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The Great War and British Fiction By Women: 1917-1925

Marlene Briggs

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies
of the University of Ottawa
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
in English Literature



Marlene Briggs, Ottawa, Canada, 1993



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ABSTRACT

This study of British women writers of the Great War highlights the connections between literature and social history in the first quarter of the twentieth century. An examination of The Tree of Heaven (1917), The Return of the Soldier (1918), The Crowded Street (1924), and Mrs Dalloway (1925) will reveal the manner in which male and female gender roles were subject to acute interrogation in wartime and post-war British society. Chapter 1 surveys literary and cultural scholarship on the Great War in order to emphasize the failure of gender-specific narratives of social change to address the complex dynamics of gender conflict which characterized the period. Chapter 2 investigates the non-combatant communities of women created through the gender-segregation of the War, revealing that the constructions of feminism in The Tree of Heaven and The Crowded Street are contextualized within their appropriation of military models for female collectivity and interaction. Chapter 3 focuses on the relationships between non-combatant women and shell-shocked veterans in The Return of the Soldier and Mrs Dalloway, illustrating that the male and female subjects of these texts are constructed in terms of their mutual subjection to the discursive institutions of the State in wartime and post-war society. All four texts provide both Modernism and feminism with a compelling, if contradictory, dimension which needs to be recovered.

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Introduction

Why doesn't somebody write a book about someone to whom nothing ever happens--like me?

Winifred Holtby The Crowded Street

With limited exceptions, women's texts have not been incorporated into the Modernist canon until fairly recently. The marginalization of women's texts dealing with the Great War has been particularly pronounced, and can be attributed to the persistence of essentialist notions of gendered identity: "Of all the biological mythologies that surround human behaviour and social arrangements," as Lynne Segal observes, "the one that 'man' is inevitably aggressive, whereas 'woman' is not, is the most tenacious" (180). The Victorian legacy of social arrangements accordingly assigned men and women to each of their separate spheres--men to the public, women to the private. This public/private dichotomy informed the construction of the Great War in literary narrative and it continues to inform literary scholarship on the period. Traditional literary scholarship has defined the genre of war literature in terms of the experience of active combat by male recruits. Such a circumscribed construction of the Great War has been challenged by a recent wave of feminist scholarship which has struggled to define the event in relation to women and domestic life. Muriel

Hammond's question, "Why doesn't somebody write a book about someone to whom nothing ever happens--like me?" (219), ironically, is both a challenge to canonical theories of value (Ardis 7) and a submission to their public authority. The marginalization of women's fiction of the Great War involves a dual structure of displacement: the texts have been regarded as irrelevant to the unfolding of public, historical conflict, and they have also been regarded as irrelevant to the conventional construction of Modernism as linguistic encounter (Huyssen 54) that implies "neutrality and apolitical objectivity" (Ardis 5).

The historical struggle of feminists to secure suffrage, in addition to educational, sexual and professional reforms, in the Victorian and Edwardian periods constitutes one of the repressed narratives of Modernism. Immediately before the Great War, "women created and sustained their first and most militant mass movement" in the form of the Women's Social and Political Union, which eventually gave up on constitutional reform (Vicinus 247) and became "an elite corps trained in urban sabotage" in order to obtain their demand--"Votes for Women!"--from a hostile government (Rowbotham 88). Many constitutionally-based suffrage societies also flourished at the time. As many scholars have pointed out, middle-class women's involvement in political agitation and organization prior to the War provided the wartime government with a well-trained and confident work-force for

the purposes of the military effort. While the War organized British men into homosocial communities, many feminist movements were absorbed into the War effort--and were fractured by it. Not surprisingly, no simple social oppositions can be excerpted from women's literary texts of the period.

This study focuses upon Great War texts by four women: May Sinclair, Rebecca West, Winifred Holtby and Virginia Woolf. All four participated in feminist organization and political debate throughout their careers. My feminist explorations of their texts highlight the interface between literature and social history in the first quarter of the century in Britain. As a result, generational and ideological differences are revealed between these middle-to-upper-class women writers. This study thereby complicates those generalized cultural narratives of women's relationship to the Great War which stress either the War's liberation or its oppression of women in patriarchal British society. The study contextualizes the fictions under consideration within history and politics; and where necessary, biography is introduced in order to challenge the conventional demarcation of personal and political experience.

However, this study does not advocate the establishment of "a female countercanon" (Ardis 7) through which 'classic' Great War texts can be systematically interrogated. Winifred Holtby's The Crowded Street (1924) and May Sinclair's The Tree of Heaven (1917) have received almost no critical

attention beyond their periods of publication, while The Return of the Soldier (1918) and particularly Mrs Dalloway (1925) have been studied more extensively. With the exception of Woolf, who has been celebrated by feminist scholars, the texts of these women writers have been neglected through the politics of canonization despite the fact that all four played prominent roles in shaping political and critical discourse in the Modernist period. My study of their texts highlights the contribution made to that discourse by their constructions of gender relations and the Great War. However, no homogeneous narrative of women's relationship to World War I is uncovered through analysis of these texts. Rather, The Tree of Heaven, The Crowded Street, The Return of the Soldier and Mrs Dalloway are explored with a view to illustrating that the "challenge to accepted gender norms requires new ways of understanding gender as historically produced and changeable" (Weedon 170).

Chapter 1 of the study examines two strains of scholarship on literature and the Great War: the myth-centered and the feminist. Myth-centered studies of the Great War include Bernard Bergonzi's Heroes' Twilight (1965), Paul Fussell's The Great War and Modern Memory (1975), and Samuel Hynes' A War Imagined (1990). Myth-centered studies of the Great War have usually reproduced the homosocial communities created by war through their exclusion of all but canonical texts written by men, usually of the officer class. The

homosocial communities of Great War texts and critics are challenged by feminist scholars. Feminist narratives of women's experience of the Great War--those which have celebrated pacifism or uncomplicated liberation from domesticity--have recently been problematized through recourse to social history and poststructuralist practices which have sought to pluralize critical discourse on war and female subjectivity. Chapter 2 investigates the non-combatant communities of women created through the gender-segregation of the War. Through comparative discussion of The Tree of Heaven and The Crowded Street, the constructions of feminism in both novels are contextualized within their appropriation of military models for female collectivity and interaction. This chapter explores generational conflict between women in the wake of historically-produced changes in discourses of 'femininity.' Chapter 3 is devoted to analysis of The Return of the Soldier and Mrs Dalloway. Both texts are discussed in terms of their attempt to collapse the wartime distinction of Front and Home: these texts are structured through the relationships between non-combatant women and shell-shocked veterans. I argue that West and Woolf employ shell-shock as a trope for the myth of homosocial community within patriarchy. West and Woolf construct men and women in terms of their mutual subjection to the discursive institutions of the State in wartime and post-war society. Their texts explore the fragmentation of male and female normative

sexual identity. The novels of West and Woolf are much more pessimistic than The Crowded Street regarding the nature of social change. The Return of the Soldier and Mrs Dalloway are contextualized within the developments of discourses of psychiatry in the Modernist period and readily adapt themselves to poststructuralist feminist practice. My study is structured so as to highlight the failure of uncomplicated homosocial or 'feminist' narratives to address the parameters of the exploration of the Great War and 'femininity' in the four texts.

The novelists under discussion offer the reader an exciting opportunity to broaden his/her understanding of a much neglected aspect of the early modern period in Britain. As Cilleton states, "World War I . . . offers a dramatic test case for issues at the core of feminist literary scholarship" (109). These texts provide Modernism with a contradictory and compelling political dimension.

I'd like to see a Tank come down the stalls,
Lurching to rag-time tunes, or 'Home, Sweet Home,'
And there'd be no more jokes in Music-halls
To mock the riddled corpses round Baupaume.

Siegfried Sassoon, "Blighters"

While here I strive, as best I may,
Strangers' long hours of pain to ease,
Dumbly I question--Far away
Lies my beloved even as these?

G.M. Mitchell, "The Nurse"

The Great War is rhetorically affiliated with the Biblical Fall in discussions of the historical and literary genesis of the modern age in Britain. Edwardian England is popularly imaged as a "peaceable Eden" (Bergonzi 20) or a "garden party" (Hynes ETM 5) violently disrupted by the "Huns," the "Tommies," and the rats of the trenches. The Great War is often conceptualized in terms of "a radical discontinuity" (Hynes AWI ix); it is described as "unexampled" (Fussell 153), "a potent myth, symbolizing the crisis of a civilization" (Bergonzi 220). Paul Fussell, in The Great War and Modern Memory (1975), maintains that "ex

post facto, literary narrative has supplied it with coherence and irony, educing the pattern: innocence savaged and destroyed" (335). Fussell's claim, based primarily on a study of the life and literature of infantry officers and privates in Flanders and Picardy, begs the question: innocence savaged and destroyed by whom, by what? Certainly, as Martin Stephen remarks, "to question [the] image of the First World War is regarded nowadays almost as a sacrilege" (6). But it seems clear enough, as Lynne Hanley points out, that Fussell "obscures his own part in the production of myths about war, presenting himself as an observer of rather than an agent in the process" (24). In fact, Fussell's text participates in the distinctly modern and pervasive conception of soldiers as pitiable young victims of mechanized slaughter, identified as "Wilfred Owenism" by Samuel Hynes (AWI 449), after the poetry of war-protest by the soldier of that name. Precisely because she is interested in interrogating de-politicized narratives of war from a feminist perspective, Hanley is able to observe that "the idea of the soldier as the chief victim of war permeates Fussell's text and the memory it shapes of war" (29-30).

Fussell's chief critical predecessor, Bernard Bergonzi, also emphasizes the victimization of male soldiers in the Great War. For instance, in Heroes' Twilight (1965), Bergonzi proclaims that he will study the "victims and witnesses of a unique crisis of British civilization" [my

emphasis] ("Preface"). However, Bergonzi acknowledges that such a viewpoint is rooted in "a permanent shift in sensibility: the mood and the rhetoric of 1914-15 are now irrecoverably lost" (199). Conscription was not introduced in Britain until May 1916, and it is indeed surprising for the modern reader to learn that "two and a half million men volunteered for service in the British army in the first sixteen months of war" (Keep 3). "The literature on the war is lacking in balance," as Modris Eksteins points out: "It concentrates for the most part on the negative repercussions of the war, not on the positive instincts that fired it for over four years" (184). An earlier analogy for the War, that of "St. George defeating the dragon--Germany" (Tylee GWWC 102), in its highlighting of male protective agency in a sexual economy of chivalry is certainly indicative of the later "shift in sensibility" noted by Bergonzi and others (199). The chivalric call to arms early in the War is even more explicitly pronounced in the propagandistic description of Germany's "rape of little Belgium" (Tylee "MRR" 204). "The body of a raped woman," as Susan Brownmiller remarks, "becomes a ceremonial battlefield. . . . The act that is played out upon her is a message passed between men . . ." (31). The two typologies of Britain's early involvement in the War with Germany--St. George and the Dragon, and "the rape of little Belgium"--both rely upon encoded or essentialist messages about gendered roles in wartime: men

must protect women as they would 'property' and women must claim protection from men in order to fulfill their socially-constructed roles. Yet, as the quotation from Brownmiller suggests, war is typically understood, even in the midst of hostile national proceedings, as a ritualized form of communication between men, whether it takes the form of "conversations in explosives" (Leed 108) or the strategic violations of female bodies.

Both Fussell and Bergonzi structure their discussions of World War I through a homosocial frame of reference. Bergonzi contextualizes his discussion of the Great War in Britain through reference to "the perennial debate between Hotspur and Falstaff" (17), or the conflict between men who would uphold "the moral virtues of heroism" and men who would uphold the "desire for self-preservation" in the face of combat (11, 12). In his prelude to a discussion of homoeroticism in the Great War, Fussell uses the traditional and conveniently depoliticized notion of the "intercourse" between Venus and Mars to preface his apparently breezy remarks on the seeming inevitability of rape and female prostitution in wartime: "That a successful campaign promises rape as well as looting has been understood from the beginning. Prolonged sexual deprivation will necessitate official brothels . . ." (270). Alternatively, he characterizes the homoerotic relations between men in World War I in terms of "mutual affection, protection, and admiration"

(272). Thus, both Fussell and Bergonzi support the construction of war as homosocial event.

In another reading of the interface between war and literature, Evelyn Hinz chooses to dramatize and interrogate contemporary issues in war scholarship through a suggestive discussion of the debate between Ajax, "the man of action," and Ulysses, "the man of words," for "the right to the armor of Achilles, as depicted by Ovid in Book XIII of his Metamorphoses" (v). What Hinz sees as the fundamental issue in such scholarship is the problematical relationship between literature (Ulysses) and the experience of history (Ajax): "If Ajax thus represents the view that art imitates life, Ulysses represents the view that life imitates art" (viii). Indeed, Fussell openly declares his abridgement of this conflict in his "Preface," describing the complex operations of "life" and literature in terms of a "simultaneous and reciprocal process" (ix). Nevertheless, the 'life' he painstakingly depicts remains that of the changing mentality of the British frontsoldier, as it is loosed from its material base (Tylee GWWC 6); and the literature he emphasizes is scrupulously canonical, usually produced by the male officer class (Hanley 21). In Hinz's article, the male statesman and the male warrior engage in a contest for priority and primacy. Given Hinz's crude framing of the history/literature problem, an issue which is undoubtedly a central concern of much war scholarship, it is perhaps inevitable that

she is brought to conclude that "both war and literature must be seen as primordial human impulses": the "agonistic principle" is also to be located "within the human psyche" (ix). The final uses of 'human' in the preceding lines can only seem ironic in light of the above discussion which suggests the limitations of invoking 'mythical' or 'trans-historical' precedents to study the Great War, as they inevitably enact and valorize socio-historical constructions of canonical and sexual hierarchies, the persistence of which do not establish their 'transcendence' or 'timelessness.'

As Tylee states, "an interest in myth became the dominant feature of books focusing on the First World War" (GWWC 6) after the years 1964-68, which "became the central years of a period of cultural re-assessment" (1) of the Great War, and war in general. One main branch of study of the literature and culture of the Great War still centers on the analysis of 'myth.' Feminist analyses of the Great War and literature have often attempted to address myth-centered studies of the War which have treated it as an act of male homosocial communication by focusing on its gender-specific meanings for women. Through recourse to social history and poststructuralist theory, more recent feminist analysis has sought to avoid a gender-specific paradigm of inquiry which merely reproduces or inverts certain essentialist ideas of male and female 'nature' with regard to war. I will examine

how myth-centered explorations of the literature and culture of the Great War have functioned to secure or displace a conception of the Great War as an act of male homosocial communication which has neglected, excluded and even stigmatized female civilians, readers, and critics. I will also examine how recent feminist studies have been complicit in the production of such a conception. Discussion of myth-centered studies will precede discussion of feminist Great War scholarship, and my analysis will inevitably highlight the inextricable nature of the cultural constructions of Front and Home as political and personal realities.

* * * *

'Myth' is a term which requires some elucidation, due to its changed and changing affiliations. From its general meaning--"explanations of the natural order and cosmic forces" (Cuddon 408)--'myth' came to take on highly complex meanings in the systems of thought of Jung and Frye, Barthes and Althusser. According to Jungian thought, "what is passed on in the human species is a predisposition to fashion meaningful myths and symbols from the common experience of each individual life" [my italics] (Lee 3). Thus, for the archetypal critic, texts "give imaginative focus to an existing community" [my italics] (Lee 4). For Northrop Frye, literature is constituted as a "self-contained verbal universe" whose "central structural principles" give literature a communicative power which is ultimately transindivid-

ual, transhistorical (Lee 324, 325). Such a view of myth allows little or no room for divergence, difference, for the oppositions and segregations which are themselves produced and inherent in industrial social formations. Particularly in the case of the Great War, where the gender-segregation of Victorian capitalism achieved its most exaggerated proportions, the suppression of "the determining weight of History" (Barthes 108) has created an impoverished critical discourse for the purposes of examining the composite culture of Britain at that time.

Subsequent theorists have sought to ground the concept of myth in material, temporally-specific realities. Barthes, in Mythologies, identifies 'myth' with "bourgeois stereotype" (Latimer 41), with "mystification," which "always consists in placing Nature at the bottom of History" (Barthes 108). The latter statement is a highly condensed critique of the Jungian contribution of myth studies to literature. Indeed, for Barthes, the idea of the "human 'community'. . . serves as an alibi to a large part of our humanism," to "classical humanism," "Adamism" (Barthes 107, 110), what Catherine Belsey entitles "Eternal Man" ("LHP" 402). The myth of "the Great Family of Man" works to trivialize difference, or "'injustices'" (Barthes 108), and it sentimentalizes superficial pluralities, ultimately working to suppress active political change. In the thought of Louis Althusser, the associations of 'myth' as they are

presented in the work of thinkers like Jung and Frye become infinitely entangling and materially insuperable. For Althusser, ideology, not 'myth,' is "the network of shared, unexamined assumptions that holds a given society together" [my italics] (Latimer 60). For Althusser, "in ideology 'men represent their real conditions of existence to themselves in an imaginary form'" (87), while the existence of ideology is also "material": "an ideology always exists in an apparatus, and its practice, or practices" (90). Thereby, as in the work of Foucault, "'Truth' is knowledge from which perspective has been fallaciously erased" (Latimer 103). Barthes, and particularly Althusser, deny and problematize the self-authorizing agency of individual critical consciousness in its process of recognizing and creating social/textual meaning through literature, as it is advocated by archetypal critics. In Barthes and Althusser, the self, one of Jung's primary archetypes (Lee 3-4), becomes the subject, whose subordination to ideological practices is "always already" masked by necessary complicity (Althusser 95). As Tylee points out, we start to become aware of our own entanglement in ideology when the efforts of attempted resistance produce "anxiety and inner turmoil" (GWWC 251). It follows, then, that the literary text is not to be viewed as the source of a unifying "knowledge," but as the site of conflict, "locations of power and resistance to power" (Bel-sey 405). And it also follows that neither the history of

the Great War nor "the history of the present" is "a history of a fall from grace": these are both histories of "the transformations of power and resistances to power" (Belsey 409).

From Bergonzi's study, which was published in 1965, to Fussell's, which was published in 1975, to others, including Samuel Hynes' and Tylee's which emerged in 1990, myth has served to focus one main branch of discussion on the literature of the Great War. Yet the historical specificities of World War I rendered it unique among wars: technology and government propaganda achieved unprecedented uses in the Great War; and in trench warfare a defensive position had to replace the model of offensive heroics enshrined in previous war narratology (Leed 105). The idea that the experience of the Great War produced "'disjunctive' rather than integrative" knowledge (Leed 74) in combatants and even in non-combatants would seem to explain much of the myth-centered criticism of the War: the very writings and behaviour of frontsoldiers seemed to issue a challenge to the merits and sense of 'civilization,' as well as to the conception of a unified self grounded in a universal human nature.

How do the various myth-centered studies of the War differ with regard to their use and understanding of 'myth'? While the work of Bergonzi and Fussell draws upon Frygian notions of myth in complementary, if distinct, ways to assess the changing modes and mentalities of combatants, the

work of Eric Leed constitutes a significant intervention in the myth-centered discussions of the war. Leed utilizes the ideas of Levi-Strauss to unite discussion of materialist and psychic realities, illustrating the necessarily dialectical process involved in accommodating combatants to the technological nature of the Great War. The work of Leed places the Great War squarely in the materialities and mentalities of industrial capitalism. Hynes attempts to unfold and chart the British cultural response to the Great War in terms of male and female imaginative responses to it: he is chiefly interested in the process by which the formally distinct categories of history and literature are collapsed into the useable fiction of a stabilized national narrative, one which has been inherited by our own generation. Tylee's efforts take a more subversive turn. She draws upon the Barthean notion of "cultural alibis" which "disguise justice and responsibility" (255) to focus her study of women writers on World War I in order to assess and expose the nature of the 'female' cultural legacy of the War.

The comments of Bergonzi and Fussell on David Jones' In Parenthesis (1937) are illustrative of their views on myth and its paradigmatic relevance to the study of the Great War. Bergonzi's study is a New Critical work which traces the shifting literary attitude toward the experience of the front in terms of a "movement . . . from a myth-dominated to a demythologized world" (198). Arguing that In Parenthesis

is illustrative of this particular change, he points out its "conscious," "individualistic" and "fragmentary" use of myth which is not "rooted in a system of public and shared beliefs"; and he implies that the War served as an explanatory site for modernist "dissociation of sensibility" despite his assertion that "the mythopoeic faculty is deep-rooted in man, and is not likely to be weakened, even in a scientific and technological age" (199, 200). Fussell remains heavily indebted to Bergonzi's study, despite the fact that he apparently contradicts Bergonzi's conclusion by maintaining that "unprecedented meaning . . . had to find precedent motifs and images" in the Great War (139). In fact, Bergonzi's emphasis upon the "mythic" is almost exclusively confined to "the rhetoric and gestures of heroism" (222); Fussell revises Bergonzi's study by emphasizing what he perceives as the persistent psychological centrality of the general mythopoeic function in men who must attempt to survive both monotonous misery and unexpected, successive trauma. Fussell cites David Jones' In Parenthesis, an "honorable miscarriage" (144), to support his view that the War "resists being subsumed into the heroic myth" (153). In contrast, Fussell maintains that Rosenberg's "Break of Day in the Trenches" is "the greatest poem of the war" because of its "subtle exploitation of conventions of English pastoral poetry" and because of "its gently ironic idiom" (250). The key word here is 'ironic,' for Fussell's selec-

tive readings of the literature of the Great War all valorize and buttress his thesis that the "essentially ironic" character of the Frygian mode of modern understanding is a result of the transformation of consciousness brought about by the Great War (35).

Fussell commits many errors of omission for the sake of his argument for "a Great War paradigm": he maintains that "the modern versus habit" is actually "traceable" to "the actualities of the Great War" (86, 79, 73). Certainly, the binary oppositions of Cixousian deconstructive practice extend further back in time: "If we read or speak, the same thread or double braid is leading us throughout literature, philosophy, criticism, centuries of representation and reflection," as in Culture/ Nature, Activity/Passivity (Cixous 560). The studies of Bergonzi and Fussell are primarily concerned with frontsoldiers and only make minor reference to women's contributions to the field of Great War writing. In these discussions of war literature, women are largely silent, and women readers are thereby constructed as "'eavesdroppers'" (Booth quoted in Miller 335) in the genre of literature concerned with war. Scholars of the Great War who focus on more than the literature of the frontsoldier inevitably involve themselves in collapsing the strict dichotomy of Front and Home upon which Bergonzi's and Fussell's work on the War depends. Enforcement of the Home/ Front dichotomy ensures the unproblematic status of the

victim-soldier identity which is central to the earlier studies of Bergonzi and Fussell. As Hanley writes, "if we ignore the devastation wreaked by war on women, children, civilians, animals, the land, buildings . . . the entire fabric of family, social and civilized life, we can perhaps construe the makers of war to be its victims, but this requires that we imagine the world of war to be inhabited only by soldiers . . ." (31).

Samuel Hynes' scholarship on the Great War works to collapse the dichotomous construction of Front and Home secured in the studies of Bergonzi and Fussell. The fictionally mediated history of the Great War and its legacy is labelled "the Myth of the War" by Hynes, who defines it as "the story of the war that has evolved, and has come to be accepted as true" (AWI ix). He believes the Myth of the War can be "reduced to two terse propositions: the old betray the young; the past is remote and useless" (x); and he identifies the most significant emotional mood of the Myth as one of "protest" (439). It is conventional for commentators on the Great War to locate the origin of the anti-war spirit which came to dominate the post-war myth in the Battle of the Somme. For instance, writing in 1937, David Jones comments on the commencement of the Somme battle in July 1916: "From then onward things hardened into a more relentless, mechanical affair, took on a more sinister aspect" (ix). Writing in 1975, Fussell states, "the inno-

cent army fully attained the knowledge of good and evil at the Somme on July 1, 1916" [my emphasis] (29). However, Hynes traces the spirit of dissent to the Somme, in part, as he explains, because many canonized war artists participated in the battle (167). He condenses the post-Somme presentation of the War in this way: "The war itself had come to seem the only source of energy in its world: guns roared, bullets flew, armies moved; but individual men could only suffer" (208). Significantly, Hynes points out that the Myth of the War was also "a myth of the world that the war had made" (439). And, more importantly, he argues that the post-war Myth wasn't finally crystallized until 1930, with the General Strike of 1926 serving as the end of an era for those of "the war generation": "it had shaken such hopes and expectations as had survived the war" (449, 421, 412). According to Hynes, it was only with the close of the Strike that hopes for revolution, the continuance of class-free comradeship and a strong pacifist movement collapsed (412).

Eric Leed's exploration of the Home/Front dichotomy takes a more complex turn. He utilizes the work of Levi-Strauss on myth in his exploration of the identity of the soldier in relation to the Front and Home in World War I. Unlike Barthes, as Leed remarks, Levi-Strauss does not conceptualize myth as "a flight from the contradictions inherent in . . . reality; rather, myth is an often unconscious 'speculation' that has a complex relation to the

culture that generates it" (119). Providing a synchronic and diachronic interpretation of the mythical constructions of the War, in which he traces the collision of "material realities and 'traditional' mentalities" of militarism (193), Leed rejects simplistic or traditional equations. For instance, in reference to the notion that war is a "rite of passage," he protests that "rites of initiation are designed to induct individuals into well defined social niches"; "rites of initiation do not maim, gas, kill, or physically destroy novices" (73). Leed argues that early involvement in the War was fuelled by the idea of a war/peace dichotomy, in which war would offer the soldier a liberating escape from the indignities and exigencies of the marketplace (61-62). Certainly, many critics have conceptualized the War in terms of "a harsh and lurid glare illuminating the bitter harvest of the Industrial Revolution" (Stephen 3). However, Leed goes further and argues that the routinization and mechanization of trench warfare revealed it to be a kind of "mirror image" of industrial economic relations (194). All hierarchies were collapsed in the War, and the "worker," not the warrior, became the model for the modern soldier (91; cf. Eksteins 173). Thus, Leed locates wartime and post-war disillusion in the nature of the pre-war homefront: "what was, initially, a liberation from domesticity began to be experienced as a loss of the home" (205). His analysis of the combatant's identification with

the machine is particularly illustrative of these points. For Leed, the image of the machine "becomes a charter of individual self-regulation, the key ingredient of social regulation" in industrial societies (152): "In the trenches, and in numerous encounters with the home, it was shown that the economy of sacrifice and blood had been absorbed in the market of goods, capital, and labour" (207). Leed argues, through an analysis primarily of the German writer, Ernst Junger, that the imaging of the War as mechanized slaughter after 1916 had its origins in a desire to displace and invalidate associations with the home and nation (153). What results is a "transposition of identities from natural parents to 'the War'" (153).

The Home/Front dichotomy as it is analyzed in British Great War scholarship must now be explored in greater depth. Whether the critical scholarship attempts to reveal the affiliations or disaffiliations of war literature with traditional themes, or whether it attempts to contextualize the literature within the "bed of propaganda within which . . . it [gains] its sense" (Tylee GWWC 6), both approaches implicitly acknowledge, through their emphasis on myth, an enduring military truism of the Great War: the idea that the experience of battle is "incommunicable" (GWWC 256). Hynes, for example, describes the "aesthetic of direct experience for war art," a "curious kind of elitism" (what Hinz calls "the Ajax syndrome" iv), as "the absolute separation between

the men who fight and those they are fighting for, applied to the arts" (159). As Fussell writes, "the presumed inadequacy of language itself to convey the facts about trench warfare is one of the motifs of all who wrote about the war" (170). Leed attempts to ground this myth in the physical reality of the World War I trench system: "the trench labyrinth becomes the summation of everything that confounds the desire for release and transcendence. . . . The trench is a system with no externality" (79). Both Leed and Fussell maintain that the persisting idea of incommunicability arose, in part, as a result of the perceived absence of an audience sufficiently receptive to horror. Sassoon memorialized such a view in the protest letter which precipitated his arrival at Craiglockhart: he spoke of "the callous complacency with which the majority at home regard the continuance of those agonies which they do not share, and which they have not sufficient imagination to realize" (quoted in Leed 207).

Increasingly, as the War continued, women came to be associated with naive idealism, indifference, sexual titillation, callousness, even murderous impulses. In her Testament of Youth (1933), Vera Brittain describes her lover Roland who has returned home on leave as "preoccupied, as though living in an inner world from which experience excluded even those he dearly loved" (187). In later letters to her, Roland informs her that she seems like a

character in a book or someone whom one has dreamt of and never seen" (216); another letter addresses her as "Phantom" (230). C.L. Graves is even less flattering: writing of "the trials that confront us in the year Nineteen Seventeen," he decries "The Flapper" as "an orgiastic nuisance who in fact enjoys the War" (in Stephen 293-94). The idea of 'Two Nations,' one which fights and one which remains at home in a state of imagined ease, profiting and war-mongering without physical or emotional risk, pervades the poetry of the War which has become canonized. Such poems include Sassoon's "Glory of Women," Owen's "Apologia Pro Poemate Meo" and "Greater Love." Such poems can be contextualized within the poetry of The White Feather Campaign (women handed white feathers to men out of uniform to denote their 'cowardice'). Undoubtedly, this campaign would have nauseated and sickened combatants: "When that procession comes, / Banners and rolling drums-- / Who'll stand and bite his thumbs-- / Will you my laddie?" (Jessie Pope quoted in Byles 483). Owen was apparently moved to write "Dulce et Decorum Est" to "Jesse Pope etc." [my italics] (Stephen 278), which is certainly indicative of his contempt for the civilian 'mob' of 'scribbling women' at home. The letter of "A Little Mother" in which sons are equated with "human ammunition," quoted in Graves' Goodbye To All That, also became a famous period piece of the Great War to be alluded to in condemnation of women's attitudes at home (202-203). 'Old Men' and war

profiteers were also the special subjects of the outraged poets of the trenches, as in Owen's "The Parable of the Old Man and the Young." Officers and generals were not exempt from hostilities. In the cultural Myth of the War, the enemy seems to include everyone but the Germans.

The unproblematical construction of the Home/Front dichotomy secured in the studies of Bergonzi and Fussell has been complicated by the work of more recent male scholars. Bergonzi states, "the soldier poets developed new modes of expression corresponding with their experience of trench warfare, while the civilians continued unthinkingly to uphold traditional attitudes . . ." [my emphasis] (61). Likewise, Fussell has commented that "from the very beginning a fissure was opening between the Army and civilians" (87), which division he does attribute, in large part, to the extensive use of government propaganda. Hynes argues more pointedly that propaganda aimed to discourage civilian unrest: "As idealism diminished, governmental controls increased; if people would not be voluntarily patriotic they must be compelled to be so" (145). In support of his case, Hynes cites "The Conscription Act" of 1916 as a "means of controlling dissent among male civilians"; "it was not necessary as a means of expanding the army--there were always plenty of recruits" (145). Eksteins problematizes the discussion of Home/Front relations offered by Bergonzi and Fussell by maintaining that soldiers were not only cen-

sored, but practiced self-censorship (181). Eksteins argues that the flow of propaganda between Home and Front was reciprocal in nature. He concludes: "It seems clear that as the war progressed the spirit of the homefront became much poorer than that of the fighting front" (181). Leed focuses on the economic nature of the Home/Front relationship, accounting for the Home/Front dichotomy in terms of the "collapsed" "economy of sacrifice" between the two, maintaining that "the home, which conducted 'business as usual'" could no longer be perceived as a "community" co-extensive with that of the mud and blood-mired combatant (206, 205). However, the absence of a gendered component in Leed's analysis here requires comment. The continuities of industrial capitalism notwithstanding, specific economic changes necessarily took place during wartime, when women were recruited for their labour in the public sphere: "Braybon's analysis shows that by the end of the War there had been an increase of about 1.5 million women in the industrial labour force . . ." (Tylee 11). Such statistics do not include the work of unpaid volunteers and organizers. Surely, this did not amount to 'business as usual.'

The Myth of the War places the Home, whether it is represented by the government, politicians, or women, in a position of culpability for the fate of the trench soldier in the Great War. While I have no wish to deny the experience of suffering of frontsoldiers in the War, as it has

been so movingly recorded in memoirs, poetry and fiction of the period, I believe it is essential to interrogate the monolithic nature of the myth of the victim-soldier in World War I precisely because it has been hypostatized, removed from its socio-historical context; most particularly, it has been excerpted from the context of culturally-informed gender conflict. By 'gender conflict,' I am referring to the conflict between men and masculinities, between women and femininities, as well as to that between specific men and women and various masculinities and femininities. Fussell's notion that innocence was "savaged and destroyed" (335) by the experience of World War I must be problematized. As Stephen points out, "two of the finest pacifist poets of the First World War were awarded the Military Cross for gallantry in action" (7). Eksteins makes a similar point when he concludes that "the war continued, and it continued for one reason: the soldier was willing to keep fighting" (176). And what kept the soldier fighting were middle-class values (Eksteins 177). The values which Eksteins emphasizes include action, physicality, 'courage,' conformism, an adherence to self-regulation--those values epitomized in the Muscular Christianity popularly associated with Charles Kingsley in the second half of the Victorian period.

Muscular Christianity emerged as the dominant manhood discourse as the international contest "to secure colonies

and spheres of influence in Africa and elsewhere" increasingly came to dominate economic and cultural life in Britain (Andreski 302). The binarism through which this discourse of Victorian manhood constituted itself in the age of imperialist expansion linked women, the poor, and the colonized together as 'other' in order to stabilize the claims of Victorian manhood to superiority and justify its abuses of privilege and power. Imperial manhood obtained its 'heroic' representatives, like Cecil Rhodes and Baden-Powell, at the cost of incalculable and enduring suffering to 'others.' Fussell links the "sporting spirit" intrinsic to the code of Muscular Christianity with the "initial British innocence" in the War (25). Elaborating on the "trope of war-as-sport"--a "commonplace" in late nineteenth-century upper-middle-class popular culture--MacDonald observes that "the acme of style was reached in the manner of the soldier's death; to die well was the ultimate glory . . ." ("POW" 22). Muscular Christianity was both an exaggeration and a rejection of the domestic ideology of Victorian Britain which relegated middle-class men and women to public and industrial, and private and familial spheres, respectively. In the late-Victorian period, male privileges were being subject to increasing challenges at home: the 'New Woman' demanded sexual autonomy, and members of the Social Purity Movement offered a social critique of male behaviour with regard to their treatment of women and sex (Jeffreys 6-26).

Fussell's view of the "innocent" nature of the "sporting spirit" (25) thus fails to contextualize the masculine codes of conduct which informed the identities of soldiers who fought in the War within the history of aggression, exploitation, and privilege which characterized dominant male roles and modes of behaviour. 'Muscular' Christianity's strong anti-domestic and anti-feminist components were to complicate the reactions of frontsoldiers to the homefront during the Great War, and were to inform the popular imaging of the British woman during the conflict.

Robert Graves' memoir Goodbye To All That (1929) is a canonical Great War text which illuminates the connections between the discourse of imperial manhood and the opposing constructions of the Home and Front. As well, the memoir's certain, if problematical, status within the Great War canon reveals the manner in which the Victorian institution of separate spheres continues to inform literary scholarship on the area. The memoir filters the experiences of both War and marriage through a self-confessed "conditioning in the Protestant morality of the English governing classes" (282). His text suggests the similarities between War and the homosocial world of the public school: "preparatory school-boys live in a world completely dissociated from home life. They have a different vocabulary, a different moral system, even different voices" (24). Yet, while Graves admits to the traumatic nature of his school and War experiences, his

memoir both indicts and evades the consequences of his "gentleman's education" (17). The memoir is structured around "caricature scenes": "It is rather a satire, built out of anecdotes heavily influenced by the techniques of stage comedy" (Fussell 207). The emotional distancing effected by Graves through his use of caricature enabled him to depict the War in terms of continuity and discontinuity with history (Cobley 53). The ambivalent interrogation of the institution of British middle-to-upper-class masculinity expressed in Graves' memoir is suggestive of the ways in which adherence to gender roles often involves both resistance and complicity.

The brief discussion of Graves' memoir is intended to emphasize the fact that explorations of canonical Great War texts must strive to engage with the contradictions they express. Literature plays a crucial role in securing or displacing gender norms and values. As Hanley has pointed out, "all the memoirists of World War I upon whom Fussell dwells cast some measure of blame on the great tradition of English literature for sending them to war" (28). Hanley's remark is aimed at the very structure of Fussell's inquiry: it does not challenge the canon in any respect. Following the orthodoxy of enforcing the separation between literature which is transcendent and history which is contingent, he relegates the work of the "classic memoirists" that he analyzes to "second rank" status (Fussell ix, 314). (The

military metaphor should not go unnoticed.) He also argues that most of the poetry of the War fails as "durable art" because of its predilection for "simple antithesis" (82). Fussell's study, despite its intended aim of grappling with "the simultaneous and reciprocal [processes]" of life and literature (ix), then, actually enforces, in the words of Ann Ardis, a separation between "an aesthetic of political engagement" and the productions of 'High' Modernist culture (170). What results is the hierarchization of the formal over and above the ideological pleasures and potentialities of literature (Ardis 175).

Because Modernism is often defined in relation to the Great War, the interrogation of texts from the period takes on a particular significance. Hynes' encompassing study of Great War culture leads him to the following conclusion: "Modernism . . . is most fundamentally the forms that post-war artists found for their sense of modern history . . . --a conception of history as discontinuous, fragmented, and subjective" (433). This comment is contextualized within a discussion of Ford's Parade's End, which Hynes describes as "a masterly expression of that mythic view" (433). This series of novels is also analyzed by Bergonzi, who maintains that Tietjens is presented as a "passive and suffering hero," while his wife Sylvia is presented as a woman possessed of an "uncontrolled and unreciprocated sexuality" (180-82). The gendered types in Ford's novel are

culturally-specific post-war expressions of a generalized social conflict which often shapes scholarship on the period. If the Muscular Christian heroic male was transformed into the victim-soldier by the Great War, how did gender-specific discontinuities affect the wartime woman, who had her own distinct sense of "inherited history" (Marcus TNH 137) informed by turn-of-the-century feminism? As in the case of Ford's Sylvia, 'woman' was often perceived as being a mixture of unsympathetic, even monstrous, sexual and professional ambitions. The relative absence of sustained discussion of women's writings on the War has obscured the nature of their contradictory contributions to Modernism. As Barthes states, "however paradoxical it may seem, myth hides nothing: its function is to distort, not to make disappear" (131). Cultural emphasis upon the victim-soldier has obscured the dialectical tensions between the sexes which worked to consolidate such a construction. If, "in the arguments of armies women are useless, and their stories marginal" (Hynes 439), why does the male-authored Myth of the War often make them the pre-eminent recipients of hostility? Why has a kind of cultural contest arisen in the literature and in the scholarship on the period which fixes or inverts a victim/victimizer opposition in its presentation of gendered wartime roles?

* * * *

In The Female Malady, Elaine Showalter relates the

phenomenon of male 'shell-shock' to the so-called hysteria of Victorian women; in her view, shell-shock was a revolt against the social construction of masculinity itself. In the trenches, "men were silenced and immobilized and forced, like women, to express their conflicts through the body" (171). She highlights the use of innovational subject-matter by female modernist writers: "Immediately after the War, in fact, women novelists appropriated the theme of shell-shock and fixed it in the public mind" (190). Jane Marcus goes further than Showalter and argues that "the fragmented bodies of men are reproduced in the fragmented parts of women's war texts, the texts themselves a 'forbidden zone' long ignored by historians and literary critics" (AW 128). Gilbert and Gubar, in their essay, "Soldier's Heart: Literary Men, Literary Women, and the Great War," emphasize the emancipation of women as a corollary of the view of the "publicly powerless" and "privately impotent" soldier in the trenches and the post-war "inhumane new era" (260, 259). They argue that "an apocalypse of masculinism" led to "an apotheosis of femaleness" (262). They emphasize the empowerment of women as a result of the War, speaking of women's "exuberance" (279), "a release of female libinal energies, as well as a liberation of female anger, which . . . women often found exhilarating" (289). Joan Byles supports such a view in less strident terms when she proclaims that women's image of themselves changed in "rad-

ical and irreversible ways" as a result of the War (473).

Gilbert and Gubar's uncomplicated narrative of women's wartime experience is full of exaggerations and historical inaccuracies: women did not gain access to "first-class jobs" and "first-class pay" as a result of the War (276), and they certainly did not "[man] the machines of state" (282) (Tylee "MRR" 207). Since they premise their argument upon "the sense of sexual wounding that haunts so many male modernist texts" ("SH" 262), it is not surprising that their imaging of women in the period seems superficial and derivative. Their essay makes no attempt to differentiate amongst modes of social experience: they do not distinguish between American and British responses, class or generational differences (Tylee "MRR" 200), nor do they distinguish between wartime and post-war writing. Tylee perceives the central problem of their article in its simplistic, unitary assumptions about femininity. Passivity and "covetous aggression" of the kind Gilbert and Gubar celebrate are merely different forms of "powerlessness" (Tylee "MRR" 200). And as Evadne Price's Not So Quiet (1930) or Vera Brittain's Testament of Youth aid in confirming, the "War constructed anonymous, dehumanised Everywoman too" (Tylee "MRR" 202). Gilbert and Gubar's essay utilizes a male frame of reference for discussion and Gilbert and Gubar therefore reproduce the culturally-authorized stereotype of women during the War. Marcus has reason to argue, then, that the net result is a

"confusing and 'othering'" of women readers (TNH 136). Ultimately, Gilbert and Gubar suggest that the exigencies of militarism were an impetus to feminism: women are thus primarily cast into the unproblematical and culturally-freighted role of 'victimizers' in the war. Women's suffering brought about by the War is completely ignored by Gilbert and Gubar, as Jane Marcus takes great pains to emphasize through her discussion of Antonia White's fiction (TNH 136-38). Tylee restores balance to Gilbert and Gubar's picture by arguing that both men and women were victims of a militaristic society (Tylee "MRR" 209). However, as Hanley points out, "Gilbert and Gubar's deployment of the military language Fussell helped make so richly metaphorical has its fine ironies" (34). It should also be emphasized that the work of Gilbert and Gubar has stimulated a great deal of critical discussion on women and their relationship to World War I.

Significantly, Gilbert and Gubar draw on the work of Arthur Marwick, who asserts that the feminist struggle for suffrage was decidedly won by women who served their country in the War (94). Debate on the nature of the gains made by feminists during the War occupies a central place in scholarship on the period, and differentiates it from the strain which has tended to concentrate on the Great War and its cultural myths. Marcus points out that "in women's history, the pre-war cultural achievements of women in politics and

art reached a high point from 1906-1914" (TNH 140). Marwick points to the (partial) gaining of the vote in 1918 as proof of feminist triumph. However, such a reductive equation does not encompass the range of opinion on the argument. Byles argues that the wartime crisis precipitated the interest of many women in the suffrage struggle as they strove for political influence (484). However, many critics, including Marcus (TNH 136), Showalter (197) and Hynes (90), concur in the view that the split of the feminist movement brought about by the War caused it irreparable damage. For instance, the Pankhursts, who headed the militant suffragettes of the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) from 1903 (Rowbotham 82), were divided by the War. The breakdown of the WSPU constitutes a dramatic, specific example of the debilitating effect of the War on many feminist organizations.¹ Many feminist scholars have responded to the work of Gilbert and Gubar through attentive explorations of social and cultural history, in order to illustrate the manner in which the War had disastrous consequences for the organized feminist community.

Jane Marcus, Angela Ingram, and Claire Culleton analyze the government's militaristic interventions in women's behaviour during wartime, detecting in them a continuance of the government's pre-war struggles with militant and non-militant suffragists. Marcus identifies the wartime propaganda, with its images of nurses, mothers, and workers (TNH

140), as a direct response to the "glorious" pre-war feminist propaganda primarily produced by the WSPU (141). She maintains that the images in wartime propaganda were "such effective patriarchal projections that ordinary soldiers and university-educated poets could blame the women at home for the death of their comrades" (141). Ingram traces the censorship policies of the government in terms of the relationship between "canonicity" and "cannon fodder" (326). She argues that censorship and failure to conform to Victorian domestic ideology were directly linked: many literary representations of "unreproducing women" (335), which included spinsters, suicidal women, lesbians and pacifists, were banned under the Defence of the Realm Act. Culleton discusses the confusing and almost comic propaganda which surrounded the women munitions workers of World War I: "Ignoring the 'male' nature of the act they describe, the men explain women munitions work as instinctive, maternal, and sexually titillating" (109). The work of Marcus, Culleton, and Ingram explores the manner in which the government attempted to 'domesticate' women's cultural and industrial efforts outside the home. The governmental resistance analyzed by these scholars supports the connection between "narrativity" and conflict (Huston 271), particularly the importance attached to the role of a passive, fixated female reader of male conflict. As Nancy Huston states, "wars do not end with the 'cessation of hostil-

ities'; they are not over until the right to describe them has been appropriated by one side over and above the other" (274). This statement offers some insight into the marginalization of women's war writing during the period: Huston identifies the way in which women often serve as a pre/text for war, with women's tears often serving as "scan-sion" for male "heroics" (274, 277). The feminist scholars discussed above emphasize the manner in which the government utilized propaganda in order to construct images of women which would serve its militaristic purposes.

Thus, the Great War can be viewed as a period of continuity and discontinuity for British women. Government propaganda attempted to co-opt women's active cultural and industrial involvement in the wartime public sphere by framing it within the familiar outlines of domestic ideology which emphasized women as nurturing presences in the private and public spheres. Middle-class women were divided in their allegiances to the private and public spheres during the War. Women who allied pacifism with feminism were confronted with the prospect of political urgencies which they were often actively prevented from publicly challenging. Even if they were newly conscious of their distinct history as women, generational conflicts often divided women who were previously allied as a sex in the fight for suffrage. My own exploration of these entanglements in wartime and post-war writings will not reveal a homogeneous

'femininity'; rather, it will loose critical discussion of women's literature in the period from the binarism of the Myth which has also served to suppress the contrarities of the socially-constructed masculine experience of the same period.

Tylee's The Great War and Women's Consciousness, originally conceived of as a response to the work of Fussell, discovers misogynist rage in the silencing of women's contributions to the literature of the Great War in the canon and in critical treatments of the subject: "Although the Somme myth ascribes guilt for the deaths of thousands of young men to old men, the final burden of guilt is placed by literature on the shoulders of women" (Tylee 257). Since women had virtually no political power to speak of, proper-tied women over thirty only gaining the vote in 1918, how has such a construction of blame come about? Tylee argues that British propaganda posters, such as the famous, "Women of England Say 'Go'!", have a great deal to do with the persisting image of the hysterically jingoistic war-mongering woman (257). She cites the famous White Feather Campaign as a movement which was highly unrepresentative of women's actual and diverse efforts during the period (257-58). Certainly, women's involvement in the International Peace Conference at the Hague in 1915 has not been incorporated into any popular imagining of the spirit of women's emotions or activities during wartime by their male contem-

poraries.² Both Tylee and Jane Marcus highlight the "double voice of the statue of Nurse Cavell" ("For King and Country" above/"Patriotism is Not Enough" below), for example, in terms of the government's denial of her "radical pacifism" and its manner of "imaging her for their own ends" (Marcus TNH 135; Tylee 258). Tylee, as well as other feminist critics of the Great War, lay special stress upon the extensive uses of censorship and propaganda by the British Government during wartime, particularly the Defence of the Realm Acts, the first of which was passed in 1914, "in five minutes in the House of Commons" (Williams quoted in Ingram 328), to construct images of women for its own purposes.

However, Tylee's wide-ranging work, which is the first of its kind, demonstrates the repressive power which the male-authored myth of the jingoistic, war-mongering woman of the Great War still retains. Her book, with its diverse individual textual analyses, is largely shaped by her attempt to counteract the famous image on the British propaganda poster: "Women of England Say 'Go'!" Her admiration for pacifists and activists, such as Sylvia Pankhurst, is sincere and unswerving. However, her analyses of the work of women like Vera Brittain, who were more inextricably mired in contradictory feelings and attitudes to the War and its soldiers, is often simplistic, even strident, evading the contradictions they present to the feminist critic. In her discussion of the failure of Testament of Youth as a

"generational autobiography" (214), Tylee argues that V. Brittain "gives no details of the history of the women's movement. . . . She actually has very little interest in or respect for other women, even of her own class" (215). Such statements reflect the desire for a digestible and literalistic narrative of feminist struggle. Yet, as Tylee herself acknowledges, "most of the first-hand accounts and imaginative responses to the First World War were written by middle-class women" (16), who, in Vera Brittain's words, had "carefully trained consciences": middle-class women's war-time identities were necessarily constituted of ceaseless negotiations between internal and external "incompatible claims" (TY 401). Along with Celeste Schenck, I would argue that the apparently conservative forms of women's writing, those which inhabit "the dispersive underside of the Modernist monolith," may often mask "a more radical politics than we [have] considered possible" (231). Yet, along with Jane Marcus, I would not attempt to maintain that "all female art is alibi" (WWE 272). Women's complicity in war and women's resistance to war deserve equal attention in critical scholarship, if essentialist myths about men and women are to be addressed and displaced.

Tylee states the interrogative aim of her book in the following terms: "what cushioned the imaginative drive of women's writing so that their myths were stifled?" (17). She acknowledges the fact that neither women's nor men's

"written memory" of the War was "homogeneous" (15). The women's myths that she uncovers, however, remain contextualized within the culturally-dominant male myths which have traditionally taken precedence over women's experiences of the War in literary and critical scholarship. Nevertheless, Tylee's work accomplishes its project of initiating revision of the one-sided scholarship on the period. Her study asserts the importance of myth for women within the context of male-authored history and critical discussion.

Recent feminist literary scholars, particularly Jane Marcus, have often turned to social history in order to politicize the exclusion of women's World War I writing from the canon and critical studies such as The Great War and Modern Memory and Heroes' Twilight. What the work of these feminist scholars illustrates is that "men do not have with myth a relationship based on truth but on use; they depoliticize according to their needs" (Barthes 157). Feminist scholarship on the War decenters the homosocial narrative of the War as it was produced by victim-soldiers and reproduced in studies of its canon/ized literature. However, the very stridency inherent in the critical projects of Tylee and Gilbert and Gubar reveals the struggle for "metalanguage" in "the speech of the oppressed": their "one language" is that of "emancipation" (Barthes 161-62). While feminist scholars must resist the experience of myth as "innocent speech," as Barthes points out, they must inevitably retain complicity

in the social formations of industrial capitalism, or condemn themselves "to live in a theoretical sociality" (142, 171). Scholarship on World War I and its literature must struggle to remain attentive to the instability of communities which both construct and resist historical myths.

Notes

Chapter 1

1. "The militant tactics of the WSPU," as Rowbotham states, "were born of despair after years of patient constitutionalism" (84). Militant actions began in 1905 and steadily increased thereafter. The first hunger strike occurred in 1909. Window smashing began in late 1911. Arson and hunger-striking characterized the organization's actions after 1911. However, "The Suffragette changed its name in 1915 to Brittania and supported military conscription for men, industrial conscription for women" (Rowbotham 116). While Sylvia Pankhurst focused her energies on the dilemmas of working class women and pacifism, Christabel and Emmeline Pankhurst supported the War. For discussion of the WSPU, see Sheila Rowbotham, Hidden From History (1973) and Martha Vicinus, Independent Women (1985).
2. In the Spring of 1915, Dr. Aletta Jacobs of Holland proposed that an international gathering of women should meet to deliberate on alternatives to war, in lieu of the usual conference devoted to suffrage issues. "One hundred and eighty British women wanted to attend, but the government first restricted the number to twenty-five, making its own selection, and then announced that the North Sea was closed to shipping; only three British women who were already out of the country managed to reach the Hague" (Vellacott 94). See Jo Vellacott, "Feminist Consciousness and The First World War." History Workshop Journal 23 (1987): 81-101. Also see Anne Wiltsher, Most Dangerous Women: Feminist Peace Campaigners of the Great War (1985).

Chapter 2

The Tree of Heaven and The Crowded Street:

Feminism and The Great War

The little vortex of the Woman's Movement was swept without a sound into the immense vortex of the War. The women rose up all over England and went into uniform.

May Sinclair The Tree of Heaven

For those who were in it, the War brought suffering, and anxiety and blinding sorrow. But these were glorious.

Winifred Holtby The Crowded Street

Feminist scholarship on the early modern period is often concerned with the impact of the Great War upon the newly emergent communities of women created by the feminist movement. Gilbert and Gubar have argued that women were 'emancipated' by World War I, and that women's culture was strengthened as "the fragmentation of male community" "accelerated" during wartime (NML 302, 323). In A Literature of Their Own, Elaine Showalter argues that "Virginia Woolf and her generation tried to create a power base in inner space, an aesthetic that championed the feminine

consciousness and asserted its superiority to the public, rationalist masculine world" (298). Showalter discerns this trend in the women writers of the suffrage period (1900-1918) as well (239). The critical positions of Gilbert and Gubar, and Showalter, as they are outlined above, 'fix' female subjectivity during the wartime period within the public and private spheres, respectively. Both critical positions are responses to the question often posed by scholars and social historians of the early twentieth century regarding the impact of World War I upon the tradition of feminist struggle which preceded it, particularly in light of the partial granting of suffrage to women of property over age 30 in 1918. However, neither of the generalized viewpoints of Showalter and Gilbert and Gubar pertaining to women's wartime and post-war fiction addresses the range and positionality of female subjectivities constructed in May Sinclair's The Tree of Heaven (1917) and Winifred Holtby's The Crowded Street (1924).

Certainly, war is an event which impinges on both the public and private spheres. It cannot be denied that both men and women participate in the suffering of war. Similarly, national community and 'adventure' are not meaningful solely to men (Segal 194). For instance, Brittain writes of the Great War: "while it lasts no emotion known to man seems as yet to have quite the compelling power of this enlarged vitality" (TY 292). In critical discussion on the period,

"female complicity in warmaking has been overlooked" in order to perpetuate a "polarized gender system" in which "men fight while women remain at home preserving the domestic front" (AW Cooper et al. xiii). Such essentialism is apparently reproduced in the texts of Sinclair and Holtby, which are firmly grounded in the institution of the family and take place in civilian settings, and which valorize the War and/or its impact upon the female subjects and their communities. However, these literary texts are retrospective social histories which are rife with contradictions regarding the interactions of their female subjects in the public and private spheres in the context of War.

The Tree of Heaven and The Crowded Street must be distinguished in terms of their fictional mediation of World War I. The Tree of Heaven, a best-seller in The United States in 1917 (McDowell 231), is often read as propaganda for the War. Holtby's text is also freighted with a certain propagandistic intent: it advances many of the ideas of egalitarian feminist organizations which revised their agendas after the Armistice. The fictional women of both texts are participants in the public sphere during the War. However, it must be emphasized that the sex-segregation of World War I effectively extended the institution of separate spheres through the agency of geographical and psychological factors. The particular pressures and traumas placed upon volunteer and conscript national male communities in the

First World War have received a great deal of critical and popular attention. But World War I also created female communities which raised new and specific problems for their members, many of which have been simplified or overlooked. The civilian women of Britain coped with competing internalized pressures and public messages. Women were inevitably encouraged to conform to conventional female roles--wife, mother, nurse--during the War (Marcus AW 129). Middle-class women were actively recruited by the wartime government for services when they had formerly been denied entry to professions and democratic political power. Many women who had been trained and habituated solely to domestic routine faced bereavement and/or lifelong 'superfluity' in post-war society. Not surprisingly, then, both texts under consideration construct a dichotomy between individual subjectivity and collective action. The Tree of Heaven and The Crowded Street juxtapose World War I and organized feminism to different effect: their explorations of these social movements make them ideal textual sites from which to investigate the impact of the War on women's culture in the Modernist period.

The central female subjects in The Tree of Heaven and The Crowded Street wrest opposing senses of community out of their experiences of war and 'femininity.' Dorothea Harrison in The Tree of Heaven regrets the time she wasted on "silly suffrage" after her fiancé is killed in the retreat

from Mons (TH 276). Even after his death, she keeps her promise to him to avoid relief work at the Front. While she is depicted as a figure of great independence and vitality, the War is the occasion for her realization that it is "the biggest fight for freedom . . ." (TH 277) and she is belatedly ushered into a consciousness of her more conventional affiliations with other women, after rejecting the possibilities afforded her through feminist struggle in a collective organization. By way of contrast, the structure of Holtby's text effectively highlights women's individual agency in the context of exposure to collective feminist struggle. Muriel Hammond in The Crowded Street romanticizes war and even suffering, because outside of marriage all other chances at fulfillment are denied her. The devastation of war affords her the opportunity to become "housekeeper" (CS 236) and bookkeeper for an activist female friend, after the latter's fiancé is killed in wartime. Through personal tragedy and exposure to her friend's feminist convictions, Muriel initiates an inner life of her own through which she is able to reject marriage. Thus, the type and degree of complicity of these novels in 'warmaking' is complicated by their constructions of feminism and its effects.

In the analysis which follows, I will discuss the fictional construction of feminism in these novels in order to explore the civilian communities of women created by World War I. Both texts depict feminism in terms of gener-

ational conflict between mother and daughter. Each text, then, constructs 'conventional' and 'transgressive' female subject-positions. The Tree of Heaven seeks to naturalize the status of its mother-daughter conflict, while in The Crowded Street the daughter's rejection of the mother precipitates her involvement with feminism. Both texts, though, are controlled by their fundamentally contradictory explorations of the interactions of women within the public and private spheres. The Tree of Heaven and The Crowded Street fictionalize the struggles of female subjects to construct social values for themselves in the absence of men, and in opposition to them. Yet, ironically, both texts rely on military metaphor in their constructions of feminism and feminist interaction. Sinclair presents men as essential to community, and the War is therefore constructed as the most legitimate space of social action and belonging in The Tree of Heaven. Holtby's text fictionalizes the War in terms of its exclusion of the central female subject from the ongoing concerns of her society. However, The Crowded Street ultimately affirms the value and necessity of female-specific community. Both novels construct narratives of social change for the approximate period 1900-1920, and as such, they are both retrospective histories: the War controls the discursive parameters of these texts. In Sinclair's text, the War functions as both point of origin and culminating crisis in the nexus of subject-positions and

fictionally-mediated historical events. In Holtby's post-war text, the War's social repercussions are emphasized. As such, both texts functioned to constitute the slowly crystallizing Myth of the War in Britain with its central oppositions of old and young, men and women, Home and Front, government and soldier (Hynes AWI 439). Holtby's exploration of the War highlights the importance of women's struggles in the private sphere in order that they may gain access to their own public forum. As Laura Stempel Mumford points out, Sinclair denies the importance of struggle in the private sphere by celebrating the kind of social unity and individual insights attainable only through War (179). Comparative textual analysis will be preceded by a brief discussion of critical scholarship on the novels, the introduction of relevant biographical information, and a discussion of each writer's feminist views.

Discussing The Tree of Heaven, Theophilus Boll remarks that "no novel of May Sinclair's has so much description of, and so many judgements upon, social conditions and social values" (237). Yet, in Sinclair's novel, all social conditions and social values find their point of culmination in the War. Her novel is organized by the dialectic of "Peace," "Vortex" and "Victory," or War, which is described by a man departing to the front as "a state of mind" (TH 297). Sinclair's text is structured around the opposition between individual and collective experience, so it is

certainly problematic that the final section devoted to the War is titled "Victory" and is concerned with the climactic moments of metaphysical discovery for her individual male and female subjects (Boll 238). Tylee speaks of The Tree of Heaven as a "family saga" which continues "to preach the Victorian message of the spiritual value of War" (131, 132), while Hynes classes the book in a category he calls "war-generation histories" which emphasized the discontinuities rather than the continuities of history (AWI 248). He states that this historically-specific genre was "concerned with the forces of change at work, the social, political, moral, religious, philosophical ideas that brought England to a war, and Victorianism to its death" (249). Mumford argues that "both feminism and World War I lose any specific political dimensions in Sinclair's presentation of them" (175) because her text is constructed to secure essentialist gender norms: "by maintaining the Homeric ideal of a heroic transcendence attainable only through battle, she also maintains the secondary position of women" (179). As is evidenced by the above discussion, The Tree of Heaven is certainly characterized by its "slipperiness" (Tylee GWWC 131). For instance, a "'feminist'" is constructed in the text to discredit "her own movement," and the novel works to "reinscribe the mass hysteria of war as individual heroism" (Marcus AW 136). In Sinclair's fiction, the War is presented as the most viable forum for male and female collec-

tive action.

The Crowded Street also concerns itself with the relationship between the individual subject and the collectivity. Holtby's text constructs the subjectivities of women in pre-war, wartime, and post-war settings. Each section of the text is dated and titled by the name of a significant woman in Muriel Hammond's realm of experience: the last "Book" is titled after Muriel herself. Thus, Muriel's attainment of a kind of unmediated female subjectivity apparently controls the trajectory of the narrative. Yet, Muriel's painful efforts to achieve a measure of self-authorization in the midst of overwhelmingly prescriptive "voices" (CS 232) are often contradicted by the ideological weight of egalitarian feminist rhetoric, as espoused in the text by Delia Vaughan: "the thing that matters is to take your life into your own hands and live it, accepting responsibility for failure or success" (232). While The Crowded Street apparently resolves itself in a celebration of women's power in terms of 'choice' and 'responsibility,' much of the narrative functions to undermine such simplistic statements through its detailed explorations of Muriel's futile efforts to combat externalized and internalized patriarchal authority.

Vera Brittain refers to The Crowded Street as a novel which "describe[s] 'woman's inhumanity to woman' in the matrimonial game" (TF 160). She speculates that "Winifred

produced in Delia Vaughan a partial . . . imaginary reconstruction" of her own "war-time self" (TF 160). Holtby's attempt to explore feminism and oppression within a programmatic framework led to great frustration. She berated the book as a "dull, trivial story" (quoted in Hardistry x) and completely destroyed the first draft in a "rage" of "anguished exasperation" (Brittain TF 162). Certainly, from such evidence alone we are led to "suspect a very great personal involvement in the story" (Hardistry x). Tylee locates the central conflict of The Crowded Street in its advocacy of unmarried fulfillment for women and its linking of "sexual rejection" with "the sordid backwash of war" in the flight of Muriel and others into a refuse-dump during the Scarborough bombardment (201), which ultimately constitutes anything but a "supreme adventure" (CS 124). However, Muriel's brush with war and danger is strategically situated within the narrative: Muriel must realize that the "magic experience lying just beyond the confines of daily life" (TF 162) which she seeks in external occasions or contingencies has its source in active engagement with the world. While the text presents the post-war social climate as crucial to Muriel's ability to escape the confines of home, Muriel's desire to become involved in the collective emotions and activities of the War at almost any cost is presented as having its appropriate outlet in Delia Vaughan's feminist organization. In Three Guineas (1938), Virginia Woolf

comments on women's involvement in the "amazing outburst of 1914," when they volunteered en masse in the service of war: "So profound was her unconscious loathing for the education of the private house with its cruelty, its poverty, its hypocrisy, its immorality, its inanity that she would undertake any task however menial, exercise any fascination however fatal that enabled her to escape" (207-208). The Crowded Street is primarily concerned with the escape of two sisters from the private house and "the education of the private house" (Woolf TG 208). In this connection, Beauman is correct in foregrounding the role of mother-daughter conflict in The Crowded Street (54-56). Holtby's text foregrounds 'war' within the private house, and locates its origin within the institution of femininity itself.

Both May Sinclair and Winifred Holtby were actively involved in the public sphere throughout their careers. Neither woman married. Sinclair was the advocate of many diverse causes through both written articles and financial support. Sinclair funded and helped organize the Medico-Psychological Clinic in London, which was founded by two women and was "the first public clinic in England to offer psychoanalytic treatment" (Showalter FM 197). She was also active in psychic and philosophical societies. She supported the innovative aesthetic experiments of Eliot, Pound, H.D. and Dorothy Richardson, among others, through her periodical publications. As well, "she gave adequate defi-

niton, sympathetic understanding, and enthusiastic support to the stream-of-consciousness novel which most critics at that time misunderstood" (Zegger 145).¹ Despite Boll's claim that Sinclair's part in the struggle for suffrage was "modest" (87), the fact remains that Sinclair "worked in the Women's Freedom League and the Women Writers Suffrage League, both non-militant groups; she collected money in December 1908 for the more radical Women's Social and Political Union" (McDowell 233). Her Journal of Impressions in Belgium (1915) was based on her three-week experience with an ambulance unit in 1914 during the War. Despite her influential role as an artist, which she drew upon in support of many public causes, and despite her participation in the War, Sinclair argued in a 1912 article as well as in Impressions and The Tree of Heaven that "it is only by danger and hardship faced and endured by men that civilization and comfort have been made possible for any of us" ("ADM" 557). In 1920, in "Worse Than War," Sinclair continued to uphold the "military necessity" of the War, while she urged the Allies to offer humanitarian aid to its victims (150).

After a year at Somerville College, Winifred Holtby also offered her services to the War effort. She served for a year under Jean McWilliam, "the officer in charge of the WAAC unit at Huchenville where Winifred was the hostel forewoman" (Berry 21). Her first journalistic success took

the War as its occasion. Her description of the German raid on Scarborough (which she witnessed as a schoolgirl), fictionally incorporated into The Crowded Street, "was not only prominently featured in the Bridlington Chronicle, but was also syndicated in Australia" (Berry 18). After taking degrees in History at Oxford, Holtby and Brittain rented a flat in London, and embarked upon lifelong writing careers. After her 1926 trip to South Africa and her appointment to the executive of Time and Tide in the same year, Holtby's political engagements brought both greater influence and responsibility. One of her most significant contributions to contemporary political affairs was her support of the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (I.C.U.), a natives' trade union founded in Cape Town, South Africa, in 1919 (Berry 22). In Mandoa, Mandoa!, "her reflections on British Imperialism took final shape" out of materials for a non-fiction book she had planned on the history of the I.C.U. (Brittain TF 249-250). At Time and Tide, her task primarily involved reporting on "contemporary events and controversies" (Berry 24), which work exposed her to the diverse social currents of her time. Throughout her life, she and Brittain were extremely active in internationalist movements, particularly The League of Nations. Holtby confessed to being in a "perpetually divided state," torn between "the private nunnery of the mind" in which she felt her creative work was best served, and the public world with

its "incessant call of the passing moment which makes the good journalist" (quoted in Brittain TF 268).

The feminist beliefs of each writer, as they were expressed through journalism, must be examined in some detail if their constructions of the War are to be understood in terms of wartime discourses of 'femininity.' The views of each writer regarding the feminist movement illuminate their respective constructions of female subjects and female community in the novels under discussion. Sinclair was born in 1863, and Holtby in 1898; thus, a generation of feminist agitation, reform and opportunity separated them. While Holtby graduated from Oxford in History, "Sinclair educated herself from books, except for a few piano lessons and a single year in 1881 at Cheltenham Ladies' College" under Dorothea Beale, who was one of the most prominent Victorian reformers active in the struggle for higher education for women (McDowell 231). Both Beale and Sinclair were influenced by the "mystical idealist" Thomas Hill Green (McDowell 233). Green's brand of idealism, in Hrisey Zegger's view, "was the dominant philosophy of the late Victorian period" (18). Green combined social reform with an anti-materialist position in metaphysics and an anti-naturalist position in ethics (Walsh 388). In A Defense of Idealism (1917) and The New Idealism (1922), Sinclair defended the idealist position against contemporary developments in philosophy. Sinclair's feminism was adapted to her

understanding of Green's idealism: "the ideal of self-realization goes hand in hand with a strong sense of duty and even of self-sacrifice" (Zegger 21).

In her article, "A Defence of Men" (1912), Sinclair comes to the following conclusion: the "consecration of woman's womanhood to suffering, that foreordained sacrifice of her flesh, that perpetual payment in blood and tears, is no more to be altered than it is to be gainsaid" (559). Regarding men and their traditional assignation to the public sphere, she writes, "the struggle and labour of getting are not favourable to the development of the highest spirituality" (560). Sinclair declares that "the social tradition has followed more or less the laws of physiological function" (559); and yet, in her exploration of the interaction of men and women in the context of Victorian Eugenics and Idealism, she consistently places "Nature at the bottom of History" (Barthes 108). Sinclair asserts that woman is the "guardian and saviour" of the "Race," and that she must give man "his chance" rather than strive for changes in social structure or material inequalities ("A Defence" 564, 566). What is particularly interesting about Sinclair's article is that it was formulated as a direct response to the "Feminists" of her day, and constitutes a carefully considered attempt to situate men and women in dynamic relation to one another in the context of contemporary social problems. While squarely placing the burden

of the struggle for greater gender equality upon women, Sinclair observes with some astuteness that "the Woman Question has brought a most formidable Man Question in its train" (558). Of women, she maintains, "She preys, not only with her strength, but with the irresistible appeal of her weakness" (562). In Mary Olivier (1919), which is one of Sinclair's most innovative texts, "the author suggests how particular notions of gender are transmitted from one generation to the next, how women can act as agents of other women's oppression in a patriarchal culture" (Radford "Introduction" vi). From Sinclair's revealing article of 1912, it can be observed that her feminism is constituted of many popular strains of late-Victorian ideas which ultimately stress the spiritual superiority and responsibility of women as individual agents in society. Like the WSPU, Sinclair claims "moral leadership" for women (Vicinus 254-55). Ironically enough, though, in The Tree of Heaven Sinclair satirizes the militant spirit and tactics of that organization.

While Sinclair was active in women's struggles for suffrage during the most intense period of its assaults on the government and property that were engineered by the militant WSPU during the Edwardian period, Holtby became active in feminist politics as part of the second generation of feminist struggle in the twentieth century, after the partial granting of the vote in 1918. Winifred Holtby once

credited her friend Vera Brittain with teaching her to "be a feminist" (Berry 20-21). Holtby confesses, "I am one of the very few women I know who went to Oxford because my mother wished it, rather than from any very strong personal impetus or scholastic pressure or family tradition" ("AWL" 273). She continues, "I was never opposed; I was grossly, undeservedly, and with astonishing optimism, encouraged from the outset . . ." (275). It is probable that such humble and guilty statements find their point of origin in Holtby's awareness of Brittain's experiences of early discouragement as she strove to gain a Somerville exhibition to Oxford (Brittain TY 59-77).

In her 1926 article, "Feminism Divided," Holtby declares, "Personally, I am a feminist, and an Old Feminist, because I dislike everything that feminism implies. I desire an end of the whole business, the demands for equality, the suggestions of sex-warfare, the very name of feminist" (48). Holtby's political beliefs regarding both gender and racial inequality were grounded in the tradition of liberal humanism. More particularly, Holtby's convictions, as expressed in "Feminism Divided," should be contextualized within a contemporary conflict of feminist means and methods as women's organizations sought to respond to the partial gains of 1918. This conflict centered on the emergence of a brand of feminist struggle which was, in some respects, opposed to the egalitarian traditions of the pre-war organ-

izations, militant and non-militant, which agitated for suffrage. In Holtby's words, "the New Feminism emphasizes the importance of the 'women's point of view,' the Old Feminism believes in the primary importance of the human being" (47). After 1918, "in formulating a new program for action the question of what constituted a feminist reform was raised for the first time" (Lewis 2). In 1922, Holtby and Brittain chose to join the Six Point Group, founded in 1921 by Viscountess Rhondda, director of Time and Tide.⁷

Like the National Union of Societies for Women's Suffrage (NUWSS), which became the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship (NUSEC) in 1919 (Lewis 2), the Six Point Group aimed for "Equal Rights." The Six Point Group hoped to achieve its aims through Acts of Parliament (Lewis 4). Lady Rhondda's organization was dedicated to the egalitarianism of the 'Old' feminist groups which agitated for suffrage. By way of contrast, the New Feminism concerned itself with the disadvantages which women experienced in patriarchal society, particularly due to their reproductive role. In sum, "new feminist theory recognized that women as a sex had no say in the organization and functioning of society, of which fact the low status of the mother seemed to offer the most eloquent proof" (Lewis 14). In an article concerned with "economic feminism," Brittain argues that "the gigantic task of making feminism social as well as political, legal and economic belongs to the future"; in the

meantime, the post-war feminist must accept "the idea of self-support as a moral principle, a duty as obvious as it has hitherto been for men" ("CVP" 106). In contrast to the New Feminists, the older Egalitarian Feminists "insisted on a private solution: having broken down all the barriers to women's advancement in society it would be up to each woman to forge her own destiny, regardless of whether or not the ground rules weighed against her" (Lewis 13). Holtby speaks of the "dream" of the Old Feminists in terms of the achievement of a society which is based upon "a supreme regard for the importance of the human being" ("FD" 49). In this imagined future, "feminism" will become "a disbanded but victorious army . . . the hour for its necessity . . . passed" (49-50). Holtby's use of militaristic discourse to frame a utopian feminism reveals the manner in which women transposed the male collectivity of war onto their own sense of political struggle for community. It also reflects the influence of the pre-war struggles of the militant Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU), which systematically exploited military images and metaphors in its campaign to secure their demands from the hostile government.³

When Muriel Hammond of The Crowded Street confronts the 'transgressive' feminist Delia Vaughan, she maintains that she had "no choice" in the course of her life (CS 232). In an earlier confrontation with Mrs. Godfrey Neale, the prosperous widow of "Weare Grange," Muriel states flatly, "men

do as they like. . . . We just wait to see what they will do. It's not our fault. Things just happen to us, or they don't" (132). Mrs. Neale retorts, "stuff and nonsense. A clever woman can do as she likes" (132). Delia, who has been educated at Newnham, discusses Muriel's predicament with her father, a vicar, who has noticed that Muriel's apathy was "almost indecent": "Conversation with Muriel was like conversation with a gramophone" (216). Delia discusses Muriel's predicament with her father while she blows out "a squadron of smoke rings" and glibly speaks of Muriel's "immense credulity and ridiculous desire to live up to other people's ideas of her" (228, 229). Delia is described as having "tobacco-stained fingers," "the face of a fighter prematurely old" (229). Given the numerous military images and metaphors which are crucial to the fictional construction of Delia Vaughan, it is not surprising that Delia equates Muriel's "self-deprecation" with "cowardice" (231). Muriel admits to "cowardice," and her encounter with Delia approximates the confrontation of an army recruiting officer with a conscientious objector, a feminist 'shirker.'

Muriel qualifies her admission of so-called cowardice, however, by admitting, "I was afraid quite genuinely of hurting other people, of my own limitations, of the crash and jar of temperament" (CS 232). By way of contrast, Delia is able to confess freely to her father, "however hard I work for some sort of vague idea of a regenerated society, I

always seem to be fighting people instead of loving them" (229). In Book II of The Crowded Street, Delia is condemned by the prominent mothers of Marshington as "lacking in a sense of duty" to her father, for planning to go to college; she is discussed in terms of her "disagreeable" nature, and her "sheer ill-breeding" (46, 47). Godfrey Neale, the male object of all matrimonial dreams in the text, confesses his fear of Delia to Muriel, likening her to "the Day of Judgment" (52). To Muriel, Delia seems "queer, graceful and confusing" (89). Throughout most of the text, Muriel is positioned on the periphery of her mother's 'conventional' domestic ideology and Delia's 'transgressive' combative feminism.

It is significant that the only women in Muriel's age-group who are free of the handicap of internalized feminine norms, Clare Duquesne and Delia Vaughan, are without immediate maternal influence. Clare is described as "fearless of life, loved by it and its lover" (CS 34). Muriel feels "adoration" for Clare (34): "to see Clare was an education; to speak with her a high adventure" (33). Clare is a free-spirited and overtly sexual presence in the text, who enthralls Muriel for her easy defiance of "the education of the private house" (Woolf TG 208). While we learn that Clare's mother is an Irish-American actress (CS 32), Delia's mother has apparently died long ago, and, as such, Delia is subject only to paternal influence. The vicar is depicted

as a man who "fled to the study of the limitations of his countrymen in former centuries and found it consoling" (212). As an antiquarian, he disputes the notion that Delia can succeed in her attempt to change human nature through parliamentary reform (105). Nevertheless, his relative lack of involvement in the lives of his parishioners also provides the pattern for his benevolent policy of non-interference in his daughter's life. Even when his "serene detachment" is broken as a result of his fears for Muriel's spiritual health, he invites his daughter to deal with Muriel as a "problem" (213) and removes himself from the scene. While Delia is able to externalize aggression in both public and private life, Muriel's unexpressed and confused rage becomes self-consuming. Muriel is depicted through images which suggest a city under siege. Her "aversion" to her mother "lacked spirit even to be violent" (218). She is characterized in terms of "blinding" depression (219) and an insatiable hunger for experience (142-43). The vicar and Delia agree that "her light has gone out" (229), as if she were evading bombardment. Muriel's battle takes place in silence, within the body, and within her family: the vicar senses between Muriel and her mother "the clash and tension of their personalities as clearly as though swords had crossed" (218).

The Tree of Heaven and The Crowded Street both construct profoundly ruptured mother-daughter relations. Like

Delia Vaughan, Dorothea Harrison of The Tree of Heaven attends Newnham, taking a First in Economics (97). Dorothea is not opposed in this by her mother, whose "firm, tight little character defended itself against any form of intellectual disturbance" (11). However, Frances Harrison adores her three male sons over and above her husband and daughter: "she had not taken one of them for granted, not even Dorothy" [my emphasis] (13). Frances' desire to "see herself in the bodies of her sons and in the mind of her daughter" (18) reflects profound tensions within this late-Victorian family.⁴ She disowns her daughter's body, and calls her "Anthony's daughter": she thinks of Dorothy in terms of "Anthony's face and body made feminine" (87). Frances both fears and secretly admires Dorothy's "truthfulness," her "disdain of conventions and hypocrisies": Frances was "sorry and always would be sorry for not being what she ought to be; and Dorothy never would be sorry for being what she was" (18, 19, 20). This results in a recurring condition of being "in disgrace and yet not in disgrace" with her mother for speaking her mind (63). Dorothea's unconscious violations of the psychological economy of the private house exclude her from the unconditional affection of her mother. While Dorothea is unafflicted with what Frances conceives of as "the pathos" of her unmarried sisters (224), or the hypochondria and dipsomania of her male relations, Bartholomew and Maurice, respectively, she is relegated outside the

'magic circle' of the family in much the same manner as they. The gulf between mother and daughter in The Tree of Heaven forces Dorothy to seek out an emotional and intellectual companion from her own generation: "Dorothy was not going to be her mother's companion, or her father's, either; she was Rosalind Jervis's companion" (39).

However, conflict over feminist means and methods ultimately divides Dorothy from her closest female companion. When Rosalind and Dorothy attend Cheltenham School together, Dorothy writes home, "I have to hold myself in so as to keep in the same class with Rosalind" (TH 80). She hopes that they will be able to attend Newnham together. They share "a joyous air of being in command" (98) as they approach a feminist meeting arranged at Dorothy's home. Yet, the proceedings of the meeting of the "Committee of the North Hampstead Branch of the Women's Franchise Union," of which Rosalind is the president (101), effectively put an end to their friendship. Dorothy and other women protest when Rosalind does not distinguish between constitutional and unconstitutional means of working for suffrage. Miss Maud Blackadder intervenes, calling herself a "recruiting sergeant" (103). Presumably, Blackadder is modelled upon Christabel Pankhurst, the flamboyant militant from the WSPU: "Christabel Pankhurst repeatedly spoke of battles, a war with the Liberal party, and army discipline" (Vicinus 261). Blackadder demands that women must give up any affiliation

with men who do not struggle with them for suffrage (TH 104). Miss Blackadder's attempt to instill a sense of the value of female-specific community in the women is greeted with Dorothy's assertion that such a high "price" will prove to be counter-productive to their aims (106). Blackadder is also careful to explain the type of women required by the movement: "Fighting women, not talkers--not writers--not thinkers are what we want!" (105). In The Tree of Heaven, as in The Crowded Street, organized feminism is constructed in terms of military metaphor. Miss Blackadder, depicted as a simplistic and bullying authoritarian, elicits Dorothy's protests against "blind, unquestioning obedience" (106).⁵ When Blackadder challenges Dorothy's "honour," (i.e. calls her a 'coward') her friend Rosalind does not offer up "one heroic, defending word": Rosalind "hadn't the strength to resist the pull and the grip and the drive of other people" (109). And yet, "the weakness that made her depend on Dorothy to start her were the qualities that attracted Dorothy to Rosalind from the beginning" (109). The attraction reveals Dorothy's lack of a sense of affiliation with her own mother. After the encounter at the meeting, she assumes responsibility in her home for a conflict involving her brother: "Dorothy had grown up, and she was there to protect and not to be protected. However agreeable it might have been to confide in her mother, it wouldn't have done" (117). Dorothea must 'fight her own battles,' since she is

isolated within her family and within the feminist community.

While the views of Dorothy and Rosalind clash with regard to the tactics to be used by women to achieve suffrage, they also disagree on the manner in which family politics contribute to the oppression of women. We learn that Rosalind Jervis has taken rooms in Chelsea, "for Mrs. Jervis was hostile to Women's Franchise" (TH 113). Not surprisingly, almost all the members of the Harrison family denigrate Rosalind for talking "revolting rot" (141) and being a "bouncing, fluffy flapper" (98). Quite simply, Mrs. Harrison views Rosalind as "unsatisfactory" (228). Rosalind's transgressions of conventional gender norms are thereby presented in terms of their foolishness and extremity. After their suffrage meeting, Rosalind tells Dorothy that she should also consider leaving home. When Dorothy maintains that her family members are "angels," Rosalind replies, "that's why they're so dangerous. They couldn't influence you if they weren't angels" (115). Dorothy argues that her family doesn't influence her "the least little bit," particularly because her mother "doesn't care enough" to stop her (115). At the close of the novel, as the last male child departs to the Front, the mother-daughter confrontation becomes explicit. After the death of her fiancé, Frances tells Dorothy, "from beginning to end you had nothing" (356). It is when Dorothy requests assistance from

her mother in choosing a wedding dress that Frances senses her maternal neglect: "this grown-up Dorothy in khaki breeches, with her talk about white frocks and blue frocks, made Frances want to cry" (270). Dorothy tells her mother that she "couldn't help" caring more for her sons than for herself: "It was natural" [my emphasis] (356). While Dorothy admits that she has "learned to do without," her mother calls her daughter "very big and generous," confessing, "I used to think you didn't want me" (356). The fact remains, though, that it is only with the departure of her sons from the home that Frances is able to respond to the emotional needs of her husband and daughter. Dorothea's feminist revolt is split between the levels of thinking and feeling (TH 116, 144) most likely because she has internalized a sense of emotional exclusion from her own gender learned through her mother's behaviour. During the War, Dorothy exclaims, "It's a war that makes it detestable to be a woman" (265). Despite Dorothy's conviction that she must struggle for social change on her own initiative, her exclusion from masculinity and its privileges predicates and confuses the textual presentation of her involvement with feminism.

In The Tree of Heaven and The Crowded Street, the fractured nature of female subjectivity is most obviously revealed in the context of their explorations of sexuality. While Frank Drayton's attempts to court Dorothea through

discussion and intellectual debate prove unsuccessful, he sweeps her into his arms with the express intention of eliciting a repressed 'femininity': he thinks, "She shall come alive. She shall feel. She shall want me. I'll make her" (TH 267). The urgency of danger intensifies her response to him. While Dorothy later regrets the time she wasted on "silly suffrage" (TH 276) when she could have been Frank's wife, Muriel Hammond's single sexual encounter with a male leaves her with a crippling knowledge of the manner in which her mother has interposed herself between her sense of possibility and her ability to act for herself. When Godfrey Neale kisses her after the Scarborough bombardment, she cannot convince herself of the reality of the event: "This was a dream" (CS 126). Her mother calls to her, and she runs. Muriel attributes her passivity in the face of romantic opportunity to "the deathliness of spirit that her years of failure had left for her": "until he had kissed her, she had never looked like this into the future, to see how it held nothing more of life for her" (129). Both the War and Godfrey had served to focus Muriel's lingering hopes that life still held some "supreme adventure" in store for her (124). In opposition to The Tree of Heaven, The Crowded Street works with the fictional conventions of romance in order to subvert them, particularly where war and heterosexual passion intersect.

In The Crowded Street, Godfrey Neale serves as a trope

for the myth of marital fulfillment for women. Prior to the Scarborough bombardment, Muriel had met Godfrey at "the Princess Royal Hotel," where she felt like "a princess in a fairy tale suddenly released from her enchantment" (116, 117). However, her romantic illusions are disrupted by a more realistic appraisal of her 'prince' and her own feelings towards him. She realizes that "nine-tenths of him was just the practical country squire, devoted to his estate and his position" (118). She feels that he is "a little stupid and lacking in imagination," somewhat thoughtless with regard to his attentions to women as a result of his unquestioning assumptions about himself and his privileged position (117). Her meditations on Godfrey are interrupted by the bombardment. Believing that England is being invaded, she experiences "elation" at her own courage and the apparent courage of others (122). She meets Godfrey: "She thought that he was going to his death, and then the thought came to her that she loved him. Here at last she had found all that she had been seeking" (123). Both illusions fade. Just as Godfrey forgets that he has kissed Muriel and fails to correspond with her, "the supreme adventure had dwindled into an uncomfortable wandering among the smells and indecencies of a refuse dump on the outskirts of Scarborough" (124). Such experiences prepare Muriel to reject the transformative authority of external events in relation to herself: she later rejects Godfrey's proposal, maintaining

that a "perfect marriage is a splendid thing, but that does not mean that the second best thing is an imperfect marriage" (269).

By way of contrast, Dorothea's involvement with Frank Drayton begins with a kind of feminist opposition, and ends in passionate acquiescence to the values embodied in him and the War. Frank Drayton is an army gunner before the outbreak of World War I, awaiting "a bigger job in the Ordnance Department" (TH 127). He and Nicky Harrison collaborate on a model of "the Moving Fortress," the tank. Dorothea admires Frank's body, which was "made all of one piece" (126), and she learns from her Aunt that "once, at an up-country station in India, he had stopped a mutiny in a native battery by laughing in the men's faces" (127). Such a detail denotes Frank Drayton's construction within the imperialist manhood discourse of Muscular Christianity. The most significant encounter in the novel between Drayton and Dorothy takes place when he goes to Holloway Jail to pick her up after she has been arrested for her participation in a feminist demonstration. Frank maintains that he is not "moved, or touched, or even interested" in her Holloway adventure (186). He informs her that her actions were motivated primarily by her desire to oppose his wishes. Dorothy concurs: "I should go again tomorrow for the same reason" (187). Sinclair's opposition of feminism and romance ultimately collapses in the face of the War.

Moreover, Dorothy's 'adventure' in Holloway Jail and the 'adventure' of being a soldier are directly linked in The Tree of Heaven. After Dorothy's confrontation with Rosalind at the Suffrage meeting, we read that

Dorothy was afraid of the Feminist Vortex. . . . She was sick and shy before the tremor and surge of collective feeling; she loathed the gestures and movements of the collective soul, the swaying and heaving and rushing forward of the many as one. She would not be carried by it; she would keep the clearness and hardness of her soul. . . . She would fight for freedom, but not in their way and not at their bidding.
(TH 110)

So why did Dorothy participate in the feminist demonstration? Dorothy explains her participation in the riot by describing her reaction to the sight of brutality inflicted upon women in the crowd: "I couldn't have left them then any more than I could have left children in a burning house" (190). Dorothy's argument for her participation in the riot has its equivalent in Frances Harrison's arguments with her son Michael about enlisting. Frances asks her son, "How can you bear to let other men fight for you?" (284). She argues that the soldiers are "fighting for everything that's weak

and defenceless" (285). Despite Michael's wartime devotion to poetry, he ultimately realizes that he had "funked it all the time" (337). While at the Front, Michael writes home that "nothing--not even poetry--can beat an infantry charge when you're leading it" (345). For Sinclair, individual prerogatives must be surrendered in the face of danger because danger is "the point of contact with reality, and death the closest point . . . you lay hold on eternal life" (347). Sinclair's idealist construction of war secures the conventional opposition between cowardice and bravery crucial to the construction of imperial manhood.

Certainly, Sinclair's idealism also complicates her construction of feminism in a wartime context. The religious overtones in Sinclair's construction of the War become pronounced in Dorothy's account of her prison experience. Dorothy reads the Bible in her cell, which she likens to "a convent cell" (192). In jail, Dorothea has intimations of the coming War, wherein the "Woman's Suffrage business was only a small part of it, a small ridiculous part" (193). She informs Frank that she "sort of saw the redeemed of the Lord," men as well as women, who were "all free" (193). Dorothy is constructed as a curious hybrid of individualistic feminism and Victorian 'femininity.' She is situated within both 'transgressive' and 'conventional' subject-positions. After the War has been declared, Drayton goes to see Dorothy: "he strained her slender body fast to him,

straight against his own straightness, till the passion and the youth she had denied and destroyed shook her" (TH 267). She regrets the fact that they are never allowed the opportunity to consummate their union, although she fears Frank's knowledge of her sexual regrets (267). Frank tells Dorothy that he realizes that she "couldn't stay out" of suffrage just for him; he also tells her that he must go to war for himself as well as for her (269). Before he departs for the front (where he is killed), he asks that she consent to his request that she not serve her ambulance unit near the line of fire (274-75), while he informs her that "it's your War, too--it's the biggest fight for freedom---" (275). Thus, Sinclair constructs the Edwardian feminist movement as an "intimation" (Mumford 177) of war, a smaller and subsidiary struggle. In contrast to Muriel, who discovers her own "tastes and inclinations" and "personality" (CS 270) as a result of her exposure to London and feminism, Dorothy eventually feels an "anguish of remorse for all that she had wasted" (TH 279). After Frank's death, Dorothy agrees to live at home with her mother, while she also insists on continuing her war work (356). Thus, essentialist and feminist gender discourses collide in the construction of Dorothy Harrison. Sinclair's construction of Dorothy is indicative of the contradictory ideologies of femininity which attended the feminist struggle in the wake of the Great War.

While Dorothea writes articles which insist upon the reform of the marriage institution and while she advocates the right of all women to bear children (TH 116), Muriel advocates "an idea of service--not just vague and sentimental, but translated into quite practical things" (CS 270). Obviously, Muriel's dream of "service" and her role as Delia Vaughan's "housekeeper" (236) correspond with conventional Victorian 'feminine' roles and norms. Yet, it must be emphasized that The Crowded Street attempts to depict Muriel's transition to public life from the physical and psychological confines of the private house. Accordingly, Muriel informs Delia that she has had "the best of both worlds" (233)--that is, the public and the private spheres. Muriel qualifies her acquiescence to Delia's imperatives of 'choice' and 'responsibility' by asking, "How can you know what blindness is when you can see?" (234). The text carefully delineates the manner in which punitive responses to unconscious resistance to patriarchal norms are internalized.

Even to the eleven year-old Muriel, "the regulations of the world" are perceived as both "alarming and incomprehensible" (17). At her first party, she learns that "the regulations of the world" forbid a middle-class girl both solitude and initiative. The young Muriel scrawls names upon her own unfilled dance program and eats a chocolate before the refreshments have been served to the others: "An

invisible hand flung wide the door, and they were upon her" (18). "They" denotes the prescriptive social gaze which ultimately blinds Muriel to her own vision of herself. Accordingly, Muriel is denounced by her mother and ridiculed by others. Muriel's traumatic experience at the party is repeated at school, where "the accidental regulations of Marshington life were shaken out of their environment and transformed into infallible rules" (28). The school enforces middle-class Victorian norms for girls, as expressed in Mrs. Hancock's parting words to Muriel, "'Be good, sweet maid, and let who will be clever'," as well as in the school motto, "Laeta sorte mea," translated as, "Happy in my lot" (41-42). When she requests lessons on astronomy and mathematics from her teacher, Muriel is not only actively discouraged, but placed in a sewing class. Muriel internalizes the blame for her desires: "The world was all right. It was she who was wrong, caring for all the wrong things" (41). Muriel commences her "first season" of social life "in a state of frigid and self-conscious terror": "the eye of the All-Seeing could hardly have been more observant than the eye of People, who measured worth by the difference between a cotton and a linen handkerchief" (45, 44). Because Muriel is prepared solely for matrimony, her sexual rejection is inevitably interpreted as exile from a common 'femininity' based upon the experiences of being loved and needed. When she meets Delia, Muriel admits to

feeling that her "nature" cut her off from other women, made her "different" (233). In The Crowded Street, Muriel's dilemmas within patriarchal society are delineated with great subtlety, and her difficulties obviously defy Delia's simplistic assertions regarding the importance of individual responsibility and 'choice,' which views Holtby also advanced under the auspices of The Six Point Group.

Through her association with Delia, Muriel begins to overcome her tragic inability to act for herself. Under Delia the "recruiting sergeant," Muriel becomes "a grave little lieutenant" (245). When she prepares a flat for herself and Delia, Muriel is confident that for the first time in her life she had done well (240). Delia, "tall, dynamic, ruthless" (241), is constructed as the 'masculine' half of their household, which reveals Holtby's reliance on the heterosexual paradigm of relations which the book aims to subvert. Muriel accepts with "chastened fortitude" the rebukes of Delia for her lack of initiative and she slowly begins to ground her own thoughts and experiences within a wider social and economic context: "Her concentration upon the intensely personal problem vanished" (243). Muriel effects a decisive change when she is forced to encounter Godfrey Neale at their London flat. Before their meeting, Muriel is armed with a variety of new ideas regarding herself and her 'femininity.' In the London flat, she and Godfrey face each other "like antagonists" (250). She

realizes that "it had been herself, not Godfrey, who had filled her dreams" (251): Godfrey Neale was representative of her own projected ambition and initiative. Realizing that Godfrey was "an embodiment of a legend, not all of his own making" (252), Muriel assists him to deal with his experience of sexual rejection by Clare Duquesne. When Muriel returns to Marshington, her mother notices that she "was more sure of herself" (259). After the Armistice, she attends a party for the British Legion at Godfrey's estate: "The British Legion, linking up village with village and class with class in memory of a glorious army, was not this a noble thing?" (258). Muriel's exposure to feminism is linked to a climate of post-war social change and optimism. While Delia's society, "The Twentieth Century Reform League," is run by women, Delia describes her own "dream of service" in terms of military metaphor--"an army without distinction of class or age moving towards the betterment of England" (243). Holtby's own phrasing of the aims of feminist struggle in "Feminism Divided" echoes Delia's phrasing of feminist social struggle. Muriel's place within Delia's reforming "feminist army" seems assured at the end of the novel. However, Muriel's experience of "the education of the private house," in the words of Virginia Woolf (TG 208), will inevitably complicate her contributions to Delia's programmatic feminist organization (CS 234).

Holtby's construction of feminism is diametrically

opposed to the tenets of Victorian domestic ideology as they are embodied in Muriel's mother, Mrs. Hammond. In The Crowded Street, it is Muriel's sister Connie who most dramatically actualizes the contradictions in Mrs. Hammond's position regarding her daughters. Connie's actions pose a direct challenge to Delia's insistence on women's freedom of choice in shaping the direction of their lives. Mrs. Hammond devotes her life to social climbing after she marries beneath her social class; and she calculates her every action according to its effect on social opinion (260). Even her service in the War is motivated by her attempt to gain glory and recognition in the suburb of Marshington after one of its families is celebrated for its escape from Germany after the outbreak of War. In the face of her husband's extra-marital affairs, Mrs. Hammond is "determined to kill pity by admiration for her patriotism" (CS 114). Above all things, Mrs. Hammond fears the unmarried, 'superfluous' status of her daughters. When Connie returns home from land service, she informs her family that she is pregnant and unmarried. Mrs. Hammond rocks "backwards and forwards on the sofa in comfortless distress" while Connie yells, "now that one of us has taken the only means she saw to fulfill your wishes and get married, and it hasn't come off, you're very angry, aren't you, but you aren't sorry . . ." (152). Connie's transgressive sexual initiative is born of defiance and despair; yet her actions eventuate in her submission to

conventional gender norms for her class and time. Her pregnancy effectively reduces her choice of options to marriage, which reduction reflects the compelling nature of New Feminist arguments which Holtby herself denied in "Feminism Divided."

At her death, Connie's husband echoes the beliefs of his father: "It was for the ungodliness o' my soul . . . the Lord took my wife and my child" (208). Muriel cannot believe that Connie was "an instrument of God sent for the punishment of any man's misdeeds" (208). Despite Connie's desperate 'choice' to marry at any cost, her actions are appropriated and contextualized within the misogynist doctrine of Original Sin. Connie's fate only serves to support Muriel's view that in marriage to Godfrey Neale she would cease to be a person (270). After Connie's death, her mother offers little resistance when Muriel decides to go to London with Delia. Meanwhile, Mrs. Hammond, consummate social opportunist, does not fail to take the opportunity of "publishing over the bridge table the news of her conversation to modernity" [sic?] (239). Muriel continues to fear the influence of Marshington's narrow prescriptive roles for women, as they are embodied in her mother and reflected in her sister's fate, even after she has taken up residence in London (269). Thus, Holtby does not present the psychological effects of Muriel's developing feminist awareness in simplistic terms.

If Mrs. Hammond is primarily concerned with social status in The Crowded Street, Frances Harrison of The Tree of Heaven is almost solely concerned with the eugenic perfection of her sons: "She looked on Maurice and Emmeline and Bartie as scapegoats, bearers of the hereditary taint, whose affliction left her children clean" (224). Her relations with Dorothy prove that Frances is deluded in her belief that she has failed to "inherit . . . the secret cruelty of sex" (25) from her own mother, who still attempts to undermine her three unmarried daughters with an "inimical, disapproving look" (21). Frances' complacent family happiness is contrasted with the daily miseries of her unmarried sisters, whom she patronizes. However, Frances' view that "everything that really mattered endured" (12) is altered by the War. When her children grow up, Frances is described as confronting "the close of an epoch": "she had become, or was at any rate trying to become, a social creature" (222). Frances' nationalism competes with family loyalty during the War.

After two of her sons have died in the War, Frances confesses to jealousy of her friend's daughter, Veronica, who resides with the Harrison family (354). Veronica is actually the illegitimate daughter of Frances' friend Vera and a man named Captain Cameron. Veronica is likened to "a meaningless counter" in the domestic warfare between her parents (89). In the "immense security" (90) of the Har-

rison home, despite the abuse and suffering in her past, Veronica uses her gift of "second sight" to strengthen and support the members of the Harrison family: "That's why they're so magnificently brave" (314), she confesses to her husband Nicky, Frances' son. When her husband dies in the War, Veronica feels a "rush of pure, mysterious happiness" (324); she also claims to have inspired Dorothy's visionary experience in jail. Veronica is chosen to march at the head of the parade of the Women's Franchise Union, carrying a pole with an olive wreath and a dove, symbolizing "the peace that follows victory" (199). The procession "marched to an unheard music, to the rhythm that was in Veronica's brain" (200). Thus, Veronica is constructed as the spiritual center of the text, in opposition to the divided feminist, Dorothy, and the materially-anchored mother, Frances Harrison. In her state of bereavement, Frances is offered "the souls of her dead sons" through Veronica: "She was the mediator between her and their souls" (353). Sinclair constructs Veronica as the epitome of the spiritual woman, the type Sinclair celebrated in "A Defence of Men"; through her superior moral nature, the cause of the War is advanced in terms of both the male and female communities that it creates. It is also implied that feminism gains its greatest strength from the spiritual refinements of individual women, although it may secure some benefit from efforts at social reform.

The exploration of The Tree of Heaven and The Crowded Street offered above illuminates the critical debate on the effect of World War I on female community. Sinclair foregrounds the role of war and male community in her textual construction of cultural change, stressing the limited role of women in effecting gender-specific socio-economic change. She draws upon the Victorian view of women as domesticating agents within society, celebrating their spiritual 'superiority.' Yet, through her construction of Dorothy Harrison, she also valorizes the struggles of individual feminists. Certainly, Sinclair's stress is always on the individual soul. As Mumford writes, "in The Tree of Heaven we see a rejection, even a denial, of the satisfactions of collective action celebrated by many of her contemporaries and by feminists today" (179). Holtby, on the other hand, foregrounds the struggles of women to shape their own lives independently of men. The emphasis of her text on individual female agency is often contradicted by a more imaginative conception of the dilemmas of feminist struggle which takes the complex process of female acculturation in patriarchal society for its context. Sinclair and, in particular, Holtby, display the difficulties of fictionalizing turn-of-the-century female community through their reliance on the rhetoric of the War in constructing feminist aims and interaction. While Sinclair celebrates the nature of heterosexual union in her text, Holtby's novel betrays the

difficulty of eluding a heterosexual paradigm in the construction of relations between women. Holtby celebrates the post-war developments which she believes have rendered female community viable. By constructing war as a metaphysical centre for society, Sinclair inevitably relegates women to a secondary status (cf. Mumford 179). While Sinclair's ideas regarding women and their place within the institution of the family take on a more complex psychological dimension in Mary Olivier (1919), Winifred Holtby was perhaps never to explore feminism in her writing in a manner so attentive to contradiction as in The Crowded Street. In Women and a Changing Civilization (1934), as in "Feminism Divided" (1926), Holtby continued to look forward to a future in which the work of feminists would no longer be necessary.

Chapter 2

1. May Sinclair was the writer who coined the term "stream of consciousness" in her article, "The Novels of Dorothy Richardson": "In this series there is no drama, no situation, no set scene. Nothing happens. It is just life going on and on. It is Miriam Henderson's stream of consciousness going on and on . . ." (5-6). See The Little Review 5.12 (1918): 3-11.
2. According to Vera Brittain, The Six Point Group agitated for reform in the following six areas: "pensions for widows, equal right of guardianship for married parents, the improvement of the laws dealing with child assault and the position of the unmarried mother, equal pay for teachers, and equal opportunities for men and women in the Civil Service" (Testament of Youth 583).
3. Martha Vicinus writes: "Joining the WSPU meant joining a spiritual army. . . . The language, iconography, and ultimately the behaviour of the WSPU portrayed an army at war with society" (Independent Women 260-61).
4. See Stephen Kern's "Explosive Intimacy: Psychodynamics of the Victorian Family" (History of Childhood Quarterly: The Journal of Psychohistory 1.3 [1974]: 437-461) for a discussion of the manner in which confused ideas about "the nature of cultural, infectious, and hereditary transmission from parent to child" affected late-Victorian family relationships (439).
5. Certainly, the autocratic nature of the WSPU cannot be disputed: "The members did not even have a vote in their own movement" (Rowbotham, Hidden From History 87).

Chapter 3

The Return of the Soldier and Mrs Dalloway:

The Female Subject and the Shell-Shocked Veteran

In order to fit into the pattern one sometimes has to forgo something of one's individual beauty.

Rebecca West The Return of the Soldier

There was an embrace in death.

Virginia Woolf Mrs Dalloway

Rebecca West's The Return of the Soldier (1918) and Virginia Woolf's Mrs Dalloway (1925) do not depict the life of infantry officers in the trenches. Their texts, perhaps as a consequence, have often been excluded from critical histories of the literature of the Great War. But their texts are surely and firmly contextualized within the cultural currents which attended the Great War and its aftermath. Certainly, these works could be classified, as they traditionally have been, as 'women's novels': "They generally have little action and less histrionics--they are about the 'drama of the undramatic,' the steadfast dailiness of a life that brings its own rewards, the intensity of the emotions, and, above all, the importance of human relation-

ships" (Beauman 5). And yet, something more than the maintenance of canonical or aesthetic hierarchies is involved in the bracketing of these novels solely in terms of their female authorship. For one thing, these novels of the Great War effectively collapse the Victorian distinction between the private and public spheres, a paradigm which has persistently if unconsciously informed the twentieth-century shaping of critical discussion of Great War literature.

The Return of the Soldier and Mrs Dalloway collapse the dichotomy of Front and Home as it was promulgated by government propaganda and the poetry of protest of well-educated and predominantly "unmarried" soldiers of the officer class (Stephen 264). In a 1917 review of Sassoon's The Old Huntsman and Other Poems, Woolf writes: "such loathing, such hatred accumulates behind them that we say to ourselves, 'Yes, this is going on; and we are sitting here watching it,' with a new shock of surprise, with an uneasy desire to leave our place in the audience . . ." (in McNellie 120). Despite, or because of, their domestic settings, The Return of the Soldier and Mrs Dalloway are chiefly concerned with the social and interpersonal power relations in British community life which ultimately supported and sustained the cultural upheaval of the Great War. West's novel was one of the first English novels about shell-shock and one of the first to feature a psychiatrist as a character (Hynes AWI 212). Both she and Woolf "appropriated the theme of shell-

shock, and fixed it in the public mind" (Showalter FM 190) as they sought to establish the distinctions and connections between socially-constructed gender roles, repression and violence. Clearly, the combative fictions of West and Woolf designate their refusal to remain passive spectators of the theatre of war.

Both West and Woolf were active as journalists and literary critics. In their literary criticism as in their fiction, they strove to delineate the complex interactions between the domestic and public spheres. As women, they often strove to bring their private experience to bear upon their appraisals of texts and public institutions in ways which challenged and complicated contemporary critical discourse. Virginia Woolf struggled throughout her writing career to capture the transitory and contradictory nature of male and female subjectivity. For Woolf, "thousands of emotions have met, collided, and disappeared in astonishing disorder" in "one day" ("CIF" 436). In her essay "Modern Fiction," Woolf acknowledges that the interest of the modern novelist "lies very likely in the dark places of psychology" (CR 192). Yet, in "Freudian Fiction" (1920), Woolf deplores the use of psychoanalytic theory as "a patent key that opens every door," turning the representation of individuals into "cases" (197). Similarly, she argues that the Victorian assignation of epithets or "[keywords]" in the establishment of character is wanting in complexity ("Mr Bennett and Mrs

Brown" 386). In her attempt to contend with the difficulties faced by the writer of fiction in her time, she ranges the Edwardians, among whom she includes "Mr Wells, Mr Bennett, and Mr Galsworthy," against the Georgians, among whom she includes "Mr Forster, Mr Lawrence . . . Mr Joyce" ("Character In Fiction" 421). She identifies the Edwardians as "materialists" who "write of unimportant things . . . making the trivial and the transitory appear the true and enduring" ("MF" 185, 187): "the Edwardians were never interested in character in itself; or in the book itself" ("CIF" 428). Her views of Edwardian fiction should be contrasted with her immensely appreciative readings of Russian fiction: "Indeed, it is the soul that is the chief character in Russian fiction" ("The Russian Point of View" CR 225). In her literary criticism, Woolf stresses the importance of psychological complexity, while her later feminist work stresses the intimate linkage of personal with political realities (TG 364).

"The prevailing sound of the Georgian age," in Woolf's view, is "the sound of breaking and falling, crashing and destruction" ("CIF" 434). For Woolf, the "tools appropriate to house building and house breaking" inherited from the Edwardians must serve the new generation of novelists in their attempt to depict "Mrs Brown," a female personage whom she identifies as "the spirit we live by, life itself" ("CIF" 436). Woolf describes Mrs Brown, a woman on a train,

poor and oppressed by some menacing matter of business, as "eternal," as "human nature," as "life" ("CIF" 430). What Woolf seems to detect in Mrs Brown is an infinite suggestiveness--that is, a complex ebb and flow of consciousness which she feels has never been adequately expressed by her contemporaries. Given her later publication of A Room of One's Own (1928), which emphasizes women's need for a private income and spatial privacy, it is significant that Woolf depicts "Mrs Brown" as a woman who is harassed into intermittent silences and displays of emotion in a public compartment. Woolf's literary criticism returns again and again to the image and architecture of the house being constructed and destroyed. Certainly, she is given to a distrust of keys which would presume to unlock and intrude upon complexly furnished and inhabited rooms. The recurring image of the house in her criticism testifies not only to her ambivalence towards her painful personal experience of the violating tumult of the Victorian household, but also to her need as a woman writer to assess and overcome the prescriptive authority of Victorian culture.

In her essay "How Should One Read A Book?," Woolf presents herself, along with other readers of biography, as one who stands outside a house "where the lights are lit and the blinds not yet drawn, and each floor of the house shows us a different section of human life in being" (CR II 284-285). Woolf clearly views the psyche as a structure. She

speaks of "life" as a "semi-transparent envelope" ("MF" CR I 189). To convey her conception of the "soul" she often has recourse to spatial metaphors: in a diary entry on Mrs Dalloway in 1923, for example, she writes, "how I dig out beautiful caves behind my characters; I think that gives exactly what I want; humanity, humour, depth. The idea is that the caves shall connect, & each comes to daylight at the present moment" (Diary 263). In the mind of Clarissa Dalloway, "the supreme mystery . . . was simply this: here was one room; there another. Did religion solve that, or love?" (Mrs Dalloway 166-67). As Makiko Minow-Pinkney observes, "the so-called 'stream of consciousness' or 'indirect interior monologue' based on represented speech allows [Woolf's] discourse to move from a character's interior world to the exterior world (or vice versa) in a homogeneous medium, which produces a continuous indeterminacy" (55). Woolf's innovational prose medium and her criticisms of her contemporaries give some indication of her desire to contend with the legacy of Victorian Britain in a manner which unites both the personal and cultural aspects of that inheritance.

Like Virginia Woolf, Rebecca West (pseudonym for Cicely Fairfield) was an extremely prolific writer of criticism and journalism from an early age. However, West's political concerns informed her earliest literary efforts: her "first publication was an impassioned letter to the editor, demand-

ing votes for women, written at the age of fourteen" (Marcus "I" TJ 3). In The New Republic of 1914, she wrote of her "duty" to establish "a new and abusive school of criticism" (Orel 8). In fact, it was her satirical review of H.G. Wells' Marriage which precipitated their ten-year affair. In 1916, she published a monograph on Henry James which expressed her admiration for his work with a few significant qualifications. She deplores James' "nagging hostility to political effort" as it finds expression in The Bostonians (HJ 72). She also criticizes that "which is not peculiar to Mr James, but is part of the social atmosphere of his time": "the persistent presentation of woman not as a human but as a sexual being" (HJ 53). Yet, her concern with aesthetic matters also informed her early literary criticism: of the Decadents, she asserts that "it was of inestimable value that it should be cried, no matter in how pert a voice, that words are jewels which, wisely set, make by their shining mental light" (HJ 81-82). Of special significance to an examination of The Return of the Soldier is West's praise of the Jamesian art of "significant omission" (Glendinning 2): "if one had a really 'great scene' one ought to leave it out and describe it simply by the full relation of its consequences . . . " (HJ 95-96). Like Woolf, West attempted to combine both aesthetic and political interests in her criticism and fiction.

However, in contrast with Woolf, West was "unwilling to

believe in stream of consciousness as an improvement over our customary ways of reproducing the idioms of speech and thought" (Orel 35). She refers to some of Joyce's more idiosyncratic narrative passages as "verbal sneezes" (SN 35). In her somewhat "tongue in cheek" (Deakin 58) essay, "Uncle Bennett," presumably written in response to Woolf's essays concerning the Edwardians, West pays homage to the "Uncles, the Big Four: H.G. Wells, George Bernard Shaw, John Galsworthy and Arnold Bennett" (SN 199). For West, Wells "illustrated as well as it has ever been done the relationship between man and his times" ("UB" 199); Shaw "popularized the use of the intellectual processes among the politically effective class" (200); Galsworthy effectively and persistently castigated the English middle class (202); and Bennett's naturalistic accretions, she argues, "travel slowly and surely toward sacredness" (211). "Uncle Bennett" reflects West's conviction that the artist and his/her society exist in a state of mutually informing dependence. Whereas Woolf shows a marked preference for post-Edwardian writers in her literary criticism, as Orel points out, West "is consistent in her view that 1914-18 is the watershed of the twentieth century": hers is the belief that "Edwardian values were superior to those that replaced them" (123). West's novels have not received the scrutiny of Woolf's, perhaps because what they emphasize is not foregrounded by that aesthetic innovation which has come to be most closely

associated with the canonized works of High Modernism. The recent work of feminist scholars like Victoria Glendinning and Jane Marcus has highlighted both her aesthetic complexity and 'radical' subject-matter.

The Return of the Soldier and Mrs Dalloway focus primarily on female subjectivity. However, both texts can be read as subtle explorations of the British social structure as it entraps both male and female subjects. These novels interrogate, through suggestive and indirect means, the relationship between the 'sheltered' non-combatant female subjects and their shell-shocked male contemporaries. Both novelists depict soldiers as 'victims,' which portrayal reflects their participation in the formation of the Myth of the Great War (Hynes AWI 449). Both novelists challenge the Victorian conception of military cowardice, which was necessarily modified by the many cases of 'male hysteria' treated in wartime and, particularly, in post-war settings.' As Eric Leed observes, the conditions of trench warfare often led to shell-shock or complete nervous collapse, because those conditions shattered "distinctions that were central to orderly thought, communicable experience, and normal human relations" (21). As a result of shell-shock, according to Showalter, "the Great War was the first, and so far, the last time in the twentieth century that men and the wrongs of men occupied a central position in the history of madness" (FM 194). Showalter's arguments regarding the

narrative explorations of socially-constructed gender roles in The Return of the Soldier and Mrs Dalloway are persuasive. She argues that West grasps "the connections between male hysteria and a whole range of male social obligations" (191). Regarding Mrs Dalloway, she argues that "the shell-shocked veteran" is connected "with the repressed woman of the man-governed world through their common enemy, the nerve specialist" (192). Given Woolf's own history of psychiatric treatment, it is intriguing to note that Mrs Dalloway, with its furious and sustained attack on the institution of psychiatry, was "the first of her novels to be completed without the interruption of mental breakdown" (Tomalin xxxii). Showalter's observations will be amplified and developed for the purposes of this study.

Woolf's critique of psychiatry is only part of her larger critique of socially-sanctioned coercive practices and internalized assumptions regarding male and female roles in her society. West's novel also connects "the shell-shocked veteran with the repressed woman of the man-governed world" (Showalter FM 192). West and Woolf depict very different varieties of psychiatrists and 'mad' soldiers. Yet, both texts present subjects, most notably Clarissa Dalloway and Septimus Smith, Jenny and Chris Baldry, who variously observe the dictates of what Christine Froula has labelled "the hysterical cultural script: the cultural text that dictates to males and females alike the necessity of silenc-

ing women's speech when it threatens the father's power" (623). Mrs. Dalloway and The Return of the Soldier ultimately locate the father's power in the modern State. The male and female subjects in both texts experience the father's power through internalized gender norms which create complex states of sexual repression. They also experience the father's power through the State and its representatives--psychiatrists, the recruiting officer. In these texts, the victim-soldiers of the War focus the narrative exploration of female subjectivities in states of psychological crisis. In fact, these texts ground 'war' within the subject; they imply that there are many similarities between surviving the Front and surviving the cumulative, daily repressions of civilian life. Both texts ground their explorations of subjectivity in the problematical nature of male and female sexuality. In The Return of the Soldier and Mrs. Dalloway, heterosexuality is a crisis-ridden construct which functions as an indicator of the larger conflicts within post-war patriarchal society. In fact, West and Woolf use the shell-shocked veteran as a trope for the myth of male community within patriarchy. The shell-shocked veteran in these texts threatens the unitary nature of patriarchy which serves as a structure of opposition and appropriation for female community in The Tree of Heaven and The Crowded Street.

While Sinclair and Holtby merely draw on military metaphor and the military model of collectivity to construct

female community, West and Woolf construct individual female subjectivity in direct relation to the traumatized male subjectivities of shell-shocked veterans. The phenomenon of shell-shock forced post-war men and women to question the contestation of social value solely in terms of gender conflict and to reappraise the nature of institutional structures and the nature of social change. If men were not the uncomplicated benefactors of patriarchy, whose ends were served by it? As a result of the War, the processes of male subjectivity became socially visible and discursively accessible in terms of victimization and madness. Rather than emphasizing oppression as female-specific, West and Woolf draw upon the historical occasion of War and the psychological 'window' of shell-shock to explore the basis and nature of gender oppression common to men and women. While the texts of Sinclair and Holtby explore female community in relation to World War I, the texts of West and Woolf construct a post-1914 social community created by War, and it is a community based on a shared sense of social oppression. West and Woolf do not attempt to erase gender difference in their texts, but neither do they foreground it in the manner of Sinclair and Holtby.

Both The Return of the Soldier and Mrs Dalloway present lower-class female subjects whose apparent defiance of the father's power allows the middle-to-upper-class female subjects some measure of insight into their affinity with

the more overtly coerced and traumatized male soldiers who are subjected to psychiatric intervention and 'cure.' The physical deaths of the war veterans, actual in Mrs Dalloway, and probably imminent in The Return of the Soldier, take on a symbolic value for the veterans and their female 'doubles,' Clarissa and Jenny. Overt speculations on the Great War and its effects are present in both novels. Even more significantly, both novels make use of pastoral settings to explore the apparent freedom of the subject in forging a sexual identity with some independence from socially-prescribed sexual roles. These settings are violently disrupted in both novels and are directly contrasted with the pervasive presence of socially-coercive structures and class and gender hierarchy with which the subjects are forced to seek reconciliation in the wartime and post-war worlds. A review of relevant scholarship on Mrs Dalloway and The Return of the Soldier will precede a concentrated examination of 'femininity' as it is constructed in each text. The discussion will then explore the parallels drawn between the experience of male and female gendered identity in the novels.

How does Woolf connect the trenches of World War I with domesticity? In her largely biographical "Introduction" to the sources and construction of Mrs Dalloway, Claire Tomalin rightly observes that "the great power of the book lies in this question as to how Septimus and Clarissa are connected

with one another" (xxxii). While Septimus is a lower-class veteran, Clarissa is a middle-aged society hostess married to a Conservative member of Parliament. Tomalin concludes her reading of this question by stating that "it is being addressed by the author to herself . . . she is both the celebrant and the mourner, both the person who is driven mad and the beloved at the party--both Clarissa Dalloway and Septimus Smith" (xxxii). In the light of recent work on Woolf, I am unwilling to dismiss such an interpretation, although it may be seen as somewhat expedient and incomplete. Clarissa Dalloway, even in the opening pages of the novel, is said to have "a perpetual sense . . . of being out, out, far out to sea and alone; she always had the feeling that it was very, very dangerous to live even one day" (MD 10). In Louise De Salvo's disturbing and persuasive study, Virginia Woolf: The Impact of Childhood Sexual Abuse on Her Life and Work, the critic explores Woolf's traumatized sense of fragility and "preoccupation with embodiment" (Trombley 33): "she did not take her right to exist for granted; she considered it almost a miracle that she continued to survive" (De Salvo 102). Significantly, Woolf originally intended Clarissa's suicide at the height of her party. In the final version of Mrs Dalloway, Clarissa only meditates on the suicide of Septimus Smith at her party. Jane Novak speculates that Woolf's implementation of the "double-plot" in Mrs Dalloway may have been influenced

by her reading of Dostoyevsky and the "doppelgangers" within his fictions rather than by the Bloom-Deadalus connection in Joyce's Ulysses (112), which she was also reading at the time.

Samuel Hynes and Gilbert and Gubar do not foreground the role of biographical factors in their discussions of Mrs Dalloway. Instead, they strive to illuminate the relationship between Clarissa and Septimus by relating Woolf's text to the broad patterns of cultural history. Gilbert and Gubar contextualize their discussion of Mrs Dalloway through reference to Eliot's The Waste Land. They argue that Woolf "examines the asymmetrical gender meanings that the war had for its survivors" (315), revising Eliot's poem concerned with male impotence and "toxic" women by portraying "a country where women are not just triumphant survivors but also potential redeemers and potent inheritors" (317). In their view, the War liberates Clarissa while it condemns Septimus to madness and death. Thus, they harness Woolf's fiction into the service of their hotly-disputed thesis that the Great War represented an unprecedented period of emancipation for women. However, they are forced to acknowledge that "not all the women in Mrs Dalloway are redemptive or powerful" (317), which acknowledgement is in itself a substantial indictment of the post-war realities which they need to overlook to support their argument. As Makiko Minow-Pinkney maintains, "what is crucial is not how Clar-

issa deciphers Septimus' suicide, but that she deciphers it, that a relation is established between the two figures" (79).

Hynes argues that Mrs Dalloway "shares the nostalgia for Victorian and Edwardian England that informs Jacob's Room": "Virginia Woolf fashioned a very Bloomsburyish Myth of the War, a myth that has a first term, the remembered world-before-the-war, and a last term, the world after, but no middle" (AWI 344-45). Certainly, it cannot be denied that "her novel is located in history," but Hynes' reading seems simplistic: "There was a time that was comfortable and happy, before war came with its cruelty and its madness, and ended all that" (345). What of Clarissa's reaction to her interrupted kiss with Sally Seton during the supposed 'idyll' at Bourton: "It was like running one's face against a granite wall in the darkness! It was shocking; it was horrible!" (MD 46). The analyses of Hynes and Gilbert and Gubar contextualize Woolf's fiction within broad historical post-war patterns, yet they are not adequately attuned to the specific complexities of the gender conflict which inform the entire text.

Regarding Tomalin's question as to the nature of the relationship between the female non-combatant and the shell-shocked veteran in Mrs Dalloway, Tylee argues that Clarissa Dalloway's "emotional frigidity" is what connects her to "the suicide of a mad veteran": "Both characters suffer from

the emotional restraint inculcated by the Victorian values of the British Empire" (GWWC 165). Tylee's argument is partially true; yet, it participates in the very misogyny which she finds so disturbing in Mrs Dalloway and other best-selling Great War novels: Clarissa is not merely "a cold, beautiful ladylike figure" who vents her "hatred" of Miss Kilman in a moral vacuum (182). In fact, the perspiring and embittered figure of Miss Kilman is noted as a stumbling block in the analyses offered by Tomalin, Gilbert and Gubar, and Tylee. While Miss Kilman may be appropriately described as "uncomfortable" within the fictional confines of Woolf's text, she is neither a "blot on the book," nor "inessential" to the thematic unfolding of Mrs Dalloway (Tomalin xxviii). Along with Emily Jensen, I will argue that Miss Kilman and Clarissa Dalloway are also 'doubles' whose connections are alternately visible and invisible as they engage in the struggle of women from distinct social classes: "obvious to the reader is the similarity between Kilman's feeling for Elizabeth and Clarissa's for Sally" (175). Clarissa's response to the suicide of Septimus Smith is mediated and made particularly meaningful to the reader through her responses to Miss Kilman in the text. During the June day in 1923, Clarissa meditates upon "the cost to herself" of living within the "respectable life" (Jensen 175) which her conformity to the socially-constructed roles of 'lady' and 'hostess' afford her. While

she is ultimately able to "assemble" herself (MD 244) and return to her social world, Septimus is unable to reconcile himself to the socially-constructed masculine role prescribed for him by heterosexual marriage and the psychiatric construct of a normative human nature.

While there is a great deal of critical discussion on the relationship that exists between Clarissa and Septimus of Mrs Dalloway, criticism of Rebecca West's first novel has failed to articulate its connections between the shell-shocked veteran and the female non-combatant. In fact, debate often centers upon the classification of this novel within the genre of the war text. In The Literary Achievement of Rebecca West (1986), Harold Orel decries the "thinness of available critical, scholarly and biographical material on Rebecca West," calling it "a scandal" (x). However, in his turn, he contributes to the "thinness" of scholarly commentary on her early novels. He can call The Return of the Soldier a "slight and early exercise" (125), even as he acknowledges that "it is more completely written than most such presents to the female fraction of the Century's audience" (124), where it was serialized in 1918. Motley F. Deakin refuses to classify the novel as one concerned with war: "despite its title, The Return of the Soldier does not give us any authentic sense of what war is about" (132). Deakin contrasts West's text with the works of such "significant" writers as Graves, Blunden, and

Sassoon (132). Despite the strength of certain of their individual insights on The Return of the Soldier, both Orel and Deakin enforce the conventional dichotomy between private and public space which has contributed to the marginalization of West's text and of women's war texts in general.

Analysis of West's first novel has focused primarily on its portrayal of the shell-shocked soldier. The return of Chris Baldry, "the epitome of English masculine fineness" (Glendinning 1), is the most obvious subject of West's domestic novel set in the Thames valley. His most troubling symptom is amnesia regarding his married life. For Hynes, Baldry's amnesia is "a symbol of the pastness of the pre-war past"; it is a narrative of "paradise regained" and lost, when Baldry is "cured" and must return to Flanders, after acknowledging the ongoing reality of his apparently sterile marriage (212). Both Orel and Tylee rebuke the novelist for her presentation of shell-shock. Orel calls the novel "a factitious world" which has recourse to "stock formulae" to bring about an implausible and even reprehensible "fictional resolution" (124-25). Tylee accepts and advances Orel's criticisms of West's portrayal of shell-shock. According to Tylee, "the distressing details of shell-shock are glanced over by West" and she believes that Chris' dilemma is presented in "unproblematical" terms (146, 147). Tylee detects in West's first novel a falling off from her earlier polemical essays, stating that "the novel endorses the main pre-

war theme of Tory-dominated fiction: war is inevitable" (147). Admittedly, West viewed participation in the War as essential, and she wrote in the Daily News, 13 April 1917, "if we refrain from regarding the invasion of Belgium as a crime, we foment a state of public opinion which would tolerate England's commission of a similar crime if the occasion arose" (TYR 340). Unable to laud West for her "socialist pacifism" (147), Tylee remains blind to the less programmatic spirit of protest in the novel.

The last major charge against West's The Return of the Soldier which must be dealt with for the purposes of this study concerns its representation of female subjectivities. In Tylee's words, there is "no indication in the novel that women might find some purpose to their lives apart from domesticity" (145). Hynes agrees with Tylee's view of West's construction of women in her first novel. Despite his great appreciation for the text, he maintains that "it comes too close to being merely a woman's novel, and so confirming the notions about women that exist in a man-governed world" (quoted in Glendinning 6). Certainly, the lower-class Margaret, Baldry's first love, as interpreted and romanticized through the gaze of the narrator, is directly compared with the Virgin Mary, sitting on a "throne of righteousness" (RS 172-73, 184). Margaret is despised as "a dowd" by Kitty at the beginning of the text (65), although Margaret's interruption of their carefully "[manicured]"

(12) world ultimately produces "the design that otherwise would not appear": the "design" she introduces through her brand of naive maternalism paradoxically threatens and challenges the practices of femininity as they had been fixed and celebrated at Baldry Court (145). Baldry's legal wife, Kitty, is blonde, "cold as moonlight, as virginity, but precious" (56-57). Kitty is presented as a materialist, a woman who has completely sacrificed her interiority for the assurances of adherence to socially-prescribed feminine identity. Her gendered role is pushed to an extreme, and her portrait has the polished closure of a caricature. The third and final female character in the novel is Jenny, Chris' self-described "disregarded playmate" (133) who, in the words of Margaret McDowell, "serves as a Jamesian central intelligence . . . far less aloof and more spontaneous than a Jamesian narrator . . . the 'third woman' in love with the soldier" (279). Jenny's consciousness constantly complicates the narrative in ways which have not yet been adequately analyzed. My analysis will consequently highlight the connections between Jenny's 'femininity' and Chris Baldry's problematical 'masculinity.'

A great deal of speculation surrounds West's constructions of women in her first novel. Some critics have read West's use of female archetypes in The Return of the Soldier in light of Jungian psychology. Others have drawn on biographical circumstance in order to support their claims that

the novel reflects West's need to explore the painful nature of her position as mistress to H.G. Wells (Hammond 100; cf. McDowell 279).² Wells' insensitivity to West's plight as a single mother can be clearly seen in his dismissive response to her radical and controversial treatment of single motherhood in The Judge (1922): he calls the book "an aimless waste" of her powers (quoted in McDowell 279). Feminists and critics who applaud the bravado and grace of West's early journalism often have difficulty understanding West's apparent adherence to the "sentimental novel's convention of the light and dark ladies" in The Return of the Soldier (Deakin 132); however, her adherence to such conventions must serve to emphasize the fact that the embattled nature of femininity in the first quarter of the century in Britain was by no means addressed by the partial granting of suffrage in 1918, the same year in which the novel was published. In fact, West wrote a series of essays entitled "Woman: The World's Worst Failure" for the New Republic in 1916, in which she acknowledges her own complicity in what she considers to be the downfall of her sex--"the instinct for elegance" (NR 244, 302). In the same series of articles, she satirizes feminists who evade the ongoing dilemmas posed by the "instinct of the female to attract the male," as well as by the position of women as mothers (126-27). As Marcus argues, West's problematization of female sexuality constitutes her "finest contribution to British left-wing

political thought and the struggle for votes for women" ("I" TJ 6). In fact, both West and Woolf explore the problematical nature of gender through an emphasis upon the repressions and transgressions within the sexual identities of their male and female subjects.

Scholars who have expressed boredom or discomfort with West's representations of feminine subjectivities in her first novel have largely ignored the extremely complex role played by the 'unreliable' narrator, Jenny; and they have also failed to note West's cumulative narrative ironies in her construction of the domestic setting. Chris is described as viewing the outside world through "the familiar frame of things" before he enlists (RS 16); on the morning of his departure for the Front, the lawn is described as having "the desolation of an empty stage" (17). The efforts of Jenny and Kitty to arrange and order Baldry's domestic life is described as a "performance" (21): in his absence, "how dreary was the empty stage . . ." (21). Kitty's grief at being forgotten by Baldry is described as a "sad mask" (51). Jenny imagines Chris and Margaret together "with the intense light spilling all around them" (80). The "painter's eye" (Glendinning 7) that West adopts in this novel is certainly difficult to ignore. Her complex handling of light and shade (most significant encounters occur at dusk) almost renders light itself as a character in the novel. Furthermore, after Baldry's return, Kitty purchases the

statue of "a white naked nymph," which is described as being "eternally innocent of all but the contemplation of beauty" (117). Both Jenny and Kitty make imaginative use of this statue of a woman "unflushed by appetite or passion" (118), in an attempt to deny the import of Baldry's rejection of their meticulously arranged domestic household. The statue comes to represent the pre-war world, particularly the constricting if assuring ideal of a unitary, socially-viable Victorian femininity: "the white nymph drooped over the black waters of the bowl and reminded one how nice, how neat and nice, life used to be . . ." (152-53). Through her contextualization of domesticity and identity within a world of artifice, West highlights the strategic repressions and revelations inherent in the performative nature of gendered roles.

Both Orel and Tylee view Jenny, Baldry's cousin, as "disturbingly complacent" (Orel 126, see Tylee GWWC 144). In fact, the drama in the text has its origin in Jenny's poignant interrogations of her gendered role as she attempts to contend with the implications of Chris Baldry's shell-shock. The shifting alliances formed by Jenny throughout the novel chart her transformed and transforming consciousness, despite her claim to be exempt from the processes of "transfiguration" (RS 137). While she shares Kitty's class-based antagonisms and prejudices, particularly at the opening of the novel, she later identifies Kitty as "the

falsest thing on earth . . . in tune with every kind of falsity" (181). Jenny identifies herself as "the type that mediates between the soul and the body and makes them run even and unhasty like a well-matched pair of carriage horses" (135). Her conventional femininity breaks down in the text when she is forced to confront her own repressed sexuality. At the opening of the story, Jenny brushes Kitty's hair, and reflects upon the manner in which she attempts to build "a little globe of ease" around herself and Kitty in Chris' absence (15). Yet, Jenny repeatedly awakens from nightmares of Chris in No-Man's Land, and it is Kitty who attempts to assuage the anxieties of Jenny regarding Chris in the opening sentence of the novel (9). Later, Jenny acknowledges that the pressure of presenting "a steady, undistorted profile" to Chris has drained her of all "vitality" (130). As she flings herself upon a pile of dead leaves, Jenny confesses to being "stunned with jealousy" (129) and "desperation" (130) at the idyllic experience of intimacy sustained between Chris and Margaret. The implications of Baldry's shell-shock are interpreted and relayed to the reader through Jenny's own fracturing consciousness.

Ironically, while Jenny's interpretive gaze is unmediated through other controlling narrative voices in the text, her momentous inner life and the very significance of her physical person are unrecognized by either Chris Baldry or his psychoanalyst. Her statement to the doctor, that "noth-

ing and everything was wrong" with Chris brings about a sudden flash of insight which cuts her off from her sole remaining companion: "A sharp movement of Kitty's body confirmed my deep, old suspicion that she hated me" (167). Thus, The Return of the Soldier explores the schisms in both male and female wartime relations. Jenny's apparent invisibility allows her on many occasions to assume the role of "spy" (11). The whole narrative is coloured by her yearning for love and attachment: "independence is not the occupation of most of us. What we desire is greatness such as this which had given sleep to the beloved" (144). Yet, Jenny is able to acknowledge the independent value of insight, despite her immense loneliness: she speaks of "the bitter rapture that attends the discovery of any truth" (134). Therefore, I am able to view Jenny's denial that she is an artist as one of the central informing ironies of the text.

In The Return of the Soldier, Jenny is unable to sustain the processes of denial through which she has attempted to structure her 'femininity' prior to Baldry's return. In her solitude, Jenny confesses to thinking of Chris "with the passion of exile" (RS 132), although she never openly declares her attachment to Chris. She speaks of Chris' absence from Baldry Court as a "kind of death" (49), and states, "nothing could ever really become a part of our life until it had been referred to Chris' attention" (21). Her repressed sexual passion colours the entire narrative, des-

pite the fact that she allies herself with Kitty in being "unflushed by appetite or passion" (118). Her descriptions of Chris emphasize physical detail--his "rough male texture" (132), his "physical gallantry" (185). When her intense jealousy of Margaret and Chris makes her "ill," her mind turns to "the perception of material things" (120). She attempts to contend with the painful vicissitudes of passionate and solitary consciousness by focusing upon the unfeeling splendour of objects. Such exercises in repression only intensify the reader's awareness of Jenny's hunger for physical contact and emotional intimacy. Her early attempt to console herself by maintaining that she lived "in the impregnable fortress of a gracious life" (121) gradually gives way to a radically revised understanding of the concept of 'home.' Thinking of Chris, she realizes "that although he did indeed desire a magnificent house, it was not a house built with hands" (116). Such a realization involves Jenny's acknowledgement of the class-based snobbery that she and Kitty had cultivated in Baldry's isolated estate (145). Chris' passionate attachment to Margaret reveals the emotional sterility of life at Baldry Court. Jenny's increasing fixation upon material objects thus gains an ironic poignancy. In fact, the psychoanalyst's discussion of Chris' psychological symptomology bears directly upon the reader's understanding of Jenny. Her "obsession" with material objects and colours bears "no direct relation"

(164) to her desire for passionate attachment and intimacy.

Jenny gains some release from her loneliness by serving as a muse/voyeur figure for Chris' verbal retelling of his courtship days with Margaret on Monkey Island (70); she also escorts Margaret to Chris' estate after he returns and begs to see her. Jenny gains some access to the intimacy she desires through an ambivalent affiliation with Margaret. When Margaret first visits Baldry Court, "repulsively furred with neglect and poverty" (25), she is presented in terms of a feared, unconsciously recognized sexuality: "With her finger-nail she followed the burst seam of the dark pigskin purse that slid about on her shiny alpaca lap" (26). Before the "cure" of Chris is effected, Margaret and Jenny "kissed, not as women, but as lovers do" (184), and the narrator accounts for this act through the feeling of "mutual adoration" that they share for Chris (131-32). The passionate, if momentary, embrace of these women marks the formal ending of the "magic circle" (183), the idyllic union of Chris and Margaret, and it paradoxically commemorates the two women's recognition of the significance of socially-constructed roles in the maintainance of their own identities. Jenny is able to accept Margaret's pity (177), but is ultimately unable to reconcile her altered consciousness of her own 'femininity' with her bitter vision of the way in which the War has forced such a recognition upon her.

The War destroys what little sense of community Jenny

feels at Baldry Court. Most dramatically, as a result of the War, Jenny is forced to explore her sexuality in a vicarious fashion through a lower-class woman whose exile from Baldry Court would have been assured at any other time. At several points in the text, Jenny is forced to meditate on the ways in which the War has altered her life. Her meditations begin with general reflections and culminate in acute personal despair. Jenny realizes that even the sky has been invaded and altered by the reality of War: "a searchlight turned all ways in the night like a sword brandished among the stars" (64). In her imagination, Jenny locates the domestic crisis of Baldry Court "somewhere behind the [F]ront" (135); her efforts to locate herself behind the Front reflect her need to grasp the complex political realities which now contextualize the crises of her daily life. In her imagined scenario, Chris stands before a French shopkeeper who is "the soul of the universe, equally cognisant and disregardful of every living thing," to whom Jenny is "no more dear than the bare-armed slut at the neighbouring door" (136). Chris is offered two crystal balls by the shopkeeper: Margaret is the image in one, and Jenny and Kitty are the images in the other. Chris reaches out to the ball which contains Margaret, "shattering" the sphere representative of life at Baldry Court (137). In her equation of herself with a "bare-armed slut" (136), Jenny expresses both self-loathing and a profound sense of

betrayal. Jenny feels that her mode of existence, her 'femininity,' has been rendered superfluous and contemptible by Chris' psychological response to the War. It is significant that Jenny images "the soul of the universe" (136) as it is created by the War in terms of commerce. Similarly, when Chris is 'cured,' he is described as looking upon his home as "a hated place to which, against all his hopes, business had forced him to return" (187). Jenny becomes aware of the exorbitant price of adherence to social conventions for gendered behaviour, yet neither Jenny nor Chris are able to escape those very roles which will continue to define their relationships to society. While Chris is forced to return to the trenches, Jenny is forced to grapple with her 'superfluous' status in the new light of those insights which she has arrived at as a result of the War.

Like the narrator of The Return of the Soldier, Clarissa Dalloway's subjectivity is rendered most accessible to the reader through her troubled reflections on her sexuality. In Mrs Dalloway, as in West's fiction, homosexual ties between women serve to focus the exploration of female sexuality in a state of crisis. The kiss between Sally Seton and Clarissa Dalloway is one of the central resonating passages in Woolf's explorations of feminine identity in Mrs Dalloway, and, as many critics have acknowledged, it is certainly one of the most moving passages in the novel. The context for Clarissa's meditation on her memory of the kiss

is significant. She returns home from the bustling streets of London, and, despite her fascination with its variety and life, "feels fold round her the familiar veils and the response to old devotions" (MD 37). She experiences the life of her household as a "secret deposit of exquisite moments," freely acknowledging to herself that her husband Richard "was the foundation of it" (37). Her ecstatic sense of domestic serenity and plenitude is shattered by the revelation of the fact that her husband has been invited to dine with Lady Bruton without her. Her exclusion "made the moment in which she stood shiver, as a plant on the river-bed feels the shock of a passing oar and shivers: so she rocked: so she shivered" (38). It is not jealousy, but the sudden disruption of her flow of emotions which makes her suddenly turn to thoughts of ageing and death. Her sexuality disintegrates in the face of this disruption: she feels herself "suddenly shrivelled, aged, breastless" (39). Her mind turns from an encompassing vision of domestic enclosure to the stark details of "green linoleum and a tap dripping" (39). The dissolution of a sense of domestic enclosure elicits Clarissa's thoughts on her sense of isolation, her own apparent failings, and her memories of adolescence, when her sexual identity was exposed to profound crisis and conflict. Woolf's text reveals the fragility of 'femininity' within the institution of domesticity.

In her "attic room" (MD 39), Clarissa recalls her

relationship with Sally Seton, whose "sort of abandonment" (42) included thoughts on the reformation of the world, the cutting off of the heads of wild flowers, a naked flight down the corridor of the passage at Bourton (43). Sally's behaviour does not receive the approbation of Clarissa's father or her Aunt Helena, who "never liked discussion of anything" (43). Yet, Clarissa feels that "the most exquisite moment of her whole life" occurred when Sally "kissed her on the lips" and gave her "a present, wrapped up," "a diamond . . . wrapped up" (45, 46). Peter Walsh, in love with Clarissa, interrupts this scene of intimacy between herself and Sally. As she pauses from her reflections and glances into the mirror, the narrative focuses on Clarissa's sense of self: "some effort, some call on her to be her self, drew the parts together, she alone knew how different, how incompatible and composed so for the world only into one centre, one diamond . . ." (47-48). The "wrapped up" diamond that Clarissa feels Sally Seton has given her is associated with rapture, spontaneity, passion. At fifty-two, Clarissa likens the self she assembles for the social gaze to a diamond, "pointed, dart-like; definite" (47). This diamond is indubitably associated in the text with repression. At fifty-two, she feels the despairing lack of "something central which permeated" (40), and she confesses to "a virginity preserved through childbirth which clung to her like a sheet" (40). When she enters her solitary attic

room, she muses ominously, "narrower and narrower would her bed be" (40). Clarissa's contemplation of death invariably merges with her perplexing and painful sense of the death of her sexuality. The heart ailment (64) which has turned Clarissa "almost white" (47) relates to her expressed sense of "an emptiness about the heart of life; an attic room" (39). At Bourton, Sally and Clarissa had "sat up till all hours of the night talking" in Sally's bedroom, which was also located "at the top of the house" (42, 43). The cumulative symbolic exploration of Clarissa's repressed sexuality culminates in the terrible irony of Sally Seton's question at the close of the text: "What does the brain matter . . . compared with the heart?" (MD 255). The reader is forced to wonder what would have resulted had they developed their relationship.

Near the close of the text, Sally Seton (Lady Rosseter) also asks, "Are we not all prisoners?" (252). Certainly, Clarissa confesses to the importance of repression in her presentation of herself: she "had tried to be the same always, never showing a sign of all the other sides of her-- faults, jealousies, vanities, suspicions . . ." (48). Despite the "horror" of Peter Walsh's interruption of "the most exquisite moment of her whole life" with Sally Seton, and despite her rejection of Walsh's love and her association of him with "quarrels," she recalls her need of his "good opinion" (45, 46). Even more importantly, she acknowledges

a debt of gratitude to him: "She owed him words: 'sentimental,' 'civilized'; they started up every day of her life as if he guarded her" (46). Her internalization of Walsh's prescriptive vocabulary accounts for her sensitivity to his frequent, if unstated, criticisms of her life and character (52, 220). At various points in the text, the reader is exposed to Walsh's patriotic sentiments and his projected sexual fantasies as a "romantic buccaneer" (69) which make manifest his investment in British patriarchal society. Walsh praises the ambulance which actually carries Septimus' mangled body as one of "the triumphs of civilization," as an indication of "the communal spirit of London" (197-98). At one point, Septimus confuses Walsh with Evans (91), which makes clear both the lure and the myth of male community in London post-war society in Mrs Dalloway.

Peter Walsh's unexpected visit to Clarissa, like Lady Bruton's invitation of her husband to lunch, disrupts her sense of domestic peace; her sewing seems momentarily to lull her crisis-ridden unconscious: "Fear no more, says the heart. Fear no more, says the heart, committing its burden to some sea . . ." (51). Before Walsh enters, she "made to hide her dress, like a virgin protecting chastity" (51). Throughout their interview--related with incredible subtlety and complexity by Woolf--Peter clenches and unfolds his pocket knife, which act makes Clarissa feel "frivolous; empty-minded; a mere silly chatterbox" (56). Both the

vulnerability and the brutality of patriarchal attitudes and assumptions are embodied in Peter Walsh in his meeting with Clarissa. She summons up her identity within the context of domesticity in order to "beat off the enemy," while he summons up his public accomplishments and other matters of pride in a similar spirit of resistance to her (57). They both weep during the interview, "in the brisk sea-salted air" of "their exquisite intimacy," and as she consoles him, she suddenly feels a "gaiety," "the brandishing of silver-flashing plumes like pampas grass in a tropic gale in her breast" (59, 60). Clarissa's sexuality is reawakened by the reminiscences and conflicts which characterize her conversation with Walsh. Peter Walsh seizes Clarissa, demands, "Are you happy . . .?" (61), before Clarissa's daughter Elizabeth, interrupts him and puts an end to the interview. Thus, domestic disruption serves both to unlock and enforce repression in Mrs Dalloway.

Similarly, patriarchal authority is both a violating and protective presence in Mrs Dalloway. Big Ben strikes the hour like "a young man, strong, indifferent, inconsiderate . . . swinging dumb-bells this way and that" (61), and the reader is abruptly recalled to the pervasive presence of social divisions, classifications, assumptions, norms, those very prescriptive attitudes of Walsh for which Clarissa expresses gratitude. Peter relates Clarissa, the hostess, to the clock of St. Margaret's, which was "reluctant to

inflict its individuality" (64). Clarissa clearly perceives the limitations of her identity as it is constituted within the confines of domesticity: "She had the oddest sense of being herself invisible; unseen; unknown; there being no more marrying, no more having of children now . . . this being Mrs Dalloway; not even Clarissa any more; this being Mrs Richard Dalloway" (13). Yet, she is also relieved to claim the protections gained through marriage: "Even now . . . if Richard had not been there reading The Times, so that she could crouch like a bird and gradually revive . . . she must have perished" (242). "She had escaped" (242), unlike Doris Kilman, unlike Septimus Smith. While Clarissa can alternately reject and succumb to the dictates of the conventional code of upper-middle class domestic femininity in her meditations and married solitude, Jenny is forced to contend with her consciousness of entrapped femininity in a solitude which she will apparently never have the experience of sharing.

Jenny's relationship to Margaret in The Return of the Soldier is similar to Clarissa's "love/hate" response to Miss Kilman, her daughter's tutor (Jenson 174). Miss Kilman's life has been dramatically affected by the upheaval of the Great War. She is described as "degradingly poor" (MD 161), having lost an important educational opportunity as a result of her German ancestry and her refusal to denounce the German State. Nevertheless, she has attained a

degree and earns her living. She teaches Elizabeth that "all professions are open to women" (170-71). She turns to the Church in the battle against her "unlovable body" (168), her poverty and private tragedies. She likens herself to "a wheel without a tyre . . . jolted by every pebble" (170). Kilman's love for Elizabeth is presented as a desperate and consuming emotion; it is presented in terms similar to those which characterize Clarissa's love for Sally: "if she could clasp her, if she could make her hers absolutely and for ever and then die; that was all she wanted" (172). Miss Kilman's anguish forces her to ask: "why should she have to suffer when other women, like Clarissa Dalloway, escaped?" (169). Both Miss Kilman and Margaret of The Return of the Soldier are presented as physically ungracious, sweaty, and religious. Yet, while Margaret's "mystic interpretation of life" (RS 160) is presented as an extension of her gentle married maternalism, Miss Kilman is depicted in the context of bitterness, solitude and despair, as being driven to value her soul over "the flesh" (MD 167). Miss Kilman thinks that Clarissa should be working in a factory (162), while Margaret expresses "pity" for Chris Baldry's wealth (RS 115-16). Miss Kilman remains the most radical portrait in Woolf's text. While Margaret may be dismissed as a generalized portrait of traditionally-constructed maternal 'instincts,' it is significant that Woolf's text also contains generalized female figures which embody similar qual-

ities, notably the "grey nurse" (73-75) and the "battered" female singing vagrant (106). While these portraits are undoubtedly constructed around class-based prejudices, they enrich Woolf's text by throwing light on the hypostatized cultural codes by which contemporary femininity was defined. They also highlight the common nature of the struggle of female subjects as distinct as Miss Kilman and Clarissa Dalloway in their attempt to negotiate an identity within the context of socially-prescribed gender roles for women.

Miss Kilman and Clarissa are members of distinct generations of women in post-war society, and they conduct a psychological battle for the allegiance of Elizabeth. Even Peter Walsh's strolling survey of London leads him to the conclusion that "a change of some sort had undoubtedly taken place" during the years 1918-1923 (MD 93), particularly in the more casual relations between the sexes. It is not surprising that in the light of such changes Clarissa views her daughter as "an Oriental mystery" (160). As one critic points out, Woolf "offers little access to Elizabeth's consciousness, insisting instead on her status as enigma": Woolf points to the future for women "in silence" (Abel 43). Throughout the narrative, Clarissa attempts to deal with the nature of her self-acknowledged hatred of Kilman, identifying her with "Elizabeth's seducer" (229). Clarissa's response to Kilman is bound up with class-based guilt and animosity, jealousy at her place in her daughter's life, as

well as a disturbing awareness of her ability to "defy the heterosexual norms that so inhibit Clarissa" (Jenson 175). When Clarissa identifies Kilman as her "enemy" (MD 229) at her party, it is done with relief and a feeling of re-discovered selfhood (Jenson 175). Miss Kilman reminds Clarissa of her own complex interiority which constantly, if unconsciously, turns upon her exploration of the richness of her own femininity as it exists in the context of its ceaseless interactions with public life and private domesticity. Jenny's class-based prejudices against the lower-class Margaret persist throughout The Return of the Soldier, moving from repulsion to sentimentalization. As in the Clarissa-Kilman tie, Margaret proves to be the impetus for Jenny's painful attempt to explore the compromises and willing complacencies of her gendered identity. Jenny's solitude and apparent superfluity in the society of Baldry Court, however, preclude her from attaining the insights of Clarissa Dalloway in Westminster.

The shell-shocked soldiers of the two novels are as distinct as Jenny and Clarissa--in the nature of their 'madness,' in their social class, as well as in the nature of the insights they are able to attain in their traumatized states. The constructions of psychiatrists in the novels are also remarkably different. Each text, however, constructs its soldier in terms of lost status, of madness, victimization and sexual trauma. Septimus is a lower-class

clerk, "half-educated, self-educated" (MD 109), who flees his home, and is "anxious to prove himself" (110); he is "one of the first to volunteer" (112), an archetypal victim-soldier. Chris Baldry enlists in 1916 and he is depicted as regretting the need to leave the horses and dogs, wife and cousin, of his estate (RS 17). Chris' shell-shock takes the form of amnesia which encompasses a span of fifteen years. His traumatized consciousness erases the recent past in an attempt to negate the socially-constructed masculinity which emphasizes stoicism, national and family responsibility. He seeks a return to that heightened state of intimacy and interiority which is opposed to the masculine prerogatives of his class and time. His fugue is ultimately explained in Oedipal terms. Septimus Smith, in a rigid adherence to the wartime values of self-sacrifice, physical courage and emotional restraint, loses all sense of interiority. His embrace of social obligation, in the form of his marriage and professional position, fails to restore any sense of subjectivity to him. Both Chris Baldry and Septimus Smith prove to be victims of socially-encoded gendered identity, and they are unable to sustain their states of reaction in their respective social matrices. While Baldry desires a return, through the person of Margaret, to maternal nurturing during the War, Septimus must struggle to contend with the legacy of a homoerotic relationship with his officer in the context of his marriage in post-war London.

Only selective details of Baldry's life are relayed to the reader in The Return of the Soldier through Jenny. We learn of Chris Baldry's "changeless" (86) love for Margaret, of the class-based quarrel which parted them, as well as of the demands made upon him by his father to uphold the failing family industry in Mexico (109-10). He is situated within an Oedipal triangle, which he apparently attempts to resolve and desires to enact through his relationship with Margaret. His father "was a little jealous of him" and his mother "wanted a stupid son, who would have been satisfied with shooting" (167), as Jenny informs his psychoanalyst. We also learn of the death of his two-year old son by Kitty. Significantly, we learn of his "wistful aspiration of becoming completely reconciled to life" (20). However, the amiable temper of the pre-war version of Chris is replaced by the urgencies of his emotional demands to see Margaret after his return from the War, by a disturbingly "furtive" nature, by boyishness. As Jenny relates, "it was as though he were an outcast and we who loved him stout policemen" (59). Lying in the woods with Margaret, he is compared to "a sleeping child, his hands unclenched and his head thrown back so that the bare throat showed defencelessly" (142). In the pastoral setting, Chris is temporarily freed from the horrors of the War and his mandatory role within it as an adult male.

Septimus Smith, we are ironically informed, "developed

manliness" (112) in the trenches while he simultaneously became involved in a homoerotic relationship with his officer, Evans, who was killed just before the Armistice. While he "congratulated himself upon feeling very little and very reasonably" (113) after his experience in the trenches and his bereavement, such apparent stoicism rapidly develops into psychosis after the War. His guilt at feeling little grief after the death of Evans is compounded by his desperate marriage to Lucrezia Warren, a hat-maker in Milan, "when the panic was on him--that he could not feel" (113). Septimus experiences a sense of terrifying inevitability (90), and has difficulty distinguishing his identity from objects. He is moved to speculate on his condition: "his brain was perfect; it must be the fault of the world then--that he could not feel" (115). Septimus continually cautions himself to be "scientific" (188) in his thought processes, while Woolf implicates such prescriptive efforts in the very 'madness' he is attempting to resist.

While Chris Baldry is obviously a member of the upper-classes, Septimus Smith's socio-economic status is more ambiguous. As Stephen has observed, "in poetic terms the true voice of the infantryman is hard to find" (10). Yet, Woolf's text does not aim to offer the reader the true voice of the infantryman. Septimus Smith's past is portrayed in the light of his aspirations to attain the cultural equipment of a middle-to-upper-class male. It is interesting to

note the manner in which Woolf links Smith's absorption of British culture with his eventual 'madness.' Septimus views himself as the personal inheritor of the Western tradition. Reading Shakespeare, he eventually feels that "the secret signal which one generation passes, under disguise, to the next is loathing, hatred, despair" (115). We learn that he left his mother, desiring to become a poet (110) and that he went to France "to save an England which consisted almost entirely of Shakespeare's plays and Miss Isabel Pole," a Shakespeare lecturer (112). Septimus' madness is constituted of his exaggerated assimilation into the cultural codes of middle-to-upper-class manhood. Through her strategic construction of Septimus, Woolf attempts to define madness as a distilled expression of patriarchal culture.

Drawing on her own experience of madness, Woolf's depiction of Septimus' states of mind are lyrical and haunting: "He would look over the edge of the sofa down into the sea" (184). Woolf's presentation of his brief respite from terror, when Rezia and himself collaborate in the creative construction of a hat (Ruotolo 106), simultaneously expresses an idyllic tenderness between husband and wife and an elegiac meditation upon the tragedy of his imminent death (MD 186-88). However, her depiction of his 'madness' is also informed by a precise and cumulative critique of socially-sanctioned psychiatric efforts which "[force] the soul" (242). In Woolf's text, medical doctors and psychia-

trists serve as "the modern officers of coercion" (Abel 41), whereas West is concerned to demonstrate the manner in which women ensure the reproduction of conventional male codes of conduct.

Woolf depicts two doctors in Mrs Dalloway, Holmes and Bradshaw. Holmes is a complacent moralist who denies the existence of any problem in Septimus' consciousness of himself and the world. "Health," according to Holmes, "is largely a matter in our own control" and Septimus is urged to "take up some hobby" (119). In this general practitioner's view, Septimus has a "duty" to pull himself out of his self-pitying "funk," if only for the sake of his wife (120, 119). Holmes becomes associated in the text with "human nature," "the repulsive brute, with the blood-red nostrils" (120). When Holmes attempts to burst into the Smiths' apartment, Septimus sets himself up on the windowledge. In life, as in death, Septimus feels pressured to act according to a script written by others: "It was their idea of tragedy, not his or Rezia's . . . Holmes and Bradshaw liked that sort of thing. . . . He did not want to die" (195). In a desperate and confused attempt to defy the authority of the cultural/psychiatric script, he cries, "I'll give it you!" (195), and flings himself out of the window. According to script, Holmes cries, "The coward!" (195), enforcing the military oppositions which constitute Septimus' madness.

However, Woolf reserves the greater portion of her polemical fury for Dr. William Bradshaw. In contrast to Holmes, Bradshaw acknowledges the existence of trauma in Septimus (124). He defines "madness" as "not having a sense of proportion" (126). Bradshaw is constructed as "a resolute champion" of Muscular Christian values, including "family affection; honour; courage; and a brilliant career" (132). If all else fails, the police and "the good of society" will enforce the value of "Proportion" upon the "Naked, defenceless, the exhausted, the friendless" (133). In this post-war fiction, it is not only soldiers who are victims of their society; each and every citizen as well is a potential victim of the State and its representatives, including Sir William Bradshaw's wife, who is described as having "gone under" (133, 131). Sir William Bradshaw "made England prosper, secluded her lunatics . . . made it impossible for the unfit to propagate their views . . ." (129). Conversion, which attends the "[worship]" of Proportion, works to have "her own features stamped on the populace" (129, 130). Ultimately, Woolf views the abusive exercise of "power" (130) as lying at the heart of both Sir William Bradshaw's psychiatric practices and the society he represents.

By way of contrast, West's 1918 fiction presents Dr. Anderson, the psychoanalyst, as a figure who is simultaneously comical, benevolent, and wise. While Kitty shares

the moralistic simplicity of Dr. Holmes in her view of Baldry's condition, Anderson rebukes her by claiming that "the mental life that can be controlled by effort isn't the mental life that matters" (RS 163). He argues for the existence of "a deep self in one, the essential self" whose desires cannot ultimately be repressed by "the superficial self" (163). The narrative uses of psychoanalytic discourse in The Return of the Soldier serve to construct non-unitary male and female subjectivity. Unlike the medical professionals in Woolf's text, the doctor in West's fiction admits to no sense of "urgency" in enforcing normality in his patients (168). Ultimately, the doctor demurs to Margaret's maternally-inspired wisdom, and the cure of Baldry is left in the hands of the three women in his life. Jenny refuses to view Chris as 'insane'; in her view, "he had attained to something saner than sanity" (133). Even in the midst of her "exclusion" from his life, she exalts his amnesia as an "adroit recovery of the dropped pearl of beauty," seeing it as an "act of genius" (134). Thus, Jenny perceives Chris' self-discovery to be at odds with the socially-sanctioned repressions which have structured her life. However, Jenny and Margaret finally overcome their reluctance to cure Chris and they show him some of his dead child's belongings in order to recall him to his recent past. By doing so, they fulfill their duty to "safeguard the dignity of the beloved" (182), in spite of the fact that

their cure will make Baldry's return to the Front inevitable. If left in his "magic circle" of maternal fixation, they reason, "he would not be quite a man" [my emphasis] (183). After his cure, Chris wears "a dreadful decent smile," and he is sadly described by Jenny in the closing page of the novel as "every inch a soldier" (187, 188). While his wife Kitty "[sucks] her breath with satisfaction" (188) at the sight of Chris' renewed resignation to his social role, Jenny's earlier explorations of her own self-betrayal in the context of conventional gendered identity secure the ironic power of the text's conclusion.

Jenny's view that Chris has recovered a "dropped pearl of beauty" (134) has great relevance to Clarissa's meditations on the suicide of Septimus Smith. Both Mrs Dalloway and The Return of the Soldier structure their narratives around the opposition of "deep self" and society (RS 163). While Jenny and Chris are personally acquainted, Clarissa and Septimus do not even meet in Mrs Dalloway. Throughout the text, Clarissa and Septimus are linked through recurring patterns of imagery. For instance, Clarissa is described as having "a narrow pea-stick figure; a ridiculous little face, beaked like a bird's" (12), while Septimus is likened to "a young hawk" (191), "beak-nosed" (18). Septimus "plunged" (242) to his death from his window, while Clarissa relates her venture into the early morning air of London to her experience at Bourton: "she had burst open the French win-

dows and plunged at Bourton into the open air" (3). More directly, Clarissa experiences herself as "a stake driven in at the top of her stairs" (223); Septimus is impaled on "rusty spikes" (241) as a result of his suicide (Jenson 177). His death makes her meditate upon her own life in the midst of her party: "A thing there was that mattered; a thing, wreathed about with chatter, defaced, obscured in her own life, let drop every day in corruption, lies, chatter" (MD 241). Thus, Clarissa feels that her "deep self" (RS 163), in the words of Dr. Anderson regarding the shell-shocked Chris Baldry, has been repressed by her "superficial self" (RS 163).

After hearing of Septimus' suicide, Clarissa is moved to reflect upon her own complicity in the subtle and violating machinations of the social system: "Somehow it was her disaster--her disgrace" (243); "she had schemed; she had pilfered" (243). She wonders: "had he plunged holding his treasure?" (242). In other words, did Septimus retain any sense of unviolated consciousness before his death? The text would seem to deny any such claim. Clarissa admits her own former susceptibility to Septimus' fate, reflecting that she herself "had escaped" (242). Yet, like Jenny and Chris and even Septimus, Clarissa has not really "escaped" (242). She has also "dropped" the "pearl of beauty" (RS 134); she has "thrown a shilling into the Serpentine" (241). While Clarissa achieves a sense of reconciliation to her life

through her meditations on Septimus' death, such a state must not be confused with a freedom ultimately unattained by Septimus, Jenny or Chris Baldry. While Clarissa and Chris Baldry are able to retain some sense of connectedness with their so-called "deep self," the constructions of Jenny and Septimus would seem to indicate the power of adherence to gendered identity in terms of its ability to render the concept of the "deep-self" an abstraction unconnected with the actual experience of socially-structured identity. As Makiko Minow-Pinkney writes, "Clarissa survives despite or perhaps because of her contradictions; Septimus vicariously represents the risk of a total rejection of patriarchal law, and perishes" (80). After a day of painful confrontations and meditations on the compromises and perilously navigated currents in her own history and social context, Clarissa returns to her party with a renewed sense of life and a new acceptance of her role as a woman of fifty-two, married, with a daughter, in the midst of a party which she has carefully assembled. Mrs Dalloway reveals that "behaving 'like a lady,' as patriarchy's 'perfect hostess,' is thus a cautious programme for survival" (Minow-Pinkney 81).

Both West and Woolf draw upon the Myth of the War and the victim-soldier's place within that myth to illustrate the traumatized subjectivities of both men and women in war-time and post-war society. In the community of survivors explored by West and Woolf, the phenomenon of shell-shock

serves as a trope for the myth of gender-specific community. Both texts ground their explorations of subjectivity in the problematical site of sexuality. Normative heterosexuality is also used as a trope for the myth of consciously-directed, unmediated identity in these fictions. Each text opposes homosexual and heterosexual sexuality in order to highlight the repressive social structures which implicate male and female subjectivities in wider patterns of oppression. Jenny's sexuality erupts when the heterosexual union of Chris and Kitty is disrupted to reveal a repressed narrative of desire and fixation. West's text draws upon the historical occasion of the War in order to highlight pre-existing structures of oppression in the family and the institutions of masculinity and femininity. Thus, Jenny is forced to contend with the strategic and unconscious repressions which have characterized her adherence to a 'femininity' structured according to the dictates of silence and interpersonal mediation. In Mrs Dalloway, Clarissa's heterosexual union serves as the occasion for both protection and oppression. Her domestic life mediates her explorations of her subjectivity, so that she avoids the fate of Septimus Smith. Septimus Smith, patriarchal "scapegoat" (32), adheres strictly to the Imperial manhood code of his time and is thereby precluded from the experience of any integrative awareness. Both texts mediate their explorations of the complex social changes brought about by the War through

analysis of the fractures within subjects who comprise the post-1914 community.

The Return of the Soldier and Mrs Dalloway expose the fragility of human subjectivity in the face of disruption and interruption, to reveal the manner in which "the skeleton of habit alone upholds the human frame" (MD 63). The "disjunctive" knowledge of combatants (Leed 74) is produced, in distinct forms, in both male and female survivors of the War. However, these texts are not uncomplicated narratives of oppression which ignore agency and gender difference. Both Jenny and Clarissa obtain benefit from adherence to patriarchal norms. The Return of the Soldier and Mrs Dalloway are also complex critiques of the institution of masculinity within patriarchy. While West emphasizes the circular dynamic of gender oppression inherent in heterosexual relations, Woolf more pointedly critiques the State and those medical and psychiatric professionals who serve its ends by silencing voices of dissent. In their fiction and non-fiction, both West and Woolf later explored the institution of the family as a site for the reproduction of conventional gender norms in both men and women. While West was to intensify her psychoanalytic interrogation of the Oedipal triangle in The Judge (1922), Woolf was to locate the origin of Fascism and war in the institution of the family in Three Guineas (1938). However, in Mrs Dalloway Woolf is particularly attentive to women's concessions to patriarchy in the

name of survival in the face of the physical and psychological deaths of so many of her male contemporaries.

Notes

Chapter 3

1. Showalter comments: "It is ironically appropriate that in 1930, when Bethlem Hospital moved to new facilities, its former buildings became the Imperial War Museum" (The Female Malady [1985], 194). Jane Marcus argues: "Bedlam become the Imperial War Museum is the 'Asylum of Antaeus', the site of convergence of the female with war and madness, the heart of one of the unsung other plots" (The New Historicism [1989], 138).
2. Rebecca West gave birth to her son, Anthony West (by H.G. Wells) on August 4, 1914, the day Britain declared war against Germany. (Motley Deakin, Rebecca West [1980], 32).

Conclusion

Shall we lay the blame on the war? When the guns fired in August 1914, did the faces of men and women show so plain in each other's eyes that romance was killed?

Virginia Woolf A Room of One's Own

Myth-centered studies of the Great War have attempted to absorb the horror of technological warfare through reference to generalized narrative patterns and archetypes. Yet, the Great War continues to be equated with the Biblical Fall, with Apocalypse; in historical narrative and literary criticism, it is charged with the death of "simplicity, certainty, faith" (Stephen 299). Virginia Woolf wondered whether it should be charged with the death of 'romance.' This study has explored the manner in which male and female gender roles were subject to acute interrogation in wartime and post-war British society. The exaggerated gender-segregation created by the War served to intensify the discursive exploration of male and female social roles formerly secured through the structures of Victorian society and resisted through the concerted efforts of women's organizations, particularly in the Edwardian period. Writing in 1928, Woolf speculated: "No age can ever have been as stri-

dently sex-conscious as our own" (ROOO 129). However, this study would seem to support Longenbach's argument: "The real terror of the war made it possible to fabricate a pre-lapsarian era in which the war between men and women had not yet been declared" (105).

Not surprisingly, all four war texts are concerned with the nature of cultural and social change. The texts by the four women writers discussed challenge the concept of war as geographical event "impinging on no one but soldiers" (Hanley 31). The four texts disrupt the homosocial construction of war and examine its horror, appeal, and imagery in domestic spaces which have traditionally been defined in opposition to history and publicity. Sinclair's text explores the Great War as an event which solidifies local community through its mobilization of individual effort in the service of a national cause. Holtby's text emphasizes the ways in which a female-specific community can both create a context for the understanding of oppression and organize efforts for social change. The Return of the Soldier depicts the consequences of women's exclusion from public community in terms of hopelessness; in her solitude, Jenny can only despair in the face of historically-produced social change which shatters a tenuous sense of stability and belonging. Mrs Dalloway subtly explores the internal and external violations of socially-prescribed gender roles in traumatized post-war society. All four texts depict profound misogyny in rela-

tions between women, and they also explore the ongoing oppression of 'superfluous' spinsters whose socialization has crippled any efforts at emotional or psychological independence from the private house. None of these texts counters the homosocial communities created by war with a version of celebratory female community. Neither do they construct a homogeneous anti-militaristic 'femininity.' These texts have great relevance for the study of both Modernism and feminism precisely because of the contradictory nature of their explorations.

Holtby's dilemma in The Crowded Street centers upon the creation of a female subjectivity which is situated within a context of oppression, yet which is able to attain some independence within those structures. Her text vacillates between the programmatic assurances of egalitarian, individualistic feminism and a more complex critique of women's subjectivity as it is situated within patriarchal institutions. All four women critique the egalitarian feminism of their predecessors by emphasizing 'femininity' as a socially-produced construct. The four wartime and post-war texts readily adapt themselves to the practices of post-structuralist feminism because of their respective emphases upon the inextricable entanglements of men and women in the public and private institutions which engender militarism. The "Outsider's Society" of women advocated by Woolf in Three Guineas (309), which would attempt to end war by

refusing to participate in structures which serve militaristic ends, would seem to be established, within the set of assumptions which ground this study, as a social and economic impossibility in the context of late twentieth-century patriarchal, industrial society.

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