and exact images. But on the average I think I should still be writing as I do even if the war we spent our lives waiting for had not actually been declared.

Captain DONALD STAUFFER:

POETRY AND WAR—War does not change poetry in its nature or in its use, and many of us will be glad that this is so. In compensation, however, we must remember that poetry does not change war. All our fine talk about the uplifting spiritual values of art, all our action of resolutely withdrawing from a coarse and cruel world to the beautiful citadel of poetry, cannot affect the nature of war. If I may mix two clichés, an ostrich hiding its head in an ivory tower is no worthy solution in relating war and poetry.

The question is not a choice between war and poetry. To view it as a dilemma makes war more purposeless and poetry more ineffectual than in actuality they are. Cutting off either war or poetry as a spiritual experience maims our capabilities as conscious human beings, and diminishes the responsibility that we can and should assume. In the Olympian hierarchy, Mars and Apollo were not opposed deities, like Ormazd and Ahriman; they were independent spiritual forces whose sway and power men recognized and rightly respected.

It is as useless to consider that war and poetry are the same thing as to consider that they are unalterable opposites. If we must avoid the dilemma of choosing one or the other, we must also resist the temptation to identify them. Only by accepting them both as important parts of human experience and by trying to relate them may we do justice to the two forces and to our own intelligence.

I do not wish to try to establish a case for either war or poetry at the expense of the other, nor even a case for war *and* poetry. Human nature being what it is in its weaknesses, strengths, and desires, both war and poetry will continue to subsist very well without benefit of defense or argument. I should like to consider their close and mysterious relationship, and the strange fact that different though the two are, intimate contact of the one with the other seems to bring out the finest qualities both in war and in poetry. They are mutually sustaining.

. . . . .

If the totalitarian powers could eradicate poetry and the memory of poetry from the Western world, their battle against England and the United States would be half won. In our poetry we find our most profound beliefs best expressed. That is the simple reason for its survival, more lasting than bronze or marble. One cannot con-

duct a war without basic conviction and passion. And though the convictions are often hidden, indirectly expressed, or not stated at all, the democracies *can* act because they believe in the worth of men, in man's right to own himself, in the inviolability of the individual human spirit, in truth so far as we can ascertain it, and in justice in intention even if in execution it often falters and fails. Our poetry has made these beliefs sharper, more evident to us, and more precious. These are beliefs, not velleities; we are ready to defend them, to implement them. Perhaps the greatest blindness of the totalitarian states in judging the democratic way of life springs from their philosophy of fear. They have failed to realize that the brutal ruthlessness of masters towards vassals, which the democracies by nature cannot manifest, may find its match in the courage that comes from the brotherhood of free men. The spirit of tragic poetry and the spirit of such a war as we are now waging lift up human nature by conceiving that there are principles and qualities and convictions in man far more important than his mere existence. The willingness to give up his own life stamps the hero's actions and beliefs with an exalted seriousness.

#### *Sergeant VERNON WATKINS:*

ART AND WAR—No poet is made by war, which is productive of no good. But a poet's work may be potentiated by his experience of war, and of suffering. In the last war Wilfred Owen's poetry found a new power the moment he lost faith in poetry. The work of every true poet is shaped by his belief or by its inversion, distrust; it was distrust in art which made Owen's greatest poems. His art is caught up in the heaven of pity.

Yeats, on the other hand, knew that war cannot touch a poet while he keeps his faith in joy; and Yeats leaves us "Lapis Lazuli" celebrating the indestructible faith in art. His pity is caught up in the heaven of art. The truest statements about war are made under one's breath, and the most false on public platforms. Bad art and false gods motivates war as much as national greed. That is why a poet should write always from his own footprint, which, wherever it is, if it's truthful, is at peace.

#### MARK VAN DOREN:

NOTE ON POETRY AND WAR—The best war poets I know are Homer and Shakespeare; and in modern times, Thomas Hardy. The difference is interesting. War could be beautiful to Homer and Shakespeare because it could be tragic. It has ceased to be that, or at any rate fully that; now it is all catastrophe, with nothing to guide our measurement of its meaning. It is epidemic calamity, during which all or most of us suffer dumbly. Hardy among modern poets is the best instance of the dumb sufferer; dumb, not in that he says nothing, but in that his statements cancel out, leaving undefined and unresolved the miseries caused in us by wars which no one wants, but in which everyone assists. I suspect any war poet now who says he knows what the current calamity means—including the one who says it means nothing at all. It means what later men will decide it meant; we are too early for that, and at best can note with honesty the feelings it makes us have. The deeper the feelings, the more difficult to express. I respect most the poet who is willing to let inconsistencies appear among the thoughts he is moved to think. He is trying to measure what cannot be measured yet, and he is not to be blamed if in the dark he takes up a variety of rulers. He is most to be praised when he restricts himself to those that feel right; and, it should be unnecessary to add, when he writes well. War is no different from any other subject. The best poetry about it is the best poetry, and our final judgment must be not of the poet's feelings as such, but of his art.

#### JULIAN SYMONS:

POETRY AND THE WAR—It is only on a superficial plane, I think, that one can talk of "poetry" and this war having any direct relation. And even on this plane it seems to me that there are really two questions and two answers: what sort of poetry will be (and is being) written in this war; and what sort of poetry should (or might) be written.

For the first question: it is obvious that the beating of a drum is a congenial sound in wartime. There has been a good deal of drum-beating in this war. And there has been, by way of superficial contrast or opposition, a lot of beating of the *individual* drum, by writers who saw with horror and surprise that this war threatened

their standards of life, and have been moved to express the importance and value of those standards. All this could be (and by some of us was) foreseen; and it could be foreseen also that the beaten drum, whether patriotic or individual, would lead to nothing very much in the way of poetry.

For the second question: I don't believe that the "war poet" exists. All poets are war poets, and peace poets too. It is pointless to "demand" of poets in this or perhaps in any war any degree of participation or support of one side or another. Most of the best lyrics have been written a long way from the battlefield. It is a truism just worth repeating that the preservation of individual integrity is an important thing for a poet; and an interest in humanity is another important thing. If our poets were more interested in men, and less in themselves, we might have had some better war poems.

But these are only minor and partial illuminations because, I believe, the question does not permit serious treatment. Questions about "poetry and the war" are still basically questions about the position of the writer in capitalist society, which you will not expect me to answer here. So perhaps I should have said merely that two years spent in the Army gave me feelings of comradeship which it is difficult for the petty-bourgeois intellectual to feel except in such conditions; and gave me also the most bitter contempt and distaste for the bureaucracy and class-distinction with which the British Army is permeated. In the Army I had the useful experience of seeing this bureaucracy and class-distinction from the bottom of the social scale; in civilian life I'm halfway up it. These two feelings, of comradeship and bitterness, I've tried to put into some poems.

#### *Lieut.-Commander RICHARD EBERHART:*

A NOTE ON WAR POETRY—Generalizations about war poetry are easy and dangerous to make. War lends the poet objects upon which to exercise his perceptions. These objects are multifarious; they may or may not be seized upon. They may impinge upon the sensibility in curious and differing ways. It cannot be said whether the poetry resulting will be superior to poetry conceived against other sets of objects, in other times. Objects themselves are loose determinants; the poem will result from endless subjective

springs welling up on these objects, which may only incite, but not fully cause, the resulting words on paper. Poetry is a complex, essential operation of the spirit; this is one of the easy and dangerous observations.

The poetry comes out of the chaos. Chaos is present to the poet in war in violent forms. He may recognize in this violence his true element, a reduction to terrible simplicity of what he knew in the heart before. Gigantic objectifications tossed and forced on sky, land and sea only emphasize the essential fact of struggle. Thus, a poet knows war without objective war in the world; it was conflict at the root of his mind that impelled him to the masking of these conflicts in the apparent resolution and order of works of art. In a dialectical sense, all poetry is war poetry.

Poems technically or substantively about war come down from ancient times. It would be difficult to evaluate such actual war poetry through the ages. Rather, the ages have already evaluated them. Likewise, it is a matter of taste whether one or another modern war poem is considered of the essence of the type, or of the essence of the author, or of the essence of what it is thought a war poem ought to be.

I would not venture to say whether young poets, alive yet, or dead, will write or have written poetry superior to that performable in peace time, due to their confrontation of the holocaustic circumstances of the present conflict. The imponderables of this problem are unresolvable. I am inclined to believe that the man who must write poetry will write it. The war may present or force a subject; it may bring out a poet, or shock him into insensibility of silence. It may kill him. Or germinate the best war poems for exfoliation years after the event.

War is another kind of show than the peace show, intractable, profoundly ingrained in man's nature. It is the evil standing up. A poet may cope with these examples, as he can with the natural shows of normal peacetime phenomena. The best war poetry will transcend war, just as it transcends nationalistic or sectarian boundaries; which is to say that the best war poetry will have to be of the spirit. Like God, it will have to be on both sides, or on none. It will be applicable to different peoples and centuries.

The universality of utterance I claim for the best war poetry tends to make it less about war than about man. Therefore, it is about the spirit; judgment upon it cannot be limited to its context, but must run the whole gamut of poetical possibilities. It is the lack

of a sufficiency and abundance of these spiritual qualities which condemns most war poetry to the particular.

*Flight Lieut. HENRY TREECE:*

THE WAR AND MY POETRY—Naturally, I cannot yet see the size or the full implications of the war, nor shall I for some years, I suspect: it has become so much of a habit. However, how it strikes me at this moment is this: When the war became inevitable, I was greatly perturbed as a person—since I did not believe in the necessity of war, and, moreover, had personally reached a state of living which I regarded as near-perfect for my needs; as a poet, I do not think that I was really affected. My poems and those of the Apocalyptic Group, which I had started with J. F. Hendry, had long sensed and expressed an ultimate disintegration, and the necessity for the individual to control the political and philosophic Machine. My poetry, that is, had *known* that all this would happen, and had prepared itself for the chaos.

I volunteered for the Royal Air Force in order to fulfill a social duty: so that I should not be ashamed of myself as the years went on. As a poet, I was naturally cynical of such behaviour. Nevertheless, the impetus of my prewar craftsman energy carried me through the first two years of war, my work retaining much of its prewar character. Gradually this impetus wore off and I was unable to produce more than a very thin trickle of verse: this being due not only to the limitations imposed on me by Service duties, but also to the fact that the *purpose* of my poetry, its warning nature, was now no longer required. The catastrophe had happened. Then, as a reaction to the complexity of the difficult early war years, my poetry became simple and often nostalgic. I wanted only to end the war and become a quiet, private person again. Now, after five years of war, there is so little to write about. War, as I see it here and now, is not the material of poetry. Lasting poetry must go down deeper than the superficial appearances of war machines; It must seek out the spirit of man in pain and glory, and must express that spirit and that pain and that glory in simple terms, in those fundamental statements to which the mechanisms of contemporary warfare are irrelevant.

This war, the last war—and possibly the next war—are all the same war, whether fought with flamethrowers or stone axes; and

it is the poet's function to seek out the germ of all war, to isolate and parade it as a warning against future disease of this sort and as a cure for the present disorder.

I feel that it is the poet's duty as a man to fight, physically; but I maintain that it is his duty as a poet to heal the results of that fighting now, and to attempt to prevent such horror for the future.

I am aware that this is all commonplace stuff, but it is the only statement I am capable of.

*FREDERIC PROKOSCH:*

REGARDING WAR POETRY—The anxiety to unearth a body of poetry which might be labeled "war poetry" is, at present, an inclination both conspicuous and curious. The fact is, of course, that there is really no such thing as pure "war poetry," "war poetry" being a catch phrase which came into prominence during the last war owing to the popularity of poets like Rupert Brooke, Sassoon, Graves, etc. (If I am not mistaken, the poets we now admire most as war poets—like Wilfred Owen and Isaac Rosenberg—were less popular than men like Graves and Sassoon and their verse had far less circulation than books like *Counter-Attack* or *Over the Brazier*: in other words, it was long after World War I that critical discrimination made itself felt.)

The interesting point is this: *Why* are we so anxious to cultivate a body of war poetry? The reasons are several, and symptomatic; I shall mention, cautiously and hesitantly, some possible reasons.

1—The emotional decay noticeable in contemporary poetry. There is a curious absence of love poetry; there is a really curious absence of any striking and informing passion among the more talented poets. Perhaps we feel, instinctively, that the war might resuscitate a direct emotional vigor which we feel is lacking in our poetry.

2—The centrifugal heterogeneous tone of most contemporary poetry. A decade ago, for example, it was apparently felt that a consistent *social* approach might present a core, a kind of tradition, around which the scattered, peripheral instincts toward poetry might collect, and thereby give substance and coloration to all that hodgepodge. More recently other tendencies have emerged; and now, perhaps, the war as a magnet toward which emotions might



more uniformly gravitate; in short, as a universal theme, which we certainly stand in need of.

3—A sense of guilt. One can't help being struck by one thing; the poets at the front write poems about peace; home, nostalgia, etc. It is mostly the "poets" safely beyond the reach of the bombers who specialize in rhetoric about Lidice, air raids, foxholes, etc. I suggest, tentatively, that this very noticeable passion and indignation at a safe distance may be a form of compensation for the sense of guilt deriving from inaction, a luxuriant steam bath of secondhand and third-rate emotions. Our best contemporary poems do not belong to this group, assuredly.

#### *M/Sergeant SELDEN RODMAN:*

WAR POETRY—War does not produce poets, any more than it produces artists or composers. On the contrary, it produces conditions infinitely hostile to art. All that can be said is that whereas it is impossible for an active soldier to compose music, and miraculous to find anything like the Guadalcanal Private's "Stretcher Bearers" coming out of modern war, the serious poet, if he is hardy enough, and lucky enough, can continue to write poems. There will not be good novels, or good plays, or even good war books written until the war is over—there never have been—but there will be, and there are, good poems. (Poems that will stand up with the best have been written in the present war by Gervase Stewart, Timothy Corsellis, Karl Shapiro, Roy Fuller and Alun Lewis, to mention only a few.) The nature of the lyric permits it. The tools are the same as a map-maker's or a dispatch-bearer's. The immediate, overwhelming personal experience is there. But first, and as fully clothed as Pallas from the head of Zeus, there must be the poet. He cannot learn his trade in a foxhole.

All serious war poetry is anti-war poetry.

It has been said that anti-war poetry began with the poems of Wilfred Owen, or a little earlier, with "Dover Beach." But that is not so. Owen was simply the first to describe the peculiar atmosphere of mechanized war, and the soul of man afflicted by its sicknesses. "Dover Beach" was unique because it came at the end of the longest period of peace and complacency in man's memory—a time during which a great deal of pseudo-war poetry had been written—and lifted the veil rather rudely on the "darkling plain" which had

been there all along. Homer's *Iliad* is full of anti-war poetry: all of what Owen called "the pity of war" is in Andromache's speech to Hector and Hector's answer. Aeschylus who fought at Marathon, and was more proud of it than of all his poetry, did not omit to mention the mud and the lice, "the sleeping on crowded decks," "the rations that never reached us," and he added:

*"Heavy is the murmur of an angry people  
Performing the purpose of a public curse."*

Because these things are so, some of the best war poetry has been written by poets who have never been near a battle field—witness Thomas Hardy, Rilke, Rimbaud. But by the same token almost all of the poetry glorifying war has been written by people who have never been near a battle field. And those who do not understand these things about war will do well to stay away from war poetry.

#### *WALLACE STEVENS:*

POETRY OF WAR—The immense poetry of war and the poetry of a work of the imagination are two different things. In the presence of the violent reality of war, consciousness takes the place of the imagination. And consciousness of an immense war is a consciousness of fact. If that is true, it follows that the poetry of war as a consciousness of the victories and defeats of nations, is a consciousness of fact, but of heroic fact, of fact on such a scale that the mere consciousness of it affects the scale of one's thinking and constitutes a participating in the heroic.

It has been easy to say in recent times that everything tends to become real, or, rather, that everything moves in the direction of reality, that is to say, in the direction of fact. We leave fact and come back to it, come back to what we wanted fact to be, not to what it was, not to what it has too often remained. The poetry of a work of the imagination constantly illustrates the fundamental and endless struggle with fact. It goes on everywhere, even in the periods that we call peace. But in war, the desire to move in the direction of fact as we want it to be and to move quickly is overwhelming.

Nothing will ever appease this desire except a consciousness of fact as everyone is at least satisfied to have it be.



S/Lieutenant ALAN ROSS:

**POETRY AND WAR**—The writing of poetry on active service is very largely dependent on personal circumstances, and the tone and attitude of the poetry is conditioned by (a) the temperament of the poet and (b) the type of impact, ideologically and actually, the war has made on the poet.

The poet who has seen war at its source and who has been in action is in a particularly exciting position, because he is able to write most accurately about the atmosphere of war, the behaviour of men closest to its heart, the personal reaction to fundamental emotions, pity, fear, love, and situations of despair and heroism. Most importantly he can write at first hand with his whole mind and body (the noncombatant cannot do this, because he is writing about something he has not experienced in the flesh, and so cannot identify himself with the feelings of those taking part without straining the imagination and being aware either of a false emphasis in himself or in the mind of the reader).

It is only possible to write under active service conditions when the mind and body are balanced, and not divorced: when there is a measure of belief in the end, if not in the means. It is possible to write well heroically or anti-heroically, realistically and of things remote from the war, emotionally and dispassionately, about boredom and about courage—because war contains all these things, but it is not possible to write if there is no basic acceptance of the fact of war or if there is an avoidance of it.

The poetry of this war has been notably free from sentimentality and from false heroics. For the most part it has been extremely sensitive of the atmosphere, of the conditions of existence, of the change and developments underlying the ideology of statesmen, and the reaction of the servicemen to them. It has been uniformly insistent on the values for which men are dying, on the rational ordering of the issues, and the rational condemnation of the means when they become ends. It is not easy to write poetry when you are fighting a war which in detail has so many contradictions and in outline has so many essentials. When in a particular case it is a necessity and yet is bad in itself, when both the necessity and the evil cannot be too strongly emphasized, when the poetry should be both, in a sense an inspiration and a testimony, and yet also a deterrent.

Those who so emptily and arrogantly decry the real poets of this

war, would learn a lot by taking the trouble to read them. The poetry is in the vision, in the coherence behind the words, and not simply in the language: it is a poetry conceived in the intellect and the emotions working together, a fusion never very satisfactory to those lacking in both or either. But you have only to live with men on a field of battle or in action, in a ship or at any aerodrome, to understand it.

MURIEL RUKEYSER:

**WAR AND POETRY**—The subject of poetry cannot be restricted. There is no way to speak of war as a *subject* for poetry. War enters all our lives, but even that horror is only a beginning. The war is in our poetry only so far as it is in our imaginations, as a meaning, as a relationship, or simply as a fact. It has not been in much of our poetry because the meanings of this war have been lost; and through this the fashion in writing is aversion, wit, or easy mysticism and easy despair. We have been told by our governments—we have allowed our governments to tell us—to win the war first, and work out the meanings afterwards. This policy breeds more war, and nothing else.

For myself, war has been in my writing since I began. The first public day that I remember was the False Armistice of 1918. And now the terms "soft peace," "hard peace," that are being passed as currency seem to me only other words for war, and war seems to me the after-image of many failures to react to truth at the time that truth first happens. We confess by this war that we did not react to fascism as it arrived. But now the fact that it might be a war against fascist ideas has slipped away. So that the war for those concerned with life, the truth which is open to all, is still ahead. It is a struggle in which poetry also lives and fights.

A poet said to me, "You bring the world in too much. Poems should not be written about the war. Are you not afraid of guessing wrong?" I deny all of this. Again, I do not believe in any rule about the *subject* of poetry. If you do not love the world you become the slave of the world. As for guessing wrong, I am not afraid of that. The war I think of is the common fight that is going on, the old same war, the struggle that gives these wars a touch of life—a fight which expresses itself in many ways among the people, always to make more freedom accessible to all. Peace, it seems to

me, is not the lack of fighting. I want an end to false armistice. Peace, I think, is the force that works for creation and freedom, that fights war. I want that. I want peace which is a way in which peoples can work together for a wide creative life. I believe that poetry is a part of that, of the means which is peace, and of the living changing goal.

*EDWIN MUIR:*

WAR AND POETRY—As for the question of poetry and war, I don't feel I have much to say about it, or rather that there is so much to be said about it that I hardly know what to say. I think war has been written about so much by the great poets, Homer, Virgil, Shakespeare (especially in *Henry V*, but also incidentally in many of his other plays) because it gives such a striking image of tragic fate, and is a situation necessarily tragic: almost all the elements of tragedy are contained in it. We cannot see this war as Homer and Virgil saw the Trojan War and the wars following it, or even as Tolstoy saw the Napoleonic invasion of Russia, because we are part of it and are involved in it. But it has modified our feelings and thoughts, and consequently the things which we write, whether these are directly about the war or not. This can be seen very clearly in contemporary French poetry, and I think in English poetry as well; where this change of feeling and thought is seen least is, I think, in some of the war poetry (or perhaps rather patriotic poetry) written by men of my own and now older generation in the conventional tradition. The war comes directly into poetry only, it seems to me, when it crystallizes into an image in the poet's mind; but its indirect influence may be seen in many things, an inflection, a sequence of thought, a sudden reference, a mood of sorrow. I think this indirect reference is about the most that we can hope to expect just now; the best of contemporary French poetry is inspired by it, and the best of the English, too.

*Corporal KARL SHAPIRO:*

SINCE THE WAR BEGAN, I have tried to be on guard against becoming a "war poet." I remember reviewing some works of certain of the Georgian writers during my first weeks in the army; at

the time I was shocked to discover that there were men whose recollections of an old war remained the most cogent experiences of their lives. A year later, ten thousand miles from home, I understood better what it was they persisted in reliving and rewriting: the comparison of the old peace with the old war seemed to be the expression of their fate rather than their wish.

There is no need to discuss the private psychological tragedy of a soldier. It is not the commonplace of suffering or the platitudinous comparison with the peace, or the focus on the future that should occupy us; but the spiritual progress or retrogression of the man in war, the increase or decrease in his knowledge of beauty, government and religion.

We know very well that the most resounding slogans ring dead after a few years, and that it is not for poetry to keep pace with public speeches and the strategy of events. We learn that war is an affection of the human spirit, without any particular reference to "values." In the totality of striving and suffering we come to see the great configuration abstractly, with oneself at the center reduced in size but not in meaning, like a V-letter. We learn that distances and new spatial arrangements cannot disturb the primordial equation of man equals man and nation nation. We learn finally that if war can teach anything it can teach humility; if it can test anything it can test externality against the soul.

I have not written these poems to accord with any doctrine or system of thought or even a theory of composition. I have nothing to offer in the way of beliefs or challenges or prosody. I try to write freely, one day as a Christian, the next as a Jew, the next as a soldier who sees the gigantic slapstick of modern war. I hope I do not impersonate other poets. Certainly our contemporary man should feel divested of the stock attitudes of the last generation, the stance of the political intellectual, the proletarian, the expert, the salesman, the world-traveler, the pundit-poet. Like the jaded king in the fairy tale we should find our clothes too delicately spun for the eye to see; like the youngster in the crowd make the marvelous discovery that our majesty is naked! -

*Lieutenant HUBERT CREEKMORE:*

WAR AND POETRY—On the surface, war and poetry are mutually inimical. War destroys what poetry would make; poetry

combats the elements from which war springs. Yet, reaction to war is such that its very violence stimulates more poetry. The shivering brutality and suffering, the distant longing and love create a tension. Sensibility becomes so keyed that slight, formerly ignored incidents register vividly. Everything strikes with a hitherto unknown and brilliant acuteness, until somewhere in the silent locked depths, feeling tries to organize, explain, express and perhaps justify. The phenomenon is evident in the large body of writing by men in service who are novices at poetry and whose work will never see print.

Poets who were writing before 1941 probably have a broader historical, social and economic background than previous war poets. Because the basis of this war involves exactly those factors in their background, their poetry cannot echo completely conventional sentiments. Although no one is likely to confine the sprawl of this war in a single poem, the collected work should form a mosaic of the responsibility, the purpose, the feel, the look of it, and the human being in it, that may possibly be new. New, because that background of the poets brings war into a mature perspective. We may expect a shift in emphasis from the traditional "war acting on man" to "man acting in war."

Of two poetic attitudes toward war—the cathartic ("*dulce et decorum*") and the antagonistic ("War is hell")—the former died, I think, in 1918. Today's poets will not want the catharsis of the military monument and the paean of courage, but rather that of man progressing. From them will emerge, I believe, a detached and reasonable compromise position: war is hell, but hell is sometimes expedient; and as we go through it, let's be men, not so called in bombast, sycophancy and intrigue, but by virtue of justice in our own hearts.

#### Lieutenant GAVIN EWART:

POETRY AND THE WAR—Personally, I feel very strongly that the best poems about war (modern war) have already been written—most of them by Wilfred Owen before he died in 1918. In a good many cases, all we can do today is to rewrite the poems of the earlier war. For this reason I find myself very shy of the war as a subject, although there is always room for good war reporting. I feel, however, that this is better done in prose. Stephen Spender's

poems on the Spanish War are probably the best war poems that have been written since World War I, but even here the poet lays himself open to the charge of sentimentality. The subject is too large and looms too near; it crushes the writer. All we can do is to provide footnotes, the small, detailed cameos of our own experience.

#### Squadron Leader JOHN PUDNEY:

THE WAR POET is a modern legend, originating from the soldier-poets of the last war, Rupert Brooke, Wilfred Owen, Robert Graves and many others. This poetry reached wide appreciation after the war. Robert Graves, who survives, lives to write his greater poetry upon themes dissociated from war.

The poet has always followed his nose. Where that deep consciousness of humanity is for him he will seek his themes. Walt Whitman or the great Soviet poet Mayakovsky may find them in the conflict of the mass. Gerard Manley Hopkins or Beddoes may find them in individuals. The classification of war as a theme is irrelevant.

I have written poems for ten years or so, and the coming of war seemed to bludgeon all desire or need for self-expression. Then in the Royal Air Force I met circumstances which drove my thoughts into the shape of verse. Whether I lost my friends or whether I noticed the splendid summer cornfield in the midst of the blitz is not ultimately important, but at the time I needed to write and, writing, happened to write war poetry. If my work expressed anything of the bright objective humanity of the flying people I am content.

On the subject of war poetry I think we are inventing a non-sensical category. Poetry survives the longest wars.

#### JOHN BERRYMAN:

ON WAR AND POETRY—I should be sorry if the relation between one of man's most destructive and witless activities and one of his most purely and intelligently creative activities should seem to be very close or satisfactory. I do not think it has been so,—is less and less, as war loses its human countenance and

living is hard enough. But poetry is not civilized. It takes its themes where it finds them, and some permanently interesting to it are thrown up by war: fear, departure, courage, loss, ambition, loyalty, intrigue, madness, faith and death. Whether its themes will engage the poetry of a particular man is another matter. There are not many poets, and there are no rules. War is an experience, worse than most, like illness or a journey or belief or marriage; those who "have" it will be affected in different degrees, in different ways; some trained to speech will talk about it, others trained equally and affected strongly will have nothing to say; those affected most—the dead—will be most silent.

## Thomas Hardy's Poem on the Turn of the Century

### THE DARKLING THRUSH

I leaned upon a coppice gate  
When Frost was specter-gray,  
And Winter's dregs made desolate  
The weakening eye of day.  
The tangled bine-stems scored the sky  
Like strings from broken lyres,  
And all mankind that haunted night  
Had sought their household fires.

The land's sharp features seemed to be  
The Century's corpse outleant;  
His crypt the cloudy canopy,  
The wind his death-lament.  
The ancient pulse of germ and birth  
Was shrunken hard and dry,  
And every spirit upon earth  
Seemed fervorless as I.

At once a voice burst forth among  
The bleak twigs overhead  
In a full-hearted evensong  
Of joy illimited;  
An aged thrush, frail, gaunt and small,  
In blast-beruffled plume,  
Had chosen thus to fling his soul  
Upon the growing gloom.

So little cause for carolings  
Of such ecstatic sound  
Was written on terrestrial things  
Afar or nigh around,  
That I could think there trembled through  
His happy good-night air  
Some blessed hope, whereof he knew  
And I was unaware.

# NAMING OF PARTS

Today we have naming of parts. Yesterday,  
We had daily cleaning. And tomorrow morning,  
We shall have what to do after firing. But today,  
Today we have naming of parts. Japonica  
Glistens like coral in all of the neighbouring gardens,  
And today we have naming of parts.

This is the lower sling swivel. And this  
is the upper sling swivel, whose use you will see of,  
When you are given your slings. And this is the piling swivel,  
Which in your case you have not got. The branches  
hold in the gardens, their silent, eloquent gestures,  
Which in our case we have not got.

This is the safety-catch, which is always released  
with an easy flick of the thumb. And please do not let me  
see anyone using his finger. You can do it quite easy  
if you have any strength in your thumb. The blossoms  
are fragile and motionless, never letting anyone see  
Any of them using their finger.

And this you can see is the bolt. The purpose of this  
is to open the breech, as you see. We can slide it  
rapidly backwards and forwards: we call this  
easing the spring. And rapidly backwards and forwards  
the early bees are assaulting and fumbling the flowers:  
They call it easing the Spring.

They call it easing the Spring: it is perfectly easy  
if you have any strength in your thumb: Like the bolt,  
and the breech, and the cocking-piece, and the point of balance,  
which in our case we have not got, and the almond-blossom  
in all of the gardens, the bees going backwards and forwards,  
For today we have naming of parts.

# Henry Reed

*Private, R.A.O.C. (British)*

## NAMING OF PARTS

Today we have naming of parts. Yesterday,  
We had daily cleaning. And tomorrow morning,  
We shall have what to do after firing. But today,  
Today we have naming of parts. Japonica  
Glistens like coral in all of the neighbouring gardens,  
And today we have naming of parts.

This is the lower sling swivel. And this  
Is the upper sling swivel, whose use you will see of,  
When you are given your slings. And this is the piling swivel,  
Which in your case you have not got. The branches  
Fold in the gardens, their silent, eloquent gestures,  
Which in our case we have not got.

This is the safety-catch, which is always released  
With an easy flick of the thumb. And please do not let me  
See anyone using his finger. You can do it quite easy  
If you have any strength in your thumb. The blossoms  
Are fragile and motionless, never letting anyone see  
Any of them using their finger.

And this you can see is the bolt. The purpose of this  
To open the breech, as you see. We can slide it  
Rapidly backwards and forwards: we call this  
Easing the spring. And rapidly backwards and forwards  
The bees are assaulting and fumbling the flowers:  
They call it easing the Spring.

They call it easing the Spring: it is perfectly easy  
If you have any strength in your thumb: Like the bolt,  
The breech, and the cocking-piece, and the point of balance,  
Which in our case we have not got, and the almond-blossom  
In all of the gardens, the bees going backwards and forwards,  
For today we have naming of parts.



W. R. RODGERS



SEÁN JENNETT



NICHOLAS MOORE  
ROBINSON JEFFERS



Cpl. RANDALL SWINGLER  
THEODORE SPENCER



## Biographical Notes

### *Part One*

#### THE POETRY OF WORLD WAR I

WILFRED OWEN (1893-1918) managed to think and write while meeting the overwhelming demands made upon an officer serving in the front line in the trenches of World War I. What he wrote, in the poetry, in his preface, in much of his prose contained in letters, is a major contribution to English poetry. He joined the Artist's Rifles in 1915 and served in France from 1916 to June, 1917, at which time he was invalided home for fourteen months. He returned to the front where his gallantry in saving his men brought him the Military Cross. He was killed in action while directing the construction of a bridge across the Sambre Canal. Exactly one week after his death the Armistice was signed.

RUPERT BROOKE (1887-1915) is the poet of World War I who has chiefly occupied the popular favour. He enlisted at the outbreak of that war and saw service in Belgium. He was placed in a training camp in Dorsetshire for some months and then, in February, 1915, sailed for the Dardanelles with the British Expeditionary Force. He contracted blood-poisoning en route and died at Skyros on April 23, 1915.

E. E. CUMMINGS was born in 1894 in Cambridge, Mass. and educated at Harvard. In World War I he served in the Ambulance Corps and, through an error of the censor's, in a detention camp. Cummings' battle against the causes of war, the stupidities of society and dishonesty have continued up to the present moment, even when he has had to fight alone. His contribution to American literature is of major quality.

ROBERT GRAVES was born in 1895 and was educated at Charterhouse and Oxford. He served three times in France in the same regiment as Siegfried Sassoon. His early work was well received and the war poems established his reputation as a war poet. But as his talent and understanding deepened he repudiated much of that early work. The poems included in this anthology are the only war poems of which he now approves. His prose works include criticism and novels; his *Collected Poems* were published in 1938 by Random House.

THOMAS HARDY (1840-1928) began writing verse at the age of fifty-eight, after a long career as a novelist. He is one of the most important of English war poets, whose work has not been sufficiently read, especially in the United States. Difficulty in obtaining permissions has prevented this editor from using as many of Hardy's poems as he would have desired. It is recommended to the reader that he look up three poems in especial: *The Man He Killed*, *In Time of "The Breaking of Nations,"* and the Armistice poem, *And There Was A Great Calm*.

HERBERT READ was born in 1893, in Yorkshire, and educated at Crossley's School, Halifax, and at the University of Leeds. He was commissioned to the Yorkshire Regiment in 1915 and served in France and Belgium, reaching the rank of Captain. His first volume appeared in 1915. He has continued to gain in distinction and influence with the years, publishing successive volumes of verse and criticism.

ISAAC ROSENBERG (1890-1918) in spite of the impediments of adverse circumstances, imperfect education and life in the trenches, was able to produce sufficient poetry to make him an important World War I poet. He was apprenticed in trade at fourteen but friends helped him to escape the depressing job, and his abilities as a painter brought him a two and a half year period at the Slade School. But his true talent was for poetry in which he struggled persistently for exact expression. He joined the army in 1915 and in spite of the torments of regimented life and trench warfare managed to produce a slim volume of work which was later gathered together and edited by Gordon Bottomley and published in 1922. He was killed in action on April 1, 1918.

SIEGFRIED SASSOON was born in 1886 and educated at Cambridge. During the First World War he served in the Royal Welsh Fusiliers

with the rank of Captain and received the Military Cross. The appearance of his book *Counter-Attack* in 1918 established him as one of the few important poets of World War I. He has continued to publish volumes of both poetry and prose throughout the "armistice" years and is now living in Wiltshire.

ALAN SEEGER (1888-1916) was born in New York and educated at Harvard. He went to Paris in 1913 and was there when war came. He quickly enlisted in the Foreign Legion in which he served for two years, almost always in action at the front. He was killed on the Fourth of July.

WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS (1865-1939) is not thought of as a war poet and saw no war service in 1914-1918. But his reading of the social dilemma gave due warning of our chaos, hence his inclusion here. His work has greatly influenced most of the poets of this generation. In this case, too, publisher's permissions were difficult to obtain, hence *Easter, 1916* and *Lapis Lazuli* which the editor wished to include are unfortunately not in this anthology.

## Part Two

### POEMS BY THE MEN IN THE ARMED FORCES OF ENGLAND AND AMERICA

WILLIAM ABRAHAMS (Sergeant, U.S. Army) was born in Boston, 1919; Harvard; inducted in the army, 1942; prior to induction an associate editor of *Vice Versa*; presently writing a novel for Simon & Schuster.

BRIAN ALLWOOD (Pilot, R.A.F.) born 1920 was killed in Italy on June 30th, 1944; worked for some time in Mass Observation, joined the R.A.F. in 1941, married September 1942 and went abroad to North Africa in November of the same year; mentioned in dispatches June 1943; is buried at Caserta.

JACK BEECHING (Petty Officer Radio Mechanic, Royal Navy) writes: "Before the war I worked as mechanic, clerk, labourer, salesman, etc., the usual run of employment for a semiskilled uneducated young man. I've published a good deal of verse in anthologies and magazines; a book of verse, *Dance Without Music* and a novel are



forthcoming; my poems aren't about the fighting war because I'm not in it—all we see are crashes, casualties and survivors, and we experience only discomforts, not danger like the infantry. A good deal of my poetry nowadays is unprintable—mostly ballads for my mess-mates."

WALTER BENTON (Lieutenant, U.S. Army) is 36 years old; a graduate of Ohio University; in the army since 1942; has appeared in many magazines; a book of poems *This Is My Beloved* is now in its sixth printing.

EARLE BIRNEY (Major, Canadian Army) was born in 1904 in Calgary, Alberta; University of British Columbia, and took his M.A. and Ph.D. in Toronto; in 1943 was awarded a Fellowship by The Royal Society of Canada; literary editor of The Canadian Forum 1936-1940; one book, *David and Other Poems*.

DAVID BOURNE (Pilot Officer, R.A.F.) was born in 1921 and was killed in action in 1941; educated at Cranbrook, Kent; volunteered for the R.A.F. in 1939, commissioned as Pilot Officer January 1941; in company (each in their own Hurricane) with his Squadron Leader he shot down an enemy bomber which was pursuing a convoy in the North Sea; the Squadron Leader was forced into the sea; but was saved by Pilot Bourne's promptness; David Bourne was killed when intercepting another enemy bomber.

NORMAN BRICK (Flight Sergeant, R.A.F.); little is known of this poet; he has appeared in Henry Treece's collection, *Air Force Poetry* and in Keidrych Rhys's *Poems from the Forces*.

JOHN CIARDI (Sergeant, U.S. Air Force) was born in Boston, 1916; Bates, Tufts and University of Michigan; one book of poems *Homeward To America*, 1940; Instructor in English, Kansas City University 1940-1942; signed on as Aviation Cadet May 1942, washed out September 1943; assigned as Central Fire Control Gunner, B-29, 1944.

TIMOTHY CORSELLIS (Pilot Officer, R.A.F.) was born in 1921; educated at Winchester; before volunteering for the R.A.F. at the age of 18 he worked in A.R.P. (Air Raid Precaution) during the blitz in London; killed in action in 1941; contributed to all the important anthologies of war poetry published in England.

LOUIS O. COXE (Lieutenant, U.S. Navy) was born in 1918 in Manchester, N.H.; St. Paul's school; Princeton; taught English at Brooks

School, North Andover, Mass. until he joined the Navy in 1942; at present a senior lieutenant in command of a small escort vessel in the Pacific, where he has been serving since May 1943.

HUBERT CREEKMORE (Lieutenant, United States Naval Reserve) was educated at Columbia University; has appeared with stories, poems and reviews in many magazines; two books of verse. *Personal Sun* and *The Stone Ants*; on editorial staff of "Gismo"—a literary magazine of writing by men in the service—while in the South Pacific; enlisted in Navy in Spring 1942, commissioned in 1943.

PAUL DEHN (Major, Intelligence Corps, R.A.) was born in 1912; Shrewsbury School; Brasenose College, Oxford; between 1934 and 1939 was a film critic, dramatic critic, columnist and crime-reporter; 1939-1944, from Private in 3rd Battalion London Scottish, via Commando, to Major in Intelligence Corps.

RICHARD EBERHART (Lieutenant Commander, U.S.N.R.) was born at Austin, Minn., 1904; four books of verse of which the latest is *Poems, New and Selected* (new Directions); stationed at present at Wildwood, N. J.

FREDERICK EBRIGHT (Sergeant, U.S. Army) was born in Penn., 1912; attended art school in Philadelphia; enlisted in the 13th Coast Artillery in 1939; has published verse in many magazines.

GAVIN EWART (Lieutenant, Royal Artillery) was born in London, 1916; educated at Wellington College & Christ's College, Cambridge; worked as commercial traveller, publisher's reader, literary and advertising odd job man until 1939; Overseas (North Africa and Italy) as a subaltern in the Royal Artillery since January 1943.

JAMES FORSYTH (Captain, British Liberation Army) was trained as a Painter and Sculptor and held exhibitions in native Scotland; in 1937 came to London and wrote; in 1941 was commissioned to a Welsh Regiment in Ireland; in June 1944 landed in France and has been fighting ever since as Captain and Signal Officer in an Infantry Battalion.

G. S. FRASER (Sergeant, British Army) was born in Scotland 25 years ago; at St. Andrews' University became editor of *The College Echoes*; was a journalist in Aberdeen, his home town; joined the army at the beginning of the war; was on the staff of PARADE, the army magazine in Cairo, and has lately been in Eritrea; a book of poems *Home Town Elegy*, 1944.

ROY FULLER (S/Lieutenant, R.N.V.R.) was born at Oldham, Lancashire, 1912; conscripted to the British Navy in April 1941, transferred to the Fleet Air Arm six months later; three books of poems, the latest of which is *A Lost Season*, published by Hogarth Press, 1944.

BERNARD H. GUTTERIDGE (Major, South East Asia Command, British Army) was born in 1916; educated at Cranleigh; now fighting in Burma with the 36th Division (Infantry); has been away from England for more than three years; the first poem of his group in this anthology was written about the hills in which Alun Lewis is buried.

JOHN HAY (Sergeant, U.S. Army) is 29 years old; Harvard; in 1939 and 1940 lived in Washington, D.C., as correspondent for the Charleston, S.C. *News and Courier*; drafted in April 1941 and in the infantry for a year before coming to the staff of *Yank*, the army weekly; has just come back to the states after eight months in Panama.

ALFRED HAYES (Private, U.S. Army) was born in London 1911; has appeared in many magazines and anthologies with his poems. One book of verse *The Big Time*; at the present in Italy.

RAYNER HEPPENSTALL (Private, British Army) was born in Yorkshire in 1911; has served four years in the British army; three books of verse; has written feature programmes for the B.B.C. and published two novels and a critical history of the ballet called "Apology for Dancing."

RANDALL JARRELL (Sergeant, U.S. Army Air Force) was born in 1914; Vanderbilt; one book of poems, *Blood for a Stranger*; in 1942 enlisted in the Air Corps as a pilot, washed out after about 30 hours flying; now a C. N. T. operator at Tucson, Arizona; *Little Friend, Little Friend*, a new book of war poetry is scheduled for 1945.

SIDNEY KEYES (2nd Lieutenant, R.A. British) was born in 1922 and killed in action in the last days of the Tunisian campaign in 1943; his second book of poems has just been published by Routledge.

STANLEY KUNITZ (S/Sergeant, U.S. Army) was born in Worcester, Mass. in 1905; Harvard; two books of verse, *Intellectual Things* and *Passport to the War*; *Poetry* awarded him the Oscar Blumenthal Prize for Lyric Poetry in 1941; before entering the army in 1943 was editor of the *Wilson Library Bulletin*; now serving with the Air Transport Command.

PATRICIA LEDWARD (Driver, A.T.S. British) was born in 1920; is joining Army Education Corps as Sergeant; has appeared in a number of anthologies and has just finished a novel of service life.

ALUN LEWIS (Lieutenant, British Army) was born in 1915; taught in a Welsh secondary school; two books of poems of which the latest *Ha! Ha! Among the Trumpets* has just been published in England by George Allen & Unwin; was killed in an accident May 1944, while on active service in India.

EMANUEL LITVINOFF (Lieutenant, British Army) was born in London in 1915; wrote two novels which were destroyed in the London blitz; has served in the army for 5 years; three books of poems.

WILLARD MAAS (Private, U.S. Army) was born in Lindsay, California in 1911 and spent the early part of his life on an orange ranch in San Joaquin Valley; was educated at San Jose State College and University of California; author of two books of verse.

BEN MADDOW (S/Sergeant, U.S. Army Air Force) was born in Passaic, N.J.; at college he shifted from chemistry to biophysics to post-graduate work in mathematics; was unemployed for a number of years; worked in a die factory, then as assistant at Bellevue; then as relief investigator; many years in the field of documentary films; has been to South America on the film job; has not yet published his first book; now with the Army Air Force Motion Picture Unit.

H. B. MALLALIEU (Captain, Royal Artillery) was born in New Jersey, U.S.A. in 1914; before the war was a journalist in London; has contributed to many magazines and anthologies; now on active service in Italy.

JOHN MANIFOLD (Captain, Intelligence Corps, Middle East Forces, Australian) was born in Melbourne, 1915; educated at Geelong Grammar School and Jesus College, Cambridge; worked as schoolmaster and as journalist in England, later as translator with a publishing firm in Germany; escaped from Germany in 1939 and joined the British Army; married in 1940; served in West Africa, and at the present time is in France; two books of verse, and a new one, *Sonnets, Chiefly Satirical* in preparation.

MICHAEL C. MARTIN (Signaller, Royal Durban Light Infantry, South African) has contributed to Keidrych Rhys's anthology; no other facts known about this poet.

WILLIAM MEREDITH (Lieutenant, U.S.N.R.) was born in New York City in 1919; worked on *The New York Times* as copy boy and later as a reporter; in 1941 was inducted into the Army, serving for eight months as a noncommissioned officer in Army Air Forces Public Relations before being discharged to enter Naval Aviation; received Navy wings and commission in October 1942; has served since as a pilot in the Pacific area; one book of poems, *Love Letter From an Impossible Land*.

HOWARD NEMEROV (Lieutenant, U.S. Air Force) was born in New York City in 1920; Harvard; with the Royal Canadian Air Force, but transferred to the U.S. Air Force in 1943; now stationed in England.

J. ELGAR OWEN (L/Bdr. Australian) appeared with his poem "Maturity" in *SALT*, the Australian Army Education Service magazine; due to difficulties of wartime communication, there is no further biographical data on Bdr. Owen.

FRANK TEMPLETON PRINCE (Captain, British Army) was born in 1912 at Kimberley, Cape Province, South Africa; went to school at Christian Brothers College, Kimberley; Balliol College, Oxford, 1931-1934; spent a year at the Graduate College, Princeton, N. J.; married; one book *Poems*, Faber & Faber, 1938; spent six months in the Middle East, but is at present stationed in England.

JOHN PUDNEY (Squadron Leader, R.A.F.) was born in England, and before the war he worked for the *News Chronicle* and the B. B. C.; has written ten books, including poetry, short stories, a novel and a travel book; as Squadron Leader he has been in Malta, Italy, the Western Desert, Canada, the U.S. and Persia; latest book of poems *Flight Above Clouds*; has edited, with Henry Treece, an anthology *Air Force Poetry* published in England.

HENRY REED (Private, British Army) has contributed to Keidrych Rhys's second war anthology; no other facts known at the present.

KEIDRYCH RHYS (Gunner, R.A., British) is the editor of *Wales*, a well-known literary magazine; one book of poems, *The Van Pool*; editor of a number of anthologies including the ably edited war collections, *Poems from the Forces* and *More Poems from the Forces*.

DICK ROBERTS (Corporal, U.S. Army) was given an honorable discharge on the 25th of November 1944 after two years of service;

born 1919 in Miles City, Montana; has lived in Billings, Mont., for 15 years; one book of verse *Spring Comes in Many Ways*, just published.

SELDEN RODMAN (M/Sergeant, U.S. Army) was born in 1909; Yale 1931; in 1932 founded, with Alfred M. Bingham, the political monthly "Common Sense" which they jointly edited until 1943; three narrative book-length poems; edited the well known collections *A New Anthology of Modern Poetry* (Modern Library) and *The Poetry of Flight*; *The Revolutionists*, a play published in 1942, was produced by the Haitian Government in Port au Prince; at present, with Lieutenant Commander Richard Eberhart, Sergeant Rodman is at work on a new anthology of war poetry.

EDWIN ROLFE (Private, U.S. Army) was born 1909 in Philadelphia, Pa.; spent two years in Spain as member of International Brigades, part of the time in the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion (Canadian) and the rest in the Lincoln Battalion (American); took part in Aragon-Catalan retreat (March-April 1938) and in Ebre Offensive (July-September 1938); entered U.S. Army in February 1943, but was medically discharged late autumn of the same year; books: *The Lincoln Battalion* and *To My Contemporaries*, poems.

ALAN ROSS (S/Lieutenant, R.N.V.R., British) was born in India in 1922; lived in France and England; Oxford; joined the Fleet Air Arm in 1942, subsequently served in destroyers on the Russian convoy route; now a staff officer attached to a destroyer flotilla; has just completed an impressionist book of prose and poetry about the war.

KARL SHAPIRO (Corporal, U.S. Army, Pacific Area) was born in Baltimore, Md., in 1913; drafted into the army in 1941, and in 1942 left for Australia; his last two books *Person, Place and Thing* and *V-Letter* have been widely acclaimed; at the present stationed in the Dutch Indies; expected back in the U.S. by the time this book appears.

WILLIAM JAY SMITH (Lieutenant, U.S.N.R.) was born at "Winnfield, La. in 1918, next door to Huey Long on Shakespeare's birthday"; Washington University (St. Louis, Mo.) on a Swope Memorial Scholarship; enlisted in U.S.N.R. in 1941; has served on both the Pacific and European theatres; joined the French Sloop *La Grandière* in 1944 as U.S. Naval Liaison Officer.

DONALD A. STAUFFER (Captain, Aircraft Unit, U.S. Marine Corps) was born in Colorado, 1902; Princeton; from 1927 on, taught English at Princeton; editor of *The Intent of the Critic*; a new book of poetic criticism *The Nature of Poetry* to be published after the war; Capt. Stauffer writes: "I've served in aviation in the Marine Corps as an Air Combat Intelligence Officer since September 1942. I've been over a year out here in the South and West Pacific. Saw the Bougainville and Rabaul campaigns when they were at their height from Nov. 1943 to March 1944, and am now seeing about all one should in the Western Carolines. This is captured Jap stationery—more plentiful than our own—and I am using red ribbon to save the sole black record for official reports. Poetry, and even business talk about poetry, does not require formality of precisely that kind."

STEPHEN STEPANCHEV (Lieutenant, A.E.F. Mission to France) was born in Yugoslavia in 1915; attended the University of Chicago, and until his induction taught at Purdue; his comment on Poetry and War and his biographical note (which he wrote he was sending in October 1944 from France) have never arrived.

GERVASE STEWART (Lieutenant, R.A.F., British) was born in 1920; educated at Cambridge, where he was Chairman of Debates and Editor of *Granta*; joined the Fleet Air Arm in 1940, was commissioned a Sub Lieutenant and became a pilot; killed in action 1941; one book of poems *No Weed Death* and another forthcoming from John Lane, The Bodley Head.

RANDALL SWINGLER (Corporal, Royal Signals, British Army) was born in 1909; novels, poems, critical essays; has been editor of *Left Review* and *Our Time*; called up into the army in 1941, and since has seen active service in North Africa and Italy.

JULIAN SYMONS (Trooper, Royal Armoured Corps, British) was born in 1912; largely self-educated; edited 1937-1939 *Twentieth Century Verse*, a "little" magazine of verse and criticism; two books of verse, *Confusions about X* (1939), *The Second Man* (1943); one anthology, *An Anthology of War Poetry* (1942); one detective story; many oddments; in preparation *The Ideal Critic*, critical essays, another detective book, a book of stories of army life; conscripted as Trooper into Royal Armoured Corps, April 1942, discharged Jan. 1944 with injured arm, still a Trooper.

DONALD THOMPSON (Gunner, British Army) has just celebrated his 25th birthday in the Middle East where he has been serving since 1939 with the British army; some of his verse was broadcast in London last year, some is to appear in a Forces Number of *Poetry London*, and John Lane, The Bodley Head, will shortly bring out his first volume of poetry.

DUNSTAN THOMPSON (Corporal, U.S. Army) was born in New London, Conn., in 1918; Harvard; one of the founders of *Vice Versa*, the verse publication of the late thirties; a first book *Poems* has been widely acclaimed; now with a Films Division of Office of War Information, stationed in London.

JOHN THOMPSON, JR. (Sergeant, U.S. Air Force) was born in 1918; has lived in Grand Rapids, Mich.; Kenyon College; at present an instructor in an Air Force ground school at San Antonio.

HENRY TREECE (Flight Lieutenant, Royal Air Force, British) was born in 1912; author of four books of verse the latest of which is *The Black Seasons* (Faber, 1944); co-editor of *The New Apocalypse*, *The White Horseman*, *Wartime Harvest*, *Transformation*, *Air Force Poetry*, *The Crown and the Sickle*; editor of a symposium on *Herbert Read* (Faber); generally known as the leader of the Apocalypse school of poetry.

BERTRAM WARR (Sergeant, Royal Canadian Air Force) was born in 1917 and killed in action in 1943; one of the two Canadian poets represented in this anthology; his poems have appeared in Henry Treece's *Air Force Poetry*, and in Keidrych Rhys's collections; no other biographical data available.

VERNON WATKINS (Sergeant, Royal Air Force) 38 years old, is a Welsh poet; in peacetime lives near Swansea; contributes widely to the literary magazines; one book of poems *Ballad of the Mari Lwyd* (Faber & Faber).

EDWARD WEISMILLER (2nd Lieutenant, U.S. Marine Corps Reserve) was born in Monticello, Wis. in 1915; spent a year at Swarthmore College; Cornell College, Mt. Vernon, Ia.; Rhodes Scholarship 1938-1939; taught English at Harvard 1939 to 1943; commissioned at a 2nd Lieutenant 1943; one book of poems *The Deer Come Down*; at the present stationed somewhere in France.

# WAR POEMS BY THE CIVILIAN POETS

CONRAD AIKEN, one of America's distinguished poets, was born in Georgia in 1889; was class poet at Harvard and removed to England in 1921 and alternated his residence between England and the U.S. for years, finally settling in Brewster, Mass.; his first book was published in 1914, his last has been published (*The Soldier*, New Directions) at the end of 1944; has written much prose ranging from criticism to fiction and has just finished revising his two anthologies of modern poetry for *The Modern Library*.

W. H. AUDEN was born in 1907; Gresham's, Holt, and Oxford; named after St. Wystan (patron saint of Wistanstow), who planted a stick in the ground which grew into a tree; the best known of the English poets and the acknowledged leader of the younger (and the older) poets during the thirties and half of the forties; author of many volumes of verse both here and in England; his *Collected Poems* (which should be a literary event of first magnitude) has been promised by Random House for early 1945.

GEORGE BARKER was born in 1913; self- and travel-educated; was teaching in Tokyo University in Japan when the war broke out; was in America 1940 to 1942; two books of prose and four of verse, all published in England; one book *Selected Poems* published in the U.S., and a New Directions pamphlet; now in England.

JOHN BERRYMAN was born in 1914; Columbia and Cambridge; a group of his poems was published in *Five Young American Poets* (First Series); a pamphlet *Poems* (New Directions, 1942); now living in Princeton.

JOHN PEALE BISHOP was born in Charles Town, W. Va., 1892; Mercersburg Academy, and Princeton; managing editor *Vanity Fair* 1921; in 1942 Director of the Publications Program in the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs; four books of verse, one with Edmund Wilson, Jr.; *Selected Poems* was published in 1941; in 1943, appointed Fellow to the Library of Congress in Comparative Literature, but was obliged to resign before the end of the year because of ill health. John Peale Bishop died of a heart attack April 1944.

GENE DERWOOD lives on Upper New York Bay.

WILLIAM EMPSON was born in 1906, educated at Cambridge; has occupied chairs in English Literature at Universities in Japan and China; author the well known *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, a book of criticism; one book of verse, *The Gathering Storm*; was lecturing on English Literature in the Peiping National University while it was refugeeing in 1937-1939, is still on the books and hopes to go back; at present doing B.B.C. work on broadcasts in Chinese; married in 1941, two children.

KENNETH FEARING was born in Chicago, 1902; University of Wisconsin; has written a number of novels but is best known for his poetry; five volumes of verse, including his *Collected Poems* published by Random House in 1940.

ROBERT FROST was born in San Francisco in 1875; he spent some time in Dartmouth, in Harvard, in teaching and in farming until 1912 when he went to England; there he found friends in the literary world with the result that his first book of verse, *A Boy's Will* was published in London in 1913; since then he has published many volumes of poetry the latest of which is *A Witness Tree*.

GEOFFREY GRIGSON writes: "I was born in 1905, the youngest of seven sons of a Church of England clergyman, and was brought up in a Cornish village, in a family in many ways governed still by a mid-nineteenth century and pre-industrial ethos. My ancestors were country lawyers, doctors, and more clergymen. Five of my brothers have been killed in the two wars. I took an English degree at Oxford, and then slid into journalism, and slid out again, after discovering that elderly journalists believed their own lies, and that journalism was as corrupt and contemptible as writing advertisements. Editing *New Verse* was an attempt to get my own mind straight, and to establish some balance between order and the fantastic, and to clip the exuberance of English sentiment and stupidity. Most of my poems are rooted in Cornwall. My admirations, as far as they are fixed, are the incorruptibility of Wyndham Lewis, the poems of Dryden, Auden, and John Clare, the drawings of Samuel Palmer and Henry Moore, the example of Blake, the limestone districts of England and Europe, the orderly excitement of the paintings of Stubbs, Poussin, and Uccello. My aversions—two of them—are the social corruptibility of English authors and the muddle-headedness of Stephen Spender. I am married and have three children, and my politics—my religion, too—are implicit in the statements I have just made. I would add money to my aversions."

ROBINSON JEFFERS was born in 1887; was educated by private tutors and by his father, and had many years in private schools in Switzerland and Leipzig; studied at University of Pittsburgh and Occidental College, Los Angeles (A.B. 1905, D. Litt. 1937); University of So. California (Doctor of Humane Letters 1939); attended medical school at U.S.C. for three years; did postgraduate work in literature at University of Zurich; married Una Call Kuster of Los Angeles in 1913; has lived on a cliff in Carmel, California, since September 1914; two long sojourns with his wife and sons in the British Isles 1929 and 1937; member National Institute of Arts and Letters; many volumes of poetry; *Selected Poetry* published in 1938; *Be Angry At the Sun*, 1941.

SEÁN JENNETT is a young poet whose first book *Always Adam* was published last year by Faber & Faber; has contributed to many anthologies and literary publications in England.

JAMES LAUGHLIN was born in 1914, Pittsburgh; started *New Directions* in 1936 while an undergraduate at Harvard.

ARCHIBALD MAC LEISH was born in Glencoe, Illinois, 1892; educated at public schools in Illinois and at Hotchkiss School; graduated from Yale and from the Harvard Law School; served in the Field Artillery of the A.E.F.; practiced law briefly in Boston and taught at Harvard; lived in France from 1923 to 1928; worked as an editor of *Fortune* from the beginning of that magazine until 1938; was an officer of Harvard University in 1938-39 and was appointed the Librarian of Congress in 1939; has published some 15 volumes of verse, including *The Hamlet of A. MacLeish*, *New Found Land*, *Conquistador*, (Pulitzer Prize 1932) and *Public Speech*, as well as two verse plays for radio, *The Fall of the City* and *Air Raid*; has just been appointed Assistant Secretary of State, in charge of cultural relations.

LOUIS MACNEICE was born in 1907; Marlborough and Oxford; (Greek: London University); several books of verse, a play, translations, a novel, poetic criticism; his collected *Poems 1925-1940* published early in 1941; was in the United States during 1940 but went back to England in the fall of that year.

MARIANNE MOORE was born in 1887; Bryn Mawr, 1909; assistant, New York Public Library, 1921-1925; acting editor, *The Dial*, 1925-1929; *Observations*, 1924; *Selected Poems*, 1935; contributor of verse

and criticism to magazines; won the Shelley Memorial Award for 1940; *Harriet Monroe Award* for 1944; *What Are Years*, 1941; *Nevertheless*, 1944.

NICHOLAS MOORE is one of the better known of the younger English poets; has contributed widely to literary magazines in both England and America; author of several volumes of verse, all published in London; was the editor of *Seven*, one of the little verse magazines of the late thirties.

EDWIN MUIR was born in Orkney in 1887, lived for a long time in Glasgow, then in London, then in various Continental cities, Prague, Dresden, Vienna, Forte dei Marmi, St. Tropez, Menton, then in London again; now in Edinburgh; a good deal of literary criticism and several volumes of poetry, including *The Narrow Place*, *Journeys and Places*, *Variations on a Time Theme*; an autobiography, *The Story and the Fable*.

FREDERIC PROKOSCH was born in 1908 in Madison, Wis.; Haverford College; Yale University, King's College, Cambridge (fellow in Chaucerian research); five novels, four books of verse, the latest of which is *Chosen Poems* published in England; has just come back from spending two years in Sweden at a "listening post" for the OWI.

ANNE RIDLER was born at Rugby, 1912; worked for some years with Faber & Faber; several volumes of verse; editor of *A Little Book of Modern Verse*.

MICHAEL ROBERTS was born in 1902; King's College; Trinity College, Cambridge; has published a great many books of criticism, and two anthologies, one of which *The Faber Book of Modern Verse* is considered the best collection of modern poetry published in the last decade; one book of poems, *Orion Marches*, 1939.

W. R. RODGERS, an Ulsterman of 33, was first discovered by the English magazine *Horizon*; his first and only book, *Awake! and Other War Poems* has been widely acclaimed; has contributed to all four of the *New Poems* series of annual anthologies edited by the present editor.

MURIEL RUKEYSER was born in New York in December 1913; Vassar; four books of verse of which the latest is *Beast In View* from which the selections in this anthology were taken; one biography,

*Willard Gibbs*; worked in the Graphics Division of the OWI in 1943; now working on a play, *The Middle of the Air*.

DELMORE SCHWARTZ was born December 1913 in Brooklyn, N. Y.; University of Wisconsin, New York University and Harvard; Briggs-Copeland Instructor in English Composition at Harvard; now the poetry editor of *Partisan Review*; *In Dreams Begin Responsibility*, 1938; *Shenandoah*, 1941; *Genesis*, 1943.

WINFIELD TOWNLEY SCOTT was born in Haverhill, Mass. in 1910; Brown University; Shelley Memorial Award, 1939; five books of verse, the latest of which has been promised for 1945 by Thomas Y. Crowell.

JOHN SINGER is a young English poet now working in Glasgow; one book of verse *The Fury of the Living*, published by William Maclelan, 1942; founder and editor of *Million-New Left Writing*.

EDITH SITWELL was born in Yorkshire in 1887 and has lived in London since 1914; published her first book of verse in 1915 and has since had a succession of volumes, including criticism, history, biography and fiction; anthologies, too; her latest book of poems, published in 1944, rounds out thirty years of noteworthy work.

BERNARD SPENCER was born in 1909; Marlborough and Oxford; has been a schoolmaster, tutor and advertising writer; once editor of *Oxford Poetry*; at present teaching at the University in Cairo.

THEODORE SPENCER was born in Villa Nova, Pa. 1902; Princeton, Cambridge and Harvard; Associate Professor of English at Harvard University; author of two books of verse, *The Paradox in the Circle* (1941) and *An Act of Life* published by Harvard University Press in 1944; *Shakespeare and the Nature of Man*, originally a series of Lowell Lectures, was published in 1942.

STEPHEN SPENDER was born in 1909 in London; University College School and Oxford; poems, plays, criticism, translations, short stories, generally a literary life; latest book of poems, *Ruins and Visions*.

WALLACE STEVENS was born in 1879 in Reading, Pa.; Harvard; practiced law in New York; lives in Hartford, Conn. and is vice-president of Hartford Accident and Indemnity Company, engaged in handling claims; two books of verse in 1942, *Parts of a World* and

*Notes Toward A Supreme Fiction*, the latter published by the fine Cummington Press.

ALLEN TATE was born in Kentucky in 1899, and graduated from Vanderbilt University in 1922; free lance in New York 1924 to 1928; was awarded a Guggenheim fellowship, 1928, and spent two years in France; in charge of creative writing under the Creative Arts Program, Princeton University, 1939 to 1942; author of two biographies; six volumes of verse, of which the latest is *The Winter Sea*, beautifully hand-printed by The Cummington Press; also, a novel, *The Fathers*; two volumes of criticism, *Reactionary Essays in Poetry and Ideas* and *Reason in Madness*; Chair of Poetry, Library of Congress 1943-1944; editor of *Sewanee Review*, 1945.

DYLAN THOMAS was born in 1914 in Wales; Swansea Grammar School; his first three books published in England were combined into one volume *The World I Breathe* by James Laughlin in 1939; another selection *New Poems* was published in pamphlet form in 1942 by New Directions; a still later book *Deaths and Entrances* is being published in England in 1945; at the present writing film scripts for a living.

MARK VAN DOREN was born in Illinois, 1894; University of Illinois, Columbia University (now professor of English there); literary editor *The Nation* 1924-1928; three novels, six volumes of criticism (a seventh, *Calliope*, in preparation); ten volumes of verse, of which the latest was *The Seven Sleepers*, 1944; the first, *Spring Thunder and Other Poems*, 1924, was written after World War I; service in that war from September, 1917, to December, 1918, 1st Lt. Infantry; service in this war, civilian.

ARTHUR WALEY was born in 1889; Rugby; King's College, Cambridge; Hon. LLD., Aberdeen; is known as a leading authority on Chinese literature and translator of Chinese poetry; his *170 Chinese Poems* is a standard work.

ROBERT PENN WARREN was born in Kentucky in 1905; Vanderbilt University, University of California, Yale and Oxford; a founder and an editor of *The Southern Review*; three novels; *Selected Poems*, 1944; Professor of English at the University of Minnesota; at present the Chair of Poetry, Library of Congress.

YVOR WINTERS was born in Chicago in 1900; University of Chicago, and the University of Idaho for two years; associate professor

of English, Stanford; married to Janet Lewis, the novelist; three books of criticism including *The Anatomy of Nonsense*, 1943; a number of volumes of poetry of which the latest is *The Giant Weapon* published by James Laughlin in the New Direction series.

OSCAR WILLIAMS started writing poetry for the second time in 1937 after a sixteen-year silence; *The Golden Darkness*, The Yale Series of Younger Poets; *The Man Coming Toward You* published by Oxford University Press in 1940 contains the work of the years 1937 to 1940; a new book of poems, *That's All That Matters*, has just been published by The Creative Age Press; editor of the *New Poems* series of annual anthologies of modern poetry.

## Acknowledgments

Thanks are due in all cases to the living poets (see Contents) without whose kindness and co-operation this anthology would not have been possible.

Thanks are also due to the following magazines: *Accent*, *The American Scholar*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, *Canadian Forum*, *Common Sense*, *Contemporary Poetry*, *Free World*, *Harper's Magazine*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Horizon* (London), *Kenyon Review*, *Life & Letters Today* (London), *The Nation*, *The New Republic*, *The Partisan Review*, *Our Time* (London), *The Listener* (London), *Poetry* (Chicago), *Poetry* (London), *Sewanee Review*, *The Quarterly Review of Literature*, *The New Yorker*, *Yale Review*, *Time & Tide* (London), *Tribune* (London), *Salt* (Australian Army Magazine).

Once again, special thanks are due to the following publishers, literary agents and others:—

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ROY FULLER—for the six poems from *A Lost Season* and *The Middle of a War*, both published by The Hogarth Press;

GEOFFREY GRIGSON—for the six poems from *Several Observations* (Cresset Press) and from *Under the Cliff* (Routledge);



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THE MACMILLAN COMPANY—Two poems by Thomas Hardy from *Collected Poems*; two poems by William Butler Yeats from *Collected Poems*; five poems by George Barker from *Selected Poems*; and *In Distrust of Merits* from *Nevertheless* by Marianne Moore; all by permission of The Macmillan Company, publishers;

NICHOLAS MOORE—for the poems by G. S. Fraser two of which, *Nilotic Elegy* and *Rostov* are from *Home Town Elegy* (published by PL, Nicholson and Watson); also for his own poem;

NEW DIRECTIONS AND JAMES LAUGHLIN—for poems by F. T. Prince, Yvor Winters, Delmore Schwartz, Conrad Aiken; the first of the three poems by Dylan Thomas; the poems by Richard Eberhart (*Poems New and Selected*); and the poem by James Laughlin;

RANDOM HOUSE—for the five poems by Stephen Spender from *Poems*; for *Ballad, August for the People* and *Spain* from *POEMS, September 1, 1939* from *Another Time, The Jew in the German Cell* from *The Double Man, If On Account of the Political Situation* from *For The Time Being*, these last six poems by W. H. Auden; for three poems from *Be Angry At the Sun* by Robinson Jeffers; for five poems by Louis MacNeice from *Collected Poems 1925-1940* and *Autumn Journal*; for three poems by Robert Graves from *Collected Poems*; all of these reprinted by permission of Random House, Inc.;

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Many of the poems in Part Two of this book have never before been published in book or magazine; the editor is especially grateful to those poets who have taken the trouble to send their manuscripts.

Thanks are also due Mr. Frederick L. Allen, editor of *Harper's*, for printing a special symposium of commentary on war and poetry by some of the poets who contribute to the Comments section of this anthology.

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