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Transnational Women's Poetry of the Two World Wars: Lola Ridge, Winifred Letts, H.D., Sheila Wingfield

Thesis presented by

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English

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Declaration

This is to certify that the work I am submitting is my own and has not been submitted for another degree, either at University College Cork or elsewhere. All external references and sources are clearly acknowledged and identified within the contents. I have read and understood the regulations of University College Cork concerning plagiarism and intellectual property.

Gráinne Condon

GRAINNE CONDON

Abstract

Dedication

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Note on spelling:

Where quotations are in US English, I have retained the original spelling throughout.

ABSTRACT

This thesis traces symmetries in the poetic responses of four women poets across two continents to the two World Wars: Lola Ridge, Winifred Letts, H.D. and Sheila Wingfield.

This thesis considers the representation of the events and experiences of the two world wars in the work of four women poets: Lola Ridge (1873-1941), Winifred Letts (1882-1972), H.D. (1886-1961) and Sheila Wingfield (1906-1992). Adopting a comparative and transnational approach, the thesis traces the relationships and "touching points" between the lives and wartime poetry of Ridge, Letts, H.D. and Wingfield (Stubbs and Haynes, 2017: 7). It examines the ways in which this quartet of women poets creates a literary space of mutual understanding and shared concern in their responses to the trauma and upheaval of a world at war. This study explores how, thematically and formally, Ridge, Letts, H.D. and Wingfield fuse, reject and champion innovation and tradition in their wartime poetry.

Collectively, the four women poets considered in this thesis disrupt the binary schema which still underpins critical conceptions; that war and Modernism are antipathetic categories, that women writing of war is an irreconcilable conundrum, and that the poetry of the First and Second World Wars, including civilian poetries, are wholly discrete. The four writers discussed in this thesis raise analogous, sensitive and contentious issues in the lead up to and during the First and Second World Wars. Read comparatively, their writing reveals formal and thematic parallels which breach temporal, geographical, gendered and political borders. This thesis identifies and explores the "transnational imaginative energies and solidarities" apparent in the wartime writing of Ridge, Letts, H.D. and Wingfield (Ramazani, 2020: 23). Their consistent and shared perceptions of warfare tether the two World Wars together. These four women poets present alternative perspectives and complicate received paradigms of war poetry, highlighting subjects and figures long excluded from the canon. Ridge, Letts, H.D. and Wingfield demonstrate that women's poetry is an integral part of the continuing and evolving narrative of a world at war.

DEDICATION

To Ange

You are the dream I go to
every time I close my eyes.

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I would like to express my sincere gratitude and thanks to both my Supervisors Lee Jenkins and Lucy Collins.

Lee, it has been a circuitous journey since we first discussed the idea of a research project on women's poetry. Little did I know when we embarked on this voyage that we would (virtually) travel across space and time to arrive at this point in the cosmos. I deeply appreciate your guidance, knowledge, and constant support. Your patience and wisdom throughout this process have been immense.

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I am cognisant too of the challenges of co-supervision and in awe of your effectiveness and professionalism as my supervisory team. Lee and Lucy, your teamwork has also helped make this process enjoyable (at least, from my perspective)! You elevate supervision to an art form, and I will be forever appreciative for your encouragement.

Always in my thoughts ….

Mary Condon (1931 - 2007)
John Condon (1930 - 2015)
Úna Burke (1961 - 2019)

… Mum, Dad, Sister …

Because you live, though out of sight and reach,
I will, so help me God, live bravely too,
Taking the road with laughter and gay speech,
Alert, intent to give life all its due.

(Winifred Letts, 1917: "Alive")

INTRODUCTION

This thesis, structured in two extended sections, considers the representation of the events and experiences of the two World Wars in the wartime writings of four women poets: Lola Ridge (1873-1941), Winifred Letts (1882-1972), H.D. (1886-1961) and Sheila Wingfield (1906-1992). Contiguous struggles also inform the poetic responses of these women, including the 1916 Irish Rising and the Spanish Civil War. During the First World War Letts and Ridge each published a collection of poetry. Letts' *Hallow-e'en and Poems of the War* was first published in 1916, with an American edition titled *The Spires of Oxford and Other Poems* appearing a year later. Ridge's *The Ghetto and Other Poems* was published in the United States in September 1918. In the immediate aftermath of the Second World War Wingfield and H.D. both issued long and meditative war poems: *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* and *Trilogy.*

This thesis' exploration of the wartime poetry of Ridge, Letts, H.D. and Wingfield examines the intersections between and evolving relationship of Modernism and war from the onset of the First World War to the end of the Second World War. This study explores how Ridge, Letts, H.D. and Wingfield variously respond to the violence and turmoil of war. This research examines the ways in which this quartet of women poets establish common ground on which to raise matters of mutual and collective concern in their poetic responses to the devastation and distress of a world at war. This thesis also identifies and explores what Jahan Ramazani describes as the "ocean-straddling energies of the poetic imagination" fashioned in the poetry of these women across two World Wars (2009a). This evaluation also highlights the importance of anthologies in shaping and sustaining the modern canon of war poetry, which continues to privilege the combatant experience.

LITERATURE REVIEW: CRITICAL CONTEXTS

In the past there was a tendency within scholarship to treat war and Modernism as mutually exclusive. This separation oversimplifies or ignores the inter-relationships between the global events of the two World Wars and the imaginative responses of artists to these phenomena. This thesis explores the intersection between Modernism

and war in the work of Ridge, Letts, H.D. and Wingfield. Anna Anselmo proposes that Modernism "serves as a label for a variety of tendencies, attitudes, convictions, and for works of art disparate in quality and meaning, but alike in spirit and, sometimes conception" (2009: 6). This perspective is germane to this thesis as war, for each woman poet, operates as a creative catalyst. Megan Swift argues that literary Modernism has "both distinct and overlapping qualities, both national and transnational characteristics" (2016). This point of view resonates with this thesis as the individual responses, in the work of four women poets, to the violence, trauma and upheaval of two World Wars transcends geographical and temporal boundaries.

Santanu Das observes that little connection is drawn between the "parallel if occasionally intersecting careers" of war studies and Modernist scholarship (2013: 22). This thesis draws on a number of strands of scholarship in an examination of this "vexed relationship" (Das, 2013: 22). In exploring how war and Modernism intersect and interconnect, this thesis examines the ways in which Ridge and Letts, H.D. and Wingfield innovate formally and in terms of subject matter in their responses to the violence and trauma of war. This thesis therefore explores and challenges some persistent assumptions: that the relationship between war and Modernism is negligible and that the canon of world war poetry is delimited to the experiences of the male combatant. This thesis also examines commonalities, currents and continuities in women's war poetry which, reaching beyond national boundaries, connects them across time and space.

The First World War was a watershed event in global history: George Kennan describes it as "*the* seminal catastrophe" (italics in the original) of the twentieth century (1979: 3). Despite Paul Fussell's contested but resilient claims for the primacy of the combatant experience of war in his *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975), the devastation of the First World War was not confined to soldiers and the battlefront. Christopher Clark notes that the war "mobilized 65 million troops, claimed three Empires, 20 million military and civilian deaths, and 21 million wounded" (2013: 1). According to Nadège Mougel civilians account for half of these war fatalities (2011). Yet the conflation of the First World War with the experience of male combatants endures, occluding alternative perspectives and flattening the

diversity of wartime literature, including that of the women writers discussed in this thesis.

Chris Baldick posits that "even among those who had not experienced combat, there was a general conviction that the old world lay in ruins" after the 1914-18 war (2004: 10). Baldick argues that a critical challenge for writers seeking to respond to the First World War is how to represent a milieu irrevocably different from the preceding (Victorian) era. Such was the depth of the crisis of the First World War that writers were forced to find new and more fitting ways of absorbing and expressing the horror and violence of war, of contemplating a fundamentally altered reality and reflecting this in their writing. According to Leonard Smith "no narrative form has exclusive claim to interpreting that war, or any war, in its myriad representations" (2001: 260). However, Das argues for the primacy of poetry in the context of Great War literature, postulating that "more than any other genre - fiction, memoir or film - it is poetry that has come to form the terrain of First World War memory" (2013: xix). For Das, First World War poetry crosses combatant and civilian zones and addresses "life at large" in a world at war (2013: xxi).

As Peter Doyle observes, the Second World War "arose from the aftermath of the First World War" (2013: 8). Vincent Sherry likewise posits that the First World War was the genesis of the "many dreads of the twentieth century" including the inevitability of the Second World War (2005: 2). The armistice in November 1918 did not result in peace and stability. In the immediate aftermath and for decades following the First World War empires and imperial regimes collapsed or were destroyed and new nation states were created. In Europe, conditions were laid which contributed to the rise of both communism and fascism.

Described by Doyle as "a total war" the Second World War was "fought on four continents, with at least twenty-five combatant nations" (2013: 9; 8). The "new primacy of the civilian experience", according to Marina MacKay, is a critical difference between the two World Wars (2007: 6). The National World War II Museum in New Orleans estimates global casualties in the Second World War at

fifteen million battle deaths, twenty-five million battle wounded and forty-five million civilian deaths.[1]

The reach of this war presented other challenges for writers seeking to respond to the unprecedented level and intensity of the conflict. MacKay argues that

> the major challenge facing any synoptic account of World War II is how to convey the war's totally unprecedented geographical scope and the crushing totality with which it managed to turn into a battleground everything it touched. (2009: 1)

Here MacKay is recognising the obliteration of the boundaries between the home front and the battlefront during the Second World War.

The First World War - first-stage Modernism[2]

Connecting the collapse of the Victorian social, political and cultural system with the onset of the First World War, Sherry argues that in 1914 Europe was "balanced on an increasingly precarious platform of old codes, enfeebled beliefs … the fact that its framework of ideals collapsed manifestly in the conflagration of war makes this the marking event for the time's turn" (2005: 6). Forging a connection between the First World War and modernity, Sherry suggests that "this war stands … as a landmark, a milestone, a turning point" (2005: 1). Samuel Hynes too views the First World War as an "agent of change" which "determined what England after the war was like and what *modern* (italics in the original) came to mean" (1990: x). Sherry uses the term "Modern*ism*" (italics in the original) to describe these transformations, as it "invokes a self-conscious awareness and assertion of this modernity, all in all, some enabling claim of difference to precedent convention, to the way things *were*" (italics in the original) (2005: 6). The magnitude and intensity of the First World War challenged

[1] Estimates regarding the death-toll in the Second World War vary widely. For instance, Royde-Smith *et. al* (2020) argue that the total death toll of the Second World War is between 40m and 50m.

[2] Marjorie Perloff in *21st-Century Modernism* (2002) employs the terms: "early", "first-stage" and "*avant-garde*" to refer to the type of prevailing Anglo-America literary Modernism in the 1910s to 1920s. For the purposes of this research the term "first-stage" will be used when referring to Modernism in this time-period.

many of poetry's established forms, devices and themes. However, Margaret Higonnet notes that there is little consensus as to whether

> the literature of World War I constituted a Modernist break with the past, or rather nostalgically attempted to sustain "traditional values" in order to shape incomprehensible experience into meaningful forms of memory. (2007: 120)

This observation provides an insight into the challenges with which writers grappled in order to make sense of and convey the turmoil of the First World War. Some writers retreated to the safety of past certainties while others chose to embrace their chaotic present and attempted to express and represent the sense of confusion and uncertainty in the formal and thematic concerns of their war writing.

Imagist poetry, the tenets of which were first formulated in 1909, reached its zenith in the years immediately prior to the outbreak of the First World War. Helen Carr observes that the "pared-down, elliptical, fragmentary, vivid, with unexpected images and juxtapositions" of Imagist poetics

> exerted a powerful influence on Modernist writers, both poets and novelists, and their ideas and debates they provoked played a vital role in the transformation of American and British cultural life that occurred at the time of the First World War. (2009: loc. 151)

However, Laurence Rainey argues that when the first anthology of Imagist poetry, *Des Imagistes*, was published in 1914, "Imagism was limping towards its demise" (2007: 89). The onset of the First World War signalled the end of the Poundian phase of the Imagist movement. With the advent of the First World War, just as pre-war norms and boundaries were radically altered, the Imagist movement and the poets who formed it would begin to fragment and disperse. After Ezra Pound's divorce from Imagism, between 1915 and 1917 three consecutive annual anthologies titled *Some Imagist Poets* were published under Amy Lowell's leadership. Lowell was determined to reverse Pound's tyrannical editorial attitude in *Des Imagistes*. The Preface to the first volume of *Some Imagist Poets* references these changes, announcing

> a slightly different arrangement to that of our former Anthology. Instead of an arbitrary selection by an editor, each poet has been permitted to represent

> himself by the work he considers his best, the only stipulation being that it should not yet have appeared in book form. (1915: v)

H.D. and Richard Aldington were actively involved in the planning and production of the 1915 edition of *Some Imagist Poets* and Lowell persuaded D.H. Lawrence to contribute poems to the 1915 and 1916 editions. The final anthology was published in April 1917, eight days after the United States had entered the conflict. In October 1917 Lowell remarks of these anthologies that

> the collection has done its work. These three little books are the germ, the nucleus of the school; its spreading out, its amplification, must be sought in the published work of the individual members of the group. (1917: 255)

This thesis explores how Imagism's afterlife emerges in the wartime collections of Ridge and Letts and is later reflected in the long form wartime poetry of H.D. and Wingfield composed in the lead up to and during the Second World War. All four collections are inflected with Imagist tenets and influences.

While Imagist poetics might initially seem more ground-breaking than Georgian poetics, Lawrence was published in both Imagist and Georgian anthologies. Carl Stead remarks on the "chorus of critics [which] begins its remarks on D.H. Lawrence's poetry by saying he was "not a Georgian"" before proceeding to focus on the characteristics of Lawrence's poetry which "mark off the Georgians from their immediate predecessors" (2005: 73). Georgian poetry of the pre-war period is often cast as the antithesis of the avant-gardism of poetic Modernism. However, Peter Howarth (2005) argues that the difference between Georgian and Imagist poetry necessarily involves considering the early alignment of these two poetries. In the years preceding the First World War both camps shared a common purpose in arguing for a new poetry which was different from that of the Victorian era. Myron Simon posits that "both Georgian and Imagist recoiled from Victorian decorum and solemnity, from turgid and ornate poetic diction, and from enervated sensualism" and "found themselves briefly in essential accord as to the poetic habits and mannerisms to be discarded" (1975: 38). Two anthologies of Georgian poetry were published during the First World War, yet David Daiches has suggested that the war "probably helped to make the Georgians look out of date some years before they

otherwise would have" (1940: 332). Imagist and Georgian poetics were both changed by the First World War.

Adam Seipp observes the importance of violence in "understand[ing] the structural connections between the first world war and the rest of the twentieth century" (2006: 762). The aesthetic of violence is a key feature of Vorticism, a movement which Pound co-founded following his involvement with Imagism. Coinciding with the onset of the First World War, this moment in Modernism rejects sentiment and celebrates the power of the machine. Vorticists espoused abstraction in the visual and verbal arts as a way of harnessing "concentrated energy with a still centre" in order to obliterate cultural and social complacency and insularity (Gasiorek, *et. al*, 2011: 61). Vorticism's forceful, experimental, self-promotion is outlined in the two (and only) issues of *Blast* magazine in 1914 and 1915 (Baldick, 2004: 28). Sarah Cole stresses the primacy of violence as a formal and thematic driver in literary Modernism *per se*: "violence experienced subjectively - bruising, terrible, vibrant, productive - is, for Modernist writers, where it all begins" (2012: 8).

In seeking to find suitable ways to respond to the crisis and violence of the First World War, writers adopted a variety of strategies. While many outlines of literary development between 1910 and 1940 are dominated by writers associated with Modernism, Baldick draws attention to a "broad modern movement of literature" which comprises a diversity of voices and embraces a "variety of forms, techniques, styles, and attitudes" connected together by a shared consciousness of change (2004: 11; 5). Baldick's "modern movement" is a useful umbrella category which embraces "Modernist" and more "traditional" forms of writing. Baldick's configuration facilitates consideration of how the women writers discussed in this thesis fuse, reject or champion innovation and tradition in their wartime poetry.

Correlations between modernity, change, violence and literary experimentation are key to this thesis, in that the approach and arrival of war, for all four poets considered here, heralded a creative transition in their poetics. Letts' wrote two types of poetry: "dialect verse celebrating the rural life of Leinster" and "representations of the First World War" (Collins, 2012: 176). The first kind, reflected in Letts' pre-war collection *Songs From Leinster* (1913) depicts the rural life of Irish peasants. Of

primary concern in this thesis, however, is Letts' second type of poetry, which is closely bound up with the First World War. Prior to the publication of her first poetry collection, *The Ghetto and Other Poems*, Ridge had published individual poems in New Zealand and Australia. Before her arrival in America in 1907 Ridge had submitted a volume titled *Verses* to the editor of the Sydney *Bulletin*, the structured and even traditional form of which stands in sharp contrast to the free verse of *The Ghetto and Other Poems*. The lead up to and the onset of the Second World War was a significant influencing factor in the transition in Wingfield's poetic style, the outcome of which was *Beat Drum, Beat Heart*. For H.D., the sea change in her poetry commenced during the First World War, culminating in *Trilogy*, written during the Second World War.

The inter-war years - Modernism *"entre deux guerres"*

The effects of the First World War extend beyond the official end of the fighting. In 1922 T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* and James Joyce's *Ulysses* appeared, two landmark Modernist publications, reflecting a post-First World War sense of disillusionment, despair and fragmentation. The 1930s was a troubled and turbulent decade. Starting in the United States after a major drop in share prices in September 1929, the Great Depression would become an international catastrophe from which economic and social recovery would be slow, and which would prepare the economic and ideological ground for the Second World War. Joe Cleary, making these connections, observes that "obvious symptoms of the deepening crisis *entre deux guerres* (italics in the original) included the Great Depression, the rise of powerful fascist movements in Europe and Asia, the collapse of the League of Nations, and the Spanish Civil War" (2014: 37).

At this time, some poets, known as the Objectivists, emerged in America. In contrast with poets associated with High Modernism, like Pound and Eliot, these poets were motivated and affected by their contemporary, political, economic and social milieux. Led by Louis Zukofsky, this short-lived poetic moment was, according to Mark Scroggins, "partly an extension of Pound's Imagist strictures" (2007: 186). Objectivist poets are sometimes called the second generation of American Modernists. Despite their short trajectory in the 1930s, Alex Davis and Lee M.

Jenkins argue that Objectivist poets as "inheritors of Modernist tendencies … may also be considered proponents of a "late" or "new" Modernism" (2007: 2). According to Christopher Beach "the Objectivists" emphasis on the "moment," the "actual time," and the historical "situation" of their poetry, marks an important change from earlier phases of American poetic Modernism" (2003: 109). During the First World War, in *The Ghetto and Other Poems*, Ridge anticipates future trends in poetic form. Michele Leggott highlights the Objectivist tendencies in Ridge's poetry (2013). Wingfield and H.D. demonstrate their credentials as Objectivists when later, in *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* and *Trilogy*, an Objectivist poetics operates as a site of resistance, and reflection capturing fleeting moments in time which have a lasting impact on humanity. In their wartime poetry this shared awareness of "historical situatedness" and their "heightened concern with matters of form and technique" links H.D. and Wingfield with Lola Ridge (Beach, 2003: 109).

The Second World War - late Modernism

By 1946 the Modernist movement had been in existence for almost three decades, and its function as a radical disruptor of prior literary norms had arguably been served. Modernism had come closer to the literary mainstream. Just as Modernism came into being as a result of a series of philosophical and historical crises, the Second World War was to threaten its *raison d'etre*. MacKay refers to this period as "late Modernism" as she explores the relationships between British Modernist writing and the transformative and creative potential of the Second World War (2007: 1). While H.D. and Wingfield transitioned to longer and open form poetry in *Trilogy* and *Beat Drum, Beat Heart*, their retention of Imagist technique as a constituent of this mode is indicative of their development and deployment of a "late Imagism" as a necessary element of MacKay's "late Modernism". The repurposing of Imagism by Wingfield and H.D. in their long-form World War II poem-sequences exploits the latent potential of this late period of Modernism, as it demonstrates that as an artistic response Modernism is "capable of development and transformation" (MacKay, 2007: 15). Over the course of this war-torn first half of the twentieth century, Modernism evolved from "a textual model of Anglo-American "high" Modernism to a more expansive one alert to different political, social, and cultural trajectories" to become a "rather fluid concept" (Das, 2013: 21). This more

expansive view of Modernist writing accommodates the inclusion of wartime texts which may be traditional in form, but modern in content. Moreover, the loosening of the formal tropes associated with high Modernism facilitates consideration of a more politically and socially engaged literature. Marjorie Perloff argues that the momentum of Modernism was deferred by the global calamities "first of the Great War, and then of a series of crises produced by the two great totalitarianisms that dominated the first half of the century and culminated in World War II and the subsequent Cold War" (2002: 3). This thesis tracks the development of poetic Modernism over the period from the onset of the First World War to the conclusion of the Second World War in its examination of the wartime poetry of four women writers. If there are continuities between the two World Wars, there are indications of contiguous correlations between early and late Modernism in this period. This study suggests that Modernism continues to evolve during the war years. Commonalities and "moment[s] of recognition" in the formal and thematic concerns of the wartime poetry of Ridge, Letts, H.D. and Wingfield which transcend temporal and geographical borders are evolutionary way-markers along the path of Modernist writing during this troubled historical period (Stubbs and Haynes, 2017: 3).

Transnational Modernism and "organic" transnationalism

In 2008 Douglas Mao and Rebecca Walkowitz commented on the "transnational turn" in Modernist studies (738). Recognition of the importance of transnational movements and exchanges to Modernist aesthetics is a relatively recent phenomenon. However, much earlier, during the two World Wars, the women writers discussed in this thesis demonstrate these tendencies in action. Responding to the "world- reshaping processes" of two World Wars, the wartime poetry of Ridge, Letts, H.D. and Wingfield refuses containment within their "national" boundaries as each poet actively and creatively engages with other geographies (Ramazani, 2009b: 57).

Jahan Ramazani's theory of "poetic transnationalism", "an approach to poetry that highlights literary confluences, commonalities, and conflicts that cross national borders", offers a way of demonstrating the global reach of both World Wars, and a means of reading wartime poetry (2006: 354; 2020: 9). Applying this theory to

combatant poetry of the First World War, Ramazani argues that soldier poets "found ingenious ways to shape language and poetic form into tunnels that join what war divides" (2020: 50). Moving away from the trenches of the First World War into a diversity of locations and civilian spaces, this thesis identifies and explores "transnational imaginative energies and solidarities" formed in the wartime poetry of four women across two World Wars (Ramazani, 2020: 28). The writing considered here exceeds the constraints of national and nationalist poetic frameworks and "makes more visible the intergeographic mappings and postnational skepticisms of Modernist poetry" (Ramazani, 2009a: 34). In a world at war the wartime verse of Ridge, Letts, H.D. and Wingfield creates a literary space of mutual understanding and dialogue which intersects and destabilises political, temporal, geographical, and gendered borders.

The geographic focus of this research is on Ireland, England and the United States, tracing the relationships between the lives and wartime poetry of four women. Letts was born in England, spent much of her life in Ireland and worked as a VAD during the First World War in hospitals in Ireland and England. The Irish-born Ridge spent her formative years in New Zealand and Australia. During the First World War, Ridge, a foreigner herself, is writing about and living in another immigrant community, New York's Jewish ghetto. The United States was H.D.'s birthplace but she spent most of her adult life in Europe and experienced both World Wars in London. Wingfield was born in England, upon her marriage came to live in Ireland, throughout her life travelled extensively and experienced the Second World War "in an enchanted coral speck in the north Atlantic" (Perrick, 2007: 70). Ramazani's conception of poetic transnationalism is therefore germane to the poetry analysed in this thesis. All four poets have "divided social belongings"; their wartime poetry reflects their experiences of cultures beyond that of their birthplaces, demonstrating a "diasporic consciousness" conveyed in "cross-national language and allusions" (Ramazani, 2009b: 62; 50). In their poetic responses to the two World Wars the quartet of women writers considered here illuminates the "flows and affiliations across the borders of nation states, regions and cultures" in a world at war (Ramazani 2009b: 62). This examination yields insights into how these poets, writing in different countries and with contrasting experiences of conflict, display commonalities in their responses to the trauma of war.

While each poet interacts differently with the brutal disruptions of war, it is possible to discern within their poetry "patterns of convergence and resistance" (Ramazani, 2006: 354). Building on the notion of a transnational poetics, Tara Stubbs explores the "webs of connection" extending between American and Irish writers in the Modernist period (2015: 211). Stubbs argues that these networks are complex, as

> entangled within this web, too, are terms such as "transatlantic" and "transnational": terms that are on the one hand satisfyingly simple (if taken literally to mean "crossing" the Atlantic Ocean or the "nation" in question), and on the other potentially obfuscating. (2015: 211)

In this war-ravaged period this thesis illuminates a strand within this connective web. By identifying moments of wartime poetic communion in America, Ireland and England, this thesis maps the points which connect these four women poets. Their landscapes move beyond the battlefield to connect with wider wartime contexts and concerns. Their verse explores spaces not typically associated with war, breaching the boundary between private and public spheres. Their perspectives encompass consideration of the impact of warfare globally, nationally, and locally. Considering the wartime poetry of these poets solely within the confines of national literary paradigms delimits their writing and is "ill-suited to the powerfully intercultural dynamics of the twentieth and twenty-first century poetry" (Ramazani, 2006: 348).

Against the backdrop of two World Wars, allied to the expatriation and mobility of the four women considered here, notions of belonging, including issues of identity, reveal the complex dynamics between poet and place. All four of the women poets are national "outsiders", each spending most of their adult lives outside of their countries of birth. Their wartime poetry is infused with this composite and cosmopolitan cultural awareness. In their explorations of disparate localities, spaces and places affected by the violence of war, each writer examines how local events and global calamities inflect and influence each other. In their wartime poetry, this quartet of women contributes to remapping the geography of Modernism. In their wartime collections these writers add to the creation of a "community beyond borders", bringing to their poetry a sense of culture and therefore of national identification as "dynamic and mobile" (Spiegel, 2015: 101; 88). At traumatic junctures in world history, these poets' experience of and empathy with cultures

outside that of their birthplace is reflected in their wartime collections, confirming the suggestion that transnationalism can be "consistent with, even constitutive of, nationalism" (Spiegel, 2015: 88).

Considering the wartime poetry of Ridge, Letts, H.D. and Wingfield within a transnational framework enables the consideration of a number of significant factors, entailing, for example, an examination of the global impact of the World Wars which resulted in fundamental shifts in social, cultural and political norms and roles. This configuration facilitates the contemplation of the spaces, borders, margins, boundaries and processes forming the bases of social and cultural institutions which were unsettled during this period of conflict. This approach also accommodates an examination of whether the wartime poetry of Ridge, Letts, H.D. and Wingfield expresses the radically altered realities wrought by the World Wars and thus "helps newness enter the world" (Ramazani, 2006: 354). By loosening the constraints of nation and ethnicity, a comparative transnational approach can also yield insights into whether the poetry of the four women poets discussed in this thesis reflects or resists their experiences of countries, communities and cultures outside of their birth-places.

For Ramazani, Modernism is "profoundly cross-cultural, translocal, and transnational" (2006: 335). In their wartime poetry these women poets mediate between the local, the national and the global. Ridge, Letts, H.D. and Wingfield also challenge the reductive notion of Modernism as solely and wholly an international concept. While the notion of a clear national identity is complicated, personally and creatively, for each writer, each formed enduring affiliations and connections to their adopted communities and countries. Their recognition of the instability and permeability of national borders, their identification of shared concerns which connect disparate locations in a world at war and their sensitivity to the repetition of cycles of warfare throughout history, aligns their poetry with Ramazani's transnational approach, which supersedes an earlier ahistorical model of Modernism.

Ramazani posits that Modernists translated their frequent geographic displacement and transcultural alienation into a poetics of dissonance and defamiliarization (2009a: 25). Yet these women writers also problematize the binary experiences of

alienation and belonging inherent in Ramazani's conception of a transnational Modernism. Despite their complicated national identities, each writer discussed in this thesis creates and experiences a sense of attachment and belonging to certain localities. Indeed, the "local" is where all four poets enter the public narrative of the World Wars. Ridge's nameless narrator living on the fifth floor of a tenement is entranced by and drawn to the vibrancy and energy of life of the New York ghetto (italics in the original):

> *Startling, vigorous life,*
>
> *That squirms under my touch,*
>
> *And baffles me when I try to examine it,*
>
> *Or hurls me back without apology.* (1918: 24).

Both dedications in Letts' collection underscore her affinity with a country in which to (italics in the original):

> *... hear the call*
> *Of all things sad, neglected, small;*
> *Thrill to the magic of the wind,*
> *Love country, town and your own kind,*
> *Sinners and saints and sea and sky,*
> *Just as they are, for so do I.* (1917).

Wingfield's *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* opens with stirring insights into the daily intimacies of a village in which the news of war has just arrived and H.D.'s narrator in *Trilogy* immediately claims ownership of "your (and my) old town square"- Mecklenburgh Square, in the Bloomsbury district of London, where H.D. had lived during the First World War ("The Walls Do Not Fall": 3). While the women writers discussed in this thesis are hyphenated between cultures, mobile and restless, each established and maintained lasting links with their chosen communities and nations. These relationships and experiences inflect their wartime poetry to produce a type of "organic" transnationalism.

Global wars with local dimensions

Cleary observes that Modernist writing in Europe, America and Ireland which emerged in the turbulent period between 1890 and 1950 involves "ambitious attempts to artistically register and interpret the crisis of meaning … and to find ways beyond the collapse of the old cultural dispensations" (2014: 38). The First World War was not a single event but an international crisis involving multiple communities and nations. The war was the catalyst for the emergence of the United States as a world superpower. A former British colony, the United States "would gradually displace Britain after 1918 to become a new world hegemony, although the process would not be complete until after World War II" (Cleary, 2014: 38). H.D., who wrote in both World Wars, is exemplary of the ways in which war and Modernism interlock. Steven Gould Axelrod, Camille Roman, and Thomas Travisano posit "it's not often that a poet changes poetic history. H.D. did it twice" (2005: 304). Hilda Doolittle's moniker, H.D., from the nom de plume "H.D., *Imagiste*" (italics in the original) bestowed upon her by Pound in 1912, makes her synonymous with Imagism, and yet her poetics began to depart from the Poundian paradigm during the First World War. The creative transition in H.D.'s poetics develops progressively, culminating in *Trilogy*, written during the Second World War. H.D.'s early Imagistic mode is nonetheless the prerequisite for her later, longer, forms. H.D. does not abandon Imagism in *Trilogy*. Rather, this thesis contends, changes in her poetics are inextricably linked with her experience of war, as H.D. "attempts to reshape our world into a more satisfying place - a spiritual home rather than a battlefield" (Axelrod *et. al*., 2005: 306).

Irish Modernism

Where Cleary posits that the "the story of Irish Modernism is constitutively both national and transnational in its dimensions", Ramazani makes the more nuanced argument that Irish poetry "deserves special attention in an exploration of what a transnational disciplinary paradigm can reveal and a national paradigm can make harder to see" (2014: 7; 2006: 346). In 1916, as the First World War intensified, Ireland made a decisive move towards achieving independence from its coloniser in a rebellion that would later become known as the Easter Rising. The signing of the

Anglo-Irish Treaty in 1921, which gave Ireland independent status but only as a dominion of the British Empire, led to the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922, confirming the partition of the island. The ensuing civil war ended in May 1923 with the "victory" of the Irish Free State over the Irish Republican forces. The Irish Free State remained in place until the coming into effect, on 18 April 1949, of The Republic of Ireland Act, when "Eire" would formally be declared a Republic. During the Free State years, the combined power of Church and State significantly impacted all elements of Irish life. Mary Trotter argues that the Irish Free State "legitimized a morality reflecting the ultramontane doctrines of the Catholic Church" (2008: 106). Here, Trotter is referring to the intense and sustained advocacy of the supreme papal authority in matters of faith and discipline which the Catholic Church exercised over this overwhelmingly Catholic Irish populace. Modernist writing in an Irish context is inevitably bound up with achieving a post-colonial national identity.

Anne Fogarty remarks on the political basis for the "peculiar local cast" of Irish Modernism (1995: 212). Ireland was, during the decades of the Free State, according to Collins "inhospitable to freedom of expression in either political or personal terms" (2012: 41). During these years, many artists left Ireland to seek these freedoms, and those that remained depended on an international market for their work (Brown, 1982: 174). Against this social, political and cultural backdrop Irish Modernism has also long been dominated by "a small handful of émigré Modernists" (Cleary, 2014: 2). Such is the length of the shadow cast by the canonical figures of William Butler Yeats, James Joyce and Samuel Beckett that the work of a generation of other writers with connections to Ireland, who were experimenting and innovating from the onset of the First World War through the period of the Irish Free State to the end the Second World War, remains largely obscured. Women writers comprise one of these neglected constituencies. In her contribution to Patricia Coughlan and Alex Davis' collection *Modernism and Ireland* (1995) Fogarty observes that "even radical revisions of Modernism still exclude and bypass the achievements of women" (1995: 211). While Wingfield has, according to Davis, a "modest reputation" within Irish Modernism, her writing, like that of Ridge and Letts, is part of the "virtual occlusion of a whole generation of Modernist women poets in Ireland" (2017: 329).

Cleary posits that there are "three successive phases of Irish Modernist achievement from the late nineteenth century to the period immediately after the World War II" (2014: 36). Each of these stages represents a creative response to specific events in Irish history. According to Cleary the First World War and the Easter Rising of 1916 are critical events in the creative development of the second and "pivotal" generation of Irish Modernists (2014: 43). One of the features of this "Yeats-Joyce" phase of Irish Modernism is that its major figures were "deeply ambivalent about Ireland and mostly scornful for one reason or another of what the national revolution had accomplished" (Cleary, 2014: 47). However, Ridge's "The Tidings" and William Butler Yeats' "Easter, 1916" which were authored in a proximate timeframe, present different perspectives on the Easter Rising which also encapsulate their contrasting views of patriotism. For Yeats, patriotism is murky and paradoxical. For Ridge, Irish patriotism at least, is clear, concrete, and if necessary, worth battling and dying for to gain freedom from colonial oppression. Writing from across the Atlantic Ridge's sentiments regarding the coetaneous revolutionary events in the country of her birth challenges some of the assumptions underpinning this phase of Irish Modernism. Ridge also presents an alternative to the dominant narrative of Irish Modernism during this historical period. In *The Ghetto and Other Poems* Ridge's approach to the Irish conflict during the First World War also highlights the potential of adopting a more expansive and transnational perspective on what constitutes Irish writing in this period of Irish history.

In this middle phase of Irish Modernism, artists "combined formal experimentation with an expressly Irish subject matter and dialect" (Cleary, 2014: 43). This observation accords with the formal and thematic changes in Letts' poetic oeuvre. Letts challenges the boundaries of Irish Modernism, and her poetic *opus* also mirrors her complex (trans)national identification. Two of Letts' three collections, *Songs From Leinster* (1913) and *More Songs From Leinster* (1926), are written in an Irish idiom, whereas *The Spires of Oxford and Other Poems* (1917) reflects a wartime transition in her poetics. Letts' proximate experience of war plays a significant role in prompting thematic and formal changes to the manner and mode of her poetry. Letts and Ridge generationally align with this stage of Irish Modernism and are creatively motivated by the First World War and the Easter Rising. However, their writing also challenges the paradigm of Irish Modernism. While the conflict was

underway, each would raise contentious issues regarding Irish involvement in the First World War. There are also nuances and differences in terms of how Ridge and Letts internalise and present their wartime experiences, in contrast to the canonical figures of Yeats and Joyce who dominate the Modernist response to this turbulent phase of Irish history. Ridge and Letts demand entry into an expanded canon of Irish Modernist writing.

Her birth-date aligns Wingfield with Cleary's third generation of Irish Modernist writers. Cleary argues that diversity is a defining feature of this late phase of Irish Modernism, the members of which "all matured professionally and artistically after the formation of the Irish Free State and after both the Irish Revival and international Modernism had already shed much of their earlier radical novelty and iconoclastic panache" (2014: 46). Wingfield's *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* responds to and reflects the impact of contemporaneous history, including such seminal events as the Great Depression, the rise of Fascism, the Second World War and, in Ireland, "the post-revolutionary conservativism of the Irish Free State and Northern Ireland" (Cleary, 2014: 46). The Second World War "would change its world even more cataclysmically than World War I had done that of its predecessors" (Cleary 2014: 46). For Wingfield, too, the lead up to, and onset of, the Second World War heralded a creative transition in her poetics. Formally innovative and thematically audacious, *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* is Wingfield's novel response to the devastating events of a world at war. Indifference to Wingfield's contribution to the canon of Irish Modernist writing has only recently been observed by critics. Adrienne Leavy posits of Wingfield and other women writers who "published poetry collections characterized by varying degrees of Modernist aesthetics … [that] until recently their contributions to literary Modernism has been almost entirely ignored" (2019: 297). Austin Clarke's observation that the Irish poet "far from being provincial … must be the focal point of many influences" (1946: 158) may be applied to Wingfield's *Beat Drum, Beat Heart*. In her long war poem Wingfield challenges national boundaries, embraces a diversity of historical and contemporaneous conflicts, exploring gendered responses to warfare.

Davis observes that Wingfield's writing could be "productively read through the prism of the transnationalist turn in Modernist studies" (2017: 343). Gail Jones

makes a similar observation regarding Ridge, whom she describes as a "transnational Modernist" (2014: 133). Letts' wartime writing could also be profitably considered through a transnational lens. The continued marginality of Wingfield, Ridge and Letts within dominant constructions of Irish Modernism may partly be due to their complex transnational identification. Tensions and dependencies between the local and international permeate and inform the poetry discussed in this thesis, in which it is argued that the wartime writing of the four women poets considered here provides insights into what a transnational paradigm may uncover and what over-reliance on a few key figures within a national poetic paradigm might obscure. The trio of poets with Irish connections -Ridge, Letts, Wingfield -raises contentious issues more often hidden within the meta-narrative of the World Wars. During the First World War, Letts and Ridge focus on various aspects of Ireland's involvement in and response to the war, including Irishmen fighting in the army of their colonisers while at home their compatriots are fighting to achieve independence. The "1930s aura of incipient conflict", allied to her own experiences of the contemporaneous Irish social and literary milieu, informs and imbues Wingfield's *Beat Drum Beat Heart* (Cole, 2012: 6). Letts, Ridge and Wingfield creatively complicate the notion of a clear national identity. Yet, each has close ties to Ireland. Each writer also tests the boundaries of poetic form in writing of the global phenomena of the two World Wars, which remain controversial events in Irish history. Against this backdrop, the three women poets are triply occluded from dominant definitions of Irish Modernism.

According to Collins the question of national affiliation underpins an evolving conception of Irish Modernism

> which includes writers born elsewhere but associated with Ireland through their subject matter or publishing choices, as well as those who were born in Ireland but who lived, and wrote, elsewhere. (2020: 14)[3]

In a similar vein Lauren Arrington proposes that recent expansions of Irish Modernism should embrace writers "who lived and wrote in and about Ireland as well as those who were Irish by birth but who lived and worked outside the country"

[3] "Melancholy Modernism - The Loss of the Irish Woman Poet 1930 - 1950" is unpublished and is referenced here by the kind permission of the author.

(2017: 1). This evolving paradigm encompasses the wartime poetics of Letts, Ridge and Wingfield. Their poetry could also

> with proper attention, help to re-adjust the definition of Modernism itself as well as the social and political contexts within which Modernism emerges as a cultural discourse. (Ó Donghaile and Smyth, 2018: 300)

This observation chimes with the wartime writing of the three women poets with Irish connections as in addition to their poetry reflecting their Irish connections it is possible to also discern the influence of their experiences of social and cultural milieux beyond Ireland.

A persistent propensity to consider war writing and Modernism as antipathetic curtails full consideration of the range of possible literatures and writers who contribute to both canons. In identifying and exploring intersections between war and Modernism in the wartime writing of Ridge, Letts, H.D. and Wingfield, this thesis challenges the prevailing paradigms in the scholarship of war literature and of Modernism. This thesis contends that the poetic narrative of both World Wars is incomplete and that the evolutionary path of Modernism as an imaginative response to these crises is not yet fully explored.

GENRE AND AUTHORSHIP

Poetry of the First World War - the Soldier poet

First World War poetry has long been characterized by the trench lyric: "the lyric testimony of the broken body -mouth, eyes, the "gashed" head - set against the abstract rhetoric of honour" (Das, 2013: 4). The figure of the soldier in the trenches has become ingrained in the collective cultural imaginary of the Great War. Writing in 2014, the centenary of the outbreak of the war, Das argues that

> over the last hundred years, the image of the First World War soldier as damaged but resilient has remained etched on British cultural consciousness, partly formed and periodically reinforced by the reading of a handful of soldier-poets, particularly Owen and Sassoon. (2014)

Published posthumously, Wilfred Owen's "*Dulce et Decorum Est*" (italics in the original) (1920), which begins "Bent double, like old beggars under sacks, / knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge", is a visceral representation of conditions in the trenches (55). The emotional impact of trench verse has contributed to its enduring position as the only valid poetry of the First World War. While trench verse rightly remains an important element in the kaleidoscope of First World War poetry, the latter has recently acquired a more expansive definition.

The poetry written by soldier-poets was influenced and changed by their experiences of the war and, according to Vincent Trott, "reflect[s] a range of positions on the war" (2017: 125). The pre-war aesthetic and thematic dispositions of soldier-poets, Georgians and Imagists among them, altered as a consequence of their first-hand experience of the horrors of warfare. These experiences had noteworthy impacts on the form, content, and style of their poetry, which reflected their growing disillusionment with the First World War. Some of the foremost pre-war Georgian poets were profoundly affected, in their writing, by their battlefront experiences. Robert Graves' "A Dead Boche" (1916) is "a founding work of this new realistic tradition … invoking no abstract values, and certainly no red sweet wine" (Baldick, 2004: 336). The poem describes the visceral experience of the English soldier-poet finding a dead body of a German soldier, "Big-bellied, spectacled, crop-haired, / Dribbling black blood from nose and beard," in Mametz Wood following the Battle of the Somme in July 1916 (33). Siegfried Sassoon's "The Hero" (1916) echoes this increasing disillusionment on the battlefront and "highlights the gulf between the ugly truths known to soldiers and the illusions cherished by civilians" (Baldick, 2004: 337). A type of anti-war poetry - for example, Sassoon's "The Old Huntsman" (1917) - developed to rebut the "implausible rhetoric of glorious sacrifice" (Baldick, 2004: 337).

Trench poetry evolved to combine traditional poetic forms with a new realism, forging a mode in which to convey the horrors of war: "the finest trench poetry revels in the meeting of tradition and innovation" (Das, 2014). Models include Ivor Gurney's "The Silent One" (1917) and Sassoon's "The Redeemer" (1916) which concern the realities of life on the frontline. Gurney describes a soldier's dilemma of whether to cross a "no-man's land" of uncut barbed wire to retrieve the bodies of

two comrades who "died on the wires, and hung there" (1). Sassoon's tone is one of documentary realism, contrasting trench life with civilian existence, where soldiers are "soaked, chilled, and wretched" while "peaceful folk in beds lay snug asleep" (3). This perspective belies a more nuanced reading of the progression of Georgian wartime poetry which, as reflected above, evolved to become more closely aligned with the experimentation and inventiveness of Modernism. Indeed, this development had started early in the war. Pericles Lewis argues that the first of Rupert Brooke's jingoistic war sonnets, "Peace",

> which idealizes war, has its echo in later Modernist poetry. Brooke's poem somewhat notoriously compares the soldiers headed off to war to "swimmers into cleanness leaping" (2007: 14)

The evolution of poetic Modernism was also caught up in the shock and devastation of the First World War. During the war, Modernist poets sought to find adequate poetic forms and language to represent altered battlefront realities. The chaos of the battlefields may have appealed to the Modernists' predisposition to break with the conventional rules. However, such was the depth of the horror of the war that reality itself became fragmented. In the battlefields of the First World War, the fragmentation which had been a formal feature of pre-war poetic Modernism became actualised and thematic, as poets struggled to absorb and express their battlefront experiences. Aldington, H.D.'s husband and a founding poet of the Imagist movement, joined the British Army in 1916 and wrote poetry while he was in the trenches. According to Sherry, experience of combat "helped to establish irony as the primary, defining mode of literary awareness" (2005: 7). Written in free verse, Aldington's incongruously titled "Trench Idyll", published in 1919, opens in a seemingly casual conversation between two soldiers, one sitting on "a lump of frozen earth", the other "on an unexploded shell", reminiscing on the pleasures of London, "its women, restaurants, night clubs, theatres" (22). Then, using the rhythm of everyday language, the horror of war intrudes into this ostensibly mundane conversation, with one soldier recounting "the nastiest job I've had", to remove the identity discs from the decomposed corpses of his long-dead comrades, still wearing their gas helmets, "who'd hung for six months" from the barbed wire and whose bodies "fell to pieces at a touch" (23). The banality of the conversation underscores the horror of the frontline. Prior to the war, Modernists like Aldington had avoided

expressing direct views on matters of public interest. Aldington's early Imagist verse was influenced by ancient Greek motifs and personae: he was an admirer of "Catullus, Ovid; Homer and Shakespeare; but the poet he most extols is Theocritus" (Carr, 2009: loc. 10186). In "Trench Idyll" Theocritus' pastoral idyll is fused with the vastly different experience of the trenches. "Trench Idyll" is an exemplar of a new Modernist voice, which emerged from combat experience, which rejects the relative objectivity, detachment and self-conscious aestheticism of pre-war Modernist poetry and instead struggles to convey the horrific realities of war.

Baldick proposes that, during the First World War, war writing underwent two different and successive phases (2004). The first stage, in the seventeen months from 1914 to 1915, is "for the most part propaganda and patriotic effusion" (Baldick, 2004: 331). During Baldick's proposed second stage, from 1916 to 1918, war writing becomes more sombre, "brooding upon the tragedy of the conflict" (2004: 336). While the overall trajectory of Baldick's phased approach to First World War writing is useful, combatant poetry evolved in a more staggered and uneven way. Brooke's sequence of five War Sonnets, written in 1914 and published three weeks before his death in 1915, in many ways epitomises this early enthusiasm yet, as noted earlier, also includes traces of uncertainty as to the heroic vision of war. Edward Thomas' "This Is No Case Of Petty Right Or Wrong", written in December 1915, signals a perceptible change in sentiment by highlighting the complexity of the notion of patriotism and expresses cynicism regarding the motives behind newspaper content during the war. "This Is No Case Of Petty Right Or Wrong" is a precursor to the type of new trench poetry which emerged later in the First World War and which "seems to recognize no "just cause" or higher purpose to the War" (Baldick, 2004: 337). Thomas' poem is an argument between two different types of patriotism. Using contrasting terms and placing them close together, German / Englishmen, hate / love, Thomas compares the more conventional approach to patriotism espoused by contemporaneous jingoistic newspapers and official First World War propaganda of hating the enemy with an alternative patriotism: "I hate not Germans, nor grow hot / With love of Englishmen, to please newspapers" (94). These lines express scorn in relation to the War Propaganda Bureau which was formed early in the war under the aegis of the British Foreign Office. This department, assisted by a number of British writers, devised and orchestrated a public campaign aimed at supporting the British

involvement in the First World War. While Thomas was not among the twenty-five British writers invited to the meeting of the War Propaganda Bureau in September 1914 from which this "patriotic" strategy emerged, he may have become aware or suspicious of the latent intention behind these newspaper articles.

Jay Winter observes "the slow and uneven evolution of trench poetry, from that written during its first year to that reflecting the great offensives of 1916-1918" (2013: 248). In the latter half of the First World War, a type of soldier poetry emerged, arising from experience of the frontline, which "redefined for the modern age what poetry of war would be" (Baldick, 2004: 336). This new kind of poetry recognises altered realities and is infused with realism, anger and protest. Poetry during these latter years of the war also evidences the expansion of the parameters and geographies of the First World War. It was during this stage of the war that *The Spires of Oxford and Other Poems* and *The Ghetto and Other Poems* were published.

Combatant First World War literature in the United States exhibits similar tendencies to that written by British soldiers. Having remained neutral for over two-and-a-half years, on 6 April 1917 the United States Congress voted America into the First World War. Concern about rising public resentment opposing this move and that the army and national guard numbered fewer than 400,000 fuelled the signing into law on 18 May 1917 of the Selective Services Act. This was the first national draft in American history, a measure which resulted in over 2.8 million men being drafted. Themes of disillusionment became, and remain, an important constituent of the American literary response to the First World War. According to Mark Whalan, the

> best known American writing about WWI was written by a new generation of male participant-writers, and generally represents the War as being responsible for soldierly disillusion and psychological trauma. (2014)

This type of literature has endured and occludes the diversity of literary responses to the war by other coetaneous writers in America, including Lola Ridge. As an anarchist and artist, the events in the lead up to and during American involvement in the war motivated Ridge and are contemporaneously reflected in *The Ghetto and Other Poems*. Whereas on first encounter the landscapes of Ridge's collection might seem to be the antithesis of the First World War trenches, war and the threat of

violence and destruction infuse *The Ghetto and Other Poems*. Connections and commonalities between these two ostensibly unrelated wartime spaces are explored in this thesis.

Das proposes that the notion that all First World War poetry is trench poetry is too restrictive and argues for "an expansive definition and a flexible critical framework alert to different political, cultural and historical trajectories" (2013: 8). This expansion facilitates consideration of alternative and other possible forms of First World War poetry. In addition, Das' expansion of the canon of war poetry allows for the inclusion of alternative perspectives, moving beyond the soldier-poet to include the wartime poetry of non-combatants. This broader lens is pertinent when considering the wartime poetry of Letts and Ridge. Each poet inherits and interrogates poetic traditions and themes as they represent the impact of the First World War on civilian and non-combatant spaces, psyches and places.

Poetry of the First World War - the woman poet

According to Claire Buck, "although women's memoirs and fiction are now much better remembered, poetry was the preeminent genre for women writers between 1914 and 1918" (2005: 89). The level of women's poetic output during the First World War was high:

> women's poetry was published in single-author collections, anthologies, and the leading newspapers, women's magazines, and local newspapers. Of the more than 2,000 poets publishing during these years a quarter were women. By contrast soldiers on active service wrote less than a fifth of the total output. (Buck, 2005: 87)

This statistic need not automatically imply that all the poetry written by women and published during the war is "war poetry", but poetry provides a way for women to claim ownership and write of their lived experiences of war. As Das observes, "all First World War poetry was not written by "war poets", just as all poetry written by the war poets is not war poetry"; in order to "qualify as a First World War poem, the war does not have to be directly present or mentioned, but at the same time some context of the war has to be registered and evoked, however obliquely" (2013: 8; 9).

These expansions facilitate consideration of the wartime poetry of Letts and Ridge, who both enlarge the experiential and spatial paradigm of war beyond that of the battlefield into hospitals in Ireland and England and a New York City Jewish ghetto.

Poetry was not the only genre caught up in the question of whether women have the authority to write about war. Prose penned by women was also linked to "the question of who has license to comment on the war" (Buck, 2005: 100). As with poetry, prose accounts of women's wartime hospital experience were widely published during the First World War. Like poetry, women writers' eye-witness prose accounts of their experience in hospitals range across the full spectrum from pro to anti-war positions. Pro-war novels include Violetta Thurston's *Field Hospital* (1915), Kate John Finzi's *Eighteen Months In The War Zone* (1916), and Olive Dent's *A VAD In France* (1917). At the time of publication and in the decade following the First World War there was a general blindness to the subversive potential of womens' First World War poetry and prose. Anti-war prose, such as Mary Agnes Hamilton's *Dead Yesterday* (1916), Rose Macaulay's *Non-Combatants and Others* (1916) and Rebecca West's *The Return of The Soldier* (1918), were not at their time of publication "exclusively read as anti-war" (Buck, 2005: 102).

Poetry anthologies and the First World War

The early decades after First World War were, according to Baldick, "a great age of anthologies" (2004: 109). Along with the verse of other women poets, the poetry of Letts and Ridge was published in several anthologies during and in the early aftermath of the First World War. However, this pattern was not generally sustained beyond the 1930s, which is a common trend for much of women's wartime poetry. This publishing pattern is not reflected in First World War poetry authored by men. The subtlety and nuance of women's wartime poetry may have been read, at the time of publication and for some years after the First World War, as supportive of the conflict. Indeed, some women's poetry may have been read as wholly unrelated to the war.

Several anthologies published during the First World War in which Letts' poetry features reveal unions between women poets writing on different sides of the

Atlantic which reflect a pattern of shared concerns regarding the devastation and trauma of the First World War. Letts' "The Spires of Oxford" was "published in eight anthologies between 1917-1919" (Khan, 1986: 74). One of these anthologies is John William Cunliffe's *Poems of the Great War* (1918). This popular anthology, in which a quarter of the poets are women, and in which poets from the United States are represented, was reprinted four times between 1916 and 1918. In the Preface, the editor reveals the rationale for his choice of poems: "to give fair representation to various schools of thought and expression as well as to the various phases of the War" (v). The first printing of this anthology was in 1916, the year when the initial war enthusiasm had waned and the true cost of the conflict was becoming apparent, making these editorial choices astute and perceptive. Anne Varty points out that Cunliffe "does not privilege one type of experience over another, nor does he draw distinctions of gender" in the belief that "it is as appropriate for men to write about grief as it is for women to write about fighting" (2017: 41). Varty here recognizes an early editorial acknowledgment of a woman poet's authority to write of their wartime experiences.

Letts' "The Connaught Rangers", while not included in *The Spires of Oxford and Other Poems*, was published in a number of anthologies between 1917 and 1921, including *A Treasury of War Poetry: British and American Poems of the World War, 1914-1919* (1919), *War Poems from the Yale Review* (1918), and *Poems of the War and the Peace* (1921). The decision to exclude "The Connaught Rangers" from *The Spires of Oxford and Other Poems* is interesting. Considered in conjunction with the dilution of the Irishness of the collection's original title, this omission may have been the result of a decision to distance Letts' poetry from the contentious and political issue of Irish involvement in the British army. The poem's exclusion from the collection also has implications for the readership of the volume. According to Buck, the vast majority of women poets whose poetry was published during the First World War reiterate the heroism of the noble soldiers (2005). The omission of "The Connaught Rangers" and the primacy given to "The Spires of Oxford" in the American edition of the collection may thus have been an editorial attempt to align Letts' poetry more closely with that of other English women poets. This strategy was successful, given the frequency with which both "The Spires of Oxford" and "The

Connaught Rangers" appear in poetry anthologies during and immediately after the First World War.

In George Herbert Clarke's *A Treasury of War Poetry: British and American Poems of the World War, 1914-1919,* over one-fifth of the contributors are women.[4] This anthology, which features Letts' "The Connaught Rangers" and four poems from *The Spires of Oxford and Other Poems,* also includes poems written by American women which share the thematic concerns of Letts' collection. Edith Thomas' "The Red Cross Nurse" resonates thematically with Letts' "A Sister In A Military Hospital". Margaret Widdemer's "Homes" exhibits similar concerns to Letts in "Dead". In both poems the female poet-speaker mourns the loss of her husband, and her grief is sharpened by everyday reminders of domesticity. The transatlantic commonalities between the women poets included in Clarke's anthology reveal their shared concern with telling the "other" story of the First World War. Their poetry provides insights into their lived experiences in army support roles and as civilians experiencing the horrific impacts of war. These preoccupations, allied to their questioning of the purpose of the war and the mounting loss of life, are poetic testimonies which foreground support workers and women.

Ridge too was frequently represented in contemporaneous anthologies. Her poetry was included in Louis Untermeyer's popular anthology, *Modern American Poetry,* which was published in six editions between 1919 and 1942 (the fifth and sixth versions were issued as a combined *Modern American Poetry and Modern British Poetry* in 1936 and 1942). Ridge and H.D. are included among Untermeyer's American contingent of poets, chosen for their "individuality", "strongly pronounced personal idiom" and "unique command" of their craft (1942: v). Passages from Ridge's "The Ghetto" and "Faces" from *The Ghetto and Other Poems* are included in all editions of this anthology. Ridge's "Song of Iron" from *The Ghetto and Other Poems* is included in Alfred Kreymborg's coterie anthology: *Others for 1919: An Anthology of the New Verse*. The motto of the little magazine *Others,* from which this anthology emanated, is "the old expressions are with us always, and there are

[4] Gill Plain observes of this anthology that of the "183 poets, 39 were clearly identifiable as women" (1995: 63).

always others". This subtitle confirms the magazine's commitment to the *avant-garde* with its focus on new, innovative and experimental kinds of poetry and is also indicative of the catholic quality of the magazine; its openness to both innovative and traditional poetries. Ridge's "The Tidings", which directly addresses the Irish rebellion of Easter 1916, along with "Flotsam" and "Art and Life" from *The Ghetto and Other Poems,* were published in 1919 in *Current Opinion.* In this periodical Ridge's poetry is included in the subsection "Voices of Living Poets", which incorporates an observation that "poetry has made war - made it in its own image, with all the tinsel of tradition stripped away" (Wheeler, 1919: 123). Ridge's presence demonstrates a contemporaneous awareness of her contribution to the poetry of the First World War.

Just as Ridge's poetry divided critics, a similar binary emerges regarding her inclusion in anthologies. Jessica Nelson North, a fellow poet and an editor of *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*, observes that "she [Ridge] never had a very large audience, though some of her poems have been highly publicized, but the friends and critics who admired her talent did so with impassioned sincerity" (1941: 209). In contrast, Terese Svoboda argues for a more expansive view of the appeal of Ridge's poetry: "her [Ridge's] triumph was in establishing common ground between Jews, and Americans, without compromising Jewish identity" (2015: 373). These divergent views illustrate the difficulties in easily categorising, if not in anthologising, Ridge's poetry. Untermeyer describes Ridge as a "revolutionary", a moniker which could also apply to her oeuvre, which ranges from the free verse sequences of "The Ghetto" to her command of the sonnet form in her final collection *Dance of Fire* (1935) (1942: 304). Formal oscillations and the wide-ranging and controversial thematic concerns of Ridge's poetry are insufficient reasons to deny her inclusion in an extensive range of anthologies. On the contrary, exploring and mining the range and reach of Ridge's *opus* yields productive and compelling insights into her technical prowess and concerns with global politics at important junctures in world history.

John Nichols argues there are two types of anthology, those that target a "mainstream, general audience" and those with "coterie readerships" (2006: 171). The more conventional anthologies assisted in establishing modern verse, as they

"circulated an image of Modernist verse as an unequivocally established canon", whereas the coterie anthologies "emphasized the new poetry's differences from prior and dominant literary traditions" (Nicholas, 2006: 171). Letts' and Ridge's publication patterns in anthologies broadly align with their contribution to modern and Modernist poetics. Ridge's poetics are overtly experimental and "Modernist" while Letts' poetry is formally more conservative. However, Letts, while formally less innovative than Ridge, establishes her wartime poetry as a platform from which to examine the actual conditions and holistic impacts of the First World War. Ridge's cross-over capability is indicative of the latent potential of her poetry to establish and embed Modernist poetry as part of American literary history. Her poetry also exposes and expresses the visceral realities of a world shaken by conflict and the omnipresent threat of death.

Higonnet's observation regarding the diversity of women's poetic responses to the First World War, that "like male poets, some women composed traditional forms whereas others played with Modernist experiments", also has resonance for *The Spires of Oxford and Other Poems* and *The Ghetto and Other Poems* (2013: 185). Ridge's collection is the more self-consciously radical. However, it would be reductive to set up a binary between the "modern" Ridge and the "traditional" Letts. Letts reimagines the genre of poetic elegy, and repurposes the sonnet form, exploiting both for political purposes to protest the war. Letts also assumes personal risk by drawing attention to the emotional and traumatic impact of war at a critical juncture in the conflict. Working within traditional poetic forms, Letts takes a more direct approach than Ridge to the trauma and suffering associated with war which reflects her own wartime experience. Baldick's contention that "every literary experiment is necessarily traditional in some sense, just as every "traditionalist" work of any value is also a new experiment" may productively be applied to a comparative analysis of the wartime poetry of Letts and Ridge (2004: 5). Each poet experiments in different ways. Letts chooses a more conventional poetic form to explore contentious themes while Ridge deploys a radical poetics to register her concerns about the social and culture milieu of the United States as it entered the First World War.

Away from the trenches, Letts and Ridge offer an alternative to the dominant imagery, of the early war years at least, of the heroic combatant fighting and dying to protect his homeland and to preserve democratic freedom. In their collections both poets explore a diversity of wartime contexts. Letts' opening poem, "The Spires of Oxford", recounts the story of the young scholars' journeys from Oxford to the battlefields of the First World War. The tranquility of Oxford gradually fades as the poem progresses. Letts' juxtaposition of the pre-war landscapes with the wartime battlefield displays a recognition of the need to move beyond idealised pre-war landscapes to reveal the harsh realities of the First World War. Later, in her sonnet sequences, Letts invites her readers to witness the depths of private grief by unveiling to public view the irreparable loss of daily domestic intimacies of grieving women who mourn their lost loved ones. In the opening sequences of "The Ghetto" Ridge recreates in the New York ghetto the claustrophobic and intimate conditions of the First World War trenches. Ridge's civilian images are a counterbalance to Sassoon's "The Death-Bed" (1916), in which, from his hospital bed, a dying soldier moving in and out of consciousness reimagines the fortifications of the trenches.

Ramazani remarks on the boundary-crossing potential of poetry, the formal "elasticity" which means that it is "well suited to evoking modernity's interlinking of widely separated sites" (2009b: 54). Transnational connections and concerns permeate both Letts' and Ridge's wartime collections. In *The Spires of Oxford and Other Poems* Letts repurposes the traditional sonnet form to cross the boundaries of locales, regions, and nation-states. *The Ghetto and Other Poems* is a more overtly experimental response to urban and industrial modernity during wartime. However, Ridge also utilises a more traditional form of poetry in "The Tidings" which connects with her Irish roots in the Irish Rebellion of 1916. In the period following the First World War it might be tempting simply to categorise Letts' verse as "war" poetry and Ridge's as "national" poetry. This is a false distinction as these perspectives are not mutually exclusive: a key concern of each poet is the dramatic social and cultural changes taking place at foot of the events of the First World War.

Poetry of the Second World War - the soldier poet

In 1943 Keith Douglas, who would be killed in action in the Normandy Landings a year later, writes of the literature of the Second World War that "there is nothing new, from a soldier's point of view, about this war, except its mobile character" (1971: 478).[5] Douglas offers as explanations that "hell cannot be let loose twice" and that the realities of life on the frontline had been so well described by the combatants of the First World War that any poetry written by soldiers of the Second World War would be redundant (1971: 478). This perspective has proved durable: almost five decades later, Fussell would posit a similar rationale regarding the relative dearth of combatant poetry of the Second World War:

> it is demoralizing to be called on to fight the same enemy twice in the space of twenty-one years, and what is there to say except what has been said the first time? (1991: 311)

Over time, a reassessment of Second World War poetry has taken place. In 1989 Victor Selwyn's *More Poems Of The Second World War*, comprising poems written by members of the Commonwealth armed forces, was published. The Foreword acknowledges that "the once widely-held conviction that while some fine poetry came out of the First World War nothing of any value had emerged from the Second World War took time to shake" (ix). Written by General Sir John Hackett, the Foreword asserts that Selwyn's anthology should greatly assist in the "final demolition" of this myth (ix).

Poetry of the Second World War - the woman poet

Adam Piette posits that the way the Second World War developed inverted the experiential paradigm of the First World War. While British soldiers were "holed up in supply lines and camps, safely tucked away from bombed cities", early Second World War poetry was written by "observers in the blitzed cities themselves" (Piette, 2009: 14). The significance of early civilian experience of the Second World War is also recognised by Gill Plain, who argues that

[5] This essay entitled "Poets in this war" was first published in the *Times Literary Supplement*, on 23 April 1971.

> the Blitz's emphatic displacement of the boundary between the home front and the battlefront is a particularly visceral demonstration of the inadequacy of understanding war writing only in terms of combat experience. (2009: 166)

This invasion of the Second World War is apparent in the disparate civilian spaces and places explored in *Trilogy* and *Beat Drum, Beat Heart.*

During the war there was "an extraordinary poetry boom" (Piette, 2009: 16). Early civilian experience of the Second World War is a key driver of this phenomenon. This reversal in the order in which the conflict of the First and Second World Wars is experienced is apparent in the opening sequences of *Trilogy* and *Beat Drum, Beat Heart*. The proximity to war is reinforced in the opening poem of H.D.'s *Trilogy,* which was "published in the midst of "fifty thousand incidents" of the London blitz" (1973). From the outset of *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* Wingfield assigns equal importance to the divergent reactions of civilians and combatants to the immediacy of war. Throughout their long war poems H.D. and Wingfield sustain their examinations of the war's obliteration of frontiers, literal, psychological and gendered.

In their representation of the devastation wrought by the Second World War, H.D. and Wingfield present snapshots of the conflict which deviate from dominant combatant war imagery. Starting with images of aerial bombardment, in the initial words of *Trilogy* H.D. conveys with arresting intimacy the destruction of the Second World War. In her quest for a peaceful future, H.D. reconjures this important image in the final volume of *Trilogy*, "The Flowering of the Rod", in which there is a return to aerial imagery but now with none of the disorientating effects of the mechanized airborne bombardment of "The Walls Do Not Fall". The first two sections of *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* comprise six Imagistic poems, which, in their extreme concision and precise visualisation, capture the essence of a pre-war peaceful milieu. The declaration of war disrupts that tranquillity. Wingfield's Imagistic opening also sets up an opposition between public and private spheres by exploring gendered responses to the announcement of war. With this Imagistic introduction to wartime Wingfield conjures a sense of male excitement and freedom which is tempered by

female fear and domestic confinement accompanying the notification of war, an exploration which is sustained in the four constituent volumes of *Beat Drum, Beat Heart*. In *Trilogy* and *Beat Drum, Beat Heart*, H.D. and Wingfield create a poetic logic and reconstitute a form more suited to the shattering impact of modern warfare. In *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* and *Trilogy*, Wingfield and H.D. fashion a modern, female form of war epic.

Piette posits that reactions against the "superheated propagandized and censored environment" of the Second World War fuelled an extensive public interest in poetry (2009: 16). In *Trilogy* and *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* H.D. and Wingfield are aware of the insidiousness of official Second World wartime propaganda. A cautionary note regarding the potential to misuse and manipulate language in time of war is struck early in "The Walls Do Not Fall" when the speaker asks:

> this is the new heresy;
> but if you do not even understand what words say,
>
> how can you expect to pass judgement
> on what words conceal? ("The Walls Do Not Fall" 8: 14).

The subversive potential of language and the organisational pattern set up at the start of *Trilogy* continue throughout in recurrent reminders of the politics and value-laden properties of language. Wingfield too is aware of the efforts of governing social institutions to mediate and manage the official narrative of the Second World War for public consumption. In *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* Wingfield elucidates the hypocrisy of "towering" and depersonalised government departments - "corridors of fact" in which "everything" except the human sacrifice of war is "accounted for" ("Men At Peace": 35).

Poetry anthologies and the Second World War

The upsurge in reading poetry would prove short-lived and lessened after the conflict ended. As Catherine Reilly comments, across the British Isles during the Second World War:

> public libraries were never so busy … and people read anything and everything and it is more than likely that poetry was read by those who had never read it before and would never read it again. (1986: x)

Indeed, as George Sutherland Fraser observes, once the fighting of the Second World War ceased, "the public fairly rapidly lost a wide interest in war poetry" (1980: xxxi).

There is a correlation between how British war poetry is produced and its treatment in anthologies. During the Second World War paper rationing was widespread and from 1942 was strictly controlled by the Ministry of Production. Piette observes that, as a consequence of the wartime closure of many literary journals, "much of the poetry of the wartime 1940s existed in more ephemeral forms: small-scale magazines launched for tiny readerships, service-specific publications, or as an unpublished manuscript, to be recaptured, if at all, after the war" (2009: 16). Helen Goethals notes that "the poetry from this period is barely in print, and mainly mediated through anthologies" (2007: 363). Thus, during and in the early aftermath of the Second World War, the limited availability of war poetry and the scarcity of paper were significant factors in editorial decisions regarding inclusion and treatment in anthologies. Precisely because of these limitations, the anthologies that did appear play a significant role in creating and shaping understandings of the poetry of the Second World War.

Contrary to enduring assumptions, poetry was composed in abundance during the Second World War. Issued in 1986, Reilly's *English Poetry of the Second World War - A Biobibliography* identifies 3,072 separate publications issued between 1939 and 1980 "containing poetry and verse on the theme of the Second World War, 1939-1945, written by English poets" in the British Isles (1986: xv).[6,7] Almost two-thousand seven hundred poets are included in this index, two-thirds of whom are

[6] a biobibliography includes biographical notes about the author or authors listed.

[7] Reilly's inclusion criteria are "works containing poetry and verse on the theme of the Second World War, 1939-1945, written by English poets (i.e., poets of England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales) both servicemen and civilians, and published in the years 1939-1980" (1986: xv).

non-combatants.[8] This catalogue also includes the war poetry of "foreign nationals" with a "particular connection with the United Kingdom" (1986: xv). H.D. is not included in this selection, although she is referenced in the index of "War poets of other English Speaking Nations" (1986: 392).[9] Despite her marriage to an Englishman and long personal history there neither the editor of the bio-bibliography nor editors of successive British anthologies regard the H.D. of *Trilogy* as having any "particular connection with the United Kingdom" (Reilly, 1986: xv).

Divided into two main sections, Reilly's comprehensive catalogue comprises eighty-seven "Anthologies" and 2,679 "Individual Authors".[10] Some of the authors included are only published in anthologies which, according to Reilly, "gives a fair indication of the popularity of a particular poet, or at least the popularity of a particular poet with anthologists" (1986: xviii). Wingfield is included in the list of individual authors and her notation in the bibliography references four of her five collections, three of which include the full text of *Beat Drum, Beat Heart*.[11] However, *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* does not feature in any of the eighty-seven anthologies included in Reilly's catalogue published between 1939 and 1980. It appears that *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* was judged by anthologists as lacking the "popularity" to merit inclusion in their anthologies of Second World War poetry. The length of *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* does not appear to be the sole deciding factor, as extracts from Louis MacNeice's *Autumn Journal* were published in at least two of the fifteen Second World War anthologies identified by Reilly in which MacNeice's poetry features.[12]

Wingfield's publishing pattern in anthologies is in sharp contrast with that of MacNeice, whose poetry is widely anthologized. Speaking in a 2007 Raidió Teilifís

[8] Of the 2,679 poets in the biobibliography, 831 served in the armed forces.

[9] "a list of Commonwealth and North American poets encountered in the course of the research" (Reilly, 1986: xv).

[10] Fifty of the eight-seven anthologies were published between 1940 and 1946.

[11] These collections are *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* (1946), *Her Storms: selected poems 1938-1977* (1977) and *A Kite's Dinner: poems 1938-1954* (1954).

[12] Extracts from *Autumn Journal* were published in W.G. Bebbington's *Introducing Modern Poetry: an anthology* (1957) and Brian Gardner's *The Terrible Rain: the war poets 1939-1945* (1978).

Éireann (RTÉ) documentary, *Hiding in Plain Sight,* Eavan Boland muses that Wingfield had a "spiritual companion" in MacNeice "but she didn't know it". Like Wingfield, MacNeice had a complicated relationship with Ireland. MacNeice was born in Belfast in 1907 to Irish parents; educated in England, he lived for much of his life in London. While Irishness is important in MacNeice's poetry it is also a source of personal conflict. In contrast, Wingfield, speaking in an earlier recording which is excerpted in the 2007 television documentary, responded unequivocally to the questions of where she felt most at home and whether, in relation to Ireland, she felt bifurcated: "I wouldn't call it a division as there has never been any division in my heart" (2007). Despite their contrasting poetic presentations of Ireland, both Wingfield and MacNeice remain inexorably tied to the country. While MacNeice rails against his heritage, calling Ireland a "faggot of useless memories", Wingfield is more sanguine about "occasionally and always" being attached to Ireland.[13,14] Posthumously, despite his ambivalence regarding his identification with and feeling of belonging to Ireland, MacNeice's art was to find a home in a new generation of "Northern Irish" poets. Wingfield, however, has yet to find a literary home in which her "native" context may be defined and celebrated.

Difficulties with the retrieval of Second World War combatant and civilian poetry meant that editors of anthologies in the early aftermath of the Second World War exerted immense power. As Reilly observes, "it seems that successive war poetry anthologists tend to perpetuate the original selection of poems chosen by earlier anthologists" (1986: xiii). Thus, early omissions of *Trilogy* and *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* from anthologies of Second World War poetry have been perpetuated by successive editors, rendering *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* and *Trilogy* scarcely visible in British and Irish poetry canons of the Second World War.

On the subject of American poetry of the Second World War, Margot Norris attributes its extreme "diversity" to the "fragmented historical and ethical configuration" of the conflict (2009: 43). Up to its late entry into the conflict, which was galvanized by the bombing of Pearl Harbour in September 1941, the Second

[13] From "Autumn Journal" XVI.

[14] According to Penny Perrick this was the last line of an entry in Wingfield's diary (2007: 141).

World War was considered by the US Congress and general public as a "European" war of little concern to the United States. These complexities are reflected formally and thematically in American Second World War poetry which, according to Norris, resists simple classification and "frustrates any sense of coherence" (2009: 43). Its variety and multiplicity also pose difficulties related to the manner in which American Second World War poetry is treated in anthologies. Regarding the contribution of civilian poets to this endeavour, Norris focuses on a small number of "canonical American poets" (2009: 44).[15] The organising principle for inclusion of these canonical figures is that their wartime poetry captures "moments in time" (Norris, 2009: 44). These are poems that "mark specific dates in the course of the war yet nonetheless draw back to offer universalizing observations" (2009: 44). This is a productive frame of reference in which to consider H.D.'s *Trilogy*, as each of its three constituent volumes is dated and may be related to specific wartime events, while at the same time exploring the "big picture" of the Second World War. However, H.D. experienced the Second World War across the Atlantic in London and at a much earlier stage of the conflict than her American counterparts. These factors, including H.D.'s complex (trans)national identification, and the fact that she experienced both of the World Wars in Europe, may explain her low profile in anthologies of American Second World War poetry.

In 1995 extracts from "The Walls Do Not Fall" featured in Desmond Graham's *Poetry of the Second World War - An International Anthology*. Michael Thomas posits that the poets included in this anthology are "fully alive to the protean nature of war, how it sharpens their own concerns and also unpredictably meshes their localities with the larger world" (2016). H.D.'s inclusion among the one hundred and twenty poets and twenty countries represented in this anthology demonstrates the increasing refinement and more penetrative lens applied to wartime poetry. H.D.'s presence also reflects the expanding international framework for reflecting on Second World War poetry. The transnational underpinnings of Graham's anthology are apparent in its organising structure, which is based on "a poetry in which human

[15] Norris identifies three "notable" non-combatant poets here: W.H. Auden, Robert Lowell and Marianne Moore.

responses and experiences echo each other across boundaries of culture and state" (Graham, 1995: xv).

Growing recognition of H.D.'s contribution to American war poetry is marked by her inclusion among the six women poets of the sixty-two featured in Harvey Shapiro's *Poets of World War II* (2003). This influential anthology is described by Hugh Haughton as "an important record of literary response to the war in the U.S.A." (2007: 442). According to Shapiro, civilian contributions were chosen "because they have something significant to say about the war" (2003: xxxi). H.D.'s "R.A.F." is included in a group of poems which is described as forming "a prelude" to the anthology (Shapiro, 2003: xxix). Written and located in London in 1941, R.A.F. is a dreamlike sequence in which a civilian speaks with the ghost of an air force pilot.[16] This poem reveals H.D.'s early and increasing awareness of the reach, trauma and anguish of war. In "R.A.F." H.D. blends past, present and future, a technique to which she would return in *Trilogy*. Indeed, "R.A.F." may be read as a prelude to *Trilogy*, in which H.D. creates a suitable vehicle in which to express the breadth and depth of her response to war (italics in the original):

> *like a ship floundering;*
>
> *we know no rule*
> *of procedure,*
>
> *we are voyageurs, discoverers*
> *of the not-known,*
>
> *the unrecorded;*
> *we have no map;* ("The Walls Do Not Fall" 43: 59).

The sole reference to *Trilogy* in Shapiro's anthology is in the biographical note, which explains that H.D.'s "experiences in London during the 1940-41 Blitz forms the basis of *The Walls Do Not Fall* the first volume of a poetic trilogy" (2003: 227). It appears that H.D. is neither sufficiently "British" nor "American" to merit full

[16] This is also the subject of H.D.'s World War Two novel *The Swords Went Out to Sea* published under the name of Delia Alton.

inclusion in British or American poetry anthologies of the Second World War. This thesis argues that war writing is a notable component of H.D.'s oeuvre, and that *Trilogy* merits separate attention and specific inclusion within the canons of American and British poetry of the Second World War.

Haughton remarks on the "overwhelmingly male constitution" of Second World War anthologies (2007: 440). Examining the gender composition of four "excellent [poetry] anthologies" reveals that of three-hundred and thirty-three poets included in these collections, less than seven percent are women (Reilly, 1984: xxi).[17] Notable exceptions to this overall trend are Reilly's *Chaos of the Night: Women's Poetry & Verse of the Second World War* (1984) and Anne Powell's *Shadows of War: British Women's Poetry of the Second World War* (1999), which together represent the work of 219 women. However, such female-centred anthologies are few and far between. Buck's assertion that "despite their productivity, women have been significantly under-represented in general anthologies of war poetry, relegated instead to collections of women's war poetry" is supported by the belated appearance of an extract from Wingfield's "Men In War" from *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* in Powell's anthology, published in 1999 (2011: 31).

Haughton argues that Brian Gardner's *The Terrible Rain: the war poets 1939-1945* (1966) helped to reopen "the debate about literature of that very different war" (2007: 439). The Introductory Note observes that the Second World War "was a total war: many a civilian - including the young - had a greater experience of the tensions, horrors, and disciplines of "battle" than the majority of servicemen" (Gardner, 1966: xxxi). However, only five of the 117 poets included in Gardner's anthology are female.[18] The representation of women poets in anthologies of the Second World War has not expanded significantly since. In Haughton's 2004 anthology *Second World War Poems* women poets make up sixteen percent of the total.[19] Extracts from "The Walls Do Not Fall" are included in this anthology.

[17] These anthologies are *Poetry in Wartime* (1942), *Poems of This War by Younger Poets* (1942), *I Burn For England* (1966) and *The Terrible Rain* (1966) (Reilly, 1984: xxi).

[18] These poets are Jocelyn Brooke, Patricia Ledward, Anne Ridler, Dorothy Sayers and Edith Sitwell.

[19] Of the 105 poets in this anthology 88 are male and 17 are women poets.

Women's wartime poetry remains underrepresented in English, American and Irish war anthologies. Buck observes of the 2007 *Oxford Handbook of British and Irish War Poetry* that "of the thirty-seven chapters only two are exclusively devoted to women's poetry and no woman poet is the main subject of a chapter" (2011: 25). Despite some recent advances in the gender balance of war poem anthologies, the contributions of the women poet, including the four poets discussed in this thesis, continues to be an afterthought, incidental to the dominant narrative of the World Wars.

Poetry canons and the two World Wars

"The way trench warfare dominates the imagery of World War I" writes Shapiro "the fleets of bombers and smoking cities dominate the imagery of World War II" (2003: xxiii). This statement captures the manner in which poetry canons represent the two World Wars. Trench poetry dominates the First World War canon, and a similar pattern emerges with regard to the Second World War: a privileging of first-hand experience of combat. In their wartime poetry Ridge, Letts, H.D. and Wingfield explore an alternative imagery of war, and each contributes to producing more inclusive and complete accounts of a world at war.

In common with the work of many other women poets, Letts' and Ridge's poetry was widely anthologized during and immediately following the First World War yet did not become part of the canon of national war literature in Ireland, England or North America. The sharp distinction between the validity of combatant and civilian war poetry does not seem to have been in evidence in the early aftermath of the First World War and appears to have taken hold at the latter end of the 1930s, in the lead up to the outbreak of the Second World War. With regard to women's poetry from the Second World War, the writing of male poets continues to dominate anthologies of war poetry. In contrast with the treatment of Letts and Ridge in First World War anthologies, the wartime poetry of Wingfield and H.D. is barely discernible in anthologies of Second World War poetry. Neither Wingfield nor H.D. is included in the national canons of Second World War literature in North America, Britain or Ireland.

Anthologies both reflect and shape literary canons. The scope of anthologies and the timing of their publication, cotaneous or in retrospect, are influencing factors with regard to the canonical status of their contributors. Women poets were active and writing in both World Wars. The trend of women writing and publishing poetry during the First World War continues in the Second World War, when "women poets were similarly productive" (Buck, 2011: 30). Yet anthologies would still be dominated by the notion that "war writing is primarily the expression of male combatant experience" (Buck, 2011: 25). Women's inclusion in the canon of war poetry remains contested. Despite efforts like that of Das to expand the canon, "many critics' definitions of what constitutes a war poet conflate war and combat: a war poet is "someone who has seen combat"" (Higonnet, 1995: 86). In 2007 Helen Goethals called for an urgent expansion of the canon of Second World War poetry:

> while it could be argued that the burgeoning of anthologies of the poetry of the First World War has broadly kept pace with the changing and increasingly complex historical understanding of that war, the same could scarcely be said of the Second. (363)

This persistent trend continues to marginalise the contribution of civilian and non-combatant poets, including the poetry, across two World Wars, of the women discussed in this thesis.

There are gendered consequences of the persistent association between combat and war writing: "the notion those women who tried to write about the Great War were automatically guilty of imagining that which they could not "know" and of surviving" (Higonnet, 1995: 86). Both World Wars were monumental upheavals which had seismic global effects. The dichotomy between the battle and home front tends to be split along gender lines, with the primacy assigned to the male combatant experience relegating or diluting the civilian - and, often, female - experience of war. This thesis argues that exploring civilian and non-combatant women's poetry enhances our understanding of the trauma and devastation of both World Wars.

Plain argues that writers' exclusion from anthologies and correspondingly from the canon may be explained by diversity of life experience and resistance to easy categorisation:

> lacking the superficial homogeneity of the soldier-poets' experience of life in the trenches, or even a cohesive vision of life in the home front, these disparate writers stubbornly resist comfortable categorization as chroniclers, defenders or even supporters of the conflict. (1995: 42)

This observation may profitably be applied to *The Spires of Oxford and Other Poems, The Ghetto and Other Poems, Trilogy* and *Beat Drum, Beat Heart*, collections which reflect their creators' varied life and wartime experiences and their collective defiance of simple or straightforward classification. The controversial thematic and formal concerns in the wartime collections of Ridge, Letts, H.D. and Wingfield may also have impacted their canonical status. However, consideration of their wartime poetry provides access to "women's different historical experience of war" and the opportunity to study spaces and places not yet fully explored in the narrative of the World Wars (Buck, 2005: 87).

As Buck observes, "poets whose approach to war is more elliptical have frequently been overlooked as war poets especially where they fall between national borders" (2011: 33). Letts', Ridge's, H.D.'s and Wingfield's similar experience of living in diverse communities and cultures and their complex (trans)national identities are reflected in *The Spires of Oxford and Other Poems, The Ghetto and Other Poems, Trilogy* and *Beat Drum, Beat Heart.* These factors may help explain the virtual occlusion of these four women war poets in national literary canons in England, America and Ireland. None of the four easily fits into established canons of the First World War, Second World War or twentieth-century women's poetry. However, exploring these complexities and mining transnational connections in their wartime poetry can also fruitfully expand national canons of war literature. The wartime verse of each of these women challenges the male prerogative of war poetry in their exploration of emotions and environments not typically included in canons of war literature. In facilitating a poetic conversation between four women poets across two World Wars, this thesis seeks further to expand the canon of war poetry. The poetry

of Ridge, Letts, Wingfield and H.D. enhances and enlarges national and international canons of world war poetry.

Continuities, commonalities and currents linking the two World Wars

As MacKay posits, "what the Great War initiated, the Second World War realised" (2007: 9). Thematic parallels in the wartime writing of the quartet of women writers discussed in this thesis reveal shared concerns and commonalities in a world at war. These intersections link the First and Second World Wars, contributing to the expansion of the definition of what constitutes "proper war literature" (2007: 5).

A critical difference between the literature of the two World Wars, according to MacKay, is that writers of the Second World War accepted that war is futile and is "state-sanctioned violence on the grand scale" (2007: 5). Reilly makes a similar observation that in the intervening decades between the World Wars:

> people's attitude to war had changed: the disillusionment engendered during the years of 1914-1918 and those that followed ensured that in 1939 there was no glorification of war or false patriotism, just a calm acceptance of what had to be done. (1984: xxii)

However, during the First World War, *The Spires of Oxford and Other Poems* and *The Ghetto and Other Poems* challenge the rationale of and for war. Analogous concerns permeate the Second World War poetry of H.D. and Wingfield. In their explorations of the efficacy of war each of the four women poets considered in this thesis adopts a similar approach by troubling temporal boundaries in their perception of warfare. Their wartime poetry provides insights into their collective consciousness of the futility of war as Ridge, Letts, H.D. and Wingfield reach into the distant past to expose the continuous and connected cycles of violence inherent in warfare. Linked with each poet's examination of the pattern of historic and coetaneous violence is the eradication of a younger generation, which bears the brunt of foolhardy decisions and senseless pride of old men. Poems such as Letts' "What Reward?" elucidate these concerns and similar themes emerge in the contemporaneous poetry of other women writers on the other side of the Atlantic. In

the third verse part of "The Ghetto" Ridge uses the imagery of a parade through an immigrant community in New York to evoke the continuity of warfare throughout history. Ridge here also portends the future devastation which would be wrought on the Jewish community in the Holocaust of the Second World War. In *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* and *Trilogy* Wingfield and H.D. are likewise alert to violent repetitions of conflict throughout history. In the closing section of "Men In War" Wingfield laments the seemingly continuous cycle of the "utter endless grief" of war (22). In "The Flowering of the Rod" H.D. bemoans the "senseless wheeling" and "foolish circling" which contributes to the constant re-occurrence of war:

> [. . .]- again,
>
> again, again;
>
> again, the steel sharpened on the stone;
>
> again, the pyramid of skulls; (6: 122)

According to H.D., short-sightedness and an incapacity to learn lessons from the past inevitably result in the return of the tornado of war. While at the conclusion of their respective war poem-sequences H.D. and Wingfield adopt contrasting approaches in seeking a final resolution to arresting this pattern of warfare, each poet is determined to confront and comprehend the repeated violence which is a hallmark of human history.

In their evocations of warfare, the four poets appraised in this thesis also make allusions to ancient cultures, indicating their awareness not alone of the repeating cycles of violence and warfare but also of the historical significance of the moment in their poetic testimonies of life and their perspectives on a world at war. Their perceptions emphasize the continuity of history, recognise the antecedents of both World Wars and express their awareness of the contemporaneous social and cultural paradigm shifts occurring during and between the First and Second World Wars. Thus, each of the four writers discussed in this thesis joins the cadre of authors who contribute to the reshaping of the valid subject matter of war poetry by altering the perception of war itself.

In 1939, for the second time in just over two decades, the world was at war. Arguing for an expansion of war poetry beyond that of combatant experience, MacKay argues that the "secondness" of the Second World War has been ignored or side-lined (2007: 5). The Second World War was pervasive and omnipresent. The battles of the Second World War occurred in a multiplicity of locations and geographies and was "fought in deserts, and jungles, on seas, plains, and familiar city streets" (MacKay 2009: 1). In "War Poet" Donald Bain expresses the dilemma of the poet who attempts to comprehend and communicate the maelstrom of the Second World War:

> We in our haste can only see the small components of the scene
> We cannot tell what incidents will focus on the final screen.
> A barrage of disruptive sound, a petal on a sleeping face,
> Both must be noted, both must have their place; (1966: 159)[20]

Writing from civilian and non-combatant perspectives, the quartet of writers discussed in this thesis identifies the importance of individual moments of lasting significance within wartime communities. In each of the two World Wars these women poets also leverage "small components of the scene" to explore the "bigger picture" of a global conflict. Their collective consciousness of the importance of seemingly minor events in both World Wars is also indicative of their kinship across time and space. In their wartime writing these poets not only connect with each other; each writer also connects with the rest of humanity in her explorations of a world at war.

A comparable catalytic moment examined by Letts, Ridge, and Wingfield is the differential reactions produced in response to the call to arms. In the third verse part of "The Ghetto" and in "The Call To Arms In Our Street" Ridge and Letts both foreground the civilian experience and innocent victims of war by focusing on a march into conflict. From the outset of *Beat Drum, Beat Heart*, Wingfield highlights divergent responses to the call to arms which disrupts a previously peaceful idyll. This concern permeates Wingfield's collection in the repeated motif of marching armies which are tracked through various landscapes and across centuries of conflict. The moment H.D. chooses as her entry into the conflict of the Second World War is

[20] Bain was a member of the Royal Artillery and was invalided out of active service before the end of the Second World War.

an apparently casual remark relating to her first-hand witness of the devastation of the airborne bombing of wartime London. In the opening line of *Trilogy* H.D. describes this aerial bombardment as "an incident here and there". Echoing the official rhetoric of the war H.D.'s deliberate use of the seemingly innocuous word "incident" immediately pinpoints tension between the civilian experience of the war and official efforts to control the narrative of the Second World War. Blurring the borders between the language of literature and media discourse, from the outset of *Trilogy* H.D. highlights the politics of warfare. All four poets, in representing the human experience of war captured in instances of enduring importance in unlikely but thought-provoking places and spaces, arguably engage more thoroughly and expansively with the concept of a world at war than the combatant poets of the First and Second World Wars.

With reference to the Second World War, MacKay suggests that the immediacy of the conflict experienced by civilians "loosens the boundaries of its possible literatures" (2007: 6). In their wartime writing, Letts, Ridge. H.D. and Wingfield all raise delicate and controversial issues in relation to the destruction and distress of war and do so while the conflict is underway. Their collections expose figures and locales rendered less visible within the official and meta-narratives of the World Wars. In *The Spires of Oxford and Other Poems* and *The Ghetto and Other Poems*, by focusing on the common act of desertion from the battlefield, Letts and Ridge bring to the fore a phenomenon which the propaganda of the war sought to keep hidden. Other figures included in Letts' collection are young soldiers dying alone behind screens in overcrowded hospitals, and college undergraduates who sacrificed their lives and futures in the defence of their homeland. Ridge explores the impact of the war on a Jewish immigrant community in New York over which the threat of war hovers. In her wartime collection Ridge also returns to her birthplace to consider an ostensibly local and unrelated colonial conflict occurring within a World War. Here, Ridge demonstrates her awareness of the global implications of a world at war. In the opening sequences of *Trilogy* and *Beat Drum, Beat Heart*, H.D. and Wingfield move from their individual experience of the lead up to and onset of war to connect with the communal experience of humanity. In these inaugural sections, by shifting between the local and the global and across space and time, H.D. and Wingfield set up the scope and ambition of their meditations on war. Each of the four women poets

considered in this thesis demonstrates their sensitivity to and understanding of the pervasiveness of war, which infringes boundaries between the personal and public arenas, opening private spheres and experiences to public scrutiny and judgement. The alternative contexts and issues explored in their four wartime poetry collections move the World Wars beyond the battlefield, channelling the specifics of conflict into wider concerns as to the destructive phenomenon of war.

Their foregrounding of the gendered impact of war also distinguishes the quartet of women writers in this thesis as war poets. The differential impact of the World Wars on men and women is a common concern of the four poets. Ridge, Letts, H.D. and Wingfield all capture and display contradictory gendered views and experiences of war. Exploring combatant poetry of the First World War, Ramazani argues in *Poetry In A Global Age* that "poetry vividly enacts the war's cross-cultural intimacies and witnesses its catastrophic destructiveness" (2020: 19). All four wartime collections reveal, regardless of location or political interests, the collective experience of grief on the part of civilians who have lost their loved ones in both conflicts. In exploring the wartime writing of Ridge, Letts, H.D. and Wingfield, in different milieux and across two World Wars, this thesis exposes emotions, intimacies and incursions into spheres that are not yet typically associated with war poetry. Each of the quartet of writers discussed in this thesis also recognises that the alienating effects of war are not the sole purview of either gender. By complicating the heroic vision of war and introducing ambiguity into the narrative of the World Wars, Ridge, Letts, H.D. and Wingfield make legitimate and valuable contributions to our understanding Of both World Wars.

In their wartime writings, these four women poets consider a profoundly changed future arising from the social disruptions brought about by the two World Wars. While their perspectives on the post-war future may differ, all four recognise the fragility of their current moment and potential futures. All four collections demonstrate a cognisance of living at a time of great insecurity and peril and reflect on the uncertainties of an indeterminate post-war future. *The Spires of Oxford and Other Poems* and *The Ghetto and Other Poems* were published when historical certainties and social norms were in a state of flux, when the First World War was effecting a "catastrophic shift in human relations" (Baldick, 2004: 10). In *Trilogy*

H.D. articulates a new matriarchal future embodied in her vision of "Our Lady of the Snow." In *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* Wingfield demonstrates a consciousness of the precariousness of her present moment, of a war so great that it has "cracked time in two" opening up a chasm between pre- and post-war time-periods ("Women In Love: 50). Both Wingfield and H.D. argue for a post-war future which is based on inclusiveness, on the cooperation of men and women. While H.D. is more radical than Wingfield in her vision of a future matriarchal realm, both writers envisage a post-war future based on mutual respect and interdependence. All four collections involve a leap of faith into a doubtful post-war future.

The wartime writing of the quartet of women poets considered in this thesis disrupts the binary schema which still underpins critical conceptions of World War poetry; that war and Modernism are antipathetic, that women writing of war is an irreconcilable conundrum, and that civilian wartime poetry of the First and Second World Wars are wholly separate and discrete. The four writers in this thesis raise analogous controversial and sensitive issues in the lead up to and during the conflicts of the First and Second World Wars. Their writing reveals formal and thematic parallels which breach temporal, geographical, gendered and political borders. This thesis identifies and explores connections and commonalities apparent in the wartime writing of Ridge, Letts, H.D. and Wingfield. Their consistent and shared perceptions of warfare tether the two World Wars together. These four women poets present alternative perspectives and complicate heroic visions of the World Wars and highlight issues and subjects formerly considered to be outside or on the periphery of the canon. Many of the issues and concerns raised in their writing remain relevant today, indicating that their wartime poetry has both contemporaneity and longevity. Ridge, Letts, H.D. and Wingfield demonstrate that women's poetry is an integral part of the continuing and evolving narrative of a world at war.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This thesis considers the representation of the events and experiences of the two World Wars in the wartime writings of four women poets: Lola Ridge, Winifred Letts, H.D. and Sheila Wingfield. The primary methodology deployed here comprises comparative close readings of these women's wartime collections, written and published in the period from the onset of the First World War to the conclusion of the Second World War. Letts' *Hallow-e'en and Poems of the War* was first published in 1916, with an American edition titled *The Spires of Oxford and Other Poems* appearing a year later; Ridge's *The Ghetto and Other Poems* was published in September 1918. H.D.'s *Trilogy* and Wingfield's *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* were both first published in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War.

The geographic focus of this research is on Ireland, England and the United States. This configuration also facilitates the application of a transnational paradigm to these women poet's wartime poetry which, according to Jahan Ramazani, "can highlight what we might call both contacts and commonalities [...] and global historical convergences and affinities across discrepant spaces" (2020: 245). This thesis traces the relationships and "touching points" between the lives and wartime poetry of Ridge, Letts, H.D. and Wingfield (Stubbs and Haynes, 2017: 7). Touching points in this thesis are understood as "moments of illumination and imagination … where distance becomes proximity … that seek to provide a fresh way to consider the geometries of space, time and culture that make up the transnational" (Stubbs and Haynes, 2017: 4).

Chris Baldick defines Modernism as "a general term applied retrospectively to the wide range of experimental and *avant-garde* trends in the literature (and other arts) of the early 20th century" (2001: 159). This is a useful working definition for this thesis as it recognises the creative breadth of Modernist writing during this period. Peter Nicholls pluralizes the term arguing that "it is commonplace now to acknowledge that Modernism is not one thing but many" (1995: viii). Nicholls uses the term *Modernisms* to acknowledge and recognise the different constituencies of Modernist writing - that there is no longer a single defining template in which to consider all Modernist literature is also pertinent to this thesis. Marjorie Perloff

posits that Modernism is "a catch-all term that refers to the literature and art produced up to the war years of 1940" (2002: 3). While embracing the widening of the critical category of Modernism this thesis is not bound chronologically to what many scholars, with some notable exceptions such as Perloff, consider as the "cut-off" or endpoint of Modernism.[21] This thesis embraces and explores a variety of poetic forms and the diversity of voices in the poetic responses of four women writers to the World Wars. All Modernist writing involves elements of formal experimental technique. This is especially relevant when considering poetic Modernism as critics and scholars must be especially alert and attentive to matters of poetic form. This thesis assesses the efficacy of a transnational framework in relation to the wartime poetry of a quartet of women poets. Ramazani's paradigm of a transnational poetics enables the close reading, including formal considerations, in the poetry of Letts, Ridge, H.D. and Wingfield during this historical period.

Paul Giles posits that "transnationalism is itself organized methodologically around the possibility of comparison" (2017: 294). In this thesis, Ramazani's dialogic framework for examining the ocean-traversing forces of the poetic imagination is explored by way of a comparative analysis of the wartime poetry of Ridge, Letts, H.D. and Wingfield across two World Wars. This analysis considers Ramazani's perspective on Modernism; his exchange-based poetic methodology; and the associated critical vocabulary he advances for analysing poetry in global terms. Modernism, according to Ramazani, is "profoundly cross-cultural, translocal, and transnational" (2006: 335). Ramazani uses the term "*transnational*" (italics in the original) to "highlight flows and affiliations not among static national entities, as sometimes suggested by *international*, but across the borders of nation-states, regions, and cultures" (italics in the original) (2009b: 62). Proffering a critical topography for poetry and transnational studies, Ramazani's theory of "poetic transnationalism" is drawn on in this thesis (2006: 354). For Ramazani, poetic transnationalism is an "approach to poetry that highlights literary confluences, commonalities, and conflicts that cross national borders" (2020: 9). This thesis

[21] Perloff (2002) argues for the continuing legacy of Modernism. According to Perloff global calamities impacted the *momentum* (italics added) of Modernism: "its [Modernism's] radical and utopian aspirations being cut off by the catastrophe, first of the Great War, and then of a series of crises produced by the two great totalitarianisms that dominated the first half of the century and culminated in World War II" (2002: 3).

delves into transnational connections forged in the wartime poetry of Ridge, Letts, H.D. and Wingfield. The application of a transnational framework in this thesis relates to a different set of wartime poets than that examined by Ramazani. The women poets examined here, writing in different countries and with contrasting experiences of conflict, display common concerns and considerations regarding the violence and trauma of war. The "national" facet of Ramazani's model is utilised here with reference to the ways in which women's war poetry "distils, embodies and expresses the "spirit of a nation"" in a world at war (2009b: 49). For Ramazani, a translocational approach to Modernism is attentive to the ways in which "art and literature interlace localities and nationalities with one another" (2009b: 54). Applying the "translocal" dimension of Ramazani's model to a world at war, this thesis explores the ways in which each of the women poets discussed here is "set apart … from the society to which she gives expression" and examines how this "in-betweenness both vitalizes and vexes their [wartime] poetry" (Ramazani 2009b: 51).

Marina MacKay's determination to read wartime texts within their "messily political contexts" and assertion that the "most important claim literature can make on our historical imaginations is to show how things felt at the time" also aligns with this research (2009: 16; 3). All four women poets offer controversial perspectives on modern conflict by exploring trauma while war is still underway.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

A number of theoretical frameworks and literary critical perspectives underpin this research. This thesis examines the intersections between Modernism and war from the onset of the First World War to the end of the Second World War. Theorists, including Marjorie Perloff, argue that the momentum of Modernism was disrupted by global calamities initially of the First World War, followed by a series of crises shaped by the two great super-powers which dominated the first half of the century, culminating in the Second World War (2002). This thesis complicates the notion that the evolutionary path of Modernism somehow "stalls" during this crisis-ridden period. Rather, the examination here of the wartime poetry of Ridge, Letts, H.D. and Wingfield tracks the continued evolution of poetic Modernism as imaginative and creative responses to the catastrophes of both World Wars.

While the received narrative of literary development between 1910 and 1940 is dominated by writers associated with Modernism, Chris Baldick resists this tendency, arguing that "Modernism was in its own time a minority event" (2004: 3). Rejecting claims that the finest English language poetry in this period was radically experimental, Baldick's emphases on continuity, inclusivity, diversity and the ""gravitational pull of tradition" rather than revolution" are relevant to the concerns of this thesis (Harding, 2005: 417). Baldick's conception of a "modern movement" which accommodates a multiplicity of poetic responses to war is a useful blanket category which covers "Modernist" and more "traditional" forms of writing. His configuration facilitates consideration of how Ridge, Letts, H.D. and Wingfield variously respond to war.

This thesis examines how Ridge, Letts, H.D. and Wingfield establish a literary clearing of shared understanding and mutual concerns in their responses to the trauma and upheaval of a world at war. This examination illuminates "moment[s] of recognition and correspondence" connecting these four women poets spatially and temporally (Stubbs and Haynes, 2017: 3). By identifying these "moments" in the wartime poetry of this quartet, this thesis seeks to contribute to the creation of a "map of transnational crossings" between Ireland, England and the United States in a world at war (Stubbs and Haynes, 2017: 7). In seeking to expand and test the efficacy of a transnational framework, this thesis identifies how the work of the four women considered here both reflects and challenges a transnational poetic paradigm across two World Wars.

Santanu Das' many contributions to the reframing and expansion of First World War literature are consonant with the concerns in this thesis. Das' argument for enlarged understandings of the global impact of the First World War as "a crack in the table of history not just in Europe" is key to this thesis' exploration of the global dimensions of the wartime poetry of Ridge, Letts, H.D. and Wingfield (2018: 417). Das' promotion of a more expansive definition of what constitutes war literature, of finding new ways of "reading - and writing - life, and particularly colonial lives, in times of war", is also pertinent to this thesis, as the wartime poetry of the four women considered here is perched on the axes of England, Ireland, and the United States - three countries with complicated colonial histories (Das, 2018: 9).

As a British colony during the First World War, Ireland is an exemplar of the "fraught relationships between imperial loyalty and nationalist aspirations [which] underpinned war support in many colonies" (Das, 2011: 24). Fashioning connections between historical and more recent conflicts and their importance in Irish collective and cultural memory, Das argues that

> one of the most fraught negotiations of war memory in recent years has been over the case of Ireland: long a source of division, war service has been re-examined in the light of the Irish Troubles and turned into a platform for negotiation. If nationalist rumblings were heard across the empire in 1914-1918, it was in Ireland that they were loudest. (2011: 23)

These observations reverberate with this thesis' exploration of how, during the First World War, Letts and Ridge raise and examine problematic "colonial" issues. These issues include consideration of the Irish contribution to the British war effort, and Ireland's decisive move, in 1916, towards independence from the British Empire. Das' promotion of the canonical inclusion of "other" narratives and accounts of the First World War, and his comment that "war poetry by colonial and non-white writers, coming out of different political, social and cultural contexts, has proved remarkably resistant to assimilation within the canon of war poetry", are relevant to this thesis' attempt further to expand the poetry canons of both World Wars (2013: 25).

MacKay's perspectives on how the Second World War inflected British writers' negotiations of national cultural identity are also of value to this thesis. In examining the intersections between war and Modernism, I draw on her recognition of the Second World War as a seminal moment in the reformulation of Modernism as a literary movement. MacKay's positing of a "late Modernism", revising the strict periodisation of Modernism, facilitates consideration of how H.D. and Wingfield respond poetically to this social, cultural and political crisis (2007: 1). MacKay's argument for the interconnectedness of Modernism and the Second World War is generative, in particular, in relation to Wingfield's *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* and H.D.'s *Trilogy*, as it expands the definition of what constitutes "proper war literature" (2007: 5). MacKay's concern with the "continuing importance of reading Modernisms in unlikely but provocative places" is applicable to all four poets

considered in this thesis, as in their wartime time poetry Ridge, Letts, H.D. and Wingfield contemplate contexts, incidents and figures not typically to the forefront in existing canons of war poetry (Brassard, 2008: 202).

The primary source materials utilised in this thesis include; Letts' *Hallow-e'en and* initially issued with the title *Poems of the War* (1916) and republished as *The Spires of Oxford and Other Poems* in 1917; Ridge's *The Ghetto and Other Poems* first published in 1918; Wingfield's *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* which was published in 1946, and H.D.'s *Trilogy* which was first published as a collection in 1973.

Trilogy's constituent three parts were published separately decades earlier; "The Walls Do Not Fall" was issued in 1944, "Tribute to the Angels" was published in 1945, and "The Flowering of the Rod" was published in 1946. This thesis also considers other writing by these authors as well as coetaneous and more recent critical reviews and commentaries. In addition to their publication of a poetry collection during or in the immediate aftermath of a World War other reasons underlie the choice of poets in this thesis; war was a creative catalyst for each poet; all were national "outsiders"; each writer resists easy categorisation with regard to their artistic and national identities; and each spent most of their adult life outside their country of birth. Notions of place and belonging are complicated for all four writers, as none of them easily fits into the worlds they occupied.

The close reading of poetry is at the centre of this thesis. According to Ramazani, poetry is "a woven thing, with sometimes contending and overlapping discourses, forms, techniques, and ideologies" (2009a: 9). This thesis involves close reading of the wartime poetry collections of Ridge, Letts, H.D. and Wingfield. The inter-connectedness between form and content is important in Ramazani's transnational poetic analyses; "*how* a poem says what it says is no less essential to its identity as a poem than *what* it says" (italics in the original) (2020: 124). The melding of poetic form and content also illuminates transnational underpinnings as, according to Ramazani, "in their intricacy and complexity, poems vividly illustrate the interdependence of form and content, and of local and foreign" (2020: 130). In this thesis, close reading of the wartime poetry of Ridge, Letts, H.D. and Wingfield reveals the intricacies and complexities of the various poetic arrangements,

structures, and patterns, shapes, tools, techniques and devices employed by these writers. Formal analysis here is not to the exclusion of thematic concerns, which indicate "the central and dominating idea of a work" (Shaw, 1972: 273). In considering the "how", the "what" and the "message" of the wartime poetry of Ridge, Letts, H.D. and Wingfield, this thesis is alert to intersections between form, content and theme, and to the distinctiveness of each women's poetry in representing the events and experiences of a world at war.

Two extended sections follow the Introduction. Each section is organised around a World War, each comprising two chapters. The First World War is the focus of the first section in which the primary texts discussed are Letts' *The Spires of Oxford and Other Poems* (1917) and Ridge's *The Ghetto and Other Poems* (1918). The first chapter concentrates on publishing contexts and the second chapter considers locations of the First World War. The Second World War, and H.D.'s *Trilogy* and Wingfield's *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* are the focal points of the second section. The third chapter explores formal evolutions, and the fourth chapter considers place and belonging in the writing of H.D. and Wingfield.

CHAPTER SUMMARIES – SECTION ONE

Section One: Lola Ridge and Winifred Letts

The Spires of Oxford and Other Poems and *The Ghetto and Other Poems* were published at a stage in the First World War when widespread optimism for an early resolution to the conflict had evaporated and the "escalating slaughter" and mounting war casualties of the conflict were becoming increasingly obvious (Baldick, 2004: 91). During this time Letts volunteered as a support worker in hospitals in England and Ireland. In the United States Ridge was living among *avant garde* artists and political radicals in New York City. Despite their different milieux, and their contrasting experiences of the war from opposite sides of the Atlantic, their collections offer an avenue into a reading of the conflict largely obscured within the popular narrative of the First World War.

Baldick's conception of a modern movement offers a literary-historical context and rationale for the pairing of Letts and Ridge (2004). On initial encounter Ridge appears the more obviously political and the more unorthodox and experimental poet, in contrast with what may be deemed Letts' more conventional poetic tendencies. However, this thesis challenges such an assumption: their wartime poetry discloses that this dichotomy is neither as sharp nor as simple as it might first appear.

Chapter One summary: Publishing contexts

The wartime verse of Letts and Ridge explores spaces and roles not typically associated with war: drawing on her VAD experience, Letts' poetry embraces army hospitals and non-combatant roles, including those of Army support workers such as chaplains and nurses, while Ridge writes of an immigrant community in the New York ghetto in time of war. Both collections bear witness to the conflict at a stage in the war which was, according to Baldick, "coloured by the collapse of early hopes for swift victory into stalemate and by apparently pointless massacres on a huge scale" (2004: 226). The mounting war casualties on both sides of the Atlantic, increasing numbers of bereaved relatives, uncertainty with regard to when and how the First World War would end, conjoined with the feeling of being on the cusp of a

world utterly changed by war, are reflected in the themes, content and concerns of Letts' and Ridge's wartime poetry.

War influenced the style of both writers. Two of Letts' three poetry collections *Songs From Leinster* (1913) and *More Songs From Leinster* (1926) were according to the Irish Theatre Institute concerned with "Irish peasantry and folk life". Of principal concern in this thesis is Letts' second type of poetry, which is tightly bound up with the First World War. Letts' proximate experience of the war plays a significant role in prompting thematic and formal changes to the manner and mode of her poetry, culminating in *The Spires of Oxford and Other Poems*.

Ridge's first published collection, *The Ghetto and Other Poems*, appeared in 1918. She had published individual poems in New Zealand and Australia. Prior to her arrival in America Ridge had submitted a volume titled *Verses* to the editor of the Sydney *Bulletin*. The free verse of *The Ghetto and Other Poems* is in sharp contrast with the more structured and even traditional form of *Verses.* Ridge's arrival in the United States appears to have been a significant creative catalyst. Ridge's eclectic lived experience imbues *The Ghetto and Other Poems* with a keen appreciation of everyday living, allied to a vague but effective sense of impending tragedy and foreboding which reflects Ridge's own precarious life circumstances. This sense of instability and flux is conveyed in her collection.

Smith, Elder & Company, London which published *Hallow-e'en and Poems of the War* and E.P. Dutton & Company, New York which issued the American edition of Letts' collection as *The Spires of Oxford and Other Poems* were both long-established and successful enterprises. In contrast, Ridge's *The Ghetto and Other Poems* was issued by Benjamin Huebsch, a Jewish immigrant who founded his publishing company in 1906. Ridge's practical knowledge of the world of literary publishing would have offered her valuable insights into the type of publisher she would consider appropriate for her inaugural collection of poetry. B.W. Huebsch and Company was likely to find a reading public for Ridge, occupying a niche in the market between the more conservative, traditional and primarily profit-driven publishers such as Harpers and the more radical publishers like John Lowell.

Chapter Two summary: Locations of war

The different landscapes and contexts explored in *The Spires of Oxford and Other Poems* and *The Ghetto and Other Poems* move the war beyond the battlefield. In their collections, both Letts and Ridge examine the impact of the war on women and children. Both collections demonstrate the universality of the collective experience of civilian grief experienced by those who have lost their loved ones in conflict. Both collections trouble temporal and geographic boundaries in their perceptions of warfare and excavate the past to expose the incessant and associated cycles of violence inherent in warfare. Writing during the First World War, Letts and Ridge consider a future profoundly altered by the ruptures brought about by the conflict, which would culminate, decades later, in the outbreak of the Second World War.

Letts was born in England to an English father and Irish mother. Letts spent much of her life in Ireland and this affiliation was deeply felt as observed by Monk Gibbon who remarked in Letts' obituary that she "loved Ireland greatly" (1972: 5). The domestic landscapes of *The Spires of Oxford and Other Poems* mirror this complex (trans)national identification, as the poems move between the quintessentially English landscape of Oxford and the pagan and haunting landscapes of rural Ireland. Irish born; Ridge's oeuvre reflects her various geographies. Like Letts, Ridge has been assigned various nationalities: Irish, Australian, American. During the First World War, in *The Ghetto and Other Poems,* the foreigner Ridge is writing of another immigrant community, the inhabitants of New York's Jewish ghetto, with a history of fleeing from sectarian violence and settling far from their homeland.

Letts' and Ridge's ambiguous relationships, both to the communities about which they are writing and to their respective birthplaces, are important influences in both collections. That complexity is reflected in each writer's relationship with Ireland and the question of their Irishness when, during the First World War, Ireland made a decisive move towards independence from its coloniser. Both poets spent most of their adult lives away from their countries of birth. While, throughout her lifetime Letts remained in touch with both her Irish and English (national) identities Ridge's transformation was more radical. However, despite these divergences in their

wartime collections, both writers focus on various aspects of Ireland's involvement in and response to the First World War.

Although the poetry of Letts and Ridge was widely anthologized during and in the early aftermath of the First World War, their writing has been excluded from national canons of war literature in England and the United States. Notwithstanding recent expansions of the canon to include the verse of civilians and support workers, understandings of First World War poetry remain delimited, giving primacy to the trench writings of soldier-poets. This thesis argues that the reconfiguration of the canon should extend to the continued respositioning of Letts and the inclusion of Ridge as First World War poets.

CHAPTER SUMMARIES – SECTION TWO

Section Two: H.D. and Sheila Wingfield

H.D.'s *Collected Poems 1912-1944* and Sheila Wingfield's *Collected Poems 1938-1983* were both published in 1983. Included in both collections are long and meditative war poems: H.D.'s *Trilogy* and Wingfield's *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* were first issued in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, almost four decades earlier.

Chapter Three summary: Formal evolutions

War for both H.D. and Wingfield heralded a creative transition in their poetics. While Wingfield's experience of the Second World War in Bermuda sharply differs from the proximity of H.D's experience in war-torn London, both poets found their wartime contexts to be locations of considerable artistic motivation. The lead up to and onset of the Second World War was a significant factor in the shift in Wingfield's poetic style, the outcome of which was *Beat Drum, Beat Heart,* whereas for H.D., the comparable stylistic change which would culminate in *Trilogy* had begun during the First World War. Despite transitioning from the short imagistic poem to the longer epic form in *Trilogy* and *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* neither poet

wholly abandoned their earlier style of writing which both retain the sharp visualisation of Imagism.

In *Trilogy* and *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* H.D. and Wingfield also demonstrate aspects of Objectivist poetics. These Objectivist tendencies are particularly apparent in the manner in which dualism permeates each poem-sequence. In *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* and *Trilogy*, an Objectivist poetics operates as a site of poetic rebelliousness and regeneration. *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* comprises four parts and the relationship between seemingly opposing forces is foregrounded in its titular arrangement. This titular construction is reflected in the structure of *Beat Drum, Beat Heart*, which is divided along gender lines and comprises two halves, each with two sections. This composition suggests an acute awareness of the two-fold and gendered experiences of war. Objectivist influences are apparent in the architecture of *Trilogy* in which there is a noticeable underlying proportionality between the three constituent volumes. Susan Stanford Friedman argues that love, not war, is at the core of *Trilogy* which is a search in the midst of war for a "regenerative love symbolized by the Goddess" (1983: 233; 228). This quest is aided by the Objectivist structure of the trio of poems.

In *Trilogy* and *Beat Drum, Beat Heart*, H.D. and Wingfield challenge the boundaries of the epic, producing "a hybrid form that fused the epic, the novel and the lyric" (Friedman, 1986: 222). This formal hybrid is suited to both H.D. and Wingfield's wide-ranging explorations and interrogations of the gendered tensions and social conflicts brought about by war (and love). In *Trilogy* and *Beat Drum, Beat Heart*, H.D. and Wingfield evolve a form appropriate to the shattering impacts of the modern experience of war. Both create a modern, female-authored and woman-centred, version of wartime epic, each poet weaving into her poem-sequence her own experience of a war which is not confined to the battlefront but seeps into civilian spaces and experience. The porous boundary between the warfront and home front in the First World War was all but obliterated in the Second World War. In *Trilogy* and *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* H.D. and Wingfield find a form in which to convey this shared experience of war and the accompanying instability and incomprehension of a social order irrevocably ruptured by the Second World War.

Chapter Four summary: Place and belonging

Beat Drum, Beat Heart and *Trilogy* were published at a time when social and cultural certainties were undermined. In *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* and *Trilogy* Wingfield and H.D.'s handling of place contributes to the larger meaning and message of the poems. In their conceptions and explorations of place and placelessness, *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* and *Trilogy* accelerate the process of disengagement with first-stage Modernism to explore the transformative potential of late Modernism.

Beat Drum, Beat Heart and *Trilogy* unsettle temporal boundaries as each poet breaks with a continuous and sequential notion of history and adopts a transhistorical approach in travelling through warfare. H.D. and Wingfield also destabilize gender roles, interrogating gendered boundaries between public and private spheres, and between normative masculine and feminine behaviour and attitudes. Wingfield and H.D. share a compulsion, perhaps arising from their troubled personal histories, to revisit and rework their prior writing. Rewriting for H.D. could be linked to past trauma and personal tragedy. This tendency may be related to H.D.'s proximate experiences of both World Wars. The compulsive and constant revision of H.D.'s autobiographical novel *Bid Me to Live* may be suggestive of her various attempts to resolve distressing memories. This roman à clef of the First World War which was likely commenced during that war, was not published until 1960 (Zilboorg, 2015). Wingfield experienced significant difficulty with "fitting into" her own personal story. Her inclination to exercise tight control over her environment and those around her may also have contributed to Wingfield's enduring compulsion to revisit and rewrite her prior work in the pursuit of her personal standards of "perfection" (O'Byrne, 2007).

In *Trilogy* and *Beat Drum, Beat Heart*, H.D. and Wingfield extend the disruption of the canon of war poetry performed, in the period of the First World War, by Letts and Ridge, and by H.D. herself, in her earlier phase. These disturbances involve redefining and transforming poetic form and practice to accommodate the poets' responses to love and war; their transhistorical view of warfare; pressuring the limits of language to express their horror of war through the ages; sensitivity to the

gendered impact of warfare; and the obliteration of private / public boundaries wrought by the Second World War.

SECTION ONE: LOLA RIDGE AND WINIFRED LETTS

The first two chapters of this thesis explores the work of Lola Ridge and Winifred Mary Letts focusing on their poetry published between 1914 and 1921. This period covers the First World War (1914-1918) and, in an Irish context, the Easter Rising (1916) and the Irish War of Independence (1919-1921), which culminated in the creation of the Irish Free State in 1922. During the First World War, writing from opposite sides of the Atlantic and in contrasting milieux, Letts and Ridge both published collections of poetry. Letts' *The Spires of Oxford and Other Poems* (1917) was first published in 1916 as *Hallow-e'en and Poems of the War*.[22] Ridge's collection *The Ghetto and Other Poems* was initially published in the United States in September 1918. These collections will be the primary focus of the ensuing two chapters.

SECTION ONE - CHAPTER ONE: PUBLISHING CONTEXTS

Chris Baldick argues that a critical challenge for writers seeking to respond to the First World War is "their sense of living and writing in a drastically changed world, a modern world which they regarded as radically different from the Victorian cultural order to which their parents belonged" (2004: 2). The devastation of the First World War was not confined to soldiers and the battlefront, but extended to non-combatants, civilians and the home front: "even among those who had not experienced combat, there was a general conviction that the old world lay in ruins" (Baldick, 2004: 10). Such was the depth of this crisis that, for poets, it meant finding new and more appropriate ways of absorbing and expressing the horror and violence of war, of contemplating a fundamentally altered reality and reflecting this in their poetry. Letts and Ridge were moved to respond to this crisis when hitherto stable social, physical, cultural, political and industrial processes, borders and boundaries were rapidly and radically realigning in the turbulence of a world at war. While Letts and Ridge lived in different countries and had contrasting experiences of the First World War, *The Spires of Oxford and Other Poems* and *The Ghetto and Other Poems* bear witness to the conflict during a stage in the war in which hopes of an

[22] This is the primary text used in this thesis unless otherwise indicated.

early resolution to the war had disappeared and the death toll was rapidly increasing. The mounting war casualties, increasing numbers of bereaved relatives, uncertainty with regard to when and how the First World War will end allied with the feeling of being on the cusp of a world forever changed by war are reflected in the themes, content and concerns of their wartime poetry.

Santanu Das proposes that this notion that all First World War poetry is trench poetry is too restrictive and argues for "an expansive definition and a flexible critical framework alert to different political, cultural and historical trajectories" (2013: 8). This perspective facilitates consideration of alternative forms of First World War poetry, ranging from "epic to satire, through the sonnet, villanelle, ode, pastoral, elegy, ballad to the limerick and the trench song" (Das, 2013: 8). It also allows for the inclusion of alternative perspectives, moving beyond that of the soldier-poet to include the wartime poetry of non-combatants and civilians. This broader lens is pertinent when considering the wartime poetry of Letts and Ridge as each poet inherits and interrogates poetic traditions and themes as they represent the impact of the First World War on non-combatant and civilian zones, spaces, psyches and places.

Despite being widely anthologized during and in the early aftermath of the First World War the wartime poetry of Letts and Ridge has not yet become part of the national canon of war literature in Ireland, England or America. Das argues that there has been significant movement since the 1990s in the canon of war poetry

> from a moral register of the truth of war to an exploration of textual complexity and wider socio-cultural contexts; there is a closer interrogation of the relationships between poetic form and historical, political and psychological processes; and far greater attention is being paid to questions of difference (class, nationality, gender and sexuality), among others. (2013: 7)

Notwithstanding some recent expansions of the canon to include the verse of civilians and support workers, understandings of First World War poetry remain delimited, giving primacy to the trench writings of soldier-poets. These relatively recent reconfigurations of what constitutes war poetry facilitate consideration of the

critical repositioning of the wartime poetry of Letts and Ridge into the canon of war literature.

While these poets might initially appear an unlikely pairing, their joint consideration yields a number of compelling insights regarding the representation of the First World War. While each poet interacts differently with the violent disruptions associated with war it is also possible to discern within their poetry "patterns of convergence and resistance" in relation to their specific contexts and to each other in some shared moments of transnational communion (Ramazani, 2006: 354). In their wartime poetry Letts and Ridge bring to the fore non-combatant and civilian experiences and perspectives of war which are not yet fully or adequately represented in official canons of First World War poetry. Described by Christopher Beach as "politically radical" and by Terese Svoboda as "an anarchist when anarchy was a political possibility" Ridge was interested and active in relation to social and political issues and marginalised communities such as immigrants, "those who had left their home country to pursue the dream of freedom in the country that promised it" (2003: 109; 2015: 3). Letts served as a support worker in the First World War and witnessed first-hand the devastation of war. The two poets' wartime concerns emerge in *The Ghetto and Other Poems* and *The Spires of Oxford and Other Poems*. Their collections reveal figures and experiences less visible within the meta-narrative and official poetry canon of the First World War. These include nameless combatants who died fighting in defence of a country where-after its citizens would not remember their individual names, young soldiers dying alone behind screens within busy hospitals, college under-graduates who sacrificed their lives and futures to protect their homeland and, such was the scale of the casualties, soldiers whose bodies remained on foreign soil never to return to their homelands. In their collections Letts and Ridge examine the impact of the war on civilians, including the effects on women and children, as a consequence of their loved ones answering the call to arms. They also raise sensitive and contentious issues while the conflict is underway. Their poetry also sheds light on the desperate acts of deserting soldiers and illuminates inter-generational tensions brought into sharp relief during the First World War. Their verse explores spaces and roles not typically associated with war: arising from her VAD experience, Letts' subjects include army hospitals and non-combatant roles including Army support workers such as chaplains and nurses, while

Ridge writes of an immigrant community in an urban ghetto in New York City. Their ambiguous relationships to the communities about which they are writing are key factors in their poetry as these enable the contemplation of issues of belonging and alienation during wartime.

The First World War is considered by many to be a watershed event in global history. According to Vincent Sherry this period of history is when:

> the many dreads of the twentieth century find their prime type and defining instance in the four years (and more) of stalemated trench warfare: the inevitable menace of the second war, approaching through the 1920s and 1930s, and then the threats of nuclear conflagration over the next fifty years. (2005: 2)

The armistice in November 1918, which officially ended the fighting, did not result in peace and stability. In the immediate aftermath and for decades following the First World War empires and imperial regimes collapsed or were destroyed and new nation states were created. In Europe, the conditions were laid which contributed to the rise of communism and fascism. In this period, the United States also became a leading global financial power.

The contrasting landscapes and contexts explored in the wartime poetry of Letts and Ridge move the war beyond the battlefield and connect with domestic spheres and wider concerns associated with the destructive phenomenon of war. *The Spires of Oxford and Other Poems* and *The Ghetto and Other Poems* trouble temporal and geographic boundaries with regard to their perceptions of warfare. In their poetry Letts and Ridge reach into antiquity to reveal the continuous and connected cycles of violence inherent in warfare. The wartime poetry of Letts and Ridge demonstrates, regardless of location or political interests, the universality of the shared grief of civilians and non-combatants who have lost their loved ones to warfare. Writing during the First World War Letts and Ridge also consider a radically altered future as a consequence of the social fissures and ruptures of this war which would culminate decades later in the outbreak of the Second World War. In these respects, Letts and Ridge adopt more expansive approaches in their understanding and poetic articulation of the concept of a "first global war" than the combatant poets of the

First World War (Ramazani, 2020: 48). These perspectives also connect with the concerns of H.D. and Sheila Wingfield, discussed in later in this thesis, who each published a major, long poem in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War.

The First World War was not a single event but an international crisis involving multiple communities and nations. During the First World War Ireland made a decisive move towards independence in a rebellion that would later become known as the Easter Rising. Letts' and Ridge's complicated relationships to Ireland and the question of their "Irishness" is reflected in their wartime poetry. Both are national "outsiders", spending most of their adult lives away from the countries of their birth. Letts was born in England but "regarded herself as Irish" (Comerford, 2012). Letts shares this sentiment with Wingfield, who also regarded Ireland as her home despite being born in England. Ridge was Irish born but spent much of her life living and writing of communities geographically and ethnically distant from Ireland. In *The Ghetto and Other Poems,* the foreigner Ridge is writing of another immigrant and Jewish community in New York City with a long history of fleeing from sectarian violence and settling in countries far from their homeland. In their wartime collections Letts and Ridge focus on various aspects of Ireland's involvement in and response to the First World War, including Irishmen fighting in the army of their colonisers, while at home their countrymen and women are fighting to achieve independence. These perspectives yield insights into their complicated relationships with Ireland and their concerns with the wider cultural and social implications of the First World War.

A key consideration in this chapter is how Letts and Ridge innovate formally and in terms of subject matter at a pivotal moment in world history. As discussed in the Introduction and as noted by Lucy Collins, the poetry for which Letts is remembered is "divided into two types" (2012: 176). The first kind, reflected in Letts' pre-war collection, *Songs From Leinster* (1913), is written in Hiberno-English: "she [Letts] was particularly effective in the old ballad measure and in her quaint portrayal of Irish peasants" (Comerford, 2012). Of primary concern in this chapter is Letts' second type of poetry, which is associated with the First World War, and is "of more enduring significance" (Collins, 2012: 176). Letts' proximate experience of war while working as a VAD in army hospitals plays a significant role in prompting

thematic and formal changes to the manner and mode of her poetry. Letts published three poetry collections: *Songs From Leinster* (1913), *The Spires of Oxford and Other Poems* (1917) and *More Songs From Leinster* (1926). By 1924 *Songs From Leinster* was into "its fifth edition" (O'Conor, 1924: 112). Poems from *Songs From Leinster* were critically described on both sides of the Atlantic as "delightful" and as a "poetry of simple people and humble souls" (O'Conor, 1924: 112; Untermeyer, 1920: 200). However, the success of Letts' inaugural poetry collection was eclipsed by the publication pattern of her second collection. Between 1917 and 1919, poems from *The Spires of Oxford and Other Poems* were published in at least nine anthologies. Reviews of *The Spires of Oxford and Other Poems* refer to "several notable poems of pathos inspired by the war" (Logue, 1928: 46). "The Spires of Oxford" was published in several anthologies and has been described as "one of the most perfect lyrics inspired by the World War" (Cooper 1924: 290). This transition in her poetics reflects Letts's wartime and eye-witness experience of the devastation wrought by the conflict which culminates in *The Spires of Oxford and Other Poems*.

The Ghetto and Other Poems was Ridge's first published collection. She had published individual poems in New Zealand and Australia, prior to her arrival in America, and had submitted a volume titled *Verses* to the editor of the Sydney *Bulletin* in 1905. *Verses,* which remains unpublished, comprises forty-six poems in the form of what Catherine Daly describes as "long verses, poems written using iambic pentameter arrayed in a survey of stanza lengths and rhyme schemes" (2002). The free verse of *The Ghetto and Other Poems* is in sharp contrast with the more structured and even traditional form of *Verses.* Ridge's arrival in the United States in 1907 appears to have been a significant creative catalyst: there is Ridge's awareness of participating in an unprecedented social and technological order radically disconnected from that of the past; there is her acute suspicion of the marginalizing impacts of capitalism; and there is her quest for an appropriate idiom in which to render her reactions to her adopted country's entry into the war (in April 1917).

The Ghetto and Other Poems (1918) comprises four long poems: "The Ghetto", "Manhattan Lights", "Labor" and "Accidentals". "The Ghetto" is described as a "magnificent pageant of the Jewish race in nine chapters" (Kreymborg, 1919: 336). Nancy Berke notes that "as participant, as poet observer, and as radical critic, Ridge

leads her readers further into the Jewish ghetto and through the crawling "undulant" streets of lower Manhattan in the shadow of its shape-shifting serpentine skyscrapers" (2010: 33). "The Ghetto" comprises a sequence of nine numbered unrhymed free verse parts. This form does not, however, indicate a lack of structure. As Daniel Tobin argues:

> the poem moves expansively across its sections, the way a mural depicts scene after scene until within the wider prospect of the entire structure each individual portrayal gains in significance and intensity. Each section is alternately atmospheric and dramatic, at once offering a catalogue of the world beheld in the teeming streets as well as in the intimacy of domestic relationships. (2004: 73)

Each verse part of "The Ghetto" stands alone as a 'slice of life' from daybreak to nightfall in the crowded Jewish ghetto. The persistent logic which drives the increasing momentum and underlies the structural integrity and formal sequencing of "The Ghetto" is also explored in this thesis.

Of the two poets, Ridge is the more overtly Modernist writer. Gail Jones describes Ridge as a " transnational Modernist … remarkable for the extraordinary political charge to her work" (2014: 133). This descriptor is productive as it encompasses the various influences on Ridge's writing prior to her arrival in the United States, when she lived in New Zealand and Australia; the challenges of settling into unfamiliar milieux; and writing at a time when the United States was rapidly modernising and had entered into the conflict of First World War. As an artist Ridge was acutely attuned to the alienating potential associated with expanding urbanisation and of finding an appropriate aesthetic response to this rapidly changing social order. Also, a consciousness of the contemporaneous disruptive political context would also have motivated the anarchist in Ridge to give comprehensible artistic expression to this shifting and "modern" reality. These tendencies in Ridge's writings are observed by Zara Raab, who remarks on the anarchical potential in Ridge's poetry: "her [Ridge's] work, charged with political urgency stands apart from her Modernist contemporaries. Her independence, of course, lies at the core of her identity as both an artist and activist" (2016). There are many reasons for Ridge's independence, including her unstable immigrant status in the United States; her geographical

mobility in the mining towns of New Zealand; her years as a promising poet and artist in Australia; and / or her unusual marital status having left her husband in New Zealand to go to Australia in 1903 and in 1919 marrying David Lawson, "although she had not divorced from her first husband nor had he died" (Svoboda, 2015: 152). This diversity of experience, her keen observational skills, and Ridge's outsider status are acknowledged by Louis Untermeyer, who posits of "The Ghetto" that "it has remained for one reared far from our chaotic centres to appraise most poignantly the life that runs through our crowded streets" (1919a: 58). Despite her upbringing away from the "crowded streets" of the New York Ghetto, Ridge discovers and brings to her poetry a sense of belonging and kinship within and with this immigrant community: her "in-betweenness" animates her wartime poetry (Ramazani 2009b: 51).

Ridge's poetry also reflects her experiences of living in and extracting herself from difficult personal circumstances. Ridge's eclectic life imbues her poetry with an appreciation of everyday living, allied to a vague sense of impending tragedy and foreboding which reflects her own precarious life circumstances. This sense of instability and flux is directly conveyed in her work: "The Ghetto" includes references to the Jewish pogroms, which accentuates the sense of peril of surviving in an ominously troublingly complex and modern world considered against the backdrop of a troubled history and warfare. A wide range of social issues are addressed in Ridge's collection: poems such as "The Fire" and "The Tidings" deal directly with war and revolution, "Babel" is concerned with the fragmentation of the modern world, and "Flotsam" highlights the plight of the native and immigrant homeless forced to sleep on benches as a result of the American economic depression of 1910.

The magnitude and intensity of the First World War challenged many of poetry's established forms, devices and themes. It is possible to consider pre-war Georgian poetry as the antithesis of the *avant-garde* aspects of poetic Modernism. However, Peter Howarth argues that the difference between Georgian and Imagist poetry "does not make sense without understanding how close the two sides originally were" (2005: 23). In the years preceding the war both camps shared a common purpose in arguing for a new poetry which was different from that of the Victorian era and was

"devoted to the ideal of a direct and immediate poetry … without cliché, self-consciousness, or convention, a realism premised on removing the filters of custom" (Howarth, 2005: 24). Peter Robinson posits that the key difference between Georgian and Modernist poetics is in "the form of poetic voice each conceived as a vehicle for this ambition" (2013: 119). Both types of poetry were changed by the First World War. Considered against the horrors and atrocities of the war the "moonlit meditations and comfortable rustic tranquillity" characteristic of much Georgian poetry began to appear "irresponsibly trivial" (Baldick, 2004: 91). While the First World War had a catastrophic effect on the softer Georgian aesthetic which "forfeited its implied claim upon the future" it was not terminal and did not "slink away and die" after the fighting ended (Baldick, 2004: 91). Modernist poetics also changed as a consequence of the war; however, its tougher aesthetic may have been better able to cope with the trauma of the war and its aftermath.

In seeking to find suitable ways to respond to the crisis of the First World War writers adopted a variety of strategies. Baldick proposes the notion of a modern movement which comprises a diversity of voices:

> the modern movement, as understood by writers who had grown up with it, was a broad church that embraced a variety of forms, techniques, styles, and attitudes, all of which were in some way innovative and in some way representative of new twentieth-century modes of awareness. (2004: 5)

This perspective is useful when considering the pairing of Letts and Ridge as it accommodates their responses to the First World War. On initial scrutiny Ridge appears the more overtly politically engaged, unorthodox and experimental poet, in contrast to Letts' more conventional poetic tendencies. However, as these chapters proceeds, this assumption will be challenged, and it will be argued that in relation to their wartime poetry this dichotomy is neither as sharp nor as simple as might first appear. This examination will also consider how Letts and Ridge deploy, disregard or champion innovation and tradition in their wartime poetry.

During the First World War, Letts who was a young middle-class woman, joined the Voluntary Aid Detachment. The VAD was founded in 1909 to provide civilian support to facilitate other trained personnel to focus on the military aspects of war.

Letts worked as a VAD at the Manchester Base Hospital and subsequently trained as a masseuse with the Almeric Paget Military Massage Corps, going on to work at army camps in Manchester and Alnwick, Northumberland (Khan, 1986). As a VAD, Letts also worked in Dublin in the Linden Auxiliary Hospital and as a masseuse in the Military Orthopaedic Hospital, both in Blackrock (Bunbury, 2018).

In contrast to Letts' wartime experience, in 1918, when her collection was published, Ridge was living among avant garde artists and political radicals in New York city. Ridge, in *The Ghetto and Other Poems*, has been likened to a *flaneur*, or *flaneuse*, walking the city streets and celebrating everyday life in a Jewish ghetto (Berke, 2010; Svoboda, 2015). Guiding the reader through a day in the life of the ghetto, in each of the verse parts of "The Ghetto" Ridge presents different aspects of everyday living which introduces its immigrant denizens: "Sodo", "Sadie", "Sarah" and "Anna" and its "sturdy ghetto children" (5; 8; 23). It includes rich and visual descriptions of the market: "coral beads, blue beads, / beads of pearl and amber / gewgaws, beauty pins"; and the traders "this young trader, / born to trade as to a caul, / peddles the notions of the hour" (11; 14). This is a reference to the Hester Street Fair which was established in 1885 and located at the corner of Hester Street and Essex Street.[23] While the ghetto might appear an unlikely inspiration for poetry, Ridge makes the daily routines of ordinary people her vivid subject matter by focusing on what Louis Untermeyer calls "the divine average", like Walt Whitman Ridge reveals "the glory of the commonplace" (1921: xxii).

Ridge and Letts, in their wartime poetry collections, share the emotional impulses and perspectives on war expressed by Whitman in "Drum-Taps", his sequence written during the American Civil War and published in 1865. Whitman, in a letter to a friend, declared his satisfaction with "Drum-Taps" as it expressed "the pending action of this *Time* & *Land we swim in*, (italics in the original) with all their large conflicting fluctuations of despair & hope, the shiftings, masses, & the whirl & deafening din […] [overlaid] [...] with the unprecedented anguish of wounded &

[23] The Hester Street fair was one of New York City's largest pushcart markets. These references are also political as they relate to the sweeping proscription against immigrant Jews from entering the professions for which they were qualified in America. With few options available many of these immigrants entered the retail and garment trade to earn a meagre living.

suffering, the beautiful young men, in wholesale death & agony, everything sometimes as if in blood color, & dripping blood" (1865a). Like Whitman, Ridge and Letts vividly capture the "*zeitgeist*" of their current moment in *The Ghetto and Other Poems* and *The Spires of Oxford and Other Poems* as both bear witness to the violence of war with a sense of intimacy and fear, demonstrating that the reach of the conflict is all encompassing and inescapable.

The Ghetto and Other Poems is dedicated to the "American People". Ridge like Whitman seeks to link with the past while also expressing unease about the future of democracy at a pivotal moment in American history. These concerns permeate her collection (italics in the original):

> *Will you feast with me, American People?*
> *But what have I that shall seem good to you!*

Showcasing the lives and activities of an immigrant urban community in the early decades of the twentieth century, at first encounter *The Ghetto and Other Poems* appears to be the antithesis of a wartime context. However, here too Ridge connects with Whitman's "Give Me The Splendid Silent Sun", as the sounds of war are discernible in the "endless, streaming" life of the "Manhattan Streets":

> People, endless, streaming, with strong voices, passions
> Pageants
> Manhattan streets, with their powerful throbs, with the
> beating drums, as now; (1865c: 68)

While Ridge's vibrant images and snapshots of urban life seem at odds with a country which has just entered the conflict of the First World War, *The Ghetto and Other Poems* is imbued with the menace of war.

Given her direct experience of the war, Letts may be less problematically defined as a war poet than Ridge. Ridge provides insights into an urban milieu into which the First World War had not yet directly intruded, and yet her collection is infused with the peril of war. Each poet focuses on the experience of living in wartime and articulates the human and political consequences of the conflict from a female, civilian and non-combatant perspective, at a time when the propaganda machine

sought to confine the war to the battlefront. Both collections trouble the boundaries of First World War poetry. Letts and Ridge were writing "a form of war poetry in which the war may not be the only or even the dominant story, or may get mixed up with other wars, or with peace" (Das, 2013: 7). *The Spires of Oxford and Other Poems* and *The Ghetto and Other Poems* both comprise provocative and thought-provoking witnessed accounts of the impact of war by offering non-traditional and challenging perspectives on a conflict which permeated every aspect of life on either side of the Atlantic.

Letts' and Ridge's collections were issued at a crucial stage in the First World War for both Britain and the United States. By 1916 Britain had been embroiled in the conflict for over two years. Across the Atlantic, on 6 April 1917, the United States Congress voted America into the war. Letts' *Hallow-e'en and Poems of the War* was first published in 1916 by Smith, Elder & Co. in London and E.P. Dutton & Company in New York. 1916 is also the year described by Brian Murdoch as a "turning point in perceptions of the war … the initial enthusiasms for the conflict, often expressed in belligerent nationalistic terms, were gone, and had been replaced in public awareness by the realities of the continued attrition at the fronts" (2009: 31). While it is difficult to link this changed attitude to a single event, the Battle of the Somme is often seen as a catalyst of negative opinion. While the media reporting of these battles was carefully managed, as the families of the casualties became aware of their losses, the extent of the tragedy became generally known. The realities of the battlefield casualties now began to gain public traction.

By August 1917, when Letts' collection was reprinted in the American edition with the new title *The Spires of Oxford and Other Poems,* the conflict had reached a deadly stalemate. The rationale for the change in the collection's title was, according to the Publisher's Note, due to the popular appeal of the title poem.[24] David Clare posits that this name change was "insisted on by her [Letts'] publishers" and that the

[24] The reason for the change in title as explained in the Publisher's Note in the collection: "the majority of the Poems in this volume were published by us in 1916 under the title *Hallow-e'en and Poems of the War*. The verdict of the public, as shown by continual requests for permission to republish, is that "The Spires of Oxford" is the most important poem in the volume - therefore in issuing a new edition with several new poems, we bow to this verdict and give "The Spires of Oxford" its place in the forefront of the volume".

new title "undermined Letts's attempts to keep her Irishness front and centre, even in a collection focussed primarily on the British Army's war effort and heavily inspired by nursing experiences in the north of England" (2019). This titular alteration may also indicate an effort to enhance the appeal of the collection to the American reader and reinforce the connection with their European allies, given that the United States had entered the conflict just four months earlier. This publishing strategy proved successful, as a second American edition was issued soon after, in February 1918. During 1917, some of the bloodiest encounters of the First World War took place, including the Battle of Arras and the third Battle of Ypres.[25] The new title may also have reflected changing international public sentiment towards the war by focusing instead on protecting more generally the shared democratic ideals of the Allied and Associated powers for which American and British soldiers were fighting and giving their lives. Given that the American edition was published after the Easter 1916 rebellion and subsequent executions in Ireland, a strategy of deemphasizing the Irishness of its original title may also have been prudent to enhance the saleability of the collection in the United States.

On 13 April 1918, the *New Republic* published Ridge's poem sequence "The Ghetto". This was reprinted in *Playboy*, "a serious *avant-garde* magazine" (Svoboda, 2015: 97). Ridge's choice of *New Republic* is interesting: launched on 7 November 1914 with the subtitle "a journal of opinion to meet the challenge of the new time" this privately subsidized journal "ranked second in importance only to the *Nation* as an organ of dissident liberalism" (Petersen, 1956: 371). While there was some cynicism that this private financial support limited the editorial freedom of the *New Republic* such concerns were not expressed by those directly involved with the journal.[26] The *New Republic* supported the formation of labour unions and women's suffrage, which would have appealed to Ridge. The journal was also an organ of the Progressive movement and during the First World War supported Wilson's foreign

[25] During 1917, in Arras, between 9 April and 16 May 1917 there were 158,000 British casualties. Between July and November 1917 in the Third Battle of Ypres British and Empire forces advanced barely five miles and suffered casualties estimated at 850,000.

[26] In *Herbert Croly of the New Republic: The Life and Thought of an American Progressive*, David Levy quotes the journalist and essayist H.L. Mencken, calling those involved in the production and content of *The New Republic* as "kept idealists" and the socialist William J. Gent's view that the publication was "polluted" by this financial arrangement (1985: 208).

policy, including the decision to enter the war. The *New Republic*'s support for this decision to enter the First World War was a position to which Ridge was ideologically and personally opposed, a view she held in common with her friend, labour organiser Frank Little. Both Ridge and Little the part-native American labour organiser - protested against American involvement in the war (Chaplin, 1948: 196).[27]

In September 1918, Ridge's first poetry collection, *The Ghetto and Other Poems*, was published by Benjamin W. Huebsch, a Jewish immigrant who, two years previously, had published Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. B.W. Huebsch and Company opened in 1906. Huebsch was opposed to censorship and was a founding member of the American Civil Liberties Union. Having started his career as a printer, Huebsch was one of the few publishers in the United States who "saw some of the opportunities that Modernism could offer to his new company" (Turner, 2003: 46). Huebsch was also D.H. Lawrence's first American publisher.

Publishing poetry offered Huebsch as a new and small publisher an opportunity to gain a foothold in the American publishing industry. Poetry was less likely than other genres to attract censor scrutiny. According to Catherine Turner, "for U.S. censors who rarely interfered with publications of poetry, verse was unquestionably artistic and supposedly inaccessible to young people" (2003: 64). Poetry was therefore considered benign and less likely to be read by and influence younger generations. B.W. Huebsch differed from more established publishers in other ways. Huebsch was also among a new kind of literary publisher to emerge in the early decades of the twentieth century who "balanced the profit motive and the desire to offer genuinely good literature to the reading public" (Becnel, 2008: 9). This strategy was successful: as Will Lissner observes, the Huebsch publishing house "became noted for its scholarly work" (1965: 110). As a publisher and editor Benjamin Huebsch gained recognition as "as one of the outstanding authorities on trends in world literature" and was credited with an ability to "corral new and unusual writers for his house from Europe as well as the United States" (Lissner, 1965: 110).

[27] Frank Little was lynched "at the hands of hired killers at the Anaconda Copper mine in Montana" (Linda Wagner-Martin, 2016: 31. *Frank Little at Calvary* in *The Ghetto and Other Poems* is dedicated to Little.

Huebsch's business qualities, his background and interest in new modes of verse may explain his interest in publishing Ridge's type of poetry. These factors may also explain why B.W. Huebsch and Company was more likely to find a reading public for Ridge, occupying a niche in the market between the more conservative, traditional and primarily profit-driven publishers such as Harpers and the more radical publishers like John Lowell. Ridge's practical knowledge of the world of literary publishing would have offered her valuable insights into the type of publisher she would consider appropriate for her inaugural collection of poetry.

The Ghetto and Other Poems, which explores the life of a community of Jewish immigrants living on New York's Lower East Side, has been described as "a sustained portrait of life in the Jewish-American ghetto where she [Ridge] lived" (Tobin, 2004: 68). Though it is not directly concerned with the war, in the fabric and texture of *The Ghetto and Other Poems* the threat of war is never far away. The collection focuses, thematically and formally, on the dramatic changes wrought in society as a result of the First World War and the associated technological advancements which contributed to the speed of America's transformation into a modern society.

SECTION ONE - CHAPTER TWO: LOCATIONS OF WAR

The First World War occurred on many fronts and Jahan Ramazani argues that there are "various ways of taking the measure of the global dimensions" of the First World War (2020: 48). In their wartime collections Letts and Ridge explore the impact of war in a variety of contexts, places, sites, and locales. They examine a diversity of figures, landscapes and environments which are not typically considered in the canon of World War poetry. They also demonstrate a sensitivity to the (trans)national complexities of the conflict as they examine various aspects of Irish involvement in the First World War.

The battlefronts - war as human tragedy

Despite the significant contribution that poetry by combatants made to a wider understanding of the conflict, Gerald Dawe argues that it took a female poet, Winifred Letts, to "capture its [the war's] actual conditions" (2015). "Poems of the War", originally called "Ad Milites", meaning "To The Soldiers", the first of three sections in *The Spires of Oxford and Other Poems*, contains a number of poems dealing directly with Letts' experiences in supporting the war effort. The influence of Letts' hospital experience is noted in a *Spectator* review of *Hallow-e'en and Poems of the War* on 20 January 1917:

> though they do not come from the battle-front, several of Miss Letts's poems show direct contact with war in hospital, and pay an affecting tribute to courageous sufferers and devoted nurses. She grieves over the shattered flotsam of battle, and the loss of our golden boys, who "gave their merry youth away for country and for God," [from "The Spires of Oxford"] yet she does not quarrel with their heroic self-sacrifice. (76)

There are seventeen poems in "Poems of the War". As the sequence progresses from its opening poem, "The Spires of Oxford", there is increased questioning of the purpose of war. Arising from the poet's direct experience of witnessing the suffering and untimely deaths of these young soldiers, a number of poems, contrary to the *Spectator* review, take issue with "heroic self-sacrifice".

While the experiences that inform this section are based on Letts' role as a VAD, neither in this position, nor as a woman poet writing of war, does Letts neatly fit socially or artistically into a traditionally accepted role. In the First World War hospitals the VADs held an uncomfortably incongruent position. While their services were desperately needed, their roles were less clearly defined than those of professional nurses. The VADs, as neither nurses nor civilians, occupied a liminal position outside the expected and accepted female roles of the war period. Some commentators have observed that the space which the VADs occupied was their personal combat zone: "nursing was widely acceptable for its traditional female associations, but for the VADs, it was their metaphorical battlefront. The hospital was their trench" (Watson, 2002: 495). While the nurse was generally accepted as conforming to societal expectations and complying with gender norms, Letts, as a VAD and a women poet writing an eye-witness account of the war, represents a double challenge to the status quo. In "Poems of the War" Letts examines the less public impacts of the First World War by focusing on interactions arising from her experience with combatants in spaces and roles not typically at the forefront of First World War poetry.

Two poems in "Poems of the War" explicitly focus on wartime army support roles: an army chaplain and a hospital nurse. In "Chaplain to the Forces" Letts ponders the role of an army chaplain. According to Michael Snape, in common with all departments within the British army, the Chaplains' Department increased dramatically during the First World War: "whereas there were only 117 commissioned chaplains representing three denominations in August 1914, more than 5,000 temporary commissions had been granted to clergymen of eleven denominations by November 1918" (2011: 321). The hierarchy of the Church of England did not permit its clergymen to assume combatant roles and they were exempt when conscription was introduced in early 1916; instead, clergymen served in "special service" as Chaplains to the army. This factor contributed to widespread resentment among the general public and within the army that the clergy encouraged enlistment and supported conscription while remaining relatively safe and protected (Bell, 2013). In addition to their comparative safety another element which fed the public resentment was the Chaplain's status within the army. In army ranking, Anglican Chaplains "held the rank of captain, which only reinforced the existing

social division" (Empey, 2012: 63). The chaplain's segregation from the frontlines remained in place until the Battle of the Somme in 1916, prior to which chaplains "were confined to rearguard zones, an exclusion that only served to diminish whatever respect they might have enjoyed from the troops, since they were not exposed to danger" (Empey, 2012: 63). In "Chaplain to the Forces" the conditions under which the chaplain worked is referenced as close to the battle in a "tree-shadowed place", with a makeshift altar "a packing case" where the army chaplain brings the "kneeling soldier, God" (12). Letts' poem reveals that the role of the army chaplain is more nuanced and complex than that prescribed in the official King's Regulations, which was "to conduct the army's compulsory religious services and bury its dead" (Snape, 2011: 321). In addition, however, the controversies with regard to the army Chaplains are also reflected in this poem.

"Chaplain to the Forces" was first published in on 24 April 1915 in the *Spectator*. It is a deceptively simple poem which concurrently praises and questions the role of the army chaplain. The deployment of irony lends the poem its undercurrents of discontent. It comprises six verses, each a sexain, with an enclosed rhyme scheme in the initial quatrain, followed by a rhyming couplet. In the penultimate verse the quatrain comprises rhyming second and third lines: "Twixt life and death, and unto death / Speed the brave whose failing breath" are enclosed within rhyming first and fourth lines, each ending with "gate" and "Fate" (12). This design creates a sense of entrapment and the inevitability that, having entered the conflict, death is the only way out for the combatant. The inescapability of death is emphasized in the following couplet, in which the soldier "answers, gallant to the end, / 'Christ is the Word' - and I His friend" (12). Structurally, the couplet reinforces the independence of each verse in examining different facets of the role of the army chaplain.

Tension in "Chaplain to the Forces" is created by the interplay of rhyme and rhythm. A strong and regular rhythm is immediately established, imposing itself quickly:

> Ambassador of Christ you go
>
> Up to the very gates of hell
>
> Through fog of powder, storm of shell, (11).

Written in iambic tetrameter, this rhythm is recognisable and familiar and creates a sense of flow which is consistently interrupted by splitting the verse structure. In each verse, the composition of an enclosed quatrain and couplet creates a disjunction, causing the reader to reflect on the meaning of this break and on the ensuing couplet. In the second sexain, the quatrain examines the "price" the army chaplain pays. The second and third lines "To be a man and yet stand by, / To hold your life whilst others die" in addition to tacitly aligning "stand by" and "die" it also correlates the role of the chaplain with emasculation (11). This association is stressed in the ensuing couplet, which reiterates the non-participatory role of the clergyman: "To watch the strife and take no part - / You with the fire at your heart" (11). This last line pushes against the reader's expectations in a subtle but significant way with the word "at", when the expectation might "in", which hints at the emotional and physical detachment of the chaplain from the battlefield action. In this couplet the rhyming of "part" and "heart" reinforces this separation between the non-combatant chaplain and the combatants.

Nosheen Khan argues this poem is "an attempt to vindicate the clergy's position" since they were at the time seen in some quarters as "morally reprehensible shirkers" (1986: 64; 51). "Chaplain to the Forces" was first published ten days after the publication of the "*Neuve Chapelle*" with an epigraph comprising a direct quotation from this letter:

> I have once more to remark upon the devotion to duty, courage and contempt of danger which has characterised the work of the Chaplains of the Army throughout this campaign.[28]

While it is unclear who made the decision to include the epigraph with the inaugural publication of Letts' poem, the proprietor and editor of the *Spectator* from 1889 to 1925, John St. Loe Strachey, is described by M. J. Allison as "an enthusiastic and sometimes influential meddler in military affairs, never happier than when organizing a parade or camp" (1975: 246). It is therefore likely that the decision to include this supportive extract from the Neuve Chapelle was editorial. The epigraph

[28] The "*Neuve Chapelle*" dispatch written by Sir John French, Commander in Chief of the British Army in France and Flanders was printed in the *London Gazette* on 14 April 1915. This letter covers the final operations of the Battle of Neuve Chappelle of October 1914 which was the first planned British offensive of the First World War.

was also published with "Chaplain to the Forces" in Rev. Reginald Wheeler's 1917 anthology, *A Book Of Verse Of The Great War*. As a missionary who served in the British army this may have been an attempt by Wheeler to defend the role of the army Chaplain. This epigraph does not appear in the initial edition of Letts' *Hallow-e'en and Poems of the War*, nor in any subsequent editions of *The Spires of Oxford and Other Poems* nor in any of the other anthologies in which this poem was included. It is unclear whether Letts was consulted with or agreed to this epigraph, but its initial inclusion may reflect an early enthusiasm for the war and its subsequent omission may reflect Letts' increasing awareness of the cost of war and her burgeoning uncertainty with regard to this support role. While there might be some validity to Khan's observations, and to Wheeler's efforts to highlight the heroics of the army chaplains, the level of ambiguity in the poem militates against a full and unquestioning acceptance of such positive assertions.

In "Chaplain to the Forces" there are a number of word combinations describing the chaplain and Christ which create a sense of dissonance. Letts initially pays homage to the chaplain by defining his role as that of "Ambassador of Christ", speaking his "Master's message" to the soldiers fighting at the front (11). The reference in the third verse to "Viceregent of God's pity you, / a sword must pierce your own soul through" and the reference to "our great Captain Christ" starts to undermine the thus far positive portrayal of the army chaplain by the paradoxical allusion to the crucifixion of Christ, who died for his beliefs. Here, the suffering of the chaplain is metaphorical: he experiences the conflict like a sword piercing "your own soul through" but is spared the physical agony and horror of actual combat (11). These designations suggest a hierarchy and authority over the fighting soldiers in a subtle gesture to the public and combatant discontent with the ranking and non-combatant status of army chaplains.

The taut structure and unvarying rhythmic pattern lend the poem a sense of restrained anger, indicating the poet-speaker's growing frustration with and uncertainty about the role of the army chaplain and the inexorable movement towards the final verse, in which the suspense and tension is resolved. While it is possible to read the initial five sexains of "Chaplain to the Forces" as either endorsement or censure for the army chaplain, the tone of the last verse is more overt

in its irony. The opening line, “Then God go with you, priest of God”, may be read as a negative judgement on both the role and personage of the chaplain (12). It is the subversion of Julian of Norwich’s talismanic revelation: “alle shalle be wele, and all shalle be wele, and alle manner of thinge shall be wel” that radically transforms the meaning of the poem (Watson and Jenkins, 2006: 209). Letts offsets Norwich’s optimism about the possibility of salvation for all people with her own declaration that “all is well” in “the fog of powder, storm of shell” of the battlefield (12). By placing this assertion before Norwich’s “all shall be well” Letts gives primacy to the current battlefield context and challenges the veracity of this visionary urging belief in the mystery of redemption, that all souls will be saved in the judgement on the last day. The feminine reference to Julian is also ironic, as the battlefields of the First World War were wholly occupied by men.

The final couplet, “Above the anguish and the loss / Still floats the ensign of His Cross”, may be read as a critique of the chaplain’s palliative role in two respects (12). Firstly, at the time the poem was published, regardless of the suffering they witnessed army chaplains were protected from active participation in the frontline by the hierarchy of the church. As such, the chaplain can neither fully empathize with nor understand the battlefield horrors experienced by the soldiers. Secondly, the chaplain has “God” on his side and is therefore, literally and spiritually, safe. The reference to “ensign” in the last line reinforces this duality, since the word denotes the flag used by military units, as well as the lowest ranked commissioned officer. Like the chaplain, ranked as an army captain, the ensign is presented as floating above and therefore uninvolved in the harsh realities and real torment of war. In “Chaplain to the Forces” the pastor, like all army chaplains, is a bystander who accompanies the soldier but does not share in the suffering and experience of death itself.

In this deeply ambiguous poem, the role of the army chaplain is described in terms which seem positive. However, the ironic tone overshadows the poem’s sincerity, reaching a climax in the last verse, which is more directly critical of the non-combatant status of the army chaplain. There may also be an undercurrent of self-reflection here regarding Letts’ opinions on her own non-combatant status during the First World War. The conversational language draws the reader in; however, in a

Modernist turn, the poem's speaker proves unreliable. Unreliable narration here manifests as the speaker seems to initially offer sympathy to the "Ambassador of Christ": however, subtly and inexorably, this initial compassion is withdrawn, culminating in the disenchanted irony of the final sexain (11).

A more redemptive reading of "Chaplain to the Forces" is possible, according to which the poet-speaker may initially seem skeptical but comes to appreciate, by the end of the poem, that the presence of the chaplain has a positive impact on the dying and wounded soldiers. However, given the deliberation in the choice of language; the careful sequencing of the verses; the ironic tone and increasing tension and cynicism as the poem progresses; the climatic final verse; and the exclusion of the epigraph from almost all the subsequent publications, "Chaplain to the Forces", on balance, leans to the more cynical view of the role of the army chaplain.

Letts' treatment of the chaplain is in sharp contrast with another army service role examined in the final poem in "Poems of the War". "A Sister In A Military Hospital" is written in formal verse. Similar in form to "Chaplain to the Forces" in comprising three sexains in closed rhyming couplets, this poem has a distinctly different tone and perspective. Opening with "Blue dress, blue tippet, trimmed with red, / White veil, coif-like about her head", Letts aligns the nurse with Our Lady (32). Adopting a more positive perspective, Letts praises the "cool, kind, hands" and "diligent service day by day" of the hospital nurse (32). Continuing the biblical allusion, the poet-speaker refers to the nurse as "Madonna of a moment" who is "Dark-eyed and hushed with sympathy", "Warm, eager" and "gaily kind" (32). This young nurse is compared with the best of what nature can offer: "Four seasons blent in rare accord" (32). This is a role of which Letts has personal experience as a VAD. In "A Sister In A Military Hospital", the tone is warm, the content is devoid of skepticism, it is direct and lacks the ambiguity of "Chaplain to the Forces". It is also possible to discern an element of self-recrimination, as in her examination of these support roles Letts may be aligning the role of the chaplain and the nurse with her own role as a non-combatant writer and carer, who can merely observe and provide small comfort to wounded and dying soldiers. Self-recrimination appears elsewhere in "Poems of the War". In "Casualty" there are notes of self-criticism, and it is also possible to

identify a public criticism aimed at a society that has become hardened to the accelerating death-toll in the war.

"Casualty" operates on several levels. Comprising four stanzas, each a quintet with a pattern of interlocking end rhyme, the poem works in a similar fashion to the sing-song limerick-style rhyme scheme. This nostalgic form appears on the surface to offer the reader a deceptively reassuring backdrop which contrasts profoundly with the message of the poem. The title "Casualty" may be read as a comment on the way in which British newspapers handled announcements of the war wounded and dead. It was quite common for newspapers, within the same edition, to publish lists of the names of war casualties and advertise for more army recruits to fill these vacancies: "the *Daily Express* featured a column for the "Casualties of War", listing names of those who were killed, wounded, missing or hospitalized and it always carried and advertisement for more men to join the forces" (Adam, 2019). "Casualty" opens by naming a soldier who has been killed: "John Delaney of the Rifles has been shot" (13). This immediately personalizes his death for the reader, a tension that is maintained throughout the poem. The use of "we", "our", "you and me" repeatedly involves the reader as a colluder in John Delaney's death. Rather than merely "A name seen on a list" identifying the soldier acts as a reminder to an increasingly habituated public that this particular young man has given his life to protect and preserve their lives (14). There is a minor variation in the third line in each verse that has the effect of disrupting the rhythm and of drawing attention to the emotional dissonance conveyed in the words, which examines the soldier's death from a slightly different perspective. In the first verse a question is posed to the reader "Does it cloud the day for you / That he lies among the dead?" (13). The second verse posits that his name will not appear either in the foreign lands where he died or in historical records of the war:

> No history will hold his humble name.
> No sculptured stone will tell
> The traveller where he fell;
> That he lies among the dead (13).

The penultimate verse states that the soldier's death will go unnoticed even among his comrades, and that his body will not be returned to his homeland: "He is lying

with the dead / Stark and silent, God knows where?" (13). This is a reference to the British government's decision not to bring the bodies of the men home following the Battle of the Somme (Booth, 1996). Admonition is apparent in the final verse, in which the poet-speaker self-remonstrates and includes an uncaring public who will not pay attention to his name on the lists of the dead, who are "All unknown and all unmissed" (14). The final lines reiterate this message and pose another question: "What to us that he is dead? - / Yet he died for you and me", in a stark reminder of John Delaney's ultimate sacrifice on behalf of his countrymen and women (14).

Two poems in "Poems of the War" are explicitly situated within a hospital and interrogate different aspects of the impact of war on soldiers. Letts' "Screens", located by its subtitle within a hospital space, is concerned with the untimely deaths of young soldiers. Behind "three red screens", the only privacy afforded him, a young combatant, lying in a "crumpled heap" , awaits his death (22; 21). The poet wonders at the life denied this young man: "He might have lived and loved and wed / But now he's done for at nineteen" (21). The final quatrain is a reminder of the frequency of war deaths: as soon as one young soldier dies, "Another man will get his bed" (22). Death is such a common occurrence that all this youth with "White counterpane and rough dark head" receives is the hurried sympathy of an overworked hospital operative: "But - Jove! - I'm sorry that he's dead" (21; 22). Khan argues that "the light-hearted tone of the poem's conclusion does not stem from any shallowness of emotion, but reflects the veneer of indifference assumed by those who tended the dying as a safeguard that enabled them to cope with such tragedies, which occurred at that time" (1988: 125). Comprising five quatrains with an alternating rhyming scheme, "Screens" is an intensely emotional poem. Its saturation by the colour red transfers the bloody battles of war into the hospital space, in which a young man, robbed of his future, lies dying behind "red screens" (22). Though couched in the familiarity of formal verse, with the sing-song rhythm typical of a ballad, Letts subverts expectations by denying consolation and not appeasing her readers with platitudes; she chooses to describe the harsh realities and loneliness of these premature deaths in a busy hospital ward. There is also an explicitly time-based reference to the First World War in "Screens". "Suvla Bay" references the second assault of the Battle of Gallipoli, which took place in August 1915 and proved another frustrated attempt by the Allied Forces to breach Turkish

defence positions (Sass, 2015). This reference indicates Letts' awareness of the sacrifices associated with these early campaigns. This perspective, written while the conflict raged, hardly aligns with the "official" reporting of the events of the First World War. It is also suggestive of Letts' consciousness of recording history while it is taking place, chronicling the human cost of warfare from a female and non-combatant perspective.

In "To a Soldier in Hospital" Letts challenges and questions the true cost of patriotism. The poem was first published in the *Spectator* on 12 August 1916, one month after the British army suffered the worst single-day death toll in its history at the Battle of the Somme. According to Khan, this eight-verse poem "celebrates a wounded soldier's patient resigned endurance of agony" (1986: 63). A different interpretation of the message of the poem is possible as, punctuated with a series of rhetorical questions, the poet-speaker queries a young soldier-patient's sustained stoicism in the face of pain and his slow and inevitable march towards premature death. This device of rhetorical questions subtly exposes the latent theme of the poem. Read in this way the overall effect, contrary to Khan's more positive interpretation, undermines a constructive explanation of the soldier's suffering and sacrifice.

Each verse of "To a Soldier in Hospital" contrasts the pre-war strength and vibrancy of the young combatant, "Of ardent life and limb", "With carelessness and joy", "Restless with throbbing hopes, with thwarted aims, / Impulsive as a colt", with his current weakened state and stoic acceptance of his fate: "How did you learn to bear this long-drawn pain / And not complain?" and "How do you lie here month by weary month, / Helpless and not revolt?" (24; 25). The last verse pits the vibrancy of youth against the young soldier's mature acceptance of pain and suffering and rails against a "God" who persists in permitting such torment:

> Since God made man so good, - here stands my creed,
> - God's good indeed. (26)

The emphasis on the endless cycle of suffering is relentless, as "each weary day" fatally injured young soldiers are brought into hospital wards awaiting their inevitable death (25).

Letts' use of repetition and rhyme in "To a Soldier in Hospital" demonstrates an awareness of a "feeling of an "echoed physical realization" - sonic dimensions of poetry that bind together the imagined community" (Ramazani, 2009a: 76). The end rhyme pattern closing each of the eight verses makes the rhymed words stand out, the pairing of "goal" and "soul", "pain" and "complain", and "fear" and "near" drawing attention to the futures lost as a result of war (24; 25). The consistent indentation of the second and fourth lines in each stanza has the effect of making the first two rhymed lines stand out visually and sonically, sustaining the reader's awareness of the already strong end rhyme:

> Courage came to you with your boyhood's grace
> Of ardent life and limb.
> Each day new dangers steeled you to the test,
> To ride, to climb, to swim. (24)

Rhythm is also used to particular effect. The last two lines of each verse, in iambic pentameter and dimeter, imitate the rhythm of a heart-beat, which heightens the emotional impact: the alignment of "death" and "breath" in the first verse indicates the laboured breathing, prolonged suffering and inevitability of the young soldier's death (24). The use of sporting metaphors highlights the jeopardy, uncertainty and the peril of war to which these young men have committed their futures and their lives: "On the winning of a goal / You staked your soul" (24). Letts' persistent deployment of this pattern of rhyme and rhythm intensifies and personalizes the grief of the non-combatants, who by supporting the war efforts, witnessed at first-hand this pain and suffering of those wounded in battle.

In "What Reward?" Letts continues the interrogation of the price of patriotism. Comprising three four-line stanzas, "What Reward?" is, like "Screens", typical of the ballad form. These song-like qualities are evocative of childhood and of more innocent times. Despite its traditional arrangement this poem raises uncomfortable questions about the sacrifices of war. Khan contends that "What Reward?" "shows that women were voicing criticism of the war well before the dominant male voices emerged on the scene" (1988: 124). Letts was not alone in voicing dissent and support for this perspective is apparent in a number of wartime anthologies to which women poets contributed and in which they protest the war.

First printed in 1916, with three subsequent reprints in the two subsequent years, J.W. Cunliffe's *Poems of the Great War* includes the American poet Sara Teasdale's "Spring in War-Time" which is also featured in *A Treasury of War Poetry, British and American Poems of the World War, 1914-1919,* (1919). "Spring in War-Time" is described by Claire Buck as a poem "which refuses renewal and regeneration whilst painfully acknowledging its inevitability" (2005: 91). This resistance is reinforced with each verse concluding with a rhetorical question: "Deep grief?", "Still fight?", "New graves?", "Grey Death?" (Teasdale, 1917: 420) as the speaker ponders on how the cycle of nature continues inexorably as the war rages; this recurring pattern, allied to the indentation of the last two lines in each verse, stresses the importance the poet places on all four questions. This formal arrangement reproduces, in "Spring in War-Time" and "What Reward?", the cyclical inevitability of warfare.

In Letts' "What Reward?" the same question is posed in the first and restated in the final verse, in which the poet speaker interrogates an unnamed third party, "Say, what reward for him?" (23). In the poem soldiers are compared to "Flotsam of battle" indicating their lack of worth: they are likened to detritus floating on the sea of destruction which is the war (23). The tone is accusatory from the outset, with the first two lines emphasizing the speaker's frustration and directly addressing the wounded soldiers: "*You* gave your life, boy, / And *you* gave a limb" (italics in the original) (23). In this short poem, again working with traditional poetic devices and schemes, Letts subverts expectations and denies closure and comfort to the reader. In "What Reward?" traumatic content is enclosed within a seemingly innocent form. Its formal properties ensure memorability; however, the substance of the poem, allied with the use of the rhyming scheme of the folk ballad, combine to ironically emphasize a world which is off kilter. Reminiscent of Blake's *Songs of Innocence and Experience* (1794) which juxtaposes the innocent and pastoral childhood idyll against the corrupt and repressive adult world, in her short poem Letts exploits the narrative potential of the ballad form to recount the tragedy and question the veracity of the received narrative of the First World War.

Letts works predominantly with traditional poetic forms but does not retreat from the harsh realities of the First World War into the pastoral idylls characteristic of much

pre-war Georgian poetry. In "Casualty", "Screens", "To a Soldier in Hospital" and "What Reward?" Letts' use of repetition, rhyme and refrain underscores and reiterates her views on the futility of war and the underlying associated physical and mental trauma of soldiers and the distress of hospital workers. These poems share many of the sentiments expressed by Wilfred Owen, revealed in a draft Preface to a volume of poetry written in 1918, the year of his death, which make it apparent that his wartime experience and poetics have evolved beyond pre-war Georgian precepts into a more realistic version of the horrors of war:

> this book is not about heroes. English Poetry is not yet fit to speak of them. Nor is it about deeds, or lands, nor anything about glory, honour, might, majesty, dominion, or power, except War … My subject is War and the pity of War. (120)[29]

In the sequence comprising "Poems of the War" Letts rails against the atrocities wrought on young soldiers in the name of patriotism and uses recognizable poetic forms to house subversive and challenging content.

This content may have been designed to impact a certain kind of reader. Letts' awareness of her readership is apparent in the opening lines of the collection's first dedication, which precedes the Contents (italics in the original):

> *To you who see*
> *The world with me*
> *I give this book.*

This initial dedication may be an attempt by Letts to engage with her readers and speculate if they share her views on the current disrupted state of affairs (italics in the original):

> *It's good to know you see it too,*
> *Smile, sign and wonder when I do;*
> *That you discern, the crooked jest*
> *Of contrast 'twixt our worst and best.*

[29] Owen was killed in action on 4 November 1918.

This aspiration to relate to her readership is reinforced by their shared affiliation to their home countries and citizens (italics in the original):

> *Love country, town and your own kind,*
> *Sinners, and saints and sea and sky*
> *Just as they are, for so do I.* (1917)

This sentiment, like the references to the colour red in "Screens" and "A Sister In A Military Hospital", is evocative of "Drum-Taps", linking Letts with Whitman as each nurse-poet reflects on their love of their homelands and first-hand knowledge of "the red business" of the wars in which both poets nursed wounded and dying soldiers (1865b: 7).

This dedication also aligns Letts with, yet also differentiates her from, other women poets. As Buck asserts, "by far the majority of women poets [published during the First World War], reiterate the nobleness of the soldier whose sacrifice buys England security and peace, and more disturbingly provides the blood that ensures national unity" (2005: 94). Chris Baldick emphasizes the importance of the "authorial voice" and "unpoetical subject matter" and "deliberate avoidance of Victorian moralizing and ornate poeticism" as some of the key differentiating features of modern English verse (2004: 79). In her collection Letts' poetic voice breaks from traditional heroic representations to present an alternative, non-combatant, perspective on the human tragedy of the First World War.

In a review for the American periodical *Bellman* Henry Adam Bellows highlights the transnational and contemporaneous importance of the "Poems of the War" section as of primary importance in *The Spires of Oxford and Other Poems*: "the significance of the collection, at least for today, lies chiefly in its poems of the war, written with poignant sincerity yet with no trace of hysteria, in honour of those who … gave their youth away / For country and for God" (1917: 39).[30] Letts is at the forefront of poets who, by bringing issues of sacrifice, trauma and suffering by soldiers into the public domain, pose searching and difficult questions about the First World War at a time when it was extremely unpopular to do so, as a woman and as a poet. Under the

[30] Founded in 1906, John Flanagan refers to the *Bellman* as the "best literary periodical which Minnesota has so far produced" (1945: 303).

provisions of the Defence of the Realm Act (1914) military personnel risked court-martial if they were deemed to be spreading "false reports or reports likely to cause disaffection to His Majesty" (1914: 8.1.(c)), therefore Letts' non-combatant status may have been an advantage in this respect.

Letts' wartime concerns and preoccupations continue after the end of the fighting. "A Ballade for Peace Day" was published in *War Poems from the Yale Review* (1919). Nearly one-third of the contributors to this transatlantic anthology are women. The Foreword explains that the underlying rationale for the selection of the poems is a shared view of the First World War as "a new atonement [rather] than as a mighty drama of arms; and its heroes for them are men, the women, the children, who have suffered to the uttermost in the redemption of the world" (1919: 5). In "A Ballade for Peace Day" Letts deploys a form closely reminiscent of the older ballade form associated with fourteenth century France. The conscious choice of this antiquated form stresses the poem's solemnity and formality. Arguably this reversion is also an authorial reaction against the "new world" which the war has created. Formally it comprises three rhymed stanzas and a shorter "Envoy". The poem opens:

> To-day Peace came on radiant feet
> And blew her trumpet in the Square -
> 'The war is over' - news is fleet, (43)

In a minor but important variation in the three refrains, Letts expresses the psychological trauma of war and her continued concern for war casualties. The first and third refrains are statements, "Some must go softly all their days", while the middle refrain is framed as a question: "Must some go softly all their days?" (43; 44). These refrains assert the sustained suffering involved in warfare after the fighting has ended as well as questioning the rationale of the war itself. Demonstrating Letts' persistent preoccupation in her wartime poetry, the "Envoy" is a direct sympathetic address to those who continue to experience the loss and trauma of war after the conflict has ended:

> O broken hearts who needs must bear
> The cost of this new world we raise,
> May God console you, is our prayer,
> While you go softly all your days. (44)

In “A Ballade for Peace Day” the First World War is portrayed in terms of a human tragedy rather than a grand heroic and patriarchal enterprise. The use of the older form is also a reminder of the incessant rounds of violence and warfare throughout history.

Poems from this first section of *The Spires of Oxford and Other Poems* were published throughout the war. The *Spectator* printed “Chaplain to the Forces” in 1915 and “To a Soldier in Hospital” in 1916 and Letts’ poetry also appeared in a number of wartime anthologies. It possible to trace a progression in “Poems of the War” from Letts’ initial uneasiness early in the war, to - as the numbers of war-wounded and war-deaths increased - dissent, a refusal to forget and a determination to remember these soldiers. It is also possible, across “Poems of the War”, to discern a “unifying factor of memorialization” (Murdoch, 2009: 53). This is a central concern of Sally Minogue and Andrew Palmer, who argue that “the non-combatant poets joined the combatant poets in the task of remembrance and memorialisation - keeping the dead in the imagination of the living” (2018: 49). In “Poems of the War” Letts is to the forefront of poets who “writing out of the heat of the First World War were forming the first literary expressions of a shared grief” (Minogue and Palmer, 2018: 21). In these middle years of the First World War, as the death-toll continued to rise, “the focus was placed very much for those at home upon the dead as such (rather than the manner of the death, for example)” (Murdoch, 2009: 53). Letts’ “Poems of the War” may thus be considered both as an act of protest and as a monument to the dead, written from an alternative and non-combatant perspective.

Letts was not alone in examining and interrogating “othered” experiences of war. On the other side of the Atlantic, Lola Ridge was considering similar themes, though in a different form, in her wartime collection *The Ghetto and Other Poems.* Ramazani argues that to challenge the persistent and pervasive dominance of national perspectives, consideration of “transnational citizenship, exchange and influences” helps make visible the international and global potential of poetry (2006: 333). This observation is relevant to the wartime poetry of Letts and Ridge, as there are a number of connections between *The Ghetto and Other Poems* and *The Spires of Oxford and Other Poems*. The themes and concerns of two poems in “Poems of the War” link Letts and Ridge and their perspective on war. These poems focus on

individual moments of lasting significance, within a community on the initial call to arms and on the battlefield in the act of desertion. These events also highlight gendered and generational tensions that sharpened and crystallised the longer the fighting continued.

In one transnational interchange, both Letts and Ridge poets use the powerful image of a marching parade to make political statements about conflict and war. Using an image of a cheery procession, Letts, in the widely anthologized "The Call To Arms In Our Street", which was first published in the *Spectator* in 1914, foregrounds the civilian experience of war, as women witness their men marching off to the war. The poem opens with a wife who "sobs her heart out, / With her head against the door" (9). The poem presents the effect on a mother "who stands watching / For the last look of her son" and a widow who watches her son "And he her only one" leave for the front (10). These reactions are in sharp contrast to the response of a young girl "who stands laughing, / For she thinks a war is grand" (10). Neither she, nor the children running alongside the parade, understand the devastation that war will bring. In "The Call To Arms In Our Street" Letts' use of rhythm imitates the footfall of the men and the repetition in each verse of "beat, drums, beat," simulates the heartbeats of the spectators, expressing civilian emotion. In each of the four verses Letts skilfully deploys the memorable image of the parade, reinforcing its positive energy through syntactical repetition - "blow, trumpets, blow" (9-10).

Using similar imagery to Letts, but with a darker tone, Ridge's parade through the New York ghetto has "drums rattling like curses in red roaring / mouths . . . / And torches spluttering silver fire" (10). Daniel Tobin argues that *The Ghetto and Other Poems* is "a mural [which] depicts scene after scene until within the wider prospect of the entire structure each individual portrayal gains in significance and intensity" (2004: 73). The scene of the marching parade in the third verse part of "The Ghetto" is one exemplar of Tobin's argument in which this seemingly innocuous event within the ghetto connections with Jewish history of persecution and presages the future destruction for this community in the Holocaust of the Second World War. This scene takes place in the third of the nine verse parts of "The Ghetto" opens with "The sturdy Ghetto children" running alongside a marching parade:

Waving their toy flags,
Prancing to the bugles,
lusty unafraid (10).

Ridge's procession takes place at night and is personified as female: "Wrapped in her darkness like a shawl" (9). The children who are "shaking little fire sticks / at the night" are a product of the Jewish history of forced mass emigration from Eastern Europe to New York City (9). Later in the last section of the same verse part, the opening five lines are repeated, but now are explicitly linked to war:

But I see a white frock
And eyes like hooded lights
Out of the shadow of pogroms
Watching . . . watching . . . (10-11)

Originating from the Russian word meaning to wreak havoc, to demolish violently, pogrom had come to refer to violent attacks by local non-Jewish populations on Jews in the Russian Empire at the end of the nineteenth century. According to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in 1917, in the civil war which followed the Bolshevik Revolution, Ukrainian nationalists, Polish officials, and Russian Red Army soldiers engaged in pogroms, killing tens of thousands of Jews. While the precise number of Jews who died in pogroms is unknown, Oleg Budnitskii posits that in the two years between 1918 and 1920 "literature on the subject places the total number of victims anywhere in the range of 50,000 to 200,000 killed or mortally wounded" Jews who were killed or fatally wounded as a result of pogroms (2012: 1). The ensuing mass emigration to the United States was in the pursuit of opportunities: "one common thread among these [Jewish] immigrants, however, is that they came to the United States to escape persecution of one variety or another: pogroms, forced conscription, poverty, and racial laws that restricted intellectual and financial advancement" (Berke, 1999: 70). The innocent responses of the children in the New York ghetto are similar to those who run alongside Letts' war parade. These children, in contrast to their parents, not having a remembered experience of the terror of war, are happily and innocently running alongside these processions. In this third verse part of "The Ghetto" Ridge evokes the recurrent historical cycles of warfare and portends the future devastation which would be wrought on the Jewish community in the Holocaust.

As exemplars of a lost women's tradition of First World War poetry, Letts and Ridge, using analogous imagery, vividly portray a moment of profound significance within a community. In the third verse part of "The Ghetto" and "The Call To Arms In Our Street" Ridge and Letts foreground the innocent victims of war by focusing on a march into conflict. Walt Whitman in "Drum-Taps" deploys similar imagery to capture the initial, male excitement at the prospect of conflict:

> From the houses then and the workshops, and through all the
> doorways,
> Leapt they tumultuous, and lo! Manhattan arming.
>
> To the drum-taps prompt,
> The young men falling in and arming; (Whitman, 1865b: 6)

However, Letts and Ridge move beyond Whitman to embrace the pervasiveness of war and provide more nuanced insights and perspectives into these pivotal moments in a world at war. Letts and Ridge capture and display contradictory gendered and generational views of the conflict, men who collectively appear to be happily marching in parade to conflict in a context in which, perhaps caught in the jovial mood of their marching comrades, their individual perceptions are masked. In contrast with other members of their communities are their wives and mothers, who know this will inevitably end in tragedy and young women and children who are, as yet, ignorant of the tragedy of war.

In "Poems of the War" Letts repurposes traditional poetic forms and genres to express her dissatisfaction with, and objection to, the unnecessary suffering, loss of life and the needless prolongation of the war. Ridge, in a vastly different milieu, expresses similar concerns, while making it clear who she believes is culpable. Ridge is unequivocal that old men are responsible for the mismanagement of the conflict. Her concern with the toxic power and influence of the older male generation and the generational tension between the "war" generation and the "old men" who sanctioned the war reflects the imprint of a modern consciousness, which was accelerated by the trauma and conflict of the First World War. Like Letts, Ridge too looks back into history to reveal unremitting cycles of violence in which the younger generation bears the brunt of the impact of the foolhardy decisions and the senseless

pride of old men. Similar concerns are reflected in H.D.'s "The Tribute", published in 1916, which is discussed in the next chapter.

There are four references to old men in "The Ghetto". They are introduced in the sixth verse part and presented as isolated from the rest of the community: "The old men sit muffled in woollens" huddled together in interior and dark spaces, who "Pass around old thoughts, dry as snuff / And there is no divergence, and no friction" (17; 18). Despite being described as "Ridiculous yet terrible" these old men wield power within their immigrant community (18). Paradoxically, these old men foreshadow T.S. Eliot's anti-Semitic character of "Gerontion" (1920), who embodies, according to Walter Strauss, Eliot's "ugly clichés that grew out of the racist form of anti-Semitism, creating stereotypes of Jews as subhuman" (1997: 36):

> My house is a decayed house,
> And the Jew squats on the window-sill, the owner,
> Spawned in some estaminet of Antwerp,
> Blistered in Brussels, patched and peeled in London. (Eliot, 1920: 15)

In Ridge's New York ghetto, in their "dingy café", old men reject what they perceive as external interference, particularly that emanating from the younger generation, preferring instead to remain in a space in which "Young life and young thought are alike barred" (17). Rejecting change, these old men resent the intrusion of:

> The insolent, young, enthusiastic, undiscriminating Committee,
> Who would placard tombstones
> And scatter leaflets even in graves,
> Comes trampling with sacrilegious feet! (18)

This repudiation of the younger generation has historical antecedents reflected in the reference to how old men "cursed Acosta" (19). According to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Acosta was a controversial young man within Judaism who centuries before had challenged the prevailing Rabbinic laws by advocating a faith based on natural law and reason. Excommunicated from the Jewish faith, he later committed suicide and became a martyr and a symbol for the intolerance of old and still powerful men in the Jewish community.

The connection between the sacrifice, martyrdom and torment of young men at the hands of old men is apparent in the poem "The Fire", which directly addresses heightened inter-generational tensions during wartime. It is another transnational connection between Letts and Ridge which articulates the cruelty of warfare by focusing on a tragic and poignant act: desertion from the battlefield.

Abruptly the First World War intrudes into Ridge's immersive and intimate portrayal of life in Hester Street, which was, according to the 1911 Census, the most densely populated street in America. In "The Fire" Ridge examines latent tensions exacerbated during the First World War. Baldick posits that while inter-generational tension is not a new phenomenon, "it quite suddenly assumes a central importance in literature at the time of the Great War"; the First World War was "an unforgiveable act of ritual filicide for which the Old Men as a whole stood condemned" (2004: 45). On 18 May 1917, six weeks after America entered the war, the United States Congress passed the Selective Services Act, which required all males in the United States between the ages of twenty-one and thirty to register for military service. In "The Fire" Ridge explicitly calls out those whom she believes are responsible for the war: "The old men of the world have made a fire / To warm their trembling hands" (89). In this three-stanza free-verse poem with diction evocative of the language of the bible, Ridge explores problematic intergenerational relationships, and is unrelenting in her criticism of the "old men" whom she deems accountable for sending young men to the war. Ridge equates war with the eternal fires of hell into which these elders "poke the young men" (89). These same old men then condemn the young men when they can no longer cope with the trauma of the battlefield: "If one run a little way, / The old men are wrath" (89). In a biblical allusion the binding of the caught deserter is suggestive of a sacrificial victim as the old men condemn him to the endless flames of war: "They catch him and bind him and throw him / again to the flames" (89). The vocabulary of "wrath" and "thereof" is indicative of Ridge's awareness of the power of biblical language to animate her poetry. She would again use inversion and return to archaic forms in *Firehead* (1929). This technique was also employed by other contemporaneous Modernist poets and friends of Ridge's, including Edna St. Vincent Millay and Hart Crane (Svoboda, 2015: 263). Ridge, by likening the young soldiers to "Green withes", young twigs from the willow tree, which "burn slow ..." , allied to the deployment of ellipsis, viscerally

demonstrates the young soldiers' prolonged and excruciating suffering. The repetition of the line "Green withes burn slow …" underscores the suffering of young men are dying in the battlefield while "the old men of the world sit round the fire / And rub their hands" (89). Here, Ridge is also demonstrating an awareness of the global dimensions of the First World War. Twice Ridge refers to the "smoke of the young men's torment" each reference stressing the cosmic and eternal impact of the ordeal of war. The poem ends:

> But the smoke of the young men's torment
> Ascends up for ever and ever. (89)

In "The Deserter" Letts too examines the issue of battlefield desertion. Written as a single stanza in iambic tetrameter the poem recounts the harrowing story of an anonymous soldier's desertion from the fields of war. The taut structure compels reading as a single unit, ensnaring the reader who, like the soldier, cannot escape the inevitably tragic outcome of the poem. Mimicking the beat of a nursery rhyme and starting with "There was a man", the reader is immediately drawn into the promise of a fairytale which also extends the reach of the poem as a universal story (30). This expectation is suddenly subverted in the ensuing lines:

> Whom Fear had dogged by night and day.
> He could not face the German guns
> And so he turned and ran away. (30)

The heartbreak of the soldier's desertion is movingly captured, and empathy is heightened by the descriptions of the young soldier who is compared with "any frightened child" and likened to "a hare with eyes as wild" (30). The tension is intensified as the poem progresses by relying on repeated sounds to convey the pounding of the deserter's heart and on recurrent words to reiterate the poignancy of the act. The isolation of the blindfolded deserter and the cruelty of the collective and official army response are exquisitely portrayed in the description of the soldier's execution by his fellow countrymen:

> An English bullet in his heart,
> An English bullet in his heart! (31)

At the end of the "The Deserter", the focus returns to the home front, where the soldier's proud mother is completely oblivious of his actions: she "thinks he fought and fell / A hero, foremost in the strife" (31). The final lines emphasize the speaker's sympathy with the mother and the cruelty of war: "O well for her she does not know / He lies in a deserter's grave" (31). The alignment of "gave" with the final word of the poem, "grave", links the image of a mother giving her son to war with the image of his demise, underscoring the inevitability of death.

In "The Deserter" Letts continues the theme of challenging the efficacy of war with a political reference to its prolongation, as this act of desertion is not a spur of the moment decision but the desperate act of a soldier whom "fear had dogged by night and day" (30). By anonymising the soldier, "don't mind his name", writing in the second person, and using the present tense, Letts adopts a non-judgemental approach, drawing the reader into the action of the poem to engage with the personal tragedy and politics of "The Deserter" (30). The use of a rhetorical question, "But who can judge him, you or I?", warns the reader and the speaker not to judge this act of desertion or the deserter too harshly (30).

In "The Deserter" Letts makes the personal and individual act of desertion collective and political. Letts raises an issue, still controversial today, regarding the treatment of British deserters during the First World War. According to Fran Brearton and Alan Gillis, "over three hundred British soldiers were executed during the war for "desertion or cowardice"" (2021: 75). John Sweeney points out that "eight decades on from the end of the First World War, the 306 British soldiers shot for desertion are still dishonoured, still shamed, still the subject of the official disapproval of Her Majesty's Government" (1999). Unusually for writing of that time, Letts brings the battlefront to the home front by focusing on the soldier's mother, who remains proud of her son's service to his country, in total ignorance of the manner of his death.

The humanity and empathy of Letts' wartime poetry are clear, albeit that her motivations for writing "The Deserter" are unknown. Perhaps her wartime experience, allied to her sense of right and wrong, may have influenced its composition. Aligning "The Deserter" with Mrs. C. Oliver Dobell's "The Tribunal", H. Gustav Klaus poses the question, "is it an accident that the two strongest pleas for

letting men opt out of the war come from women poets?" (1991: 113). Full recognition for Letts' courage in raising the difficult and controversial issue of desertion while the First World War has not yet been achieved.

In "The Fire" and "The Deserter" repetition is used particularly effectively by Ridge and Letts and underscores the recurring cycle of warfare. In these poems each poet deploys the reiteration of words and images as a strategic, subversive and political, device. This strategy also stresses the trauma and loss of war as a collective and universal phenomenon. Each poet, by focusing on the common act of desertion, brings to the fore an act which the propaganda of the war sought to keep hidden and, in this way, presents an alternative view of the devastation of war. In addition to shedding light on the less "heroic" side of the war these poems also help in generating and directing attention to the exacerbated intergenerational tensions of the war years. These concerns place Ridge and Letts at the forefront of a generation of poets which, according to Vincent Sherry, has "authored in words a war its old men have not fought in body" (2005: 126). Each poet highlights the mental anguish and terror of battle and raises controversial questions regarding the efficacy of war by pondering whether the deserting soldier should be considered a casualty, coward, or victim of war.

Generational differences are also reflected in the radical social, cultural and artistic changes taking place in this period in Europe and America. Cynicism directed towards the older generation of men, who propelled nations into the First World War and through their pride and ineptitude prolonged the conflict, was a significant factor in an increasing demand for art and literature that was honest, clear, direct, less ornate and devoid of the pomposity and empty rhetoric of previous traditions of war poetry. These tensions became increasingly visible in the poetry of combatants, non-combatants and civilians as the First World War continued. Letts' and Ridge's concerns are reflected in the work of contemporaneous poets who adopted varying strategies to express their dissatisfaction with the older generation. Baldick posits that soldiers who had experienced the horrors of the front line "returned from the trenches with a hardened contempt for the bankrupt ideals of their elders" (2004: 10). The mature trench lyric of Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon and the biting irony and sarcasm of Osbert Sitwell reflect the diversity of response from the soldier poets.

For Sassoon, the "old men" are the military leaders who managed to avoid being sent to the frontline. "Base Details", written in Rouen in 1917, features an Army major who represents the British military leadership. In this tightly structured monologue, the use of a regular end rhyme scheme pointedly paints an unflattering and scathing picture of senior military authority encapsulated in this childlike and "petulant" figure (25).

"Base Details" employs similar tropes and raises analogous concerns to those raised by Letts' in "Casualty", that of reading the roll of honour, which comprises the names of the war-dead. Sassoon's Major denies respect to the dead soldier by not using his name, referring to him instead as the "poor young chap" whose father is known to the Major (25). The reference to the war as a "scrap" echoes Letts' "What Reward?" in which the young soldiers are compared to the "flotsam of battle" (23). "Flotsam" in *The Ghetto and Other Poems* highlights the plight of native and immigrant homeless who were forced to sleep on city benches due to the American economic depression of 1910. In this sense, Ridge displays similar sentiments to Letts and Sassoon in referring to people whose lives are considered of little value. In "Base Details" the use of onomatopoeia, as in "guzzling and gulping", accentuates the unhealthy appearance and demeanour of the senior military leader who is also infantilized with words like "toddle" and "petulant" (25). The vivid use of contrast in the final rhyming couplet in "Base Details" also highlights the vastly differing war experiences of the infantry and the military leadership in the First World War. Sassoon's young soldier, "youth stone dead" in the battlefield, is sharply contrasted with the major "at the Base", staying "at the best hotel" who will amble "safely home and die - in bed" (25). This final couplet also expresses contempt for the machine of the First World War in which the aged and senior officers are protected from active duty while they condemn the younger generation to almost certain death on these fields.

Like Ridge, Sitwell in "The Eternal Club" (1918), uses the metaphor of a fire for the First World War, around which the old men gather to warm themselves and express their dissatisfaction with young men who are not prepared to submissively accept their premature deaths:

Warming their withered hands, the dotards say:
"In our youth men were happy till they died.
What is it ails the young man of to-day -
To make them bitter and dissatisfied?" (110)

The figures of the "dotards" with "withered hands" in Sitwell's "Eternal Club" resemble Ridge's jealous old men who resent the physical strength of the young men of the ghetto, their "blood, high powered, / Leaping in flexible arteries" (1918: 18). Similarly, the aged men in Sitwell's "Armchair" (1917) who "govern men / By making speeches with my toothless jaws" send their "sons, if old enough" and "grandsons out to France" and congratulate each other on their own longevity while they "sacrifice each other's sons each day" to war resonate with Ridge's old menfolk who "Pass around old thoughts, as draft as snuff" in a "dingy café" (1917: 117; 1918: 17). While their specific targets vary - Sassoon concentrates on the elderly military leaders, the focus of Sitwell's ire is aged male politicians, and both Letts and Ridge blame the older male generations for the current war and conflict throughout history - each poet connects the fact of and the apparent endlessness of the First World War to the elder male generation.

In contrast with Letts' more conventional poetic form, underpinning Ridge's journey through the streets of an urban immigrant ghetto and her commentary on and response to modern life in the second decade of the twentieth century is her use of innovative poetic techniques. According to Louis Untermeyer, "the city dominates her [Ridge's] book: but the whole industrial world surges beneath it" (1919b: 347). In *The Ghetto and Other* Poems, aside from "The Fire", which is centrally concerned with war, the fire image is employed variously in the collection to interrogate various other aspects of war. Fire is used with reference to the Irish Rebellion in "The Tidings". During the First World War the movement for Irish independence took a significant step forward, "driven largely by the British authorities' disproportionate response to the 1916 Easter Rising" (Das, 2013: 160). This rebellion occurred against the backdrop of a long history of British rule in Ireland. On Easter Monday 1916, a group of Irish nationalists, in an attempt to establish an Irish Republic, staged a rebellion against the occupying British government. Within a week, martial law had been declared in Ireland, and the short-lived rebellion was supressed. Soon

thereafter the leaders of this rebellion, were executed by firing squad. This act increased public resentment and was a major factor in the subsequent events which established the Irish Free State in 1922. “The Tidings” explicitly refers to this significant post-colonial conflict which took place in Ridge’s birthplace and within the meta conflict of the First World War. Ridge uses fire to highlight the impact of war on the innocent in “The Ghetto” as children innocently run beside a parade into conflict “shaking little fire sticks” (9). Ridge also uses fire to express views on the intensified industrialisation which was itself a response to the extreme demands for resources in the form of equipment and materials during the war.

These influences and connections are apparent in “Fuel”, “The Song of Iron” and “The Legion of Iron” in the third long poem, “Labor”, in *The Ghetto and Other Poems*. In the three verse “Fuel” Ridge echoes Letts’ concerns in “What Reward?” and “Casualty”, that of the general public becoming inured to the tragedy of war: “(Ten million men are called to die)” (61). Placing this statement in brackets, as an almost incidental aside, underscores the significance of the message. This also demonstrates Ridge’s wider political concern with world events, as the line in parenthesis refers to the Jiangsu-Anhui flood of 1911. It reveals Ridge’s concerns with and sensitivity to the connectedness of world systems outside of her own cultural context. This flood caused widespread famine in China, exacerbated by the Xinhai Revolution, which would topple the Qing dynasty in early 1912, two years prior to the outbreak of the First World War. In these two events, millions of people perished. Multiple losses occlude the profundity of a single death, highlighting another tragic consequence of war, that an entire society becomes increasingly desensitized to the horror of warfare.

In “The Song of Iron” and “The Legion of Iron” Ridge forges links between industrialization and the First World War. The location for both poems may be the Brooklyn Navy Yard, located across the East River from Manhattan, and close to the ghetto. In this Navy Yard the workforce tripled to 18,000 within a year of America’s entry into the First World War. By the end of 1918 it is estimated that the United States government invested $40m, the equivalent of almost $700m today, in the expansion of this facility (Koppel, 1918). The centrality of New York to America’s contribution to the First World War is apparent in a proclamation made by the

Governor of New York, Charles Whitman, on 6 April 1918, urging New Yorkers to purchase liberty bonds in support of the war effort:

> New York's pride is in the pride of things done. Her leadership is no more due to her great wealth or her large population than to the patriotism of her citizens and the uses to which her wealth is put. In every war in which this country has engaged, she has shown a spirit of sacrifice that has made her preeminent among the States. In this war, New York has outdone her own history. (Whitman, 1918)

This statement, made on the first anniversary of American entry into the First World War, indicates the reliance placed on the city of New York to support the American war effort. Aaron Noble, Keith Swaney and Vicki Weiss posit that in this appeal, "the Empire State once again led all others [States] in the number of men, the amount of money, and the tonnage of materials supplied to American forces during World War 1" (2017: xv). The New York State Archives records that:

> New York was a center for mobilization of troops and materiel [sic]. In an era that lacked an interstate highway system, convoys of supplies and equipment traveled on State roads and railways, and the Port of New York was a major point for overseas embarkation. State industries built ships and munitions; they held the largest number of defense contracts of any state during the war. (1993: 5)

Perhaps because of such significant investment in the First World War, in "The Song of Iron" Ridge, by using strong and active verbs allied with some nonce words, adds intensity and charge to emphasize the potentially destructive force of these new machines:

> Mighty converters torn from their axis,
> Flung to the furnaces, vomiting fire,
> Jumbled in the white-heaten masses disshapen . . .
> Writhing in flame-tortured levers of iron . . . (53)

In "The Legion of Iron", Ridge aligns this increasing industrialisation with war by evoking the principal unit of a Roman army to describe men passing "through the great iron gates" going to work in the factory (59). Ridge's army of men are "Silent of purpose inflexible, set to fulfilment - / To conquer, to withstand, overthrow ..."

(59). In “The Legion of Iron” Ridge’s views on the futility and human cost of war are couched in industrial language and imagery. Returning to the theme of “The Fire” the poet-speaker wonders what would happen in war if the men in charge “Who hold the earth so careless in the crook of their arms?”, “stood aside” and “The armies halted ...” with “idle men chaffing across the trenches” (59). With these observations Ridge is making a political connection between the callousness of capitalists gaining financially from the war, and other powerful men making decisions about leading their nations into war and industrialisation.

In their collections Letts and Ridge draw on classical models and archetypes. In the first verse part of “The Ghetto” Ridge invokes the “Brood of those ancient mothers who saw the dawn / break over Egypt . . .” (4). Pagan traditions and Christian tropes infuse *The Spires of Oxford and Other Poems*. Both poets share this syncretism with other Modernist writers alluding to ancient history and mythology to help make sense of their traumatic and fragmented present (Mambrol, 2016). They also share this propensity with H.D. and Wingfield in *Trilogy* and *Beat Drum, Beat Heart,* written in the period of the Second World War. Given the turbulent background against which Letts’ and Ridge’s poetry was written, it is likely that these allusions to ancient cultures are deliberate choices, indicating each poet’s awareness of the repeating cycles of violence and warfare and of the historical significance of the moment in their poetic testimonies of life and war on both sides of the Atlantic. The final verse part of “The Ghetto”, which starts a new day in the ghetto, celebrates life, when “A sallow dawn is in the sky” (23). The pulse of life in the ghetto is captured and emphasized in italics in the final lines (italics in the original):

> *Bartering, changing, extorting,*
> *Dreaming, debating, aspiring,*
> *Astounding, indestructible*
> *Life of the Ghetto . . .*
>
> *Strong flux of life,*
> *Like a bitter wine*
> *Out of the bloody stills of the world . . .*
> *Out of the passion eternal*. (26)

This endorsement and future orientation are indicative of the potential for a positive future; however, Ridge and Letts demonstrate in *The Ghetto and Other Poems* and *The Spires of Oxford and Other Poems* an acute awareness that this possible future is fragile as the cycles of warfare throughout history are constantly repeated. In this sense, Letts and Ridge join those poets who helped to reshape the valid subject matter of war poetry by altering the perception of war itself. Their perspectives recognise the past antecedents to the current conflict, allied with contemporaneous social and cultural paradigm shifts occurring during the First World War itself.

The home front - private loss as public protest

Minogue and Palmer posit that "all poets living through the First World War, whether combatant or not, were faced with the task of representing experiences which were so far from normality that they must have sometimes seemed to defy representation" (2018: 19). Letts specifically examines the civilian impact of the First World War in the middle section of *The Spires of Oxford and Other Poems*. This section, entitled "Ad Mortuum", translates as "To Death". In this sequence of poems, the latent subversive potential of Letts' poetry becomes apparent in her treatment of female grief, mourning and remembrance.

"Ad Mortuum" has its own dedication which explicitly raises and addresses the courage of the non-combatants; mothers, lovers, sweethearts, sisters and wives, who suffer heartbreak and loss when their loved ones are killed and injured in the front lines of the First World War. In this short rondeau, which has its roots in French lyrical poetry, Letts explicitly makes gender dynamics a primary concern of this middle section of her collection by praising the courage and acknowledging the "*great sorrow*" of women whose grief and loss is rendered almost invisible, occluded by the heroic sacrifices of their men (italics in the original):

> *For England's sake men give their lives*
> *And we cry "Brave."*
> *But braver yet*
> *The hearts that break and live*
> *Having no more to give,*

Mothers, sweethearts and wives.
Let none forget
Or with averted head
Pass this great sorrow by -
Those would how thankfully be dead
Yet may not die. (34)

In "Ad Mortuum" Letts repurposes traditional poetic genres and forms to make visible the invasion of the First World War into the home front. The elegy is an extremely versatile phenomenon and has the potential to cross and transcend national boundaries. Ramazani posits that "reading poems as elegies … you necessarily place them within a cross-nationally comparative framework" (2009a: 72). The global nature and reach of the First World War unified all those, regardless of their nationality, mourning their dead. Carole Stone argues that the elegy provides women with a socially acceptable form of expressing their rage, "since their anger is read as a stage of grief" (1991: 85). The elegy can thus connect people across political and geographical borders, binding them together into an imagined community, sharing with others the grief of the loss of their loved ones. Letts' interest in elegy also connects her with Whitman. Ramazani argues for the subversive potential of this traditional poetic genre: "elegies show mourning to be destabilizing and transfigurative … exemplary of the power of grief to make and unmake the world" (2009a: 85). The deeply personal nature of the elegy is a powerful private expression of public identity. In lamenting those lost in wartime, the elegy is also a robust reminder and reinforcement of collective national identity. The latent transformative, unsettling and connective potential of the elegy is explored by Letts in this sequence of poems. These combined attributes of the elegy also reveal its liberating potential. Letts capitalizes on this possibility in "Ad Mortuum". In this middle section of *The Spires of Oxford and Other Poems* Letts demonstrates mastery of the elegy as a genre for civilian war verse which foregrounds the suffering of women who have lost their loved ones. Letts modifies the conventions of elegy to interrogate subtly social and political norms, and to protest the war. In this fourteen-poem sequence, Letts produces a politically charged form of female-authored elegy in which the woman's voice is the central and driving force. Exploiting the transformative potential of elegy, Letts crafts what Stone calls a "female elegiac poetry" using it is a

means of "political protest … that puts women's voices at the center" (Stone, 1991: 85). Thematically Letts' type of elegy connects women in their universal and shared grief for their war dead.

In "Ad Mortuum" all the poems are written in sonnet form and ordered in a sequence that follows the stages of grief - denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance - which, over half a century later, would be formalized into a model of grieving by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross (Kubler-Ross and Kessler, 2014). Letts also uses the conventions of the elegy as a political tool by her "use of repetitions and refrains, the reiterated questions, the outbreak of vengeful anger or cursing, the procession of mourners, the movement from grief to consolation" (Stone, 1991: 85). From its memorable and highly visual opening, "In misty cerements they wrapped the word / My heart had feared so long: dead … dead …", the first poem "Dead", articulates a woman's numbed horror upon first learning of her lover's death in the war (35). The rhyming couplets of the initial six lines are abandoned in the middle section, as the speaker struggles to comprehend the delivered message. In what Margaret Higonnet describes as the interrogation of "common representation of peace and war as antithesis, and confronting us with their tangled inter-relationships", the woman's disbelief is reinforced as she continues to be immersed in everyday domestic reminders of her dead lover: "Your racquet and a worn-out tennis shoe, / Your pipe upon the mantel" (2013: 193; 1917: 35). The fragmented rhythm, whereby the metre does not follow a regular pattern with persistent deviations and breaks, allied to the use of ellipsis, vividly conveys the woman's chaotic thoughts and numbing disbelief: "dead . . . dead . . . I heard" (35). The reappearance of end rhyme in the final couplet signifies the speaker-poet's return to the present and an awareness of the sharp contrast between her peaceful pastoral surroundings and her emotions: "The tennis court is marked, the wrens are fled, / But you are dead, beloved, you are dead" (35).

In "Your Name" the woman refuses to sanctify or mourn her dead loved one. This sonnet comprises three enclosed quatrains and a rhyming couplet. The consistent use of slant rhyme introduces and sustains discordance, which allied to a careful construction of the introverted quatrains wherein the first and last line of each quatrain rhyme, heightens the poem's intensity. This enclosed rhyming scheme, as in the second quatrain in which "shrine and "mine" and "apart" and "heart" are paired

in close proximity, augments the personal and introspective theme of deep loss (36). Such is the depth of her grief that the woman, figuratively and literally, closes in on herself. “Your Name” opens with a statement of intention and of strength: “When I can dare at last to speak your name / It shall not be with hushed and reverent speech” (36). The final quatrain, in a minor variation of the opening line, continues the subtle note of dissonance, indicating the speaker’s rejection of the predictable and expected social response of putting her loved one on a pedestal:

> Your name, when I dare speak it, dear,
> Shall still be linked with laughter and with joy.
> No solemn panegyrist shall destroy
> My image of you, gay, familiar (36)

The title, “Your Name”, is personal and political. It addresses not only the speaker’s own grief but that of the nameless multitudes of other women who have lost their loved ones in war. The poet-speaker declares her intention to keep her dead loved one close: “Death shall not hide you in some jewelled shrine / Nor set you in marmoreal pomp apart” (36). In the final couplet, the refusal to sanctify her beloved is reinforced: “- lest I discover / Too late I’ve won a saint but lost a lover” (36).

“Loss” reflects a woman’s articulation of the trauma associated with the death of her lover, conjoined with her dawning realisation of a bleak and lonely future. Evocative pastoral scenes, suggestive of Georgian poetic tropes, contrast her inner turmoil with the peaceful domestic context, as every alternate line begins with descriptions of what the woman has lost: “my sun and moon”, the “hope of Spring, the joy of June”, a “zest of living”, “all hope and fear and keen suspense”, the “rainbow’s gold”, and, evoking the other-worldly, “the path to Faerie” (38). This reversion to Georgian pastoral tropes and outmoded poetics reinforces the depth and potency of the loss and underscores the current fragmented and traumatic reality. The final rhyming couplet resists consolation: “I lost the master word, dear love, the clue / That threads the maze of life when I lost you” indicating the all-encompassing profundity of the speaker’s loss (38) .

“If Love Of Mine” moves to the bargaining stage of grief, as the woman wishes her loved one back to life. In each quatrain the woman considers different methods by

which she might magically "witch you back to earth" (41). Having considered offering love and prayer, the poem culminates in a rejection of consolation: "If love of mine could lure you back to me / From the rose gardens of eternity" (41). In a similar vein, the refusal to accept that her loved one is truly gone is the theme of "Alive", which opens "Because you live, though out of sight and reach" (42). This poem focuses on a woman's bravery and commitment to life despite the death of her lover. Each quatrain contains a promise to cherish life: "I will, so help me God, live bravely too", "I will delight my soul with many things" and "I will for your sake praise what I have missed" (42). The final couplet takes a mystical turn by praising death itself, "who gives anew / Brave adventurous and love - and you" (42). In the ethereal sonnet "The Ghost" insight is provided into a newly-bereaved widow's psyche. Such is the depth of this women's grief that she considers herself, like her lover, to be dead. However, she also recognises the importance of maintaining outward appearances: she will "Put on my gay attire, laugh and jest" so that no-one will realise that " … in this careless host / Of revellers, I linger as a ghost" (42). The final sonnet in the "Ad Mortuum" section "The Truce" coincides with the final stage in the grieving process: acceptance. Written like an incantation, there is recognition of the finality of death in the concluding couplet, as the speaker seeks a moment of respite before facing an interminable future alone:

> O grant this truce from pain, this moment's rest,
> Before I brace my soul to further test. (48)

All poems in "Ad Mortuum" are written in the form of the English sonnet. However, the framing function of the concluding couplet of the sonnet is consistently subverted, resisting closure. The final rhyming couplet in each sonnet serves a dual purpose, on one hand reinforcing the enormity of the loss, and on the other hand by rejecting consolation, and combining this rejection with personal affect, the poet crafts a political statement about the civilian impacts of the First World War. In this sequence Letts produces a female-authored home front sonnet which is comparable with male-authored war zone sonnets in its impact on the conventions of the sonnet form. By combining the English and Italian sonnet forms, Rupert Brooke's "The Soldier" (1914) also recognises that in the conflict of the First World War men from different countries are fighting side by side to protect their homelands. Formally and

thematically Letts' and Brooke's poems reflect cross-cultural underpinnings. Formally, too, Owen's "Parable of the Old Man and the Young" (1918) is comparable with Letts' repurposing of the sonnet. The use of a loose iambic pentameter, with no enjambment or rhyme, gives Owen's poem a spasmodic rhythm. Rhythmic irregularities are also suggestive of Abram's moral flaws such as in the second, fourth and tenth lines stressing "knife", "Father" and "Heaven" (42). This arrangement builds up the tension of the action leading to the climatic couplet in which expectations are subverted and closure is resisted.

Stone emphasizes the importance of mourning in creating history, as its victims bear witness to "the tragedies of a people, a nation, a world in which human beings kill each other. In doing so they pass through individual grief to collective grief" (1991: 89). As a unit the sonnet sequence comprising "Ad Mortuum" exquisitely captures and makes visible a female wartime collective in their shared mourning. Letts' sonnet sequence also presages features of Tara Guissin-Stubbs' conception of the modern Irish sonnet as "a place where the public and private merge" (2020: 16). Women's communal grief for their war dead is a symbolic expression and lasting testament of both national and transnational identity, as it unites those who grieve for their war dead, regardless of national or cultural identity.

Letts also adapts a traditional poetic genre to bear witness to the devastation of war on the home front while also demonstrating that grieving crosses temporal and geographical boundaries. The speakers in "Ad Mortuum" are, with one exception, identifiably female. In one sonnet, "The Dream", the point-of-view is male. Like the other sonnets it is infused with otherworldly imagery and recounts the return home of the dead soldier as a ghost. "The Dream" rejects the hypermasculinity of the fearless war hero, presenting a softer reading of the soldier figure, who yearns for the solace of his beloved. The ghost soldier, in a subservient position on his knees before his beloved, seeks comfort "O happiness! to kneel beside you there / And feel your fingers resting on my hair" (39). Even though the point of view is male; in this sonnet the figure of the woman is in a position of power and strength. Collectively, these intensely subjective and individualised perspectives produce a resonant and collective female voice, giving a universality to their grief and intensifying the emotional and traumatic impact of the war. In male-authored elegy, women's

suffering has traditionally been subordinated to "the martyred vocation of the male melancholic cultural hero [in which] the suffering of women is doomed to remain speechless, incoherent or excessive" (Zeiger, 1997: 6). In this sequence Letts gives a voice to the speechless, a coherence to their grief and a demonstration of the depth and profundity of women's losses during war. By torquing the conventional contours of the elegiac thematic arc Letts subverts the traditional resolution of elegies. Letts highlights the unpredictability of mourning, that it is emotional, traumatic and that each person experiences grief differently. As Ramazani argues, "the modern elegist tends not to achieve but resist consolation" (1994: xi). In these poems Letts problematizes mourning by repurposing a traditional poetic genre and thus transforming it into a means to simultaneously mourn the dead and protest the First World War. These poems also fulfil the conditions posited by Stone: they "mediate between the public and the private worlds and thus allow them [her] to express grief for a loved one, an acceptable outlet for a woman, while simultaneously protesting the cause of the loved one's death, in these elegies, the political repression it is less permissible for women to write about" (1991: 86).

In "Ad Mortuum" Letts reclaims a conventional genre to create a female elegy which both protests the war and in which women give first-hand testimony and witness to the emotional and psychological civilian impact of First World War atrocities. Formally too Letts in this sequence repurposes the traditional sonnet form to cross the boundaries of nation-states, regions and cultures. The consistent rejection of consolation underscores the cultural importance of the collection. The necessity of retaining and remembering this kind of poetry is emphasized by Buck who, echoing Ramazani, argues:

> poetry is able [. . .] to play a significant role in the cultural work of mourning because and not despite poets' rejection of consolation. But if the work of mourning is also the work of cultural transmission, then we need to be careful about what disappears. (2010: 432)

This emphasis on rejection of consolation is an essential part of the still unfolding narrative of the World Wars and underscores the importance of raising awareness of Letts' cultural contribution to the canon of First World War poetry.

"Ad Mortuum" could also be considered a feminist enterprise, as Letts places the female perspective as the central impetus and drive in each poem. By positioning the sonnet sequence in the domestic realm, Letts also demonstrates how this space can operate as "a microcosm for larger questions about the human condition … here everyday places act as a springboard for broader musings" (Guissin-Stubbs, 2020: 17). In this section of *The Spires of Oxford and Other Poems* Letts leverages private places to pose larger and public questions about a world at war. These insights demonstrate Letts' awareness that, during the First World War, women, regardless of their ethnicity, nationality or social position, share the devastating experience of death and loss of their loved ones in battle. There is also a recognition of the importance of mourning to making the holistic impact of war apparent. In this sequence Letts also produces "transnational" elegies in the sense envisaged by Ramazani which "suggest other ways of mourning death than within physical barriers and conceptual lines patrolled by militaries and enforced by violence" (2009a: 93). This sequence demonstrates that grief cannot be contained within the boundaries of the private sphere and rejects appeasing others by rendering female grief almost invisible and therefore socially and personally inconsequential.

By aligning a woman's private sorrow with the collective grief of all women who mourn their war dead Letts succeeds in making a powerful political and universal statement protesting the war. Such is the dissident potential of "Ad Mortuum" that its strength of conviction and intensity of war protest has not yet been fully recognised. Letts' most widely anthologized poems to date are drawn from the first section of the collection. It is conceivable that the seemingly straightforward connection between combat and the "Poems of the War" was considered by editors to hold a greater public appeal than the rest of the collection. However, despite this imbalance with regard to treatment in anthologies, some contemporaneous reviewers single out the "To Death" section in the collection. Norreys Jephson O'Conor observes that

> the fourteen sonnets comprising the sequence "Ad Mortuum" are Miss Letts' most notable achievement, and I should not be surprised were they to attain a permanent place in sonnet literature. (1919: 216)

Perhaps the thematic subtleties and formal nuances of the "Ad Mortuum" section of *The Spires of Oxford and Other Poems*, allied to their raising the uncomfortable and unpopular matter of the increasing multitudes of deaths as the First World War progressed, conspired to occlude their underlying message. Widespread acknowledgement and recognition of Letts' "permanent place in sonnet literature" remains elusive and this thesis seeks to contribute to this endeavour.

Landscapes and locations - reconsidering place, space and belonging in a World War

Baldick proposes that "the meanings of the [First World] War changed over time" (2004: 331). These changes and uncertainties are reflected in Letts' and Ridge's sensitivity to their surroundings, which demonstrates their consciousness of living at a moment when the outcome of the war is unclear and the future indeterminate. Both collections were published when historical certainties and social norms were in a state of flux and the First World War was affecting a "catastrophic shift in human relations" (Baldick, 2004: 10). The landscapes in their poetry are sites in which the concepts of familiarity and estrangement are explored at a time when the fragility of life is all too apparent. These settings also provide insights into the kinds of relationships Letts and Ridge had with their wartime communities. Their sensitive and insightful depictions and representations of disparate and assorted wartime landscapes also reflect Ridge's and Letts' personal affinities with and affiliations to their chosen communities, demonstrating a type of "organic" transnationalism in their wartime poetry.

The landscape of Letts' poetry is predominantly that of the English countryside. In *The Spires of Oxford and Other Poems* Letts adopts a holistic view of the impact of the First World War. She also recognises that, in times of war, the landscapes of home assume a greater importance in the hearts and minds of the displaced and homesick soldiers fighting for the preservation of their homeland. David Goldie posits that "the tension between nostalgia for a remembered domestic countryside and the realities of the ruined, almost denatured landscapes of France and Flanders is a common one in the British poetry of the First World War" (2013: 170). Letts in common, with other British war poets, writes in *The Spires of Oxford and Other*

Poems "in defence of their landscape" (Goldie, 2013: 170). The sense of Englishness is reflected in the choice of Oxford in the title and the primacy of "The Spires of Oxford" within the second edition of Letts' collection.

In 1867, in "Thyrsis", Matthew Arnold had described Oxford as "that sweet city with her dreaming spires" (74). The choice of Oxford and its relationship to quintessential Englishness in the title of the second edition of Letts' collection cannot be accidental. By vividly contrasting "The grey spires of Oxford / Against a pearl-grey sky";

> … the peaceful river,
> The cricket field, the quad,
> The shaven lawns of Oxford

with the "bloody sod" of a foreign battlefield, to which these young men "gave their merry youth away / For country and for God", Letts dramatizes and intensifies the human tragedy of war (3). These images of Oxford are consistent with classic tropes of pre-war Georgian poetry. Letts also adopts a traditional form, the metrical pattern of the ballad. The rhyme scheme and iambic meter enhances the musicality, producing a "sing-song" rhythm, which continues the pattern of enhancing the memorability of the poem. There are some notable resemblances between "The Spires of Oxford" and a Christmas carol believed to have originated in the Middle Ages: "God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen". In addition to the line "God rest you, happy gentlemen", other comparisons include the uniformity of the verses, the predominance of the AB rhyme and hymnal qualities. Khan (1986) posits that the similarity between the "Spires of Oxford" and "God Rest You Merry Gentlemen" may also help explain the popular appeal of the poem.

The ballad form of "The Spires of Oxford" gives the poem a narrative quality which is used to recount the story of the young scholars' journeys from Oxford to the battlefields of the First World War. Letts, however, continues to subvert classic poetic conventions to introduce and sustain an ominous tone. Comprising four sexains, the even numbered lines share a similar end-rhyme: in the first stanza "by", "sky" and "die" are linked, and in the third stanza "quad", "sod" and "God" are connected, revealing an underlying thematic dissonance and sense of impending

danger (3). The tranquility of Oxford gradually fades as the poem progresses. Letts' juxtaposition of pre-war landscapes with the wartime battlefield displays a recognition of the need to move beyond the Georgian pre-war idyll to the harsh realities of the First World War. The speaker mourns the lost potential and innocence of those young "Oxford men" who eagerly responded to the call to war "But when the bugles sounded - War! / They put their games away" (3). By positioning the tranquility of Oxford against the frenetic activity of the battlefields, Letts heightens the poignancy of these young men's lives cut prematurely short, who "laid your good lives down", in a war fought in foreign landscapes far from the security of their homeland (3).

The subtitle of "The Spires of Oxford", "seen from a train", has gendered and time-based connotations. This caption sets up the themes of transience and of time quickly passing as Letts gradually injects unease by juxtaposing peaceful images of Oxford with images of the war-torn battlefront. Anne Varty argues that the subtitle positions the speaker outside the colleges and emphasizes "women's role as spectators, excluded from the university as from the front" (2017: 41). It may also be a comment on the ambiguous role of the VAD compared with the position of the nurse in the wartime hospitals.

Within "Poems of the War" and referring to the bloody Battle of the Somme, "July, 1916" opens in praise of the English landscape:

> Here in happy England the fields are steeped in quiet,
> Saving for the larks' song and drone of bumble bees; (27)

and contrasts, in the second stanza, the peacefulness of the domestic English countryside with the foreign battlefield. The first of July 1916 was the date on which the Battle of the Somme commenced, and the poem was presumably written not long after these events. While, according to Brian Murdoch, "the numbers of deaths [in the Battle of the Somme], were not immediately made clear in the home press" (2009: 48), in "July, 1916", possibly arising from her wartime VAD experience, Letts is acknowledging and displaying an awareness of the scale of the tragedy.

In the second verse, a claim is made regarding the primacy of the soldier's native landscape. Returning to a theme in "Casualty", Letts refers to the official decision to leave the bodies of the fallen soldiers on foreign soil:

> But over there, in France, the grass is torn and trodden,
> *Our* pastures grow moon daisies, but *theirs* are
> strewn with lead.
> The fertile, kindly fields are harassed and blood-sodden,
> The sheaves they bear for harvesting will be our
> garnered dead. (27)

Using a similar pattern to "To a Soldier in Hospital" and "What Reward?" of indenting the alternate lines, Letts ensures the strong rhyme stands out and arrests the reader's attention. By aligning "trodden" and "sodden"; and "lead" with "dead" there is a persistent connection between the landscape of war and the tragedy of multiple corpses left to inseminate foreign soil (27). The final lines praise the courage of "the lads of England, in peril of advancing, / Have laid their splendid lives down, ungrudging of the cost" who, by dying in an alien landscape, have defended their homeland:

> Who kept for us our England, inviolate, defended,
> But by their passing made for us December of
> July? (28)

This ending reinforces the date and time, which is linked to the idea of an uncertain future by the rhetorical question, a device deployed throughout Letts' collection.

In "The Spires of Oxford" and "July, 1916" Letts links patriotism with the domestic English landscape. Brooke's "The Soldier", written when enthusiasm and confidence in an early victory were high, makes a similar connection. In his poem Brooke imagines his corpse lying in "some corner of a foreign field / That is forever England" (1914: 21). According to Ramazani Brooke "imagines his dead body as marking a real estate claim on behalf of the nation" (2009a: 73). Letts' "July, 1916" speaks back to "The Soldier" by referencing the 72,000 soldiers from Britain and the Commonwealth who died in the Battle of the Somme: with no known graves, their decayed bodies are left to fertilize French pastures. Both poems are also exemplars

of the "political uses of mourning in the service of the nation-state" (Ramazani, 2009a: 73). However, Letts moves beyond Brooke's idealization of the heroic death of the soldier protecting his homeland to explore the realities of the tragedy and suffering of the First World War. Here, Letts raises the issue of the "absent presences" of the war dead who were denied the dignity of a grave.

There is another native landscape infusing Letts' collection, that of the country Letts considered home: Ireland. The second edition of Letts' collection deemphasizes the mystical and pagan nature of its original title, *Hallow-e'en and Poems of the War*. Promoting "The Spires of Oxford" from third to first place in the sequence changes the relationship between the first three poems in the collection. The relegation of both "Hallow-e'en, 1915" and "Hallow-e'en, 1914", which concentrate on the pagan, and therefore uncivilised, aspects of the domestic landscape, contrasts sharply with Oxford, which is a proxy for Englishness. It also downplays the importance of the Irish countryside and Irish identity in the collection. The precise reasons for this shift in focus are unknown but it may partly be due to the poor state of the Irish relationship with Britain in this period. In 1914 Ireland was embroiled in a constitutional and political crisis. Months prior to the outbreak of the First World War, the British promise of Irish Home Rule had been thwarted by the Ulster Volunteers. This was key to the later insurrection against British rule in Ireland in 1916. These events and actions aggravated the already tense relationship and may help explain the moderation of Irishness in the second edition of Letts' collection.

The theme of "Hallow-e'en, 1915", like that of "The Spires of Oxford", defends a native countryside. In contrast with the English countryside of "The Spires of Oxford" the scenery in "Hallow-e'en, 1915" is evocative and earthy. The poem opens with an appeal to the ghosts of soldiers who have fallen in foreign lands to return home:

> Will you come back to us, men of our hearts, to-night
> In the misty close of the brief October day?
> Will you leave the alien graves where you sleep and steal away
> To see the gables and eaves of home grow dark in the evening light? (5)

In keeping with ancient Celtic beliefs that on this night the veil between the living and the dead becomes thin and the dead freely walk among the living there is a sense of homecoming and welcome for the return of these ghostly apparitions:

> We have no fear of you, silent shadows, who tread
> The leaf-bestrewn paths, the dew-wet lawns. (6)

"Hallow-e'en, 1914", also deals with the theme of the living, waiting to welcome home their loved ones, the spectral dead:

> The candles are lighted, the hearthstones are swept,
> The fires glow red.
> We shall welcome them out of the night -
> Our home-coming dead. (8)

The consistent conformity of the pattern of the rhyme scheme in "Hallow-e'en, 1914" suggests the inevitability of the return of the "home-coming dead" from war in foreign lands. The feast of Halloween has its roots in pagan traditions. The ancient Celts celebrated the festival of Samhain to make the end of summer and harvest season. These connections with mysticism and ancient times may have been considered a less appropriate landscape than Oxford, a quintessential icon of Englishness associated with advanced learning and civilisation, and as such a more acceptable symbol of Britishness at this stage of the First World War. This rearrangement of the first three poems allied to the inclusion of mystical language in poems such as "Loss" (38), "If Love of Mine" (41), and "The Ghost" (47) is also indicative of Letts' complicated sense of home.

"Hallow-e'en, 1914" and "Hallow-e'en, 1915" also comport with Georgian paganism of a kind which is reflected in Brooke's poetry, especially in the period immediately preceding the war in 1908 - 1912, when he was involved with the self-proclaimed "neo-pagans". This poetry features a fundamental and intimate attachment to the domestic countryside. According to Chris Hill:

> like others of his generation, he [Brooke] embraced pastoral, idyllic images of England as a way to capture a beautiful, peaceful, reassuringly unchanging and unchanged image of a nation and landscape that had been rapidly changing because of industrialization. (2012)

The idea that the rural landscape has a mystical and elemental quality which provides an anchor, refuge and hope during times of conflict and change is apparent in Letts' wartime collection.

In sharp contrast with the wartime landscapes of Letts' poetry, across the Atlantic, Ridge chooses an urban milieu, New York, in which to situate her collection, a city which symbolizes liberty and industrial modernity. Ridge's choice of poetic milieu in one of the poorest and most densely populated areas of New York just as America enters the First World War, initially seems unorthodox. Yet as an outsider, Ridge may have considered this community as providing refuge, given her own precarious immigrant status. As an artist and poet this urban ghetto may also have appealed to Ridge's creative impulses and her drive for change. Ridge, as a foreigner, immigrant, rebel and artist, was clearly attracted to and motivated by this cityscape. According to Raymond Williams, the character and composition of the metropolis is one of the main drivers behind formal Modernist innovation: "the most important general elements of the innovations in form is the fact of immigration to the metropolis, and it cannot too often be emphasized how many of the major innovators, were, in this precise sense, immigrants" (1989: 45). This community and context are inextricably linked to Ridge's aesthetic experimentation under the looming shadow of America's involvement in the First World War.

This setting provides a dynamic and vibrant platform from which to explore the complexities of living in wartime, when older and more traditional forms of poetic expression seem unable to cope with the realities of modern life and of war. Using innovative techniques such as the "repetition of words and images that depict visual sensations, Ridge captures the constant stimulation evoked by a stroll through the thoroughfares of the modern metropolis" (Berke, 2010: 39). Tobin argues that Ridge deals directly with life "to get out and make a clearing instead of huddling in mental tenements" (2004: 72). In this clearing Ridge creates a space in which to examine and to portray, in vivid and innovative ways, an immigrant community and multi-cultural relationships soon after the United States entered the First World War.

As an innovator and artist Ridge also anticipates future trends in poetic form. Michele Leggott highlights the Objectivist tendencies in Ridge's poetry in which she

is “anticipating by a decade or so the blend with Leftist politics that produced Objectivist writing in the late 1920s” (2013). Svoboda likewise highlights the “compressed, simple language that could be called proto-objectivist” (2015: 110). Christopher Beach, connecting Ridge’s political views, and her awareness of the “historical situatedness” of her writing with the objectivist tendencies in her poetry, observes that “the goals of the Objectivists overlapped with those of politically radical poets of the 1930s such as Genevieve Taggard, Muriel Rukeyser, Lola Ridge, and John Wheelwright” (2003: 109). “Flotsam”, from the long poem “Manhattan Lights” in *The Ghetto and Other Poems*, is written in free verse and comprises two synchronous parts. Encompassing immigrants from across the world, the poem refers to “They / Flotsam of the five oceans”, who are silent and homeless trying to find shelter in Manhattan:

> Figures drift upon the benches
> With no more rustle than a dropped leaf settling -
> Slovenly figures like untied parcels,
> And papers wrapped about their knees
> Huddled one to the other,
> Cringing to the wind - (33-34)

The second part of “Flotsam” describes a horrific attack on these homeless drifters by police: “A uniformed front, / Paunched;” with:

> Boot-heels clanking
> In metallic rhythm;
> The blows of a baton,
> Quick, staccato . . . (35; 34).

The two segments of “Flotsam” can be read as separate stand-alone poems but also combine to make a unified whole. The themes within “Flotsam” highlight Ridge’s political concerns with the plight of social outcasts, newcomers to New York, being forced to sleep in park benches due to the economic Depression of the 1910s.
In “The Ghetto” Ridge utilizes authorial intervention in the figure of the ubiquitous narrator, watcher and guide. The gaze of this unnamed narrator is restless and reflects on the fleeting images of urban modernity. This figure also provides access to and creates a sense of intimacy with the interior and exterior spaces within the

ghetto which adds depth and richness to an unfolding exposition of life there. From a "fifth-floor" perch the narrator gazes on the vibrant life below and watches the denizens as they go about their daily routines (15). The positioning of the narrator above the activity in the streets introduces a sense of isolation, perhaps reflecting Ridge's own perspective as a foreigner and outsider within another immigrant community. In his review of *The Ghetto and Other Poems* Untermeyer remarks that Ridge's "detachment, instead of blurring her work, focuses and sharpens it" (1919a: 58). However, Ridge's unidentified narrator also displays a sense of intimacy and affinity with the life in the ghetto. This resonates with immigrant and outsider themes, including contradictory feelings of closeness and estrangement and Ridge's simultaneous maintenance of rival interpretations of urban life.

In *The Ghetto and Other Poems*, rejecting rigid, restrictive poetic rules and traditional form, Ridge explores the potential of a new kind of poetry which has the power to release the poet-artist into the possibilities of experiencing and presenting the world in new ways. Ridge is described by Alfred Kreymborg as a "revolutionist […] a prototype of the artist rebels of Russia, Germany, and Austro-Hungary who were the forerunners of the present régime over there" (1919: 335). This comment aligns Ridge with other artists who, perhaps sensing catastrophic change in the lead up to and during the First World War, reflected in their art this sense of unease and impending chaos. In Australia, as a student of Julian Ashton, the founder of the Sydney Art School and having the editor of pro-labour *Bulletin* A.G. Stephens as a mentor, Ridge would have been familiar with the combination of radical politics and art (see Svoboda, 2015: 39). Later, in New York, when managing the Ferrer Center, Ridge encountered the work of the painter Robert Henri, founder of the Ashcan School of painting, who "gave free art lessons at the Center" (Svoboda, 2015: 77). Through her management of the Center, Ridge would also have been familiar with the art of George Bellows, whose "War Series" of lithographs depicting German atrocities during the invasion of Belgium caused immediate and vociferous controversy when first printed in 1918. Her interest in anarchist politics meant that Ridge would also have been aware of the jarring and surreal works of Marcel Duchamp, whose controversial painting *Nude Descending a Staircase* was exhibited at the Armory Show in February 1913 and his urinal sculpture, *Fountain*, which was submitted to but rejected by the Salon of Independent Artists show in April 1917.

During her time at the Ferrer Center Svoboda posits that Ridge "would have heard lectures or helped organise talks with a host of other activists, artists and writers. These included Margaret Sanger, Upton Sinclair, Clarence Darrow, Ben Reitman, Bill Haywood and Elizabeth Gurley Flynn" (Svoboda, 2015: 77).[31]

The fragmentation and abstraction in Ridge's *The Ghetto and Other Poems* position Ridge alongside these other artistic rebels, political activists and innovators. Ridge's wartime poetry, in this sense, "helps newness enter the world" (Ramazani, 2006: 354). The opening lines of "The Ghetto" exemplify a poetic break with the past and Ridge's concerns with the dangers of modernity, by creating the context for the ensuing action by focusing on the oppressive "heat" of the ghetto, to which Ridge gives a corporeal presence. The reader is inexorably drawn into the oppressive atmosphere of the ghetto:

> Cool, inaccessible air
> Is floating in velvety blackness shot with steel-blue lights,
> But no breath stirs the heat
> Leaning its ponderous bulk upon the Ghetto
> And most on Hester street . . . (3)

Similar to Whitman, who regarded poetry as a "unique mode of active perception and cognition", by appealing to five senses, Ridge explores the potential of a new kind of poetry which has the power to release both the poet and reader into an exploration of new possibilities and fresh perceptions of the world (Frogley qtd. Cooper, 2001: 353). Alan Trachtenberg posits that "he [Whitman] was the most provocative and nourishing not as a model to mimic but as a force to engage with, as much as to resist as to adore" (1999: 200). In "The Ghetto" Ridge's perception of modernity aligns with Whitman's idea that new poetry "measures its success on its ability to produce discernible effects on readers" but deviates from Whitman in literally and figuratively immersing her readers in the life of the ghetto (Trachtenberg, 1999: 200). Contrary to Whitman's staging for his readers "a carnival

[31] Margaret Sanger championed women's rights including universal access to birth control. Upton Sinclair was a writer who is best known for his exposé of the meatpacking industry in his novel *The Jungle* (1906), Clarence Darrow was a lawyer and leading member of the American Civil Liberties Union, Ben Reitman was the Leader of the International Itinerant Migratory Workers Union, Bill Haywood was a founding member of the Industrial Workers of the World, and Elizabeth Gurley Flynn was a founding member of the American Civil Liberties Union.

of release, of free acceptance of the pleasure of things, without stint or limit", Ridge's introduction to the ghetto is intense: the setting, which initially appears confining and oppressive, is opened up, and the reader's sensory perception of the vibrancy of ghetto life is expanded (Trachtenberg, 1999: 201).

By introducing the reader to the stifling atmosphere and crowded living conditions of the ghetto, Ridge re-creates the claustrophobic and intimate conditions of the trenches:

> The heat . . .
> Nosing in the body's overflow,
> Like a beast pressing its great steaming belly close,
> Covering all avenues of air . . . (3)

Whether or not Ridge was aware of Sassoon's wartime poetry, these conditions compare with those of "The Death-Bed" (1916). Sassoon's poem, in which a young soldier moves in and out of consciousness, is imbued, from the outset, with the spatial imagery of the trenches when the dying soldier initially becomes aware of silence of his surroundings which he compares with the fortifications of the trenches:

> He drowsed and was aware of the silence heaped
> Round him, unshaken as the steadfast walls; (94)

The sensory perceptions of the soldier are emphasized throughout: he "moaned and dropped / Through crimson gloom to darkness", "was blind: he could not see the stars / Glinting among the wraiths of wandering cloud", and:

> stirred, shifting his body; then the pain
> Leaped like a prowling beast, and gripped and tore
> His groping dreams with grinding claws and fangs (Sassoon: 95).

The three-dimensional imagery of Sassoon's trenches has been moved to a ghetto in New York City in Ridge's "The Ghetto". In contrast with "The Death-Bed" the ghetto is revealed as synonymous with life, in the images of the crowded streets, the daily activities of the denizens and the vibrancy of the local markets.

In *The Ghetto and Other Poems*, Ridge's use of light and shadow, allied to the Whitmanian device of anaphora, gives a musical rhythm and tone of religious

incantation to her poetry. These devices heighten the intensity and engage the reader's emotions. This effect is apparent in the eighth verse part of "The Ghetto" in which the line "Lights go out" is repeated at the beginning of half of its constituent eight verses (21-23). The influence of American writers is registered in Ridge's repeated use of the word "and" as a democratic conjunction. In pairing objects and people, Ridge does not discriminate between animate subjects and inanimate objects, deliberately blurring the boundaries between the natural and manufactured worlds. This coupling, while heightening the sensual appeal of the collection, also evokes a sense of impending danger in the inexorable coming together of human and machine as modern industry and technologies converge and shape modern society. Nothing and nobody is immune from this social and mechanical revolution. This repetition of "and" after "Lights go out" in the eighth verse part of "The Ghetto" focuses the reader on what comes next, on an indeterminate future, signifying the feeling of claustrophobia and the encroaching surrounds of the ghetto:

> And the stark trunks of the factories
> Melt into the drawn darkness,
> Sheathing like a seamless garment. (21)

The use of light and shadow in this penultimate verse part of "The Ghetto" vividly demonstrates the looming presence of industrialisation. By contrast, in the same verse part, life goes on within the confines of the ghetto: "And mothers take home their babies, / Waxen and delicately curled", "And the young men shut their eyes, / But life turns in them …", "And the great lovers linger in little groups / still passionately debating", "And colors rush together / fusing and floating away …" (21; 22; 23). This phantasmagoria of light and shadow, day and night, of the interior world of the ghetto and the world outside, creates the sensation of these worlds being set on a collision course, deepening the sensation of existing in and entering into an uncertain future in which nothing is stable or immutable.

Perhaps arising from her training as a painter, the visual and sensory appeal in Ridge's poetry infuses the landscapes of *The Ghetto and Other Poems*. Pictorial influences have been observed in the collection: Kreymborg (1919) remarks on the pageantry of the "The Ghetto" and Tobin uses terms such as "portrait" and "mural"

in describing Ridge's poetry (2004: 68; 73). Imagist tendencies in Ridge's collection were also noted by critics. Untermeyer describes "The Ghetto" as

> studded with images that are surprising and yet never strained or irrelevant; it glows with a color that is barbaric, exotic and as local as Grand Street. In this poem Miss Ridge achieves the sharp line, the arresting and fixing of motion, the condensed clarity advertised by the Imagists - and so seldom attained by them. (1919a: 53)

Svoboda posits that ""The Ghetto" could be considered a long sequence of Imagist poems, expecially sections one through six where Ridge packs concise language into nearly every line" (2015: 111). With few words and powerful imagery Ridge incisively portrays the crowded living conditions and the population density of the ghetto in the opening verse part of "The Ghetto":

> Bodies dangle from the fire esapes
> Or sprawl over the stoops . . .
> Upturned faces glimmer pallidly -
> Herring-yellow faces, spotted as with a mold, (3)

Ridge's colleague and friend Kreymborg published *Des Imagistes* as a special issue of his Greenwich Village little magazine, *The Glebe*, in February 1914. Ridge's friends, William Carlos Williams and Ford Madox Ford (Hueffer), each had a poem published in *Des Imagistes*. This anthology was published under the direction of Ezra Pound when, according to Lawrence Rainey, "[Poundian] Imagism was limping towards its demise" (2007: 89). It also heralded the ending of Pound's domination of the Imagist movement. Ridge was familiar with Pound's work and knew Amy Lowell (Tobin, 2004). The outbreak of the First World War signalled the start of the third and final stage of Imagism under Lowell's leadership. This phase of Imagism was independent of Pound and the most contentious, but "it was Lowell's promotion of Imagism that had most impact in America" (Carr, 2009: loc. 175). Lowell was the driving force and editor of three consecutive annual anthologies, *Some Imagist Poets*, published between 1915 and 1917. The first two anthologies, while controversial, sold well. The third anthology was published on 14 April 1917, eight days after America had entered the war: "poetry sales slumped, and even the demon saleswoman of poetry, Lowell, was unable to create the same level of interest as

there had been in the early volumes" (Carr, 2009: loc. 16692). Laurie Champion posits that Lowell's articulation of what constituted Imagist poetry was "especially significant in her time":

> Lowell's art-for-art's sake theory of imagism emphasized the use of striking image, conciseness of focus, direct speech, subtle rhythms, freedom of subject matter, and exception from moral. *Imagiste* verse evokes rather than describes, intimates rather than preaches, so the reader must actively engage the sensory impressions of the poet in pursuit of the meaning. (2000: 200)

These influences are apparent *The Ghetto and Other Poems* in Ridge's conjuring of arresting images, her appeal to all the senses of her readers leading to their immersion within the life of the ghetto. It also aligns her poetry with the principles of Imagism espoused in the Preface to *Some Imagist Poets* (1915), including the principle of "absolute freedom in the choice of subject", which is apparent in Ridge's novel choice of community and context (vii).

In *The Ghetto and Other Poems*, Ridge's Imagism eschews the ancient models favoured by Pound and the early Imagist coterie and creates a new Imagist mould for her poetry more aligned with the "American" Imagism espoused by Lowell. However, Ridge also repurposes Imagist poetics by both adhering to and breaking with Imagist principles. Her poetry can simply be read as a recording of accidental images of everyday city life in an urban ghetto and / or a sequence of images linked by a subtle subversive logic. Ridge's collection is influenced by Imagist idioms of conciseness and directness; however, Ridge also introduces novelty. While the city setting is already synonymous with Modernism, Ridge, as a foreigner and outsider, by identifying with another immigrant Jewish community in New York City with a long history of fleeing from sectarian violence, is driving the case for the inclusion of a new kind of multi-ethnic America as a valid subject of poetry. While the Imagist collective had fully dissolved by the end of the second decade of the twentieth century, "their [the Imagist poets] ideas and the debates they provoked played a vital role in the transformation of American and British cultural life that occurred at the time of the First World War" (Carr, 2009: loc. 155).

In *The Ghetto and Other Poems* Ridge's awareness of the inexorable march of social change and radical transformations spurred on by the war is apparent in the production of her own brand of American Imagism from within a community with a complicated relationship with America, just as their adopted country enters the First World War. These propensities, allied to Ridge's interest in Imagism and free verse, connects her to H.D., who lived as an expatriate in Europe during both World Wars. In the lead up to and during the First World War H.D.'s primary poetic mode was Imagist, as may be observed in her first collection, *Sea Garden* (1916), which, according to Celena Kusch, "in many ways exemplifies imagist poetic strategies" (2010: 47). During the First World War H.D. experienced a number of personal tragedies and traumas which prompted a significant creative transition in her poetics. In the interval between the First and the Second World War, the style and form of H.D.'s poetry transitioned from the brevity of her Imagistic mode to longer form epic poetry. H.D.'s *Trilogy*, written during the Second World War, is discussed in the next chapter.

Ridge's interest in Imagism also links her with an Irish poet, Joseph Campbell. A Belfast-born Catholic nationalist, Campbell was one of the poets associated with the *Tour d'Eiffel* group in London in 1909 where, "under the leadership of T. E. Hulme", Imagism began (Debritto, 2013). Like Ridge, Campbell was profoundly influenced by Whitman. This inspiration is two-fold: "Campbell was unusual among Irish poets in being attracted to Whitman's use of free verse" and this break with traditional poetic forms is also linked to Campbell's political ideology: as a "poet of the people, the poet of liberty" (Carr, 2009: loc. 3358). Campbell's collection *Irishry* (1914) was lauded by Richard Aldington in *The Egoist*, "he likes the mot juste; he is not over-descriptive. He can make "images" too" (1914: 287). Ridge, like Campbell, links her poetic techniques, including the use of free verse, with her personal and political ideologies. Ridge and Campbell also share an interest in political activism in the cause of Ireland's freedom from colonial occupation. Campbell was actively involved in the cause of Irish nationalism; he organized Republic volunteers and served in various intelligence tasks in support of the [Easter 1916] Rising.

Ireland

Letts and Ridge had lifelong ties with Ireland, connections which illustrate the complexity of each poet's (trans)national identification, as is reflected in their wartime collections. Gerald Dawe argues in *The Irish Times* on 5 May 2015 that "Ireland, poetry and the First World War is a story of contradictions, of contrasts, and, a century later, of reconciliation" (2015). The First World War was not a single, monolithic narrative. The story of this war comprises many national stories, including that of Ireland. Das argues "Ireland is a powerful example of how, until recently, memories of the First World War and its literature were suppressed in the national consciousness" (2013: 26). In an Irish context the connection between memory, culture and national identity has particular and paradoxical resonances and meanings. Ramazani argues that poetry is a potent site for "imagining the nation" (2009a: 75). Letts and Ridge had strong emotional and psychic attachments to Ireland. *The Spires of Oxford and Other Poems* and *The Ghetto and Other Poems* reflect these unbreakable connections when, during the First World War, Ireland made a critical step towards achieving its imagined community. This decisive move towards independence took the form of the Easter 1916 Rising, a *de facto* battle of the First World War (see McGarry: 2017).

The Easter Rising is a watershed event in Ireland's achieving independence from the British empire: "the proximity of events such as the Easter Rising (1916) … often determined the place of the First World War and its literature in the cultural life of the nations" (Das, 2013: 26). At the same moment as this rebellion occurred, Irish men were fighting and dying in the British army during the First World War. Within Irish history the participation of Irish men in the British defence forces in the First World War has been "either marginalized or reconfigured" (Das 2013: 26). Each of these contradictory national and international moments and events is reflected in Letts' and Ridge's wartime collections. Letts examines Irish involvement within the British Forces in the First World War in "The Connaught Rangers," and Ridge explores its antithesis, the Irish revolt against British colonial rule, in "The Tidings". The troubling complexity of Irishmen enlisting and volunteering as part of the British armed forces during the First World War is addressed in Letts' "The Connaught Rangers". Though widely anthologized "The Connaught Rangers" is not

contained in any edition of *The Spires of Oxford and Other Poems*. The poem appears in Letts' next and final poetry collection, *More Songs From Leinster*, which was published in 1926. David Clare refers to the inclusion of the poem as the collection's "belated tribute to a famous Irish regiment" (2019). Irishmen taking a bullet on behalf of the British Empire is examined in "The Connaught Rangers". The Connaught Rangers regiment had been part of the British army since the late eighteenth century (Bowen, 2005). In this poem Letts explores "one narrative of Irishness that has been marginalised and largely erased from public memory, namely the Irish regiments in the British Army" (Morrissey, 2005: 71). The tension between establishing a distinct and independent Irish national identity and Irish service within the coloniser's army to defend the Empire is a contentious, deep-rooted and emotive issue in the Irish national consciousness.

The First World War was a particularly difficult moment in the relationship between Britain and Ireland, since, as Goldie argues, "the First World War also occurs at a point of fracture in the Union" (2013: 160). Irish enlistment in the British Army during the First World War was entangled with the desire for Home Rule. John Morrissey posits that Irish involvement in the British army during the First World War "was motivated by a multitude of factors" (2005: 77). In a similar vein, Goldie proposes that the British army offered "an escape, a way out of poverty, or the opportunity of adventure for young men of the impoverished regions and smaller nations of the United Kingdom" (2013: 159). Included among these reasons are "romanticism, exoticism and fantasy" (Morrissey, 2005: 77), which is apparent in the pageantry of the opening lines of "The Connaught Rangers":

> I saw the Connaught Rangers when they were passing by,
> On a spring day, a good day, with gold rifts in the sky.
> Themselves were marching steadily along the Liffey quay
> An' I see the young proud look of them as if it was to-day! (45)

During the First World War, according to the Connaught Rangers Association website, "13,431 men served overseas with the Connaught Rangers. Approximately 2,500 never returned", with many serving in Western and Eastern Europe, the Middle East, North America, and India. Using similar imagery to "The Call To Arms In Our Street", "The Connaught Rangers" combines spectacle and poignancy. The

poem, which starts with the “bright lads” marching to war in parade through the streets of Dublin, ends in the foreshadowing of tragedy (45). In this poem, in another time-bound reference, Letts laments the “green graves that are in Serbia and in Gallipoli”, acknowledging one of the most tragic and disastrous campaigns of the First World War (45). In this drive, which took place between April and December 1915, many of the Connaught Rangers regiment lost their lives. Along with other Allied regiments, the Rangers landed in the Gallipoli peninsula with the intention of conquering Istanbul and effectively removing Turkey, a strong German ally, from the war, thus weakening Germany’s position. The campaign ended in utter failure and would come to be remembered as a “crucial site of collective sacrifice, public memory and national myth” (Morrissey, 2005: 77).

Adopting a traditional form of three sexains, each stanza comprising three rhyming couplets, in “The Connaught Rangers”, Letts is unafraid to raise the matter of Irishmen dying for their colonizers. Her acute observational skills highlight the intensity of these experiences while connecting strongly to Irish identity. There are several Irish national cultural signifiers in lines repeated in the last line of each verse. These references are “the green flags on their bayonets all fluttering in the wind!” with a minor variation in the poignant last line of the poem which draws attention to the sacrifice of these Irishmen: “And the green flags on their bayonets will flutter in the wind” signifying their demise on the battlefield (45; 46). A long history as part of the British army ceased in 1922, when the Connaught Rangers “were disbanded along with five other regiments from the newly formed Irish Free State” (Morrissey, 2005: 73). According to Dawe, these Irish soldiers, having “fought and won an appalling war away from home”, were “displaced from [Irish] history, and if not exactly forgotten, set aside as a problematic adjunct to the main narrative of Irish national development post independence” (2015). The story of this regiment, captured in “The Connaught Rangers”, is not yet fully explored or recognised as a valid and full part of the cultural history of Ireland.

In the immediate aftermath of the Easter Rising, the involvement in and return of surviving Irish soldiers to Ireland from the campaigns of the First World War were controversial and problematic. These complexities were articulated in an open letter from George Russell to the *Irish Times* on 17 December 1917. Self-proclaimed as

"Anglo-Irish with the blood of both races in me", Russell seeks a way forward which would peacefully accommodate these returning soldiers, "alongside the recent pain and mounting anger over the imprisonment and execution of the leaders of the [Easter 1916] Rising" (1917: 6). In an appeal to Irish unity and recognising the animosity aroused by Irish soldiers' serving in the British army Russell seeks peaceful coexistence between Irish people, on both sides of the Easter 1916 and First World War conflicts, when "many thousands of Irishmen will return to their country who have faced death for other ideals than those that inspire many more thousands now in Ireland and make them also fearless of death" (1917: 6). In seeking a consensus between politics and morality, Russell argues for an Ireland that is not locked into the past and pleads "we are one people" who have the opportunity to create a new and collective national identity: "we have been told that there are two nations in Ireland. That may have been so in the past, but is not true to-day" (1917: 6). In this impassioned article Russell seeks to find a way forward which involves reconciling with and letting go of the turbulent past so that Irish people themselves may find a collective way forward. These issues would rage for decades after the First World War as Ireland sought self-determination. A further complication is that, in the aftermath of the war, "Ireland was also a post-Easter Rising Ireland which was heading into a "revolutionary war of its own" a few years later" (Dawe, 2015).

In "The Tidings", the last poem in *The Ghetto and Other Poems,* Ridge explicitly reconnects with the country of her birth and combines her political concerns with her personal history. "The Tidings", with the subtitle "Easter, 1916", comprising three quatrains, is a powerfully imagistic poem. Using the image of "a forest fire" for the rebellion, "The Tidings" demonstrates Ridge's awareness of the contemporaneous revolt in her birthplace and of its historical significance (101). The opening words, "censored lines that mimic truth" signals Ridge's sensitivity to the power of language in wartime and its potential to mislead an unwitting public regarding the truth of war, a propensity which Ridge shares with Letts, H.D. and Wingfield.

It is ambivalent whether "The Tidings" is an expression of Ridge's Irishness or of her wider support for global anti-imperial movements, but it is likely that the political and personal sentiments are intertwined. Ridge's second collection *Sun-up and Other Poems* (1920) according to Nancy Berke, extends "Ridge's interest in

representing labor exploitation and unrest" (2000: 196). Ridge's enduring ties with Ireland are also apparent in "To Larkin" in *Sun-up and Other Poems* which is "dedicated to the Irish labour activist Jim Larkin, a very successful trade unionist who was arrested in the Palmer raids on an extended visit to the U.S., and jailed in Sing for anarchism" (Svoboda, 2015: 166). What is undoubted is the speaker's regret at not being present at that historical moment in Ireland's history. The persona in "The Tidings" expresses this remorse in the italicized words and final exclamation point which stress the speaker's emotion: "*They are fighting to-night in Sackville Street, / And I am not there!*" (101).

Ridge's "The Tidings" and William Butler Yeats' canonical "Easter, 1916" present different perspectives on Ireland's colonial uprising. "Easter, 1916" is, according to Goldie "deeply ambiguous" but does "encapsulate a sense of Irish dislocation in regard to the war's events" (2013: 168). Sarah Cole posits of "Easter, 1916" that it "is less interested in providing an account of violence… than in reflecting on its power" (2012: 148). In "Easter, 1916", Yeats is "torn between celebration and condemnation of the heroic sacrifice, as the participants created the tragic play of the Rising by resigning their parts in the casual comedy" (Allison, 2006: 210). This ambivalence is shared by Catholic nationalist soldier-poets Francis Ledwidge and Tom Kettle, who both died in the First World War. Both were "Catholics and active members of the nationalist Irish Volunteers who embodied this paradox by enlisting in the British Army" (Goldie, 2013: 169). Such contradictions have resulted in soldier-poets holding a fragile and uncertain position in Ireland's cultural history and collective memory.

Yeats' paradoxical position on the First World War is also apparent when in response to a request to contribute to an anthology for those made homeless by the war, he "both refused and agreed, by writing a poem about not writing a war poem" (Dawe, 2015). The resultant "A Reason for Keeping Silent" was first published in Edith Wharton's *The Book of the Homeless* (1916). This sexain comprises two halves, each with the same rhyme scheme. The first three lines articulate the poet's attitude to writing about war, suggesting that it is better to be silent as "we have no gift to set a statesman right" (45). The second half articulates the role of the poet, which is not to meddle in matters of state but rather to be an inoffensive story-teller

to the youth and consoler of the aged. In sharp contrast with Yeats' view on the role of the artist in times of war, Ridge, in a review of Kreymborg's *Plays for Poem-Mimes,* articulates her position: "the artist's interpretation of life must be more than a record of action or a corroboration of registered emotions" (1919: 29). In *The Ghetto and Other Poems* Ridge sets out on her own poetic voyage of discovery, "to make life face itself anew by the aid of new symbols - life, never to be persuaded or reconciled by its own bitterly familiar image" (Ridge, 1919: 31). Ridge's and Yeats' divergent views on the role of the poet are also apparent in their contrasting use of symbolism in poems dealing with similar themes in "The Tidings" and "Easter, 1916".

The image of the stone in "Easter, 1916" illustrates Yeats' ambivalence in relation to the rebellion, torn between celebrating and condemning the heroic sacrifices of those involved. Cole observes that in "Easter, 1916" the stone is the poem's "clearest image of stasis" (2012: 149). Ridge, in "The Tidings", is unequivocal in supporting the rebellion. Using the symbol of the heart, Ridge assumes a passionate and active position in favour of this watershed moment in the Irish struggle for freedom from colonial rule. In each of the three verses the heart is firstly compared with "a rousing bell", then "a mother bird", signifying the protective nature of a mother's love as she seeks to defend her home from "a forest fire" which is the rebellion of 1916 (101). The final comparison to "a lover foiled" is a reference to Ridge's own heart and her inability to fight alongside her fellow countrymen and women in Sackville Street (101). The contrasting use of symbolism in their poems can also be read as a proxy for Yeats' and Ridge's divergent views on patriotism. For Yeats, patriotism is murky and paradoxical and rooted in Ireland's past. For Ridge, Irish patriotism at least, is current, concrete, part of life and an investment in a future which is worth fighting and dying for. Ramazani posits of "Easter, 1916" that it exemplifies "the compatibility of elegy with nationalism but also dissent from nationalism" (2009a: 80). As a subversive companion piece, Ridge's "The Tidings" is illustrative of how the "the story of Irish Modernism is constitutively both national and transnational in its dimensions" (Cleary, 2014: 7).

Reframing First World War poetry

Arguing for a reformulation of First World War poetry, Das posits that:

> First World War poetry looks before and after the war, joining past and future, and combatant and civilian zones; it speaks in varying cadences not just of combat, but also of life at large - of beauty, longing, religion, nature, animals, intimacy, historical change, poetic responsibility, Europe and Englishness, race, democracy and empire [. . .] all touched directly or indirectly by the war. (2014: xxi)

Here, Das looks beyond the British trench lyric as the only poetic response to the First World War and acknowledges the diversity of imaginative responses and variety of poetic forms employed by writers. This observation is germane to *The Spires of Oxford and Other Poems* and *The Ghetto and Other Poems*. Letts' collection consistently engages with the First World War, whereas in Ridge's there is a less explicit underpinning of the war, which appears in fragmentary and marginal manifestations, although this does not suggest a less sustained engagement with conflict and warfare. As a poetic strategy, the periodic references and allusions to war interspersed throughout *The Ghetto and Other Poems* reflect the arbitrariness of war while concurrently accentuating the risk of conflict as a looming presence. In addition, placing much of the action within the claustrophobic atmosphere of the ghetto has the effect of combining the positive anarchic energy of that location with an impending sense of disaster, creating a combustible and fragile mood. The seemingly randomly inserted references to war also serve to contrast the current vibrancy of life in the ghetto with the future threat of war, in which the lives of this immigrant community will become inevitably and inexorably entangled. Letts' and Ridge's perception of warfare as a continual and interwoven process, allied to their inclusion of different voices impacted by the First World War, challenge the long-standing dominance and sole authority of soldier poetry within the canon of war poetry. Both collections link the past with the present, extend the frontier of the war into the home front, demonstrate the all-encompassing nature of war and utilise a variety of poetic techniques—innovative and traditional—to represent their war time experiences.

Ridge's *The Ghetto and Other Poems* is a more overtly experimental response to urban and industrial modernity during wartime. According to Svoboda, "four years

before T. S. Eliot, […], published *The Waste Land* (1922), Ridge's long poem "The Ghetto" celebrated the Jewish Lower East Side and prophesied the multi-ethnic world of the twenty-first century" (2016). Whereas Letts predominantly works within familiar milieux and poetic traditions, innovation, both formal and thematic, is nonetheless apparent in her verse. In *The Spires of Oxford and Other Poems* Letts demonstrates her formal skill in the art of the "studied miniature", a poetic trait she shares with H.D. In the first two sections of Letts' collection, "Poems of the War" and "Ad Mortuum", "the universe becomes so small "that it threatened to seem precious" but such preciousness for H.D. as for Letts is "a kind of weapon" against the militarism and masculinity of the war" (Das, 2013: 21). Letts' objections to the First World War, her persistence in presenting the war as much as a civilian as a combatant experience, conjoined with her deep sympathy for combatants, non-combatants and civilians, displays a modern consciousness which may justifiably be compared, on an equal footing, with that of Ridge. Letts' poetry fulfils the public "hunger for the expression in poetry of the conditions endured by soldiers and civilians alike, the urge to remember them" (Varty, 2016: 40). Letts' understated approach is far from passive. Her poetry confronts the harsh realities of the First World War and memorializes the support services and civilian experiences of war for future generations.

Although the poetry of Letts and Ridge was widely anthologized during and in the early aftermath of the First World War, their writing has been excluded from national canons of war literature in England and the United States. Some quite recent interest in Irish First World War poetry has resulted in the inclusion of poems from *The Spires of Oxford and Other Poems* in Dawe's *Earth Voices Whispering: An Anthology of Irish War Poetry 1914-1945* (2008), which features five poems from Letts' collection.[32] Notwithstanding recent expansions of the canon to include the verse of civilians and support workers, understandings of First World War poetry remain delimited, giving primacy to the trench writings of soldier-poets. This thesis argues that the reconfiguration of the canon should extend to the continued respositioning of Letts and the inclusion of Ridge as First World War poets.

[32] These are "Hallow-e'en, 1914", "The Call To Arms In Our Street", "Casualty", "Screens" and "Dead".

SECTION TWO: H.D. AND SHEILA WINGFIELD

> An incident here and there,
> and rails gone (for guns)
> from your (and my) old town square:
> (H.D., "The Walls Do Not Fall" 1: 3)

This powerful and pictorial opening of the first of three long poems written by H.D. during the Second World War immediately positions the reader in the centre of a war-torn London. This proximity is reinforced by a statement on the back cover of *Trilogy* (1973) that the opening poem, "The Walls Do Not Fall", was "published in the midst of the "fifty thousand incidents" of the London blitz" (1973).[33]

In the opening seventeen words of *Trilogy* quoted above, H.D. conveys with arresting intimacy the destruction of the Second World War in a masterful demonstration of what Bernard Engel calls her "ability to communicate brief impressions by imagery without resort to declaration or explanation" (1969: 509). The "guns" and "rails" refer to the repurposing of city railings into weapons of war.[34]

This striking opening image also has personal import for H.D., who lived in Lowndes Square in Knightsbridge during the Second World War. This square, including its communal garden for residents, was ringed by railings. According to historical records from *Bomb Site* on the first day of the London Blitz, 7 September 1940, an incendiary bomb was dropped on Lowndes Square, literally placing H.D. in the middle of the conflict. This experience is reflected in *Trilogy* in which there is a sustained focus on speaking for and about the communal experience of war and

[33] Unless otherwise indicated this is the primary *Trilogy* text used in this thesis.

[34] According to the London Historic Parks and Gardens Trust "faced with an oversupply, rather than halt the collection, which had turned out to be a unifying effort for the country and of great propaganda value, the government allowed it to continue". This positive impact on morale is believed to have influenced the Government's decision to continue with these efforts. According to John Farr (2010) only twenty-six percent of the collected iron work was used for munitions. By 1944 most of it was rusting in council depots or railway sidings. It is now believed much of this collected iron work was quietly disposed of in landfill or at sea after the war. There is also some dispute as to whether these railings were either suitable or used for armament production.

trauma. Throughout *Trilogy* there are repeated references to "our" and "we" as the community in which H.D. lived during wartime and other communities throughout the ages which have experienced the horror and devastation of war. These communities include H.D.'s readers, her neighbours in Mecklenburgh Square, where she lived during the First World War, her husband, the bewildered denizen of London who stumbles in shock "trembling a known street-corner", artists who are "the bearers of secret wisdom", and children in ancient Pompeii who "cry for food / and flaming stones fall on them" (4; 14; 39). These sensitivities also highlight the "translocal" dimension in H.D.'s war poetry in which she "interlaces localities and nationalities" sharing in the trauma of war (Ramazani, 2009b: 54).

Underpinning the immediacy and proximity to war in the three *Trilogy* poem-sequences, H.D. dated and located their composition. The dates placed at the end of the second volume, "Tribute to the Angels", and the final volume, "The Flowering of the Rod", are "London, *May 17-31, 1944*" and "London, December 18-31, 1944" respectively. According to Sarah Graham, "H.D. flags the dates to place herself firmly in the center of the war experience - announcing to her audience - even before they read the first line of the first poem [which is preceded with "*from London* 1942"] - that she is not just living through the war years, but doing so in London, writing poetry as the blitz rages around her" (2002: 161). In addition to immersion in a war-damaged contemporaneity the additional inclusion of "*for Karnak* 1923" before the "Walls Do Not Fall" hints at the ambition of *Trilogy* in which H.D., Elizabeth Anderson suggests, is "foregrounding the presence of history" (2012: 13).

These dates also indicate that each poem was written in a short time and at key stages during the war. Louis Martz argues that the first poem, "The Walls Do Not Fall", responds "to the danger and the bravery of the scene, a sequence firmly grounded at beginning and end in the actual experience of the bombing" (1983: xxx). Graham posits that "Tribute to the Angels" is "a poem about peace or the hope of peace, written at a time when it finally seemed possible that the Allies might make progress against Nazi Germany" (2002: 188). The timing of the writing of the final volume, "The Flowering of the Rod", has evoked contradictory critical responses. According to Graham, it was written when "peace still had not arrived, the war had been consuming lives for five years and the situation now seemed hopeless" (2002:

194). In contrast, Deanna Polson posits that "The Flowering of the Rod" was written "when peace was imminent, and the promise of rebuilding and spiritual resurrection seemed possible" (2008: 5). The latter position is more compelling, as the date which ends *Trilogy* coincides with the last day of 1944, a Sunday, and thus new beginnings - "the turn from the old year into the new" (Anderson, 2012: 130). In all three volumes what the reader experiences is "not the war mediated by H.D.'s particular response, but the war itself" (Graham, 2002: 162). This immediacy of *Trilogy* reflects H.D.'s lived experience of war, and the proximity to war which appears to have released her creative agency. Adalaide Morris observes that "after a decade of blockage, H.D. was writing with assurance and speed, her typewriter clacking across the noise of the raids" (2003: 111). The insistence on including the composition dates as an intrinsic element in each of each of the volumes of *Trilogy*, together with the short period between their composition and initial publication, reinforces the urgency and intensity of H.D.'s motivation to share her message of war, love, and resurrection at a critical historical juncture.

Locating the opening action of "The Walls Do Not Fall" in London also connects with H.D.'s past. During the First World War she lived in various London neighbourhoods: Holland Place Chambers in Kensington, Christchurch Place in Hampstead and, in 1916-18, in rooms in Mecklenburgh Square, Bloomsbury, where her then husband Richard Aldington returned from leave from officer training and from the Front. Ariane Bankes posits that Mecklenburgh Square "acted as a magnet to those keen to break the mould and prepared to be radical, creative, even downright eccentric, in order to live how they liked" (2020: 34). Francesca Wade's *Square Haunting* (2020) is a composite study of Modernist women scholars and writers who resided in Mecklenburgh Square, including, at different times, the classicist Jane Harrison, the historian Eileen Power, the novelist Dorothy L. Sayers (who lived in H.D.'s own rooms, at number 44), and Virginia Woolf. It was during the First World War, at 44 Mecklenburgh Square, that H.D. gave sanctuary to D.H. Lawrence and his wife Frieda following their expulsion from Cornwall under the Defence of the Realm Act, while H.D.'s husband, was in officer training in Lichfield. The First World War, and Mecklenburgh Square, are the subject and setting of H.D.'s autobiographical novel *Bid Me to Live* (1960), which is, according to Susan Stanford Friedman, the final and only published text of H.D.'s three "autobiographical

narratives about the Great War period" (1989: 147). In *Bid Me to Live*, which was drafted during the Second World War and is therefore contemporaneous with *Trilogy*, H.D. presages the imagery and central metaphor she explores in "The Walls Do Not Fall":

> London is the quietest place in the world, once it is quiet. Might have added, after an air-raid, everything, once it is quiet, is a grave-yard; we walk among stones, paving-stones, but any stone might have been our tomb-stone, a slice of a wall failing, this ceiling over our heads. (Zilboorg, 2011, II: 6)

In 1983 "The Walls Do Not Fall", along with its two companion poem-sequences, would be included in H.D.'s *Collected Poems 1912-1944*, a collection which is bookended by the two World Wars. In the same year Sheila Wingfield's *Collected Poems 1938-1983* was published. Peter Levi's 1984 review of both collections failed to identify a key connection between the poets, that in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War "both had published a long meditative poem in 1946 - H.D.'s *Trilogy* and Sheila Wingfield's *Beat Drum, Beat Heart*" (Perrick, 2007: 188).[35] War influences both the setting and subject matter of *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* and *Trilogy* and was, for each poet, a powerful creative and productive trigger. Robert Duncan posits that in *Trilogy* H.D. is "at war with war" (2011: 394). These long war poems, and the neglected affiliations between Wingfield and H.D., are the primary focus of the ensuing two chapters in this thesis.

[35] Unless otherwise indicated this is the primary text of *Beat Drum, Beat Hea*rt used in this thesis.

SECTION TWO - CHAPTER THREE: FORMAL EVOLUTIONS

Concerning the literary response to the Second World War, Paul Fussell observes that "faced with events so unprecedented and so inaccessible to normal models of humane understanding, literature spent a lot of time standing apart and aghast" (1991: 311). One consequence of this effect is observed by Marina MacKay, who points out that "many of the important works of World War II literature were in fact written or published well after 1945" (2009a: 3). In contrast, H.D. was swift to publish her texts of literary witness. Graham posits of "The Walls Do Not Fall" that "the text is more concerned with the act of writing poetry in wartime than any other issue" (2002: 174). H.D. composed *Trilogy* in the midst of the London Blitz and started to publish the poems during the war. "The Walls Do Not Fall" alludes to finding potential for creativity during the conflict:

> so, through our desolation,
> thoughts stir, inspiration stalks us
> through gloom; ("The Walls Do Not Fall" 1:3).

Wingfield's female persona in "Women In Love", in *Beat Drum, Beat Heart,* also finds motivation in her contemporaneous wartime context:

> I said inspired and I fully
> Mean it: truly each
> Word, each thing that occurs
> Shows me its own
> And inner, natural tact. ("Women In Love": 47)

The theme of *Beat Drum, Beat Heart,* as described on the dust jacket of the first edition, "is twofold - the incidence of war in the lives of men and women, and the incidence of love in their hearts". H.D., who "regarded war as the epitome of forces that shattered the intersecting personal and public demands of history" (Friedman, 1983: 231), produced, according to the back cover of *Trilogy* (1973), "three long poems written under the shattering impact of World War II [which rank] with T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*, and Ezra Pound's *Pisan Cantos* as civilian war poetry coming out of a civilian's experience of war".

Beat Drum, Beat Heart was first published in 1946 in a single volume and was also included in three of Wingfield's subsequent collections: *A Kite's Dinner: Poems 1938-1954* (1954), *Her Storms: Selected Poems 1938 - 1977* (1977) and *Collected Poems: 1938 - 1983* (1983). The first volume of H.D.'s trio, "The Walls Do Not Fall", was published in 1944, "Tribute to the Angels" first appeared in 1945 and the third volume, "The Flowering of the Rod", was published in 1946. Despite a plan, as early as December 1946, to bring out the three poems in one volume, it was not until 1973, twelve years after H.D.'s death, that the three poem-sequences were published together as *Trilogy*.[36] This publishing history contrasts with that of Eliot's *Four Quartets*, which was first issued as a volume in the spring of 1943 in New York and in London in the autumn of 1944, shortly after the constituent individual poems had been published (see Russell: 2008).

Like H.D. and Wingfield, Eliot wrote poetry during the conflict, bringing to the fore the civilian experience of war. Gill Plain posits that the dissolution of the boundaries between the home front and the battlefront in the Second World War created the potential for writers to "invert traditional paradigms of suffering and sacrifice" (2009: 166). Despite the reach of the Second World War and the diversity and quantity of women's wartime literature, their entry into the canon has proved problematic. In exploring the challenges with regard to the canonical status of women's wartime writings, shared trauma, according to Plain, does not in itself constitute war literature. However, the female experience of what Plain, borrowing from Elizabeth Bowen, calls the "climate" of war reveals:

> a complex body of writing that grapples in particular with issues of belonging and exclusion surrounding the perceived cultural disjuncture between "woman" and "war". (2009: 166)

The atmosphere of war permeates *Trilogy* and *Beat Drum, Beat Heart*. H.D. and Wingfield are concerned not only with the current conflict but also with the cycle of warfare throughout the ages. They share an interest in describing a post-war future in

[36] The three poems were separately published in 1944, 1945 and 1946. Donna Krolik Hollenberg (1997) notes that in a letter to H.D. in late December 1946 Norman Holmes Pearson references that he would request Oxford University Press to publish the three poems in one volume. Despite H.D.'s positive response in her reply of 14 January 1947 this did not occur as the poems were first published as a collection in 1973.

which that cycle would be broken. These themes alone suggest their long poems as suitable for inclusion in the canon of war poetry. However, H.D. and Wingfield are also concerned with matters of inclusion and exclusion and belonging and alienation during wartime and their foregrounding of the gendered impact of war distinguishes them as war poets. Alex Davis reinforces the credentials of *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* as part of the canon of war poetry:

> it is one of the major Irish long poems of the century, and, in its complex and scrupulous attention to the activities and behaviour of men and women during military conflict, is comparable with the blitz novels of fellow Ascendancy writer Elizabeth Bowen. (2003a: 347)

A significant factor in positioning women's literature within the canon of war writing is, according to Plain, related to the heterogeneity of women's wartime reaction and literary output:

> the literature of the Second World War is a vast body of writing whose relationship to conflict ranges from the immediate to the intangible [. . .] they [women writers] demonstrated, in the diversity of their production and the timescale over which it was produced, that war is a concept beyond combat, its impact far exceeding the customary parameters of 1939- 45. (2009: 176)

This thesis argues that the diversity of the wartime poetry of the four women poets in this thesis is not a legitimate reason to dismiss their inclusion in the modern canon of war poetry.

Adam Piette observes with regard to the poetry of the Second World War in Britain that "the early war poetry was by observers in the blitzed cities themselves" (2009: 14). *Trilogy* records H.D.'s experience of the aerial bombardment of London. While Wingfield's direct experience of war might appear more tangential, in *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* her acute sensitivity to and understanding of the horror and tragedy of war throughout history is demonstrably apparent.

Beat Drum, Beat Heart and *Trilogy* were published at a pivotal moment in history and at a critical juncture for literary Modernism. By 1946 the Modernist movement, having been in existence for almost three decades, was, according to MacKay

"already orthodox" (2007: 15). Just as Modernism came into being as a result of a series of crises, the Second World War was to threaten its foundations. MacKay refers to this period as "late Modernism", the atmosphere of which "resembles the watershed event that it recorded: the Second World War" (2007: 1). This conception is useful in relation to *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* and *Trilogy* as it facilitates reflection on a significant difference between the First and Second World Wars, specifically "the new primacy of the civilian experience: whereas the "home front" was primarily a propaganda metaphor in 1918, the Second World War was halfway through before the number of dead British combatants exceeded that of dead British civilians" (MacKay, 2007: 6). This perspective permits consideration of more diverse and expansive literary expressions and the inclusion of a wider range of writers, as "war's homecoming, or the new significance of the non-combatant experience, loosens the boundaries of its possible literatures" (MacKay, 2007: 6). Against this backdrop, the inter-related notions of border, boundary, margins and identity are critical to this discussion of the similarities and differences between *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* and *Trilogy* in terms of how these texts attach or detach from the Modernist project at an important crossroads in literary and social history.

Plain argues that the aerial bombing of cities displaced the former boundary between the home and battlefronts, illustrating that the Second World War could only be fully understood by considering both combatant and non-combatant war experience. This war disrupted social and cultural norms and patterns which were "founded on the emphatic cultural distinction between male activity and female passivity, combatant and non-combatant, soldier and mother" (Plain, 2009: 166). Many of the social, cultural and political effects of borders, boundaries, margins and identity were, prior to the war, largely taken for granted. As a consequence of the conflict, these hitherto stable categories became provisional, negotiable and relative; borders became permeable, boundaries became contested, margins became blurred and identities malleable. These disruptions in turn raised serious questions relating to belonging and alienation, exclusion and inclusion, safety and danger and what constitutes public and private space in a world at war.

Notions of place and belonging are complicated for H.D. and Wingfield, as neither easily fits into the worlds they occupied. Wingfield was born in England to an Irish

mother and on her paternal side, she was of Jewish heritage, something to which she never directly alluded. As a consequence of her marriage Wingfield came to live in a predominantly Catholic country as a member of a class which was one of the last remnants of Ireland's colonial past. Caroline Zilboorg remarks on H.D.'s lifelong "conflict of national identities [which] intensified during wartime"; a citizen of the United States by birth, H.D. was British by her marriage to Aldington in 1913 and spent much of her adult life in London and other locations across Europe (2011: xvii). Celena Kusch posits of H.D.'s first poetry collection, *Sea Garden,* which was published during the First World War, that it "dislocates national identity from its geographical foundations and sets it in motion and in contact with other nations" (2010: 50). This would be a continued preoccupation in H.D.'s writing. Here, Kusch is recognising the transnational potentialities of H.D.'s poetry. Identifying the transnational reach and possibilities of their wartime poetry, the consequences of these displacements and disruptions, personally and in the wider social arena, is central to understanding *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* and *Trilogy*, as each poet examines movements, fissures, and gaps in order to interrogate and elucidate the social, political, and economic consequences of the Second World War. For H.D. and Wingfield their lived experiences in the lead up to and during war heralded a creative transition in their poetics. The Second World War was a significant influencing factor in the transition in Wingfield's poetic style, the outcome of which was *Beat Drum, Beat Heart*, whereas for H.D., the sea change in her poetry commenced during the First World War, culminating in *Trilogy*, which was written during the Second World War.

From Imagism to Epic

Imagism was at its zenith in the years immediately prior to the outbreak of the First World War. Hilda Doolittle's moniker H.D., based on the nom de plume 'H.D., *Imagiste*' bestowed upon her by Ezra Pound in 1912, is synonymous with Imagism, and yet her poetics began to change in the course of the First World War. During the autumn of 1916, according to Helen Carr, H.D. concentrated on writing prose "embodying her feelings about war" (2009: loc. 16468). One such piece is H.D.'s review, believed by Gary Burnett to have been written in 1916, of Yeats'

Responsibilities and Other Poems (1914).[37] In this review H.D. offers her opinions on the relationship between politics and the arts in a world at war. In contrast with Yeats' perspective, H.D. argues that during wartime an artist should not stand apart from, or in judgement on, the rest of humankind. Lola Ridge demonstrates a comparable perspective in her wartime poetics, as discussed in the previous chapter of this thesis. According to H.D., the artist has a responsibility to ensure that past mistakes are not repeated and to trust the future in the hands of younger and upcoming generations:

> but we are none the less responsible, we are all a part of this world calamity, we can not [sic] stand apart with Pharisaic gesture. But we can do this. We can wait, endure, confess the past was all a mistake, turn to the future and hope for the generation to follow. (H.D. 1916: 53)[38]

Here, H.D. "outlines her belief that art and the artist must stand against the forces of war and destruction, and struggle to find a transformative vision of a more humane and healing world" (Carr, 2009: loc. 16468). This quest would come to fruition in H.D.'s poetry written decades later, during the Second World War. In "The Walls Do Not Fall", H.D. articulates her conception of the role of the poet:

> we are the keepers of the secret,
> the carriers, the spinners
>
> of the rare intangible thread
> that binds all humanity
>
> to ancient wisdom,
> to antiquity; ("The Walls Do Not Fall" 15: 24).

While claiming a woman-centred space for the visionary artist in *Trilogy* H.D.'s conception of poetry also echoes the theosophical influences of Pound's earlier model of poetry; a belief in "a deeper older alternative truth about existence lost to

[37] While the precise date of the creation of this review is unknown Burnett (1988) establishes 1916 as the earliest probable date for this review.

[38] This review was published in 1987/88 in *Agenda.*

modern rationalism, which could be discovered particularly in Eastern religion and philosophy" (Carr, 2009: loc. 5128).

H.D.'s exploration of this linkage between the political and personal during war is anticipated in her poetry of the First World War period. In a departure from H.D.'s succinct Imagist mode, "The Tribute", comprising eleven verses, was published in *The Egoist* in November 1916. It is a political poem which is "more explicitly concerned with the war than H.D.'s other poems … it is more insistent in its message, an attempt to write more directly about the political world" (Carr, 2009: loc. 16452). "The Tribute" considers the eradication of a generation of young men as a consequence of the First World War:

> That the boys of the cities keep
> with the gods apart,
> for our world was too base
> for their youth,
> our city too dark, (VIII: 166)

Similar concerns are expressed by Letts and Ridge in their poetry collections published during this time period. [39]

According to Martz, "The Tribute" is important in another respect as, beginning the formal evolution of H.D.'s poetry, it "shows a prophetic spirit struggling for release into longer forms" (1998: 84). These preoccupations were not limited to a single text, as "Cities", published in H.D.'s first collection, *Sea Garden* (1916), also exhibits these tendencies. Carr, in a similar vein to Martz, posits that these two poems are H.D.'s "first move towards a different form of writing, which would make possible poems like her powerful Second World War *Trilogy*" (2009: loc. 16468). The notion that some of the foundations for H.D.'s later longer form were laid in her First World War poetry and are therefore suggestive of a progressive movement and maturation in her writing is advanced by Horace Gregory in a contemporaneous review of "The Walls Do Not Fall". In this review Gregory describes the poem as "unmistakable proof of the poet's maturity and it contains those rare qualities which so fortunately transcend the more facile definitions of time and place" (1944: 586).

[39] See earlier references in this thesis to Letts' "The Deserter" and Ridge's "The Fire".

H.D.'s complicated relationship with Lawrence also plays a part in her creative evolution. During the years of their friendship (1914-18), H.D. began to emerge from the restrictions of Imagism: "by 1916-1917 H.D. was beginning to create a strongly personal voice, breaking out of the Imagist confines, breaking through the Greek mask" (Martz, 1983: xix). Martz postulates that the expansiveness and ambition of *Trilogy* has its roots in H.D.'s relationship with Lawrence: "one suspects that this tendency towards greater openness [in *Trilogy*] was encouraged by her friendship with D.H. Lawrence which began in 1914 and ended abruptly in 1918" (1983: xix). Despite the associated personal distress this relationship caused H.D., it also appears to have contributed to the change in her poetry; the movement toward the more open forms of *Trilogy*.

Wartime was traumatic for H.D., who, during the First World War, suffered many personal tragedies, including the still-birth of her baby in 1915 and the break-up of her marriage to Aldington. The understanding of trauma prior to the nineteenth-century related solely to physical injuries and only over time came to include psychological and emotional disturbances. Sigmund Freud, with whose work H.D. was familiar and with whom she underwent analysis in the 1930s, proposed, in his discussion of the emotional impact of war, that trauma is connected with a compulsion to repeat the repressed traumatic incident: "he [the victim] is obliged to *repeat* the repressed material as a contemporary experience instead of, as the physician would prefer to see, *remembering* it as something belonging to the past" (italics in the original) (1920: 288).[40] This compulsion is embodied in the character of Julia, the H.D. figure in *Bid Me to Live*:

> it was shut in her as other things were shut in her because "the war will be over." (The war will never be over.) (I: 4)

The purpose of re-enactment is an attempt by the victim of trauma to dominate, understand and therefore get past the trauma. According to Freud, traumatic

[40] Susan Stanford Friedman explores these connections between H.D. and Freud in *Analyzing Freud: Letters of H.D., Bryher, And Their Circle* which references that "it was March of 1933 when H.D. first encountered the famous patriarch of psychoanalysis in the flesh" (2002:xiii).

compulsion takes two forms. The first is an unconscious recreation of the conditions of the trauma and the second manifests in repeated dreams.
Both kinds of trauma are reflected in *Trilogy*. As Graham points out, "there is, in fact, a paradox in *Trilogy* that is uniquely war-based: H.D. is simultaneously provoked and disabled by war because it is an experience that is both utterly new (the unprecedented destruction of the Blitz) and yet horribly reminiscent of the earlier conflict" (2002: 173). Having married Aldington in 1913, the stillbirth of their baby followed two years later, and by the end of the First World War her husband's affairs contributed to H.D.'s decision to go to Cornwall with Cecil Gray, by whom she was to become pregnant. Her brother Gilbert died in action in France, the shock of which resulted in her father's death just prior to the birth of H.D.'s daughter, Perdita, in March 1919. Aldington's final and brutal rejection of H.D. swiftly followed, as did her own near death from influenza later that year.[41]

In *Trilogy* survival is linked to reconciliation with the past and emergence into the present: "the frailty of links between past and present and the extraordinary fact of their survival are important parts of the reading" (Graham, 2002: 166). Recovering from trauma has also been likened to moving through the stages of grief, requiring the integration of the experienced loss(es), the processing of the grief that leads to adaptation and ultimately to acceptance of loss. The dates on which each of the three volumes of *Trilogy* were written reflect this vacillation between intensity, hope, anger and exhaustion which accompanies the grieving process; the initial disbelief at the cessation of the bombing of London which was unrelenting in the period between September 1940 and May 1941 coincides with "The Walls Do Not Fall" and the conclusion of another persistent bombing campaign focused on southern England which lasted for the five months from January to May 1944, coincides with the writing of "Tribute to the Angels".[42] 1944 was a critical year, as the offensives of the previous year, including the "Dambusters" aerial bombings of the dams in the Ruhr Valley and Operation Gomorrah, the day and night aerial bombing of Hamburg for a week by British and American air-forces, began to yield positive results. The

[41] Catherine Zilboorg's Introduction and Editors Notes in *Bid Me To Live* (2011) provides an overview of this period of H.D.'s life.

[42] According to Manfred Griehl in *Luftwaffe At War German Bombers Over England: 1940 - 1944* this offensive codenamed Operation Steinbock ended in early 1944 (1999:72).

invasion of Normandy by allied forces (D-Day) took place in June 1944, beginning the reclamation of Europe from Nazi Germany. However, the optimism of the early part of 1944, when "Tribute to the Angels" was written, was, by the end of the year, beginning to fade and this is when the last book of *Trilogy*, "The Flowering of the Rod", was written.

Norman Holmes Pearson reinforces the connection between the writing of *Trilogy* and the working through of trauma, quoting H.D.'s remark that "outer threat and constant reminder of death drove me inward" (1973: v). This is consistent with Simone Weil's observations on war trauma: "the mind ought to find a way out, but the mind has lost all capacity to do as much as look outward. The mind is completely absorbed in doing itself violence" (1956: 22). Combining Freud's compulsion therapy with the stages of grieving, the act of writing about and within the war was, for H.D., cathartic.

The cumulative impact of H.D.'s experiences of and in the First World War, including personal tragedies, complex relationships, wartime politics, and concern for the arts, are significant catalysts in triggering the change in her writing. The creative transition in H.D.'s poetics develops progressively, culminating in *Trilogy* written during the Second World War. H.D.'s Imagistic mode is nonetheless the prerequisite for her later, longer, forms. H.D. did not abandon Imagism in *Trilogy*, which is a poem-sequence infused with Imagist tenets. Graham observes that *Trilogy* is:

> reminiscent in its appearance of the poetry of H.D.'s [earlier] imagist period, each section of the poem takes its place upon the page with plenty of space around it, each line averaging eight words or so, usually in sets of ten couplets though sometimes more, giving an overall impression of a writer taking her time, not needing to fill the page to make her point. (2002: 162)

In this sense *Trilogy* is comparable with Pound's epic, the *Cantos,* which likewise retains features and techniques of Imagism.

The opening of *Trilogy* has the curious effect of simultaneously attracting and alienating the reader. The third line of "The Walls Do Not Fall" immediately

establishes a rapport with the reader, and perhaps, addressee - H.D.'s husband Aldington, who lived with her in Mecklenburgh Square, or H.D. herself in her earlier identity: the removal of railings is "from your (and my) old town square" (3). The importance of the reader or addressee ("your") is emphasized in their positioning prior to the writer ("my"), locating the reader within both the "town square" and poetic space. However, immediately and abruptly thereafter, the reader is challenged. The placing of a colon at the end of the first tercet sets up the expectation of clarification in the ensuing lines, yet, seemingly at random, the poet moves the action far back in time and place to ancient Egypt:

> mist and mist-grey, no colour,
> still the Luxor bee, chick and hare
> pursue unalterable purpose
>
> in green, rose-red, lapis;
> they continue to prophesy
> from the stone papyrus:
>
> there, as here, ruin opens
> the tomb, the temple; enter,
> there as here, there are no doors: ("The Walls Do Not Fall" 1: 3).

Despite this ostensibly abrupt transition across time and place there is an insistent authorial intention to continually engage with the reader, who embodies the collective experience of war and trauma. This persistence is apparent in later references to mutual current and past suffering and tragedy: "shivering overtakes us", "we pass on" and "we are caught up by the tornado / and deposited on no pleasant ground" ("The Walls Do Not Fall": 1: 3; 4; 32: 45).

Moving across time and space is not a new preoccupation for H.D., who had examined transhistorical contexts in her three-part prose work, *Palimpsest* (1926), which crosses from Rome (circa 75 B.C.), to London (circa A.D. 1916-1926) and Egypt (circa A.D. 1925). However, the strategy in "The Walls Do Not Fall" is also evocative of Eliot's "mythical method" elaborated in his review of James Joyce's *Ulysses*. The writer who employs the mythical method, Eliot says, is:

> manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity … it is simply a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history. (1923: 483)

Denis Donoghue notes that the mythical method entails "the juxtaposition of two levels of awareness, two places of reality, at once similar and different: the meaning is the transaction between them" (1997: 211). By employing this technique in *Trilogy* what H.D. proffers to her readers is not an escape to the past, but access to understanding a confusing present. In this opening section of "The Walls Do Not Fall" the alignment of ancient Egypt with present-day London and the subordination of the poetic voice necessitate the reader's participation in making connections and creating meaning, rather than relying on the narrator to lead the interpretation. While this opening sequence of *Trilogy* may initially bewilder the reader, it invites active engagement. The correspondence between the ruins of ancient Egypt and the ruins of the contemporary London is neither accidental nor arbitrary but is instead a poetic strategy which highlights the ambition and scope of *Trilogy.* The mirroring of time and place, as the blitzed city of London is linked with ancient Egypt (Luxor, where the tomb of Tutankhamun was opened), highlights a key concern of *Trilogy*: to parallel past and present events in seeking a resolution to the current crisis of war.

In the Foreword to *Trilogy*, Pearson, H.D.'s friend and literary executor, notes her attempt "to connect the experience of World War Two with her history and history in general" (1973: vi). To H.D., the personal association is clear as, in an undated letter to Pearson which Donna Krolik Hollenberg says was likely written in 1943, H.D writes, quoting from "The Walls Do Not Fall", that:

> the "fallen roof leaves the sealed room open to the air" is of course true of our own house of life - outer violence touching the deepest hidden subconscious terrors etc. and we see much of our past "on show", as it were". (H.D. in Hollenberg, 1997: 33)

The final tercet of the opening section of *Trilogy* reinforces this idea; that external violence triggers inner terrors, both from an individual's lived past and the collective past of lost generations:

yet the frame held:
we passed the flame: we wonder
what saved us? what for? (“The Walls Do Not Fall” 1: 4)

So fundamental is this quest that the remainder of *Trilogy* seeks to find answers to these questions.

For both H.D. and Wingfield there is a close imbrication between their lives and their writing. War, for Wingfield as it was for H.D., acted as a catalyst which would presage significant changes, artistically and personally. Wingfield’s first collection, *Poems,* was published in 1938. While Wingfield began publishing poetry well after Imagism was at its peak prior to the publication of *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* and *Trilogy* similarities had been observed between Wingfield’s poetry and H.D.’s Imagist mode. Robert Hogan posits that Wingfield’s *Poems* “reveals an economical, almost stark style which some reviewers have compared favourably to the early Imagist works of H.D. and Pound” (1979: 694). As Wingfield’s first collection was generally critically well received, Lucy Collins speculates as to why Wingfield, in *Beat Drum, Beat Heart,* “should depart so radically from the form of her early work” (2013: 23). The Second World War appears to be a significant factor in this transition. The onset of the war heralded significant changes in Wingfield’s life, which would influence her writing: Collins argues that the “immediacy of war opened up a new vein of exploration in her [Wingfield’s] poetry” (2013: 23). A complicating factor in determining when this creative change occurred is the ambiguity as to when precisely Wingfield wrote *Beat Drum, Beat Heart*. Given that the second line of *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* is “*War War it has come*” it would be reasonable to assume that it was written when the Second World War had been declared or in the immediate lead up to the conflict. A note in Wingfield’s *Collected Poems 1938-1983* casts doubt on this assumption, however: “it so happens that the long poem *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* was written many years before World War II, and had only six lines added during the war to bring it more up-to-date” (1983: 180). Penny Perrick, drawing on references within the poem itself, argues that “Sheila was indeed working on the poem in 1938 against the backdrop of the Spanish Civil War, Picasso’s *Guernica*, and Chamberlain’s “peace in our time”” (2007: 180). For Davis, *Beat Drum, Beat Heart*

> strikes a recognisably "Thirties" note in its apocalyptic forebodings, ambivalently censuring vicissitudes of war and love while embracing the redemptive potential of martial and sexual immolation. (2003b: 82).

It is therefore highly probable that Wingfield began to write *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* in the 1930s, underscoring the importance of this decade to Wingfield and the ways in which it may have influenced the creation, style and content of *Beat Drum, Beat Heart*.

In December 1932 Sheila Wingfield married Mervyn [Pat] Wingfield who would, upon the death of his father in 1947, become the ninth Viscount Powerscourt. In February 1933, the couple came to Ireland and according to *The Irish Times*:

> scenes of great rejoicing were witnessed at Powerscourt House, Enniskerry, Co. Wicklow yesterday on the occasion of the homecoming of the Hon. Mervyn Patrick Wingfield … with his wife. (1933: 4)

However, it is unclear how much time the Wingfields spent in Ireland during the 1930s as their first child Grania was born in London in April 1934 and Wingfield writes of having spent time in Kent prior to the Second World War.[43] Wingfield was alienated in a number of ways from Ireland: a Jewish heiress, marrying into an Anglo-Irish family with declining fortunes who were desperate to maintain their Irish estate, which had been in the family since 1618 when the land and a viscountcy had been bestowed by Elizabeth I on Richard Wingfield (Perrick, 2007: 39). While Wingfield's alienation was caused in part by factors outside her control, one element of her estrangement was self-inflicted; her choice of husband. As Collins observes, by marrying Mervyn Wingfield, "Sheila accepted a position in Ireland's dwindling Ascendency Class, choosing status over creative freedom" (2013: 17).

Wingfield's arrival in Ireland coincided with a particularly problematic phase in Irish history. Tom Clyde describes this inter-war period in Ireland as:

[43] Alex Davis references an inclusion in Wingfield's *Sun Too Fast* (1974) of her spending time in Kent prior to the Second World War (2001:339).

> a pause for breath in extremely difficult circumstances: the disruption of the Civil War, the emergence of a new society (and one increasingly hostile to avant garde gestures and foreign influences) … and of course the economic difficulties of the 1930s. (2003: 42)

In 1937, four years after Wingfield came to Ireland, a new Constitution removed references to the British monarch from the internal affairs of the twenty-six county Irish Free State, legitimised the partition of Ireland, and established Eire. As Collins observes, this Constitution was regressive, as "the role of women was overwhelmingly linked to their reproductive capacity and so the need to regulate their sexual lives acquired the utmost importance" (2012: 40). The Constitution, despite being endorsed by a narrow majority of the population, came into effect on 29 December 1937. Richard Breen, Damian Hannan, David Rottman and Christopher Whelan refer to the "ethnic and religious" overtones of this Constitution, which declared the "family as the natural primary and fundamental unit of society" (1990: 107; Article 41.1). Within this family unit emphasis is placed on the "special role in the common good that women play in the home" (Breen *et. al*., 1990: 108). This Constitution explicitly emphasized the primacy of a woman's role in the private sphere over their public life:

> the state shall, therefore, endeavour to ensure that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of the duties in the home. (Article 41.2.2)

During the 1930s, the collective power of the Catholic Church and State apparatuses operating in Ireland explicitly and implicitly sought to silence and idealise woman as object and mother. Alex Davis and Lee M. Jenkins' proposition that Modernism and post-colonialism are not mutually exclusive has particular resonance in an Irish context (2007). Pound's rallying cry to "Make it New" coincides, in Ireland, with what Anne Fogarty calls "the simultaneous desire to achieve independence from English rule in every sphere including the literary" (1995: 212). However, the repressive environment of Ireland in the 1930s also impacted on literary creation, production and publication. As Terence Brown posits, "the 1930s [in Ireland] had been a trying time for writers who had chosen to remain in the country, censorship and an unsympathetic public climate had only proved bearable because markets for their work had been readily available abroad" (1982: 174). In Ireland, opportunities

for publishing and in particular for publishing poetry were slim. Through her friendship with Ottoline Morrell, Wingfield met John Hayward, "the poetry adviser to the Cresset Press", who was instrumental in getting Wingfield's work published (Perrick, 2007: 54). It is likely that limited opportunities to disseminate her work in Ireland, together with her social connections, influenced Wingfield's choice of an English publishing house for her early collections, including *Poems* (1938) and *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* (1946).

Marginality defines Wingfield's life. In contrast to H.D.'s presence at the centre of an *avant-garde* milieu, Wingfield, despite her lifelong efforts, subsisted on the literary margins. In her 2007 documentary, Anne Roper observes that Wingfield undertook a major renovation of Powerscourt, the Wingfield ancestral home, "in the hope that literary people would visit - but very few did" (Raidió Teilifís Éireann, 2007a). This comparative isolation shaped her work in important ways. George Sutherland Fraser in the Preface to *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* in *Collected Poems 1938-1983* observes that "Sheila Wingfield had in 1938 never heard of Imagism. It was her fate, and in some ways a lucky fate, to be a natural poet and to live, apart from a very few friends like John Hayward and like Ottoline Morrell … quite outside the literary world" (1983: xv). This latter point is contentious, as Wingfield was herself in part the cause of her exclusion, and neither Hayward nor Morrell were detached from literary circles. According to Roper (2007a), among the reasons for Wingfield's isolation were her belief that she could not obtain patronage due to her husband's disapproval of her writing poetry and her life-long fear of censure. Publication also caused Wingfield enduring chronic and psychological pain; according to Michael Seery, "on the eve of the publication of *Poems* in 1938, Sheila suffered the first of a series of breakdowns" (2013: 116).

In her second collection, *Beat Drum, Beat Heart*, Wingfield undertakes an ambitious and far-reaching enterprise. Described as a "two-thousand line comparison of the psychological and philosophical states of men in war and women in love", this bold aspiration is underscored on the inside front cover of *Beat Drum, Beat Heart*: "she [Wingfield] calls in evidence not only of the human condition of men and woman in all ages but personal knowledge of the "*servitudes et grandeurs*" of love and war" (Hogan, 1979: 694).

The Second World War is referred to as "The Emergency" in Irish history. For the duration of the conflict Ireland maintained a position of neutrality. Further marginalising Wingfield from the majority of the Irish populace, her husband served in the British Army as a Major in the Royal Irish Regiment and 8th Hussars. A pregnant Wingfield and her two children spent the war in Bermuda, where her youngest child was born. Unlike H.D., who gave birth to a stillborn daughter during wartime, Wingfield gave birth to a son, Guy, in 1940. His birth was nonetheless traumatic, as Guy was born hearing-impaired due to Wingfield contracting German measles during her pregnancy. Despite these challenges, the war years heralded an unprecedented personal and creative freedom for Wingfield. According to Perrick Wingfield would remember this time with great fondness: "the account she wrote in *Real People* about her time on the island is uncharacteristically gushing" (2007: 70).

Some reviewers remark on the emotional detachment of Wingfield's pre-war poetry, while also recognising its ability to connect with humanity. As Marjorie Elizabeth Howes observes, "Wingfield's reluctance to reveal the self fully leads her to reflect on the interwoven nature of human experience" (2020: 296). This latent potential of Wingfield's pre-war poetry may have been fully realised as a consequence of her wartime experiences. That the shift from Wingfield's earlier poetic style to the expansiveness and breadth in *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* is evolutionary rather than a complete departure from her earlier poetry is suggested by Hogan, who observes of *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* that "while it is more subjective than the earlier efforts, nevertheless, retains much of the objectiveness vividness and taut rigor of *Poems*". (1979: 694).

Wartime would, as it did for H.D., trigger a notable change in Wingfield's poetry. This perspective is supported by Collins (2013), who suggests that the reason for Wingfield's creative transition from her earlier poetry to *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* was brought on by the Second World War and rooted in her lived experience. While Wingfield's experience of the Second World War "in an enchanted coral speck in the north Atlantic" is in sharp contrast with H.D's experience in the centre of a war-torn London, for both poets their wartime contexts are sites of significant creative motivation (Perrick, 2007). Wingfield's wartime expatriation in Bermuda may have

provided her with an exceptional opportunity for personal and artistic liberty, which is reflected formally and thematically in *Beat Drum, Beat Heart*. The female speaker in "Women At Peace" likens this new-found autonomy to an emergence from stupor:

> As in a trance - until
> One morning when I wake,
> Wake suddenly, not knowing
> How, not knowing why,
> Feeling a change to climates
> Nearer south . . .
> Clear clear ("Women At Peace": 59)

Like H.D., however, Wingfield does not wholly abandon her earlier style of writing. In writing of the "big picture" of the Second World War Wingfield, like H.D., preserves elements of Imagism.

While each poet transitions to longer and open form poetry in *Trilogy* and *Beat Drum, Beat Heart*, their retention of Imagist technique as a constituent of this mode is indicative of their development and deployment of a "late Imagism" as a necessary element of MacKay's "late Modernism". This repurposing of Imagism by Wingfield and H.D. in their long form World War Two poem-sequences exploits the latent potential of this late period of Modernism, as it:

> allows us to reconsider what Modernism means as a description of distinctive aesthetic modes that were not monolithic or static but capable of development and transformation. (MacKay, 2007: 16)

The first two sections of *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* comprise six Imagistic poems, which, in their extreme concision and precise visualisation, capture "a series of snapshots of peacetime" (Davis, 2001: 341). The poem opens (italics in the original):

> Shouts rang up the street
> *War War it has come*
> Like leaves they were blown
> A spear from its corner
> A summons on paper

Or buckle to thumb (“Men In War”: 9)

Unlike *Trilogy*’s visceral opening in a war-torn London, the start of *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* is upbeat and engaging. The scene depicts the early excitement of war, likening the shouts reverberating through the streets to leaves blowing in the wind, a metaphor for the passage of the souls of the dead in Homer, Virgil, Dante and Shelley. This scene is evocative, in particular, of Shelley’s “Ode to the West Wind” as these winds of change and revolution may be intensely destructive or a powerful force of regeneration which reinforces the historical significance of the present moment. A sombre note is introduced with the words “spear” and “summons”, capturing a sense of foreboding, following which the action immediately moves indoors. This transition from outdoors to indoors signals oppositional experiences and expectations of war. The word “spear” also aligns with the *Drum* in the poem’s title which is evocative of war rituals traditionally associated in African culture with the beating of drums and the brandishing of spears signalling the onset of war. These references are anachronistic, indicative of a poem that time-travels through periods of warfare, a transhistorical tendency that Wingfield shares with H.D.:

In the dark of a room
Old fears were known
By wrinkled up cheeks
And by young wives
Who bending at waist
Must kiss them alone (“Men In War”: 9)

The “room” of this verse is analogous to the contrasting combatant / civilian experiences of war. It also presages the breaching of the boundaries between public and private spaces wrought by the Second World War and connects with an awareness of the invasiveness of war throughout history.

This Imagistic poem also sets up an opposition between the public and private spheres in their gendered responses to the announcement of war. From the bright outdoor excitement, the reader is now taken into the dark confines of the intimate female space within which women, young and old, are “bending” in fear of this news. In this site, old women with “wrinkled up cheeks” who suffered through the tragedy of the First World War, and “young wives” who have yet to experience war

as adults, share a sense of fear. This communal and yet private female response ("them alone") sharply contrasts with the excitement on the streets as their menfolk follow the enticing call to march to war:

> But light were their feet
> As thoughts were broken
> And barriers thrown -
> Out of copse out of brake
> Out of field they were flown
> To the tap of the drum. ("Men In War": 9)

The "tap of the drum" in the final line is a possible illusion to Whitman's "Drum-Taps".

Each of the three following vignettes starts with the word "Goodbye" - to the "milkcart pony" - to "the inn's warmth" (9) - and concludes:

> Goodbye such emptiness
> As loiters up and down
> To show its friends
> The new pup on a string,
> Or some tight held-flowers
> Goes mutely visiting -
> On Sundays, in the cleanness
> Of a town: ("Men In War": 10)

Fraser, in the Preface to *Beat Drum, Beat Heart*, praises these shorter poems, in which "there is not a word wasted there and the references are absolutely precise" (1983: xiv). In the opening sequence, Wingfield creates, with an Imagist's economy of language and precisely observed detail, gendered oppositions of foreboding and excitement following the announcement of war and its impact on an idealized rural community. Each of these six vignettes could be considered a poem in its own right but Wingfield's wider vision links them together in order to create a broader canvas on which to paint the narrative of *Beat Drum, Beat Heart.*

In these Imagistic poems which open *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* Wingfield conjures a sense of male excitement and freedom which is tempered by female fear and

domestic confinement accompanying the announcement of war. Wingfield captures and suspends in time the exact moment war is announced which, as the atrocities of the war unfold, heralds a fundamental change from that point forward. These sensory images engage and immerse the reader in the precise moment at which life for everyone is irrevocably changed. This compelling and visual opening of *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* draws the reader into the unfolding meditation on war and love.

In his Preface, Fraser reinforces the Imagistic connection between Wingfield and H.D.: "if published around 1912, [the poems] would have been recognised as masterly Imagist poems in the manner of Ezra Pound or H.D" (1983: xv). In the opening sequences of *Trilogy* and *Beat Drum, Beat Heart,* H.D. and Wingfield move from their individual experience of war to connect with the communal experience of humanity. In these opening sections, by shifting between the local and the global, and across space and time, each poet sets up the scope and ambition of their meditations on war. These openings also initiate their explorations of the "transnational imaginative energies and solidarities" which are forged in their wartime collections (Ramazani, 2020: 28).

Like Wingfield and H.D., Pound had transitioned from the short Imagist poem to the epic. Authored within similar timeframes *Beat, Drum, Beat Heart* and *Trilogy* have formal commonalities with Pound's *Cantos*, and in particular with his Second World War sequence, *The Pisan Cantos.* Flexibility of form links *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* and *Trilogy* to Pound's *Cantos.* Donald Hall, quoting from an interview with Pound, posits that a significant challenge in writing the *Cantos* was formal: "to get a form - something elastic enough to take the necessary material" (Pound, 1962). While the notion of elasticity is useful when considering all three long poems, in their long war poems, both Wingfield and H.D. exceed Pound's conception of an epic as a poem including history to produce, in a context in which certainties and social boundaries have become unstable and permeable, a form of poetry which reflects more directly the act of recording history itself. The revisions made to *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* between its initial publication and all subsequent published versions, are indicative of Wingfield's consciousness of the significance of accurately chronicling her lived history and the social and cultural impacts of war for future generations. In *Trilogy* H.D. too is conscious of the need to ensure that her first-hand witness of the

atrocities of war is accurately recorded and remembered. This concern is registered in H.D.'s conception of the role of the artist in wartime - as the "keepers of the secret" and the "carriers" of the narrative of a world at war for future generations ("The Walls Do Not Fall, 15: 24).

The epic is a genre traditionally associated with and publicly expounding men's heroic deeds, and often narrated by a male, thus reinforcing the dominant male perspective of history and culture. According to Friedman, the "genre norms for the epic have established it as a preeminent poetic genre of action in the public domain" (1986: 204). The poetic rules, therefore, for epic poetry reflect western ideals of masculinity, in contrast to the lyric, which in its intimacy and privacy, reflects ideals and traits associated with femininity, albeit that lyric poetry, too, has long been a male domain. In their long war poems H.D. and Wingfield problematize the boundaries of the epic and lyric to craft a hybrid form more suited to their responses to war.

Beat Drum, Beat Heart and *Trilogy* are long narrative poems which exhibit characteristics of the epic form. Each poem is wide-ranging, ambitious, visionary and large in scale. *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* is described by Herbert Read whose reaction is recorded in the Preface to Wingfield's *Collected Poems 1938-1983*, as "the most sustained meditation on war that has been written in our time. I find it difficult to think of a modern poem of equal length that so successfully maintains a unity of style and such directness of vision" (1983: xiii). In its 1946 publication, *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* is sixty-four pages in length and comprises almost two thousand lines. *Trilogy* (1973) is one hundred and seventy-two pages, comprising three volumes each divided into forty-three sections. Each section, Marilyn Hacker notes, "is a single sentence composed of multiple linked segments: full stops occur only at the end of individually numbered poems" (2008). The structural regularity of *Trilogy* ensures cohesion, in that each of the numbered poems makes sense in its own right while each is also essential to the overall meaning of *Trilogy*: Georgina Rivera-Castaner posits that "the whole is capable of being realized only in terms of its constituent parts" (1970: 42). *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* and *Trilogy* address the universal themes of love and war across cultures and histories, and both poem-sequences are didactic insofar as their poets articulate the devastation that war has

wrought through the ages and offer warnings to future generations not to repeat the mistakes of the past.

While H.D. and Wingfield transition to an epic mode in *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* and *Trilogy* they also problematize the epic form. Both poems incorporate strong and resonant female voices, values and perspectives. H.D., early in her career, "associated the epic not only with a generalized masculinity, but also more specifically with the destructive aspects of the masculine - war, armies, death and betrayal" (Friedman, 1986: 214). However, in the middle of the London Blitz, H.D. successfully rises to the immense challenge of finding an innovative poetic form to accommodate her response to war and her vision of the future. In *Trilogy* H.D. articulates the level of challenge faced and foreshadows Anglo-Irish novelist Bowen's contention, in her novel of wartime espionage *The Heat of the Day*, that "war's being global meant that it ran off the edges of maps; it was uncontainable" (1948: 308) (italics in the original):

> *we are voyageurs, discoverers*
> *of the not-known,*
>
> *the unrecorded;*
> *we have no map;* ("The Walls Do Not Fall" 43: 59)

With no map to guide her, H.D. understands that the Second World War requires a radical and unique poetic response. In *Trilogy*, in a revisionary version of epic, H.D. creates a suitable vehicle in which to express the breadth and depth of her response to war. In *Trilogy*, H.D. successfully combines the visionary and visual poetic structure praised by Graham as the "presentation … of a determination of purpose, of ideas contained within a grid, of language tamed" with a poetics that articulates the immediate impact of war (2002: 162). H.D. also transcends the immediate theme of war to accommodate an exploration and interrogation of borders, boundaries and margins across time and space.

Denise Levertov, quoted on the back cover of *Trilogy*, insists that:

> H.D. spoke of essentials. It is a simplicity not of reduction but of having gone further, further out of the circle of known light, further toward an unknown center. (1973)

This observation underscores the visionary quality of *Trilogy*. This poem is an entry point into an exploration of an "*unregistered dimension*" from where there may be no return yet has the transformative potential of reaching "*haven, / heaven*" ("The Walls Do Not Fall": 58; 59) (italics in the original). This is a challenge which is accepted and articulated in *Trilogy.* With these three volumes, H.D. rediscovers and recreates, in the remaking and reworking of "masculine" epic form, a poetics in which to articulate the "not-known".

In *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* Wingfield, too, problematizes the traditions of heroic epic. The male soldier, in the final section of "Men In War", uses the words "shameful", "hapless", "degraded" and "murder", terms not conventionally associated with heroic all-conquering, returning, male combatants. This section closes with a plea from the male speaker not to repeat past mistakes, with the realisation that truth, like everything else in life, is relative and conditional:

> Never, never again.
> By the square, tragic mouth
> Of wrath, that's now shameful or hapless,
> And degraded by disaster; and by
> Murder done in clean air
> And truth wrung like a dirty cloth;
> By everyone who carried in his mind
> Some bright image like a coin,
> Yet could not give small change
> Or find a right retort, surprised
> And piteously;
>
> By any homeless ones who sit,
> Empty of feeling, on a heap of bricks ("Men In War": 22)

In this final section of the first part of *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* Wingfield demonstrates her mastery of language by inserting antonyms which invert the heroic

register of the epic while also finding a way to challenge the veracity and heroism of the war narrative.

What has been written of *Trilogy* could also apply to *Beat Drum, Beat Heart*, that it "challenged male cultural authority by reimagining the epic form and its traditional myths, imbuing them with her [their] own mysticism and feminism" (Axelrod et al. 2009: 304). In *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* and *Trilogy* Wingfield and H.D. contest the boundaries of the epic itself, producing "a hybrid form that fused the epic, the novel and the lyric" (Friedman, 1986: 222). That hybrid form is more suited to these women's wide-ranging exploration and interrogation of the gendered tensions and social conflicts which war (and love) can wreak in the lives of men and women. Michael Andre Bernstein posits that:

> what distinguishes a modern verse epic from its classical predecessors is the necessity, in a society no longer unified by a single, generally accepted code of values, of justifying its argument by the direct appeal of the author's own experiences and emotions. (1980: 180)

Fragmentation and fracture are key considerations in *Trilogy* and *Beat Drum, Beat Heart*, as each poet creates a poetic logic and reconstitutes a form adequate to the shattering impact of modern war. In their war poems Wingfield and H.D. repurpose an older "heroic" mode by wresting it back from literary history to reflect the disintegration of their contemporary moment. In *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* and *Trilogy*, Wingfield and H.D. create a modern, female form of epic authored during wartime. Under the shattering impact and shadow of the Second World War each poet weaves into their war poems their own experiences of war, which encompass not battle zones but civilian spaces. During the First World War, the direct impact of the war was sometimes felt far from the Front, for example in the Zeppelin raids on London from 1915-17, but in the Second World War the boundary between the home front and battlefront was demolished. Both H.D. and Wingfield find a form capable of conveying this shared experience of war and the accompanying unpredictability and disorientation of a social order no longer operating as an integrated whole, irrevocably severed from its past by the rupture of the Second World War.

The interwar years: objectivist poetics as a site of resistance, regeneration, reflection and renewal

The 1930s, bookended by the arrival of the Great Depression and the onset of the Second World War, was a troubled and turbulent period in global history. Starting in the United States after a major drop in share prices in September 1929, the Great Depression would become an international catastrophe from which economic and social recovery would be slow. At this time, a cluster of poets, known as the Objectivists, emerged in America. In the words of Burton Hatlen, "Jewish and Modernist marginality came together, a marriage consummated in the midst of a worldwide political and economic crisis; and out of this marriage the Objectivist movement was born" (1999: 49). In contrast to poets associated with High Modernism, like Pound and Eliot, the Objectivists were, according to Richard Parker, "poets who were mostly Jewish, - either card-carrying Communists … and from urban backgrounds" (2014: 58). These poets were motivated and affected by their contemporary, political, economic and social milieux: as noted in the *Princeton Encyclopaedia of Poetry and Poetics*, "the Depression, the Holocaust and World War II made a deep impact on them" (2012: 964).

The term "Objectivists" first appeared in the February 1931 issue of *Poetry* guest-edited by Louis Zukofsky, where it describes poetry which "invoked the particularity of objects, freed from the interference of the poet's ego" (Axelrod, *et. al*: 2009: 748).[44] Led by Zukofsky, this short-lived poetic moment was, according to Mark Scroggins, "partly an extension of Pound's Imagist strictures" (2007: 186). Objectivist poets are sometimes called the second generation of American Modernists and, in some ways, Objectivism is a 1930s renovation of Imagism. William Carlos Williams, who was a key figure in the earlier Imagist movement and is represented in Pound's 1914 anthology *Des Imagistes*, was also associated with the Objectivist movement. However, Objectivist poetry also moved beyond Imagism: as Christopher Beach explains, it "was in some ways an extension of

[44] According to Robert Tucker (2014) "the term "Objectivist" was coined only after Harriet Monroe … insisted to the young Zukofsky that if he wished to guest-edit the February 1931 issue of the magazine he must have a name for his "movement"" (248).

Imagism, though it sought a greater complexity of thought and emotion than Imagism had provided" (2003: 108). According to the *Princeton Encyclopaedia of Poetry and Poetics* Objectivist poets "sought "to think with things as they exist"" (Zukofsky), to extend the range of Imagism while retaining its respect for things and for craft, and to open the poem to contemplate realities and historical context" (2012: 964). Despite their short trajectory in the 1930s, according to Davis and Jenkins, Objectivist poets as "inheritors of Modernist tendencies … may also be considered proponents of a "late" or "new" Modernism" (2007: 2). This notion of continuity between first-stage Modernism, Imagism, Objectivism and late Modernism is helpful in considering *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* and *Trilogy*, in which Objectivist tendencies are apparent, particularly in relation to dualism.[45] Objectivist epistemology holds that thoughts are separate from the world of objects and therefore that reality can be objectively known. Dualism is inherent in the Objectivist distinction between "subjective" and "objective" reality which is, according to Ann Cunliffe, "reminiscent of Cartesian dualism that mind-body, person-world, inner private-outer public self, individual-society, and so on are separate" (2010: 5). Dualism permeates both poem-sequences.

Jeffrey Twitchell-Waas' contention that "the insistence on viewing the poem as an object rather than as an expressive vehicle keeps the linguistic medium at arm's length and therefore directs attention to formal and social questions" comports with the attentiveness to impartiality and objectivity in *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* and *Trilogy* (2015: 320). These propensities also highlight a consciousness of the magnitude of their challenge, as Wingfield and H.D. seek to make sense of their profound personal (and local) horror in the face of the Second World War while simultaneously directing attention to the bigger (global) picture of warfare and conflict throughout history.

Commentators have remarked on Objectivist tendencies in Wingfield's poetry prior to *Beat Drum, Beat Heart*. Davis observes that Wingfield's poetry "possesses a

[45] In *21st-Century Modernism: The "New" Poetics* Marjorie Perloff employs the terms: "early", "first-stage" and "*avant-garde"* to refer to the prevailing Anglo-American literary Modernism during the early decades of the twentieth century (2002:3). For the purposes of this research the term "first-stage" will be used when referring to Modernism in this time-period.

quality of objectivism" which is enhanced in *Beat Drum, Beat Heart,* Wingfield's "most achieved work" (2003a: 347). The Preface to Wingfield's *Collected Poems 1938-1983* explicitly aligns her oeuvre with Objectivism: "Wingfield is something rather unusual in woman poets, an objectivist. She is more interested in all the wonderful, sad, and glorious detail of the world around her than in herself" (Fraser, 1983: xv). Perrick contends that Wingfield would have responded positively to the Objectivist label:

> she [Wingfield] thought of herself as an objectivist poet and would have liked Anne Fogarty's description of her work as "reticent probing, impersonal and non-declamatory". (2007: 143)

This reticence is, according to Collins, a feature of Wingfield's writing: "she desires always to explore but never to reveal the self fully" (2013: 21). According to Scroggins poetic structure and construction are specific concerns of Objectivist poets, who experimented "in the traditional or innovative shapes into which the poet casts his words" (2007: 187). In *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* Wingfield absorbs elements of Imagist tenets and of Objectivist tendencies.

Beat Drum, Beat Heart comprises four parts which is a structural similarity with Eliot's Second World war sequence *Four Quartets*. The relationship between seemingly opposite forces is foregrounded in the titular and structural arrangement of *Beat Drum, Beat Heart*. This composition is linked to the notion of duality, in the sense defined by Mona Ericson, as "two conceptually distinctive ideas that are interrelated" (2004: 10). The dust-jacket of *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* (1946) indicates its two-fold theme, "the incidence of war in the lives of men and women, and the incidence of love in their hearts". The title is split, the reference to "drum" conjuring the idea of marching, activity and movement, and the reference to "heart" suggestive of passion, privacy and emotion: the two sides share the word "beat", which indicates life itself.

This titular construction is also reflected in the structure of *Beat Drum, Beat Heart,* which is divided along gender lines and comprises two halves, each composed of two sections. The first two sections, "Men In War" and "Men At Peace", are linked by the word "men", which aligns with "drum" in the title as active, public and

outward focused. In contrast, the final two sections, “Women In Love” and “Women At Peace”, share the word “women”, which aligns with the “heart” of the poem’s title and are gendered as personal, emotional and private. These ostensible oppositions also invite the reader to read across these categories: in *Beat Drum, Beat Heart*, the gendered titles and structure align with the public / private binary which “indicates both the separate and contingent roles that still mark relationships between the sexes” (Collins, 2013: 23). The structure of *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* suggests an acute awareness of the two-fold and gendered experiences of war.

Objectivist influences are also apparent in the architecture of *Trilogy*, in the striking structural symmetry between the three constituent volumes. Each volume comprises an identical number of sections and, with only three exceptions, each section is written in couplets. Twitchell-Wass outlines the three principles of an Objectivist poem: “a self-consciously focused object constructed out of material possibilities” with “a (presumably social) aim or purpose” which is set “within the larger constraints of society and history” (2015: 320). Aligning with these three Objectivist tenets, the three volumes of *Trilogy* were published at key stages during and in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, and were issued sequentially in consecutive years: 1944, 1945 and 1946.

Duality is embedded within the couplet structure of *Trilogy*. Throughout the poem apparent opposites are presented together on the page, past and present; science and tradition; secularity and religion; and good and evil:

> Evil was active in the land,
> Good was impoverished and sad;
>
> Ill promised adventure,
> Good was smug and fat;
>
> Dev-ill was after us,
> tricked up like Jehovah;
>
> Good was the tasteless pod,

stripped from the manna-beans, pulse, lentils:
they were angry when we were so hungry
for the nourishment, God:

they snatched off our amulets,
charms are not, they said, grace;

but gods always face two-ways,
so let us search the old highways

for the true-rune, the right spell,
recover old values; ("The Walls Do Not Fall" 2: 5).

Aural and rhetorical effects are also apparent in this passage, demonstrating what may be deemed an Objectivist inclination to assign equal importance to sound and image (Beach, 2003). Intricate aural arrangements are embedded within the couplet structure. Imperfect rhyme and repetition are employed to defy readerly expectations and increase dramatic impact by the placement in close proximity of "Good", "God" and "gods". The alignment of "Evil", "Ill", "two-ways" and "highways" and the satiric reconstitution of "Dev-ill" also enhances the rhetorical effectiveness of this passage.

Thematically, this second section of "The Walls Do Not Fall" reminds the reader that "Evil /Ill / Dev-ill" will flourish unless "Good" is vigilant. This tension is ever present: good and evil are interdependent and deceptive, as "gods always face two-ways" and "God" and "Jehovah" are "tricked up". However, despite these ostensible oppositions, their coexistence is necessary for survival and evolution. As William Blake writes in his *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790):

> Without Contraries is no progression. Attraction and repulsion, reason and energy, love and hate, are necessary to human existence.
>
> From these contraries spring what the religious call Good and Evil. Good is the passive that obeys reason; Evil is the active springing from Energy.

Good is heaven. Evil is hell. (“The Argument”: 7).

Centuries apart, the two sequences highlight Blake and H.D.’s common intellectual curiosity and their concern that differences, especially those based on belief systems which determine what their followers consider to be good and evil, have, throughout history, been a cause of conflict and strife. The necessary coexistence of polarities, the effects of which are sharpened and intensified in wartime, also highlight the paradox of war throughout history.

The speaker in this section of “The Walls Do Not Fall” pronounces that answers to the current crisis of war, the evil which is “active in the land”, will be found by rediscovering ancient truths from pre-Christian pagan times (5). While *Trilogy* and *Four Quartets* are concerned with humanity’s relationship to history and time in a world torn apart by war, in contrast with Eliot’s Christian vision H.D.’s conceptualization of resolution involves mystical syncretism. Written within similar timeframes, a mutual concern of *Trilogy* and *Four Quartets* is a poetic quest for meaning in the context of the horrors of war. Each poem-sequence involves a leap of faith into a doubtful future. These uncertainties are reflected in the closing sequence of “The Walls Do Not Fall”:

we know no rule
of procedure, (“The Walls Do Not Fall” 43: 59).

possibly we will reach haven,
heaven. (“The Walls Do Not Fall” 43: 59).

Four Quartets is described by Beach as a “metaphysical exploration of both the poet’s personal history and the more public history of the two countries in which he lived” and a “mediation on time as well as place” (2003: 174). While Eliot’s pursuit of meaning in the chaotic present culminates with faith in established Christian doctrine, H.D. in *Trilogy* seeks answers in pagan truths. In the middle volume of *Trilogy*, “Tribute to the Angels”, H.D. moves beyond dominant patriarchal and Christian narratives to articulate a new matriarchal future embodied in her vision of “Our Lady of the Snow” (31: 96). H.D.’s symbol of salvation takes the form of a possible future which is better described by what it is “not” than what it “is”:

she is the counter-coin-side
of primitive terror;

she is not-fear, she is not-war,
but she is no symbolic figure

of peace, charity, chastity, goodness,
faith, hope reward;

she is not Justice with eyes
blindfolded like Love's; ("Tribute to the Angels" 39: 104).

Davis highlights some formal similarities between *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* and Eliot's *Four Quartets*:

> its [*Beat Drum, Beat Heart*] various stanzaic and free verse forms are juxtaposed in a manner resembling that of the less discordant transitions of *Four Quartets*. (2003b: 82)

Davis (2001) also argues that the Objectivist tendency in Wingfield's poetry is consistent with Eliot's theory of poetic impersonality. The language in *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* is highly concentrated, comporting with Wingfield's theory of poetry; "what is personally felt must be fused with what is being, and has been, felt by others. But always in terms of the factual" (Perrick, 2007: 125). This effect is apparent in "Men In War", which "at once calls one's attention to the voice of the individual speaker yet allows the speaker to fade from view as the poem progresses" (Collins, 2013: 21). The "I" flounders and ultimately disappears:

I fail. I can do nothing right,
But mistake upon mistake,
Until the war goes slowly creaking on
Into the disillusionary years
Of destiny, where perhaps later
Comes my opponent, just as I. ("Men In War": 15)

The "I" as the first and last word of this sentence emphasizes the personal nature of the passage, which yields insight into Wingfield's private self. The indentations are

indicative of the speaker's uncertainty, pausing as if to carefully consider their next words. However, this is only a fleeting personal glimpse, as by the end of "Men At Peace", this momentary hint of the poet's private self becomes generalised and depersonalised:

> Whoever is in low
> Relief, faintly embossed,
> Take heed, take care,
> For you will be erased. ("Men At Peace": 36)

These brief personal insights persist throughout *Beat Drum, Beat Heart.* Later, the female speaker in "Women In Love" epitomises the same idea but now with more assurance:

> I am a parody; what I do is extreme -
> Yet round me all natural things I see
> Are stupid, without substance:
> People with no faces, in nameless houses,
> Or going on errands that have no meaning.
> I am apart from all lookers-on,
> But I speak for and fulfil them;
> And wait for the oracle, and at the same time
> Predict it. ("Women In Love": 45)

The "I" reappears in this passage, stressing the isolation of the poet who, though ostensibly detached from daily life, nevertheless understands the interconnectedness of humanity. This is a moment in *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* when Wingfield transcends the impersonality of first-stage Modernism and the theme of war to explore new possibilities and futures.

In H.D.'s *Trilogy* the speaking subject is a complicated concept. Graham remarks on the speaker's "liminal state" as a "constant trope" in the poem (2002: 189). This liminality is frequently associated with the image of a door evoked as a portal to other dimensions through which the speaker gains access to other realms and temporalities. The door image is introduced early in "The Walls Do Not Fall", in

which the speaker, located in a war-torn London, moves between the present and the past:

> there, as here, ruin opens
> the tomb, the temple; enter,
> there as here, there are no doors: ("The Walls Do Not Fall" 1: 3)

The speaking subject empathizes with the suffering war has wrought on innocent victims throughout the ages, in ancient Pompeii:

> I am hungry, the children cry for food
> And flaming stones fall on them; ("The Walls Do Not Fall" 29: 39)

In "Tribute to the Angels" the speaker moves between reality and dreams in casual conversations with friends:

> when we saw the outer hall
> grow lighter - then we saw where the door was,
>
> there was no door
> (this was a dream of course), ("Tribute to the Angels" 25: 89)

Referencing the dream world is a recurring feature of *Trilogy*. Therapeutically, as a patient of Freud, H.D. would have been aware of the importance he placed on the interpretation of dreams as "the royal road to a knowledge of the unconscious activities of the mind" (Marcus qtd. Freud, 1999:1). Morris argues that dreams are intrinsically associated with the visionary aspects of H.D.'s writing, suggesting that "for H.D., dream was always interior projection, a cinematic exhibition of the mind's submerged content" (2003: 107). Indeed, according to Morris, dreams are a structuring feature of *Trilogy* as "each of the three parts of *Trilogy* generates a "real" dream, a vision that prompts the recovery of the "alchemist's secret", the process through which destruction precedes and permits, new, more perfect life" (2003: 112). In this section it is also unclear whether the speaker is alive or dead - "my old self, wrapped round me, / was shroud" ("The Walls Do Not Fall" 13: 20). The varied positioning and ambiguity of the speaker facilities the freedom of the speaking subject to witness the devastation of war throughout history, and from different perspectives and realms. This arrangement underscores the importance of the speaker in *Trilogy*. Whereas the gender of Wingfield's speaker in *Beat Drum, Beat*

Heart is demonstrably male or female, the speaker's gender in *Trilogy* is never specified. This indeterminacy again demonstrates H.D.'s openness to permitting the reader to form their own interpretation of *Trilogy.*

In the final volume of *Trilogy*, the speaker appears jaded and disillusioned by the continuing conflict and, similar to Wingfield's speaker in "Women At Peace", in "The Flowering of the Rod" H.D.'s speaker retreats. However, in contrast to Wingfield's speaker, the speaking subject in *Trilogy* draws back into the mystical realm to seek a resolution to the crisis of war:

> now having given all, let us leave all;
> above all, let us leave pity
>
> and mount higher
> to love - resurrection. ("The Flowering of the Rod" 1: 114)

In *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* and *Trilogy* each poet provides fleeting personal glimpses of their authentic selves before withdrawing. At the conclusion of their respective war poem-sequences Wingfield recedes into the collective of humanity and H.D. into mystical realms in the quest that both poets undertake to comprehend the cycles of war throughout history.

Critics have remarked on the resemblances between H.D. herself and the speaker in *Trilogy*. Graham posits that witness and giving voice to the devastation of war underscore H.D.'s credentials as a war poet:

> it is this engagement, the willingness to witness and to speak, that makes a war poet, and this is the role that I believe H.D. quite deliberately embraces in the first two parts of *Trilogy*. War poets may yearn for the life before or after war but the one thing they cannot do is walk away from the war while it continues … (2002: 197)

These observations may also be applied to Wingfield's deployment of her speaking subjects in *Beat Drum, Beat Heart*. Wingfield's speakers witness war from a male (combatant) and female (non-combatant) perspective and elucidate their reactions both in the midst of the conflict and in its immediate aftermath in peacetime.

Given Wingfield's knowledge of her literary milieu, it is likely a deliberate choice that the penultimate section of *Beat Drum, Beat Heart,* "Women In Love", shares its title with Lawrence's novel of that name, which was written during the First World War and published in 1920. Davis understands this connection in thematic terms: "the sexual politics of the final two sections of the poem ["Women In Love" and "Women At Peace"] are closer to D.H. Lawrence than Virginia Woolf" (2003b: 82). A comparison may be made between Wingfield's female persona in "Women In Love" and Ursula Brangwen in Lawrence's *Women in Love,* each of whom seeks to obliterate her past:

> she wanted to have no past. She wanted to have come down from the slopes of heaven to this place …. she felt that memory was a dirty trick played upon her. (*Women in Love*: 482)

Similarly, Wingfield's speaker in "Women In Love" seeks to rid herself from the burden of her lived history:

> Where's the past,
> That lumber room of what's important?
> The *bric-à-brac* of old feelings?
> Finished, put away. ("Women In Love": 43)

H D.'s roman- à-clef, *Bid Me to Live,* features thinly-disguised reproductions of characters from her own life. Julia Ashton is the H.D. figure, and she shares her name with the H.D. figure in Lawrence's novel *Aaron's Rod* (1922). H.D.'s "Julia" bears comparison with Wingfield's female persona, and with Lawrence's female protagonist in *Women in Love*. In both World Wars all three female characters exhibit an intense sensitivity to the notion that while the horrors of war might obliterate the past, harrowing memories linger, a notion articulated by Julia in *Bid Me to Live*:

> she must hold the thing; like a tight-rope walker, she must move tip-toe across an infinitely narrow thread, a strand, the rope, the umbilical cord, the silver-cord that bound them to that [pre-war] past. The past has been blasted to hell, you might say; already, in 1917, the past was gone. It had been blasted and blighted, the old order was dead, was dying, was being bombed

> to bits, was no more. But that was not true. Reality lived in the minds of those who had lived before that August. They had lived then. (II: 11/12)

Lawrence's (contested) influence extends into *Trilogy*. It is in "Tribute to the Angels", which thematically sets up the final volume, "The Flowering of the Rod", that this impact is particularly potent. Contrary to the intimate and almost conversational tone at the start of "The Walls Do Not Fall", the opening sequence of "Tribute to the Angels" is forthright in its intentions. It is a request to the ancient Greek god Hermes, who is associated with wisdom and magic, and also "thrice greatest" ("Trismegistus" a title given by the Greeks to the Egyptian God Thoth, the god of wisdom and learning), to combine ancient wisdom and alchemy to seek an end to the crisis of war. According to Leo Hamalian, this composite figure of Hermes Trismegistus, whose "province is thought, / inventive, artful curious;" may represent Lawrence himself (1: 63). By starting with a petition to the ancient gods for healing from the wounds of war, "Tribute to the Angels" is both transhistorical and topical. The composition date of the second volume of *Trilogy* is flagged at the end of the poem as "London, *May 17-31, 1944*", the same month as the final German aerial bombing of London, marking widespread optimism about the end of the war ("Tribute to the Angels": 110).

"Tribute to the Angels" is described by Axelrod, *et. al* as "a mythic narrative of female divinity to counter the androcentric social systems of world civilization" (2009: 328). The range of this middle volume is wide, as according to Alfred Kreymborg, it

> swiftly ranges the movement of hierarchies from the Persian, Egyptian, and Greek through the Hebrew and Christian and discovers beyond all their original differences a fundamental relation, heritage, and design whose highest and most human symbol is Our Lady. (1945: 11)

In the final section of "Tribute to the Angels" the goddess manifests in the guise of a Lady:

> She carried a book, either to imply
> she was one of us, with us,

or to suggest she was satisfied
with our purpose, a tribute to the Angels; (41: 107)

While "Tribute to the Angels" is obscure and mystical, vacillating like the stages of grieving between anger, hope and despair, it is also a vision of the re-creation of a new order from the fragments of the old world shattered by the Second World War. The poet's mission is to:

melt down and integrate,

re-invoke, re-create
opal, onyx obsidian,

now scattered in the shards
men tread upon. ("Tribute to the Angels" 1: 63)

The three stones opal, onyx and obsidian, are all associated with elements of healing. Opal assists with the acceptance of change and inner balance, onyx is associated with wise decisions, happiness and emotional balance, and obsidian is a protective stone associated with removing negativity (Roeder, 1994).[46]

Reinforcing the connection with Lawrence, the final lines of "Tribute to the Angels" describes the last of the epiphanies:

This is the flowering of the rod,
this is the flowering of the burnt-out wood,

where, Zadkiel, we pause to give
thanks that we rise again from death and live.
("Tribute to the Angels": 110)

This Old Testament reference here is to the flowering of Aaron's Rod, vindicating his divine authority as high priest:

[46] Eric Harlson in *Encyclopaedia of American Poetry: The Twentieth Century* argues that each of the poems in *Trilogy* "asks what treasures have been exposed and how their broken shards might now be handled" (2001: 405). Linking precious stones with healing, quoting these lines from "Tribute To the Angels", Harlson argues that here H.D. "uses the metaphor of alchemy to envision what might be made of London" (2001: 405).

> and it came to pass, that on the morrow Moses went into the tabernacle of witness; and, behold the rod of Aaron, for the house of Levi was budded: and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms and yielded almonds. (*Numbers*: XVIII)

There are two other references to Aaron's staff in "Tribute to the Angels". In the seventh section, we are told that:

> this is the flowering of the rood,
> this is the flowering of the reed. (7: 70)

Martz observes of this couplet that "in her [H.D.'s] wordplay the rod of Aaron and the cross of Christ are merged; the reed that struck Christ merges with the reed of the Nile mentioned earlier, with overtones of music and of poetry" (1998: 101). This further illustrates the poet's persistence in seeking a solution to war not rooted in a single answer or solely in ancient religion. The next reference is in the twenty-third section:

> a half-burnt-out apple-tree
> blossoming;
>
> this the flowering of the rood,
> this is the flowering of the wood. ("Tribute to the Angels" 23: 87)

Collectively in these three couplets from different sections of the middle volume of *Trilogy* and in another iteration of imperfect rhyme, the words "reed", "rood", "rod" and "wood" draw together Christian, pagan and mystical traditions, stressing the importance of all humanity coming together to put an end to the conflict of war. While H.D.'s mysticism has a resonance with Yeats', the manner in which H.D. deploys mythical figures and their transformations in *Trilogy* is notably different. In contrast with Yeats' invention of his own mythic system, in *Trilogy* H.D., according to Rachel DuPlessis, is concerned with rearranging and reorientating specific myths (2007). While H.D. and Yeats agree that time, memory and history move in spirals or "gyres" they differ in their views of how a new phase of civilisation is initiated (Schuchard, 1998: 347). According to Aaron Santesso, "whereas Yeats believed that time and history were "crushed" at the end of each age, resulting in a brief void, H.D. thought that time rejuvenated itself as it spiraled" (2004: 211). Therefore, in

Trilogy, H.D.'s transformations are regenerative in contrast with the destruction inherent in Yeats' cyclical view of history.

In addition to H.D.'s feminist revision of Lawrence's novel there is a titular allusion in the final volume of *Trilogy* to *Aaron's Rod*. A variation of this word-play re-emerges in "The Flowering of the Rod", stressing H.D.'s preoccupation with the importance of the artist in recording history. In this instance, the predominant concern is with hope arising from the ashes of war, which is evocative of Lawrence's personal symbol of the phoenix:

> I am branded with a word,
> I am burnt with wood.
>
> drawn from glowing ember,
> not cut, not marked with steel; ("The Flowering of the Rod" 8: 124)

Friedman argues that love, not war, is the "structural center" of *Trilogy*, that the essence of the series is "the poet's search amid the firebombs of World War II for a regenerative love symbolized by the Goddess" (1983: 233; 228). This quest is aided by the Objectivist structure of the trio of poems, in which "experimental polarities, particularly the opposition between love and violence, provide the underlying dualistic structure" (Friedman, 1983: 232). This search commences in "The Walls Do Not Fall" where, in the midst of war, bombarded from the air, against the odds, the human spirit endures:

> *Still the walls do not fall,*
> *I do not know why;*
>
> *there is zrr-hiss,*
> *lightning in a not-known,*
>
> *unregistered dimension;*
> *we are powerless,* (43: 58)

This search comes full circle in "The Flowering of the Rod", which is described by Leonard Schwartz as "the most personal of H.D.'s *Trilogy* compositions" (2001:

290). In this final volume there is a return to aerial imagery but this time with none of the disorientating effects of the mechanized aerial bombardment of "The Walls Do Not Fall". In "The Flowering of the Rod" the poet focuses on the natural cycle of life and this search for love is likened to the inexorable migratory flight of wild geese:

> does the first wild-goose stop to explain
> to the others? No - he is off;
>
> they follow or not
> that is their affair;
>
> does the first wild-goose care
> whether the others follow or not?
> I don't think so - he is happy to be off -
> he knows where he is going;
>
> so we must be drawn or we must fly,
> like the snow-geese of the Arctic circle, (3: 116).

This image of wild geese in *Trilogy* has particular resonances in an Irish context as it evokes the historical Irish involvement in foreign armies and connects with the Irish Civil War (1922-1923). According to Stephen McGarry "wild geese" is a term used since the sixteenth century to describe Irishmen serving in European armies (2013). In July 1923, this phrase was resurrected by Eamon DeValera when the Irish Republican Army abandoned its armed resistance against the Free State government. Gavin Foster observes, in this "defiant statement as part of the anti-treaty cause" DeValera vows "there will be no "Wild Geese" … this time" (2015: 203). Here, DeValera alludes to the historical pattern whereby failed national rebellions and insurrections resulted in mass emigrations from Ireland to foreign parts:

> Living or dead, we mean to establish the right of Irish Republicans to live and work openly for the complete liberation of our country. (DeValera, in Foster, 2015: 203)

This speech was delivered just two months after the official end of the Irish Civil War which left Irish society divided and families torn asunder. The promise of peaceful coexistence regardless of wartime allegiance is germane with H.D.'s view of the transformative and regenerative power of humanity in the aftermath of war and trauma. In this sense in *Trilogy* H.D. exceeds the theme of war and first-stage Modernism to explore future possibilities.

In *Trilogy* H.D. troubles the boundaries of normative poetic language to demonstrate the unprecedented horror and consequences of the violence of the Second World War. The politics of language is highlighted in the first line of "The Walls Do Not Fall". Enclosed within a seemingly innocuous remark, the second word, "incident", is laden with meaning. Its use reflects the tendency of the media during the Second World War to understate the devastating impact of the sustained aerial bombings which H.D. witnessed at first-hand. The use of the ostensibly innocent word "incident" seeks to negate the public impact of the atrocities of war. According to MacKay, "the prosecution of war, infamously, depends on a referential minimalism akin to "Newspeak" - "casualties", "collateral damage", "strategic withdrawal" and "displaced persons" are among the many phrasings we use to name and avoid the unbearable" (2009a: 5). By blurring the borders between the language of literature and media discourse H.D. cautions the reader from the first line of *Trilogy* to pay close attention to the ensuing action and themes of the poem.

Later in this first volume H.D. directly addresses the inability and sometimes deliberate failure of language to convey meaning, that "one must know and feel by intuition the meaning that words hide" (Versluis, 2004: 107):

> We have had too much consecration,
> too little affirmation,
> too much: but this, this, this
> has been proved heretical,
>
> too little: I know, I feel
> the meaning that words hide;

they are anagrams, cryptograms,
little boxes, conditioned

to hatch butterflies … (“The Walls Do Not Fall” 39: 53)

The reference to hatching butterflies is linked to an earlier reference to the “butterfly’s antennae” (32: 44). As the butterfly is associated with resurrection and immortality in the Christian tradition, and more generally with transformation and metamorphosis, the poet here appears to be adopting an optimistic position, that a positive future may emerge out of the destruction of war. Graham contends that *Trilogy* is a series of “little boxes” from which H.D. hopes to “hatch” some “extraordinary new meaning, but the poem, like the slippery medium of language itself, is inclined to outgrow its given space and take off in any number of directions” (2002: 163-164).

The language of *Trilogy* can be perplexing. The latent and manifest meaning of words are explored throughout the three volumes. In “The Walls Do Not Fall” the biblical story of creation is reworked, with the relationship between the “word” and the “sword” at its core. Throughout this biblical recreation, the “word” has consistent dominion over “sword”, which is literally and figuratively placed in a subordinate position. In addition to an anagrammatic relationship between these two words, embedded in this reformulated biblical narrative is a message that in order to achieve and maintain lasting peace, dialogue (“word”) is more powerful than fighting (“sword”):

forever; remember, O Sword,
you are the younger brother, the latter-born,

your Triumph, however exultant,
must one day be over,

in the beginning
was the Word. (“The Walls Do Not Fall” 10: 17)

This relational supremacy is reiterated in the ensuing section of “The Walls Do Not Fall” in which, according to Morris, “the word makes manifest, brings forth,

generates, or realizes - makes real - that which has been “unmanifest in the dim dimension / where thought dwells”” (2000: 758). However, there is also a glimpse of some authorial culpability in that without the intervention of the “word” between the realms of dreams and reality the “sword” would never have emerged:

> Without thought, invention,
> you would not have been, O Sword,
>
> without idea and the Word’s mediation,
> you would have remained
>
> unmanifest in the dim dimension
> where thought dwells,
>
> and beyond thought and idea,
> their begetter,
>
> Dream,
> Vision. (“The Walls Do Not Fall” 11: 18)

A cautionary note regarding the tendency to misuse and manipulate language in wartime is struck early in “The Walls Do Not Fall” when the speaker asks:

> this is the new heresy;
> but if you do not even understand what words say,
>
> how can you expect to pass judgement
> on what words conceal? (“The Walls Do Not Fall” 8: 14)

The subversive potential of language and the organisational pattern set up at the start of “The Walls Do Not Fall” continue throughout the sequence and are underpinned by dualism. This cycle of drawing towards and then moving back from the reader is a recurring feature in H.D.’s work, “a struggle between the urge to communicate and the will to obscure, the simultaneous desire for and fear of free expression” (Graham, 2002: 163). The language of *Trilogy* the use of words and their positioning within the text, consistently signals vigilance. This arrangement is underpinned by the

notion that words and how they are organised can convey or camouflage meaning. There are recurrent reminders in *Trilogy* of the politics and value-laden properties of language, an issue which was potent in the contemporary context of war propaganda. Indeed, according to Graham, in *Trilogy* H.D. is effectively acting as a war correspondent, reporting live from the war action, and "offering her readers nothing less than zeitgeist" (2002: 162). *Trilogy* heralds a new era in poetic language in which the barriers between media and poetic discourse are permeable and the boundaries between writer and reader blur, facilitating innovative linguistic exchanges which create new possibilities for poetry.

If H.D., in *Trilogy,* wrestles with the power of an untamed language, critics have remarked on the coolness, restraint and terseness of the language of Wingfield's poetry, in which "there is not a word wasted" (Fraser, 1983: xiv). This calm surface, however, belies its emotional and turbulent undercurrents and the effort expended by Wingfield to achieve such precision. Collins observes that Wingfield "worked hard to realize clarity of diction" positing that the "stillness" at the core of her poetry "belies its subtly turbulent character" (2018: 177). This short passage from "Men In War" exemplifies Wingfield's attention to and awareness of the potency of language in war:

> The others, still
>
> With armed pack,
> Must walk over the chill
> Of cobbles in retreat
> Or where flints cut right
> Through the road
> That hurt so many marching feet.
> Some things they can never talk
> About or try to explain -
> No one would understand.
>
> Fools that we were to fight:
>
> All's wrecked on either hand. ("Men In War": 19)

The opening words, "the others, still", suggest that the speaker has departed from the army brotherhood and is dead. In counterpoint to the lightness of their step when

marching into war in the opening of *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* the soldiers are now in retreat. With careful craft and strategic use of language Wingfield expertly captures and conveys the physical discomfort of retreating soldiers, burdened with full army packs, marching over "the chill / of cobbles" and "flints" … "that hurt so many marching feet". Her lines also register the psychological damage of warfare about which the returning solider "can never talk", and their collective regret in joining the conflict - "fools we were to fight". Collins posits that in *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* Wingfield's attention to language and the "emotional variation" underpinning it "transmits a greater cultural, as well as formal, charge" (2018: 178). The precise and concentrated language in this passage conveys an acute sensitivity to the personal and collective psychological and physical damage wrought by war.

Both Wingfield and H.D. explore the dissident potential of language and urge caution in interpreting the official narrative of the progress of the Second World War. MacKay argues the value of Modernist writing in wartime is that its "formal waywardness disrupts the hierarchically imposed version of the real" (2007: 9). This observation is particularly important against the backdrop of the efforts of governing institutions to mediate and manage the narrative of the Second World War for public consumption. In *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* Wingfield elucidates the hypocrisy of "towering" and depersonalised government departments - "corridors of fact" in which "everything" except the human sacrifice of war is "accounted for":

> Meanwhile, in institutions towering
> Like their unending, shadowless grey days,
> There's been amassed in record, ledger, file
> And down long corridors of fact
> Index and tabulation, so that everything
> Is noted, everything exact, everything
> Balanced, budgeted and accounted for -
> Except that life's both pointless and disgraced. ("Men At Peace": 35)

In these establishments war records are immaculately updated and "amassed", yet the true cost of war in human life and suffering is completely disregarded and considered to be "pointless and disgraced".

SECTION TWO - CHAPTER FOUR: PLACE AND BELONGING

Beat Drum, Beat Heart and *Trilogy* are both poetic representations of the psychological and personal effects of war and expressions of the collective and social values of a world at war. For each poet, their poem-sequences are voyages into the "not-known" in which they examine notions of belonging and alienation during a period of monumental upheaval and turmoil. This chapter explores how H.D. and Wingfield internalise, confront and connect with the wider communal impacts of war. Their poetic examinations explore the devastation of war which disrupts social fabric and cultural norms. There are insights into H.D. and Wingfield's personal lives as the war encroaches into the domestic sphere. As this chapter will show, both writers share a propensity to revise and rewrite their work, yielding insights into H.D. and Wingfield's personal lives and creative processes in a world at war.

Voyages into the "not-known" - rethinking place, identity, and belonging in a world at war

Beat Drum, Beat Heart and *Trilogy* were published at a time during and in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, when social and cultural certainties were undermined and, in this sense, both poems are voyages of discovery into the "not-known" ("The Walls Do Not Fall", 43: 59). Despite the uncertainty as to when precisely *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* was written, the years preceding the conflict were imbued with a pervading sense of uncertainty and unease about the future. Wingfield, who lived in both Britain and Ireland during the 1930s, must have been sensitive to these tensions. A note in Wingfield's *Collected Poems 1938-1983* confirms that she revisited and, at the very least, added to her long poem during the conflict.[47] Against this backdrop, allied to both poets being permanent expatriates and their mobility, notions of place, including identity and belonging, are important considerations in their long war poems.

[47] *Collected Poems 1938-1983* includes a note: "it so happens that the long poem *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* was written many years before World War II, and had only six lines added during the war to bring it more up-to-date" (1983: 180).

Place, how it is portrayed, its conception and treatment, in *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* and *Trilogy* is where each poet tests the critically accepted boundaries of Modernism. Alex Davis and Lee M. Jenkins foreground issues of "region", "nation" and "location" to challenge a homogenous conception of a placeless international Modernism, arguing that their concentration on issues of place and region has positioned some poets on the margins of Modernism (2000: 4). Marina MacKay's notion of "late Modernism" is useful here, too, as it facilitates consideration of how Modernism continues to transform and develop as an artistic response to the Second World War (2007: 1). Both perspectives embrace the diverse range of writerly responses to the Second World War and facilitate valid consideration of how Wingfield and H.D., from different and diverse backgrounds, milieux, and traditions, internalise and respond formally and thematically to the Second World War in *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* and *Trilogy*.

According to MacKay, key features of late Modernist writing include mobility and movement: as "an art without frontiers," Modernism was the work of the "restlessly mobile émigré or exile" (2009b: 1601). Mobility is not the sole purview of late Modernist writers, as H.D. like other first-stage Modernists including Lawrence, Pound and Joyce, lived in exile. H.D., who, like Joyce, remained in permanent exile, wrote in the early and later phases of Modernism, in both World Wars, and at contrasting ends of the poetic spectrum, from the brevity and concision of Imagism to epic. H.D. thus troubles a clear-cut distinction between first-stage and late Modernism. Wingfield's background and experience also reflect a complex interaction between her sense of place and her personal and literary identity. Hyphenated between cultures, mobile, restless and displaced, Wingfield and H.D. also challenge the reductive notion of Modernism as solely and wholly an international concept. While the notion of a clear national identity is complicated for H.D. and Wingfield, each nonetheless developed lasting links to and relationships with their adopted communities and countries. Just as was the case for Ridge and Letts, these relationships inflect the wartime writing of H.D. and Wingfield to produce a type of "organic" transnationalism.

Place may be defined in many ways. Edward Relph posits that a sense of place is created by the interchange between location, landscape, and personal involvement,

with each element insufficient on its own (1976). This idea of place is consistent with Gerda Speller's, who suggests that place is a space that has acquired meaning as a result of a person's interaction with it (2000). Identity is closely aligned with these transactional views of place as, according to Edward Casey, identity is created internally in the mind of a person and externally through interaction with the outside world (2001). In *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* and *Trilogy* matters relating to identity and belonging in the personal and public spheres are raised and explored against the backdrop of a world at war. It is also where each poet exploits the transformative potential of the late stage of Modernism. The ways in which H.D. and Wingfield consider and treat the notions of place, identity and belonging is also intrinsically linked with duality, which formally and thematically permeates *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* and *Trilogy*.

Wingfield's life is synonymous with doubleness: her parentage and upbringing were split between Ireland and England; suppressing her Jewishness she came to Ireland to live in a Catholic country; in marriage she traded her wealth for status; and her desire for public recognition was in tension with her desire for privacy. This last point is supported by Lucy Collins, who argues that "divisions between the desire for recognition as a poet, and a love of privacy -even secrecy - shaped Wingfield's art in important ways" (2013: 18). So deep were these dichotomies that they adversely affected Wingfield's sense of her achievements and the fulfilment of her artistic ambition: "these contradictions which highlight the divided self that shaped Wingfield's poetic persona so powerfully, also made it difficult for her to achieve creative satisfaction" (Collins, 2013: 19).

Louis MacNeice, a poet who, like Wingfield, had a complicated relationship with Ireland and whose poetry, according to Edna Longley, "has often been seen as dealing with matters alien to Ireland - the Second World War for instance" (1988: xiii), composed another long and ambitious war poem in a proximate timeframe to *Trilogy* and *Beat Drum, Beat Heart*. Wingfield was aware of MacNeice's *Autumn Journal* which was published in 1939. George Sutherland Fraser refers to the poem in the Preface to *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* in Wingfield's *Collected Poems 1938-1983*:

> *Autumn Journal* does sweep over "cultures and peoples and histories" … as well as meditating on the coming war and exploring ruined love affairs. But he [MacNeice] has a gloss and sophistication, suiting him, which Sheila Wingfield would think it vulgar to aim at. (1983: xvi)

This "gloss" is linked to MacNeice's penchant for the theatrical and is "a function of dramatic technique" in his writing (Longley, 1988: xi). This is one of the key differences between *Autumn Journal* and *Beat Drum, Beat Heart*. While there is a reluctance to fully reveal herself there is an inherent sincerity in Wingfield's *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* which is not easy to discern beneath the polish and erudition of MacNeice's *Autumn Journal*.

For H.D., place is also a complex phenomenon, but her sense of belonging is strongly associated with the city of London. Their shared love of London, the wartime destruction of which causes their poetic speakers something akin to physical pain, aligns H.D. with MacNeice. *Autumn Journal* predicts the actual damage wrought upon the city referenced in *Trilogy*. H.D. has a profound personal attachment to London. According to her biographer Barbara Guest, the city was a logical site for H.D.'s increased productivity, as the Second World War curtailed her ability to travel:

> the war encouraged a creativity in her that had been thwarted by the travels, extensive plans, the shifts of persons and places in the previous year … concentrated living, squirreled away in a small apartment, fewer social activities, a narrowing of her dimensions would give her a concentrated world so necessary to her craft. (1984: 253)

London, of course, is a key site of Modernism. In the century preceding 1925 London was, according to Katherine Mullin, the largest city in the world and as such it became defined as one of the locations of international Modernism. London, in Eliot's *The Waste Land*, "is a textual rather than a temporal or … geographical phenomenon" (Davis and Jenkins, 2000: 14). In this sense London is "a site in which the alienation of urban experience … becomes both the analogue and a model for the cultural fragmentation of the Modernist era" (Davis and Jenkins, 2000: 15). While London is the inspiration for *Trilogy* and infuses it with vitality and purpose, the trauma H.D. experienced during the First World War is also remembered and

reflected in the opening sequence. Therefore, for H.D. as with MacNeice, London is important to a personal and poetic sense of place.

Wingfield and H.D.'s explorations of the civilian and combatant impacts of a world at war resonate with MacKay's argument that Second World War writing differs significantly from that of the First World War. That

> it does not take as its *raison d'etre* the position that war is stupid, wasteful and ugly is certainly not because writers mistook state-sanctioned violence on the grand scale for anything other than what it is, but exactly because, after the Great War, they took this as given. (2007: 5)

Identity and the impact of violence on individual subjectivity is explored by Wingfield in "Men In War". In this first section of *Beat Drum, Beat Heart*, in the midst of war, individual identity is lost, and a collective male identity is assumed which is common to all soldiers, across space and time:

> Brothers, this is our cloud, our hidden night,
> And we ourselves are obscured. We know nothing,
> Do nothing; here there is no frame,
> No ladder to climb in clear air,
> No tap or chip of bricks on a bright day,
> But a leaning together like pillars in the darkness,
> With the world a heavy seal.
> And now not I, but at all cost
> The other, must be saved from harm. ("Men In War": 13)

This imagery suggests the disorientating and debilitating effects of being caught up in the midst of war. These impacts are physical and psychological; the suffocating sense of being buried alive with "no ladder to climb in clear air"; and "We know nothing, / Do nothing". The reference to having no "frame" is evocative of similar imagery in "The Walls Do Not Fall" in which the physical violence of war generates psychological terror.

Beat Drum, Beat Heart transcends the temporality as well as the geography of the war-zone by exploring a loss of individual identity which seeps into peacetime. In

"Men At Peace" the returning soldiers strive to settle into daily, "old coat" routines and to recover their individual identities, thus becoming "decent" again:

> Free from hateful foreigners -
> The way they cut their hair or clear their throat
> Or dig their elbow in one's private ribs - each
> Is back into his old coat
> And land and life:
> 'Now we can own ourselves, like decent folk' ("Men At Peace": 27)

However, in the post-war milieu, everything is in a state of flux and what is required is not a recovery of an old identity but the recreation of a new identity more suitable to the changing times, as is recognised by the returning male soldiers:

> Nothing feels contrary or vexing -yet
> The stillness of the air's a fret,
> A hint, a growing certainty
> That all needs a harsh harrowing ("Men In War": 33)

The second half of the poem, "Women In Love" and "Women At Peace", which is female-dominated, seeks answers to the question of a creation of a new and shared (post-war) identity.

Reflecting on the significant disasters and the two World Wars of the twentieth century, Jonathan Glover posits that "most of the time what matters is the personal and the local. But the great public disasters can strike the most unlikely places" (1999: 42). Wingfield and H.D. exemplify this in *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* and *Trilogy* as it is through the local that each writer enters the war as launch sites for their explorations of the transnational and global dimensions of a world at war. In a related observation Relph posits that if place is somewhere then placelessness can be anywhere (1976). These observations regarding the potential of war to invade "the most unlikely places" and the reach of the Second World War are useful when considering the war poems of H.D. and Wingfield in comparison with the work of William Carlos Williams, an American Modernist poet who was a friend and a contemporary of H.D.. At first encounter Williams might appear an unlikely comparator with H.D. and Wingfield, described as he is by Davis and Jenkins as "the

American who stayed at home, that member of the lost generation, who never got lost" (2000: 22). However, like H.D., Williams was as a poet of first-stage Imagism who also later embraced Objectivist tendencies. Irish poet John Montague describes Williams' work as poetry that is "rooted in the local idiom, but speaks internationally" and it is this transcendence of national boundaries, especially potent during the Second World War, which links H.D., Wingfield and Williams (in Bowers, 1994: 31). Writing from disparate corners of the world, the three poets understood the potential for literary innovation and creation during wartime: "war releases energy. Energy can be used to transmute and create. Thus, war by releasing energy indirectly serves in the creation of values" (Williams, 1954: 245). H.D., Wingfield and Williams all understood that war breaches geographic and national borders as well as the boundaries between the personal and public arenas, opening up hitherto private spheres to public scrutiny. The trio also recognised the potential for transformation which can emerge from the destruction of war. Anxiety with regard to the Second World War is apparent in Williams' "Graceful Bastion", published in *The New Yorker* in August 1940, a year prior to America's entry into the war. "The Graceful Bastion" like "The Walls Do Not Fall" uses the image of a butterfly to demonstrate the destructive potential of war. Infused with pastoral imagery Williams' poem employs the flight of a white butterfly in an "August garden" as a dramatic counterpoint to the enormity of the threat posed by wartime aerial bombardment which is also a preoccupation in *Trilogy*. "The Graceful Bastion" presages this damage and the fragility of the current moment:

> secure against
> bombardments no more
> dangerous to its
>
> armored might than if
> the cotton clouds
> should merely fall. (11)

The opening part of "The Walls Do Not Fall" illustrates the realisation of this destructive potential in the actual shattering of a once-familiar milieu as a consequence of aerial attacks. The terror of war is intense, as the speaker stumbles around the streets of a once familiar but now alien war-torn landscape: "trembling at

a known street-corner, / we know not nor are known" ("The Walls Do Not Fall" 1: 4).

Wingfield, H.D. and Williams are all concerned with the importance of a sense of belonging in a world modernising and transforming at a hitherto unprecedented pace. In *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* and *Trilogy* Wingfield and H.D.'s handling of place contributes to the larger meaning and message of the poems; it forms part of each poet's identity, the splitting of which is examined and interrogated as each navigates the horror of war and the fundamental questions it raises about belonging and alienation, inclusion and exclusion, loss and hope. While Williams prioritises the local (place) over the general (placelessness) and Wingfield and H.D., in *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* and *Trilogy*, prioritise universal acts of warfare over the daily routines of living, all three poets are centrally concerned with exploring the complexity of alienation and belonging in a complicated modern world.

For reasons of expediency and / or convenience, most scholars, with some exceptions, consider 1945 as the endpoint of Modernism.[48] This date also marks the end of the Second World War and a momentous shift in world politics as well as in social, cultural, and literary values. While MacKay agrees that this period "marked the beginning of the end of literary Modernism in Britain" she deploys "end" in Eliot's double sense: the end of Modernism signifies both its realisation and its dissolution" (2007: 1). These perspectives resonate with *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* and *Trilogy*, in which there is evidence of the influence of first-stage Modernism. However, in their conceptions and explorations of belonging, place and placelessness, *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* and *Trilogy* accelerate the process of disengagement with first-stage Modernism to explore the dissent potential of the late Modernist period.

In their poetic search to find adequate ways to reflect and internalise the social and literary crises of the mid-century in a world at war for the second time in three

[48] Perloff (2002) argues for the continuing legacy of Modernism. According to Perloff global calamities impacted the *momentum* (italics added) of Modernism: "its [Modernism's] radical and utopian aspirations being cut off by the catastrophe, first of the Great War, and then of a series of crises produced by the two great totalitarianisms that dominated the first half of the century and culminated in World War II" (2002: 3).

decades, Wingfield and H.D. exploit the destabilizing potential of Modernism. This examination is another commonality between Wingfield and H.D., as *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* and *Trilogy* foreground and disrupt boundaries hitherto considered unassailable. The temporal boundary is unsettled as *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* and *Trilogy* break with a continuous and sequential notion of history, with both poets adopting a transhistorical approach in time travelling through warfare. The fluidity of time and collapsing distances between time and place were not new concerns for H.D. as she had already deployed this kind of transhistorical time travel in *Palimpsest*, published in 1926. The Modernist tendency of conceiving of time in a non-chronological way is apparent in both works to "renounce the mindlessly habitual, unthinkingly collective perspectives that make war possible" and raise uncomfortable questions about the efficacy of warfare through the ages (MacKay, 2007: 9).

Davis argues that a notable feature of Wingfield's poetry is her view of history, specifically her disruption of the relentlessly linear and forward progression of time. He argues that:

> the poem's [*Beat Drum, Beat Heart*] slices of "*Now"* work to bring past and present into alignment which bursts the categories of space and time, and signal the poet's restlessness with an orderly, sequential paradigm of history. (2001: 350)

This focus on the circularity of time and history connects Wingfield with Eliot. In *Four Quartets* Eliot too is concerned with the cyclical nature of time. This central temporal conflict is introduced in the first poem "Burnt Norton" (1936) which begins:

> Time present and time past
> Are both perhaps present in time future,
> And time future contained in time past. (1943, I: 13)

The core of Eliot's observation here is, according to Mary Ann Gillies, that "each moment contains all time" and so, according to Grover Smith, "combines the union of the flux of time with the stillness of eternity" (1996: 98; 1974: 253). "Little Gidding" (1942), the last of the *Four Quartets*, examines how the past is enveloped by the present:

A people without history
Is not redeemed from time, for history is a pattern
Of timeless moments. (1943, V: 58)

These temporal frictions are intensified in a world at war, as in *Beat Drum, Beat Heart*. The female persona in "Women In Love" displays awareness of the vagaries and complexity of time:

Recriminations,
Reproaches and bitterness,
Have opened a gulf,
Have cracked time in two -
Time that in splendour
Of success could elide
Into a long
Negation of itself,
Time timeless,
Without front, time
Without direction, ("Women In Love": 50)

In this passage Wingfield demonstrates a consciousness of the fragility of her present moment, of a war so great that it has "cracked time in two" opening up a chasm between pre and post-war time-periods. This "gulf" is so vast that it disrupts linear time and opens rifts between alternative pasts and potential futures. Such is the depth and breadth of these fractures that the female persona recognises that it is almost impossible to successfully navigate these tensions and find resolution to the current crisis of war.

Literary genre is another boundary troubled by the wartime writing of H.D. and Wingfield. While in *Trilogy* and *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* H.D. and Wingfield utilise the poetic mode as their preferred method to bear witness to war, other writers chose different ways to represent this experience. H.D. herself crosses genre in *Bid Me to Live,* utilising the novel as a mode to depict life during wartime. Despite employing different genres to represent their experience of war there are areas of convergence between Woolf's Modernist prose in *To the Lighthouse* (1927) and Wingfield and H.D.'s Modernist poetry. Rather than providing a direct account of the war, Megan

Mondi posits that Woolf "*represents* war by providing impressions of it, and the painting of a canvas … in the hopes that the amalgamated impression provides as truthful and as enduring a rendering as possible" (2006: 23). This observation is also valid with regard to *Beat Drum, Beat Heart,* in which the perspectives and impressions of men and women in the context of war and peacetime are captured.

Beat Drum, Beat Heart, *Trilogy* and *To the Lighthouse* transcend time, place and circumstance as each writer seeks to convey the shattering impact of warfare. Wingfield's concern with the cyclical quality of events also echoes Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* in its contribution to what Samuel Hynes calls the "myth of war", "the notion, partly true and partly imagined, that the [first World] war created a vast gap between the pre-war and the post-war world" (1990: xi). In the closing section of "Men In War" Wingfield illustrates the seemingly continuous cycle of the "utter endless grief" of war:

> And chiefly by such as those who cannot sleep
> But - fretting like the wind at night -
> Think ceaselessly, had they advanced,
> Gone back, been forthright, or declared themselves
> Some other time, or place, or way, there would
> Have been no utter endless grief: I swear,
> I pray, never again. ("Men In War": 22)

Beat Drum, Beat Heart spans centuries of human conflict across the globe: "the collective male persona of this section of the poem ["Men In War"] is a transcultural and transhistorical figure, a "time trotter" who experiences of war are coterminous with human history" (Davis, 2001: 341). The poem includes references to contemporaneous conflicts and draws on wars of prior centuries. The 1934-1935, 6,000-mile trek of Chinese communists, resulting in the relocation of their base from southeast to northwest China and in the emergence of Mao Zedong as the undisputed party leader, is also referenced:

> Twelve provinces of forest and wild
> Rivers, terrors, ravines crossed
> And mountains, half their number lost,
> On the Long March which lasted three days

And a year: (“Men In War”: 12)

The bloody Spanish Civil War of 1936 - 1939, which transcended national borders and resulted in four decades of fascist dictatorship in Spain itself, is referenced, as is the killing of the playwright and poet Federico Garcia Lorca:

We are the men who dragged Lorca
Through an arched street, between tall-shadowed houses;
We are a man dragged and killed on the outskirts
Of a town in Spain. (“Men In War”: 14)

Wingfield connects with soldiers in earlier wars, moving back centuries to the first Genoese-Venetian war (1264-1266):

‘I a Venetian whom the Genoese strewed on deep water.
Spars and oars of all our fleet had snapped like reeds.
I drowned, thinking of young fishermen
Who wade in a lagoon’ (“Men In War”: 18)

Nearer to home, Wingfield also refers to the Battle of Vinegar Hill, during Ireland’s prolonged anticolonial struggle against Britain. This battle between British troops and Irish rebels effectively ended the 1798 rebellion. After the revolt ended atrocities ensued, including mass rape and murder and the public beheading of rebel leaders by British soldiers:

We thought, this is warm this is different,
This abscinds us from all past fights, as we marched among
haycocks,
With some of the brambles ripe, but the same chill
Lies in our hair, as in pale winter
When the saplings are cut through:
Yes, plenty more of torture; and the crime
Of graves and children hurled into the air.
Such hate, insult and such shame
Cannot be scraped out of our core
Unless Time, in its passage round the world,
Should, like an idle workman, slow and stop. (“Men In War”: 16)

This alignment of wars spanning time and space demonstrates that all conflict has the same outcome: a temporary cessation of violence prior to the inevitable onset of the next period of conflict. This pattern will continue in an endless cycle unless something fundamentally changes. These war-stopping potential changes are what Wingfield explores in *Beat Drum, Beat Heart.*

In *Trilogy* H.D. is also concerned with the nature of time and war. In *Trilogy* two temporalities concurrently unfurl as H.D. brings the past and present together. At the outset, in the epigraph to "The Walls Do Not Fall", a connection is made between ancient Egypt and contemporary Britain (italics in the original):

> *for Karnak* 1923
> *from London* 1942.

In the first section of "The Walls Do Not Fall" the merging and juxtaposition of these two great cities indicates, for the poet, that there are "no doors" between space and time:

> there, as here, ruin opens
> the tomb, the temple; enter
> there as here, there are no doors: ("The Walls Do Not Fall" 1: 3)

Trilogy opens with the speaker walking through the ruins of the city bombed by the Luftwaffe. According to Louis Martz, this opening "equates the opening of an Egyptian tomb with the "opening" of churches and other buildings by the bombs" (1983: xxx). H.D. goes further, comparing the fires of the London Blitz with the volcanic fire that engulfed Pompeii, as she links natural disaster in the ancient world with modern, technological atrocities.

Crucially, like Wingfield, H.D. questions whether any lessons have been learned from past disasters:

> - we pass on
>
> to another cellar, to another sliced wall
> where poor utensils show
> like rare objects in a museum;

Pompeii has nothing to teach us,
we know crack of volcanic fissure,
slow flow of terrible lava,

pressure on heart, lungs, the brain
about to burst its brittle case
(what the skull can endure!):

over us, Apocryphal fire,
under us, the earth sway, dip of a floor,
slope of a pavement

where men roll, drunk
with a new bewilderment,
sorcery, bedevilment: ("The Walls Do Not Fall" 1: 4).

In this sequence, by inserting "Apocryphal" before "fire" in the penultimate tercet, H.D. is challenging the authenticity and origin of the "fire" which, in *Trilogy*, is the Second World War.

The invasiveness of war - disrupting dichotomies and destabilizing social norms

Prior to the outbreak of the Second World War there was a clear and obvious cultural differentiation between the roles and spheres of influence of males and females, combatants and non-combatants, soldiers and civilians (Plain, 2009). Gill Plain argues that in war "such a clear-cut dichotomy could not be maintained in a new age of mechanized armies and airborne warfare" (2009: 166). In *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* and *Trilogy* Wingfield and H.D. exhibit their political awareness in the manner in which they destabilize gender roles, and interrogate the gendered boundaries between public and private spheres, and between normative masculine and feminine behaviour and attitudes.

Kristine Miller proposes that during the Second World War:

> traditional notions of the home's seclusion and security crumbled with the walls of townhouses, flats, private homes, and air raid shelters. As Axis bombers blitzed London, Coventry, and other British cities, civilians experienced a violence previously known only by soldiers on the front line. (1999: 140)

The invasion of the war into the home front is explored in *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* and Trilogy. Indeed, this is also a key differentiating factor between H.D.'s First and Second World War texts. *Bid Me to Live* includes a reference to the Zeppelin aerial attacks on London which began in 1915. Julia witnesses such a raid from behind a window within the safety of her home: a "tip-tilted object in a dim sky that even then was sliding sideways and even then was about to stop" (I: 3). However, in *Trilogy* even this flimsy division between the home front and the warfront is demolished. The breaking down of the literal and social boundaries between private and public spaces is likewise conveyed in the imagery in Wingfield's *Beat Drum, Beat Heart*:

> If one could see beyond house fronts
> Into the past, as through a glass pane,
> The tremendous roar and then the quiet
> Of dying in rubble would be plain,
> Though beams and bricks are up again. ("Women At Peace": 64)

In "Women In Love" the speaker observes the poignancy inherent in wartime aerial bombing when ruined homes are publicly laid bare to curious onlookers:

> Look at the tattered room
> Exposed to the sky. No splendour in this ruin,
> But shame in small wallpaper
> For all eyes. ("Women In Love": 54)

According to Plain, "the Blitz's emphatic displacement of the boundary between the home front and the battlefront is a particularly visceral demonstration of the inadequacy of understanding war writing only in terms of combat experience" (2009: 166). This slippage between public and private boundaries is a concern shared with another poet, Freda Laughton, whose only collection, *A Transitory House,* was published in 1945. Like Wingfield, Laughton was English-born, and in the same year as Wingfield, married and came to live in Ireland. Laughton's description of the

destructive effect of the bombing of a home in “The Bombed House” echoes Wingfield’s imagery:

> This house has lanes not corridors.
> Some walls are cliffs, and some,
> Whilst drunkenly dancing,
> Committed suicide. (52)

During the aerial wartime bombing of British cities a year later in *Beat Drum, Beat Heart*, Wingfield would portray a comparable scene as “civilians experienced a violence previously known only by soldiers on the front line” (Plain, 2009: 140). In *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* Wingfield directly addresses the impact of modern technologies in the Second World War which extended the reach of the conflict to such an extent that it eliminated the boundary between the battlefront and the home front:

> Should someone ask, Where are these battlefields? -
> Perhaps in the country house
> Where a clammy mist and the lightship’s moan
> Surge over the mesembryanthemum garden,
> Over the huge hidden lawn and into
> The strange room with its guest blotter.
>
> Perhaps in the Fenway.
> Municipal ducks, freezing lake,
> Reeds like straw,
> And an old bottle
> Caught in the ice.
> Perhaps by sand
> Near prickled, sea-pitted
> Coral rocks
> Where fond hope and insufficiency
> Are the same as anywhere else,
> An in the heat roads blind you
> With whiteness. (“Women In Love”: 45-46)

She concludes that these battlefronts are universal and everywhere. In the original version of *Beat Drum, Beat Heart*, published in 1946, the final line of this section reads:

> These are Flanders, Navarino, Carthage. ("Women In Love": 46)

In later versions, the line reads:

> These are my Flanders, Valley Forge and Carthage. ("Women In Love", 1954: 74)[49]

With the insertion of the word "my" in the later versions of *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* the speaker personalises the impact of these wars. By replacing the reference to the Greek Revolution with the American Revolution, Wingfield exceeds the borders of Europe to recognise the global impact of war. This too is illustrative of the transnational reach of Wingfield's wartime poetry. There is also an insightful recognition, by inserting the reference to Valley Forge, which despite the lack of open combat was a key turning point in the American War of Independence, that where the battles are fought is not necessarily where wars are won. Wingfield's concern with the devastating impact of technologies on modern warfare is shared by H.D.. In her review of Yeats' *Responsibilities and Other Poems* H.D. posits that "for us … the chief enemy … is the great overwhelming mechanical daemon, the devil of machinery, of which we can hardly repeat too often, the war is the hideous offspring", an observation also made by Ridge in *The Ghetto and Other Poems* (1916: 52).

According to MacKay, "one of the "wars within the war"" was the tension between the genders (2009a: 2). In *Trilogy* and *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* H.D. and Wingfield challenge gender norms and interrogate binaries. In their long war poems both poets explore the impact of war on gender relations from a public and social perspective, while privately, H.D. and Wingfield in their marriages experienced these "wars within the war". H.D. and Wingfield's husbands both suffered shell-shock as a result of their war-time service with the British army. In 1942 Wingfield's husband became a prisoner of war following his capture in Italy. During the war Wingfield's creative

[49] These changes remain in later versions of the poem: *Beat Drum, Beat Heart*, (1954: 74), (1977: 52), (1983: 50).

life flourished, Anne Roper posits that Wingfield's "most prolific period of writing came during the Second World War", but when her husband returned from the war with compromised health, their marriage would break down (2007b: 4). In *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* Wingfield's sensitivity to the mental torment of war is illustrated in "Men In War", when, in the midst of combat, a soldier, directly addressing the reader, questions his once strongly felt conviction about the veracity of war and his sanity:

> Where is my cause, that seems as cold as a blown
> Mist? It was so firm, so solid. Do you think
> It's I have grown into a ghost?
> All is reversed; all is astray;
> Reason is now a mirror full of flaws
> Gestures that were heroic are remote ("Men In War": 15)

This exploration of male combatant subjectivity and their questioning of the efficacy of war in the midst of battle links Wingfield with Letts and with combatant poets such as Rupert Brooke and Edward Thomas of the First World War which were discussed earlier in this thesis.

H.D.'s husband Aldington also suffered psychologically as a consequence of his military service in the First World War. This was one of a number of factors which led to their permanent separation soon after the war. This intrusion of the war into the domestic sphere is reflected in *Bid Me to Live*, in which H.D.:

> deconstructs the binary of public and private to examine not only the war at home faced by civilians, but also the war *in* home, the marriage bed as battlefield of sexual politics. (Friedman, 1989: 149)

This sentiment is echoed by Caroline Zilboorg, in her Introduction to H.D.s *Bid Me to Live*:

> the war began to seem increasingly not only an external crisis … but an internal matter, in which, soldier or not, she [H.D.] herself and those she loved were at risk. (2011: xxii)

In *Bid Me to Live* these domestic impacts are articulated by Julia in her vivid and disturbing depiction of her returned officer husband, Rafe, modelled on Aldington:

> You could not argue. His moods were more violent. He was not really the young officer on leave; that was not Rafe. Then if that was not Rafe, well, let it be not-Rafe; the disintegrating factor was the glance, the look, the throwing aside of the uniform and the turn of the head, a stranger standing over by the book-shelf, was Rafe Ashton. This is my husband, this is the man I married. The stranger became singularly strange, his language, his voice, the thing he brought into the room. (IV: 25)

This husband-stranger, "not-Rafe", invades the safety of their home. This once familiar person exudes such rage that his wife treads warily around him as if afraid of triggering an explosion. Their home has now become the battlefield.

Outside the context of her own marriage, Wingfield examines gender relations in the social arena in *Beat Drum, Beat Heart*. Collins observes that "though Wingfield denied seeing herself as a feminist, it is in this poem [*Beat Drum, Beat Heart*] that she records most directly the importance of acknowledging the fullest extent of women's intellectual and emotional character" (2013: 23). The Second World War provided opportunities for women, as unprecedented numbers entered paid employment, as a direct result of which they experienced new freedoms in filling roles to which they had previously been denied.

This sense of new-found autonomy is apparent in the early part of "Women At Peace" in which there is an almost giddy sense of exhilaration at the dawning realisation of new possibilities:

> [. . .] not knowing
> How, not knowing why,
> Feeling a change to climates ("Women At Peace": 59)

There is also a sense of physical freedom, likened to an emergence from mourning in the preceding section, as the speaker cries:

> How easy is every act!
> Gloomy beliefs
> Have vanished as black wisps
> Escape the sunrise;

What was difficult

Is clear again. (“Women In Love”: 48)

However, there is also confusion and the dawning realisation of being on the precipice of change and an uncertain future:

She has reached
The rim of time
The dune end
Of the world.
What to lean on
Where to turn . . . (“Women At Peace”: 72)

Exploiting the transformative potential of the late Modernist period, Wingfield establishes in *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* that war, in addition to devastation, can bring the potential for radical change. This change is also felt by the returning combatants. In the aftermath of the war the returning soldiering men re-enter a different milieu in which the balance of power, in their absence, has shifted. Their previously unchallenged dominance, in public and private, is now threatened.

Throughout *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* the notion of “space” is strategically employed by Wingfield to demonstrate opposition and the contrary experiences and consequences of war. From the outset, in her examination of indoor and outdoor spaces, Wingfield highlights contrasting gendered and age-related reactions to the call to arms. Building on this throughout *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* Wingfield examines civilian and combatant spaces and moves in and out of place and time to explore these differential impacts of relentless cycles of warfare throughout history. In a reversal of the initial male enthusiasm and female trepidation in response to the onset of war in the opening of *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* Wingfield explores its antithesis in the early aftermath of the war, in which there is a sense of female awareness of their expanded and new-found freedoms:

For in me I feel a new time,
A new space, on whose axes spin my world
As you and I - the man, the woman - are face to face.

(“Women In Love”: 43)

Wingfield explores the opposite effect as the returning male combatants struggle to find a suitable and uncontested space in this new milieu:

> [. . .] Find me a cause
> Or a catastrophe
> To crack and shake ("Men At Peace": 37)

Collins argues that "though differentiated, these [male] figures now move in a mutable world where, finding one's bearings is challenging" (2013: 24). However, despite their excitement there is also a sense of female awareness of both the enormity and the fragility of the moment:

> The air's filled with power, and hesitancy,
> And awareness sharp as a blade's edge:
> The lightest gesture, the least sign
> Can alter our whole fate. ("Women In Love": 43)

Wingfield's preoccupation with questioning the legitimacy of the freedoms afforded women during the conflict continues beyond the end of the Second World War and is apparent in her revision of the final section of the poem.

Gender is likewise a significant factor in H.D.'s vision of the future. However, in contrast to Wingfield's more pragmatic approach, H.D. envisages a mystical future. In "Tribute to the Angels" a future is described that is beyond the battlefields of war, existing on a spiritual plane which is "different yet the same as before", presided over by a female divinity:

> her attention is undivided,
> we are her bridegroom and lamb;
>
> her book is our book; written
> or unwritten, its pages will reveal
>
> a tale of a Fisherman,
> a tale of a jar or jars,
>
> the same - different - the same attributes,

different yet the same as before. (“Tribute to the Angels” 39: 104-105)

In this sequence H.D. describes a future as yet “unwritten” which could be “different” but retains the same “attributes” as pre-war life. The crucial difference is that H.D. blurs the boundaries between the male betrothed and victim, as it is not clear who is the “bridegroom” and who is the “lamb”. Friedman posits that “*Trilogy* argues fundamentally that a world at war has lost touch with the female forms of divinity and that the search for life amid death is inextricably linked with the recovery of the Goddess” (1983: 231). Yet H.D. moves beyond this idea to offer the possibility of an entirely new post-war future by suggesting that males and females are two sides of the same coin, complementary (“different yet the same”). All of humanity working together creates the potential to build a possible future “undivided” by conflict and gender-based difference. Sarah Graham, quoting H.D. who calls “Tribute to the Angels” a “premature peace poem”, posits that:

> its genesis in the war also makes it a performative peace poem which strives to create a desired state of “not-war” through the act of writing, moving toward a state of peace in its construction that can serve as a model for world it inhabits, interrogates, and reflects. (2002: 193-194)[50]

A similar sentiment is apparent in Muriel Rukeyser’s “Easter Eve 1945” which was written shortly before the Allies accepted Germany’s surrender on 8 May 1945. Written in a proximate timeframe to *Trilogy*, what Rukeyser seeks is “not lack of war” but the “fierce continual flame” of peace:

> Now I say that the peace the spirit needs is peace,
> Not lack of war, but fierce continual flame. (75)

The middle volume of *Trilogy* describes a future which disrupts the rigidity of gender itself, and thus the inflexibility of gender roles. It also upends the decorum of the pre-war years, offering the possibility of a more peaceful and productive future. While Wingfield limits her interrogation to gender roles, it is in her exploration of

[50] The Foreword to *Trilogy* includes reference to Osbert Sitwell’s review of “The Walls Do Not Fall” in *The Observer* [on 28 May 1944], in which he commented “we want - we need - more”. H.D. in response wrote in a letter to her cousin in June 1944 that she was “so be-dazzled” that she “sat down the last two weeks of May and did another series, the same length [...] a sort of premature peace poem” (1973: ix).

what gender itself is, does, and could constitute in the future, that H.D. moves beyond Wingfield.

Virginia Woolf's pacifist polemic, *Three Guineas*, published in 1938, is worthy of consideration in a discussion of *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* and *Trilogy*. MacKay argues that in this text Woolf addresses, more explicitly than at any point in her writing career, "the public spheres of history and contemporary politics" (2003: 126). In this sense Woolf, like Wingfield and H.D., engages with history, power, the violence of war and its impact on civilisation. MacKay further argues it is only through a critical engagement with gender, "to present a public challenge to the mindlessness of patriarchal conservatism and complicit femininity", that real change can come about, and here, too, Woolf exhibits similar concerns to Wingfield and H.D. (MacKay, 2003: 142). Where Woolf significantly diverges from H.D. and Wingfield is her argument in support of the necessary marginality of women. This future for women as Woolf envisages it is linked to the creation of a "Society of Outsiders [which] has the same ends as your society—freedom, equality, peace; but that it seeks to achieve them by the means that a different sex, a different tradition, a different education, and the different values which result from those differences have placed within our reach" (1938: 173). Ironically, Wingfield and H.D. are, in many ways, outsiders yet both argue for a post-war future which is based on inclusiveness, on the cooperation of men and women. While H.D. is more radical than Wingfield in her vision of a future matriarchal realm, H.D., too, envisages a post-war future based on mutual respect and interdependence:

> But she spoke so he looked at her,
> she was shy and simple and young;
>
> she said, Sir, it is a most beautiful fragrance,
> as of all flowering things together;
>
> but Kaspar knew the seal of the jar was unbroken.
>
> ("The Flowering of the Rod" 43: 172)

Focusing on the future is not Wingfield and H.D.'s sole preoccupation in *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* and *Trilogy*: as the result, perhaps, of their troubled personal histories, Wingfield and H.D. share a compulsion to revisit and rework their prior writing. Robert O'Byrne describes Wingfield as a woman "forever uncomfortable with herself, gliding with supposed assurance between different worlds but unable to settle or find ease in any of them" (2007: 10). At the heart of this and many similar observations about Wingfield is that she experienced significant difficulty with fitting into her own personal story. Perhaps too, Wingfield's "lifelong preoccupation with retaining tight control over the people and events around her" extended into her creative life (O'Byrne, 2007: 10). These difficulties may well have contributed to and manifested in Wingfield's enduring compulsion to revisit and rewrite her prior work in her pursuit of her exacting personal standards. An insight into her creative process is proffered by Wingfield herself in a reference to *A Kite's Dinner* (1954) which she recalls was published "after months of choosing, revising, and for the fiftieth time re-correcting past and recent work" (Perrick qtd. Wingfield, 2007: 108).

The variations between the initial publication of *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* and later versions which were included in Wingfield's collections in 1954, 1977 and 1983 highlight this retrospective feature of her poetry, which is, according to Collins, also an indication "of her [Wingfield's] continuous engagement with her own creative process" (2013: 19). Yet, Wingfield's propensity to substantially revise her poems after their original publication also provides insights into her divided self and her awareness of accurately recording history. One such change is her reference to newly acquired female agency, which is evident in the original publication of *Beat Drum, Beat Heart*:

> Now I'm in charge of myself
> And can be quick at my desk,
> Counter or cafeteria,
> And responsible, in decency
> Of a job well done. The hours
> May be backbreaking, may be
> Not too bad - the room
> Or house I come home to

Frowsty or pleasant,
Dirty or dull, but it doesn't
Matter - I am free ("Women At Peace", 1946: 63-64)

This passage in its entirety is omitted from the later published versions of *Beat Drum, Beat Heart*, indicating that the early post-war optimism relating to female agency was temporary.

The later, revised, versions of *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* are shorter than the original. The sense of early post-war hopefulness is undermined again in the revised conclusion to *Beat Drum, Beat Heart*. These alterations indicate a shift in the poet's initial post-war optimism, in which, after a period of recollection and experience, it transpired to the poet that the opportunities and potential which opened for women during and in the immediate aftermath of the war were illusory.

This final sequence of *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* demonstrates Wingfield's concern with the collective impact of the Second World War for women and also provides insights into her own selfhood.[51] In exploiting the dissident potential of language Wingfield is drawing attention to both the changes in gender relations in the decade since the immediate aftermath of the Second World War and to changes in her own position and personal life in the intervening period.

Wingfield's social and personal perspective are interwoven throughout this sequence. A comparison of the opening of the final sequence of "Women At Peace" between the original publication of *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* and later published versions yields compelling insights. For instance, the charged opening of this final sequence of "Women At Peace" now includes "random fate" and "rout", which could refer to the sudden passing of both Wingfield's in-laws in a three-month period between late 1946 and March 1947. As a consequence, Wingfield's husband inherited the family viscountcy which also meant that Sheila Wingfield became the ninth Viscountess Powerscourt. It also heralded a move of the family household: Penny Perrick notes that Wingfield who had "scarcely settled her family into easily-

[51] The sequence in full is included as Appendix 1.

managed Bellair", had to uproot her family and move to the ancestral home of the Wingfield's, Powerscourt Castle and estate (2007: 78).

Immediately following this opening, the ensuing revised section starting in the original with "Give me the yoke" and ending with "That follow" of the closing sequence in "Women At Peace" has been described by Kathy D'Arcy as illustrative of Wingfield's use of "half-hidden satires and asides to write the entire less speakable rejection of the social positioning of women" (2008: 115). The overall message of these two passages is largely unchanged: the freedom which women experienced during the war is deceptive and that all women wish, in order to be fulfilled, is to be "yoked" to and dominated by a man who is "the provenance of right". The changes between the original and subsequent versions are mainly in the active verbs: "give me the yoke" is replaced with "free me that I may wear a yoke," suggesting that what women experienced during the war was indeed a temporary freedom. The idealised man, in the later version, is now "loved," but he is also charged with full responsibility, not just for his woman, but for all the tragedies that will inevitably ensue, sounding a cautionary note that the perpetuation of patriarchy will end in tragedy. This sequence also includes a plea for personal freedom from the "yoke" and "name", which could refer to the obligations and duties associated with the role of Viscountness, as well as offering a comment on the state of the Wingfield's post-war marital relationship.

In these final lines of *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* the word "renew" has been replaced with "reflood", "remake" with "renew" and the last three words have been changed from "make me new" to "make me whole". The later ending is more positive, in that the female speaker seems to be seeking agency, as opposed to finding fulfilment in her returned soldiering man.

Over a half-century later these changes would receive increasing critical attention. Plain argues that the post-war period posed challenges for women:

> it would seem that women were not granted citizenship in the Second World War; rather, they were forced to negotiate for it. And when attained it was

> provisional, subject to an ongoing program of proof emerging from a basic cultural assumption of women's unreliability. (2009: 169)

Wingfield's early awareness of the conditionality of the freedoms experienced by women in wartime is apparent in her revisions in these related passages in the subsequent iterations of *Beat Drum, Beat Heart.*

The revised conclusion of *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* also provides insights into Wingfield's self-perception. In the revision the female speaker acknowledges that she is not "whole", in a significant deviation from the first version of *Beat Drum, Beat Heart,* in which the female persona sought to be "new". In the eight years between its original publication and the next iteration of *Beat Drum, Beat Heart*, Wingfield experienced significant personal upheaval. In 1945 following his release as a prisoner of war Pat Wingfield initially recuperated in England at his sister's home. He was not joined there by his wife who "didn't make the journey from Bermuda to welcome her husband home" (Perrick, 2007: 77). Following this stay in England Pat joined his family in Bermuda where they stayed for six months (Perrick, 2007: 77). After leaving Bermuda the Wingfield family spent time in New York and England before returning to Ireland. Having taken up residence in Powerscourt Sheila Wingfield "took charge of remodelling and refurbishing of Powerscourt Castle, County Wicklow, a one-hundred-room Big House" (Comerford, 2006: 323). During this time according to Coleen Comerford Wingfield's husband "farmed" (2006: 323). This transformation to Powerscourt was funded by Wingfield's personal wealth as her husband's family was struggling financially (Perrick, 2007). However, while Wingfield enthusiastically undertook the renovation of Powerscourt, other areas of her life were in turmoil. As Perrick observes, "placid contentment wasn't in Sheila's nature": "domesticity, her churlish husband and her disappointing children, whose lives had to be controlled at all costs, could not compete with poetry" (2007: 88; 90). Given the finality of the full-stop which now ends *Beat Drum, Beat Heart*, in contrast with the more open-ended prior versions, there is a personal poignancy to these final lines which illuminates Wingfield's sense of her bifurcated self.

H.D., too, was a serial re-writer. This tendency could be linked to past trauma. Donna Holik Hollenberg refers to a letter H.D. wrote to Norman Pearson in the

winter of 1949, referencing her roman à clef of the First World War, *Bid Me to Live* (1960), in which H.D. notes that "the War I and War II over-lap in some curious way, one of those pleats in time" (1997: 87). H.D.'s propensity to revisit what she refers to as "War I and War II" is apparent in her compulsive and decades-long redrafting of *Bid Me to Live*. This experimental autobiographical novel, which, according to Caroline Zilboorg, was "likely begun as early as 1918" took H.D. over three decades to complete and was not published until 1960 (2015: xxix). In this sense, rewriting for H.D. may have represented her impulse to repeat these past experiences while working through painful memories. The constant revision of *Bid Me to Live* may be related to H.D.'s proximate experiences of both World Wars. This sensitivity is observed by Sacvan Bercovitch, who posits that in *Bid Me to Live*, H.D. shares Woolf's concern with being "acutely aware of the role of history and war in particular in giving meaning to while shattering people's lives" (2003: 248). This observation may help explain why *Bid Me to Live*, along with *Paint It To-day* and *Asphodel*, which comprise H.D.'s Madrigal cycle of novels, went through extensive revision and rewriting and are, according to Friedman and DuPlessis, "dramatically different novels about the same period in her [H.D.'s] life" (1990: 236). The madrigal has a long history as a poetic and musical form which, according to Edward Doughtie dates from the fourteenth century (2012). "Madrigal" is a term which "resonated with H.D. with the issues of war and love (love-in-war)" (Friedman and DuPlessis, 1990: 249). This association evokes a highpoint of the madrigal in musical history when in 1638 Claudio Monteverdi published his eighth book of madrigals, "Madrigals of Love and War". In this composition Monteverdi transforms the equation of love and war found in Latin elegy into a musical composition which, according to Robert Ketterer "exploited the elegiac theme of love as battle" (1998: 384). With *Trilogy* H.D. achieves its poetic equivalence. Poetry may also have afforded H.D. a more authentic means to achieve the "psychological and aesthetic fulfilment" envisaged by Catherine Brosman in expressing her horror and outrage at a world at war for the second time in as many decades (1992: 86). In this sense *Trilogy* is also a manifestation of the power of poetry as articulated by Rukeyser (1949) in *Life of Poetry*:

> a poem does invite, it does require. What does it invite? A poem invites you to feel. More than that: it invites you to respond. And better than that: a poem invites a total response. (8)

In *Trilogy* H.D. seeks to immerse her readers into the atmosphere of war, seeking "a total response" to the trauma and devastation of a world at war. H.D.'s propensity to re-write does not impinge directly on *Trilogy*, in which the inclusion of the date of composition of each volume, allied with the short intervening period between their composition and initial publication, reinforces the urgency and intensity of H.D.'s motivation to share her message of war, love, and resurrection at a critical historical juncture. H.D.'s creation of this wartime poem-sequence may thus represent the start of healing from a tragic past.

Challenging the canon of war poetry

Responding to the "world- reshaping processes" of two World Wars, the wartime poetry of H.D. and Wingfield refuses containment within "national" boundaries as each poet actively and creatively engages with other geographies (Ramazani, 2009b: 57). *Trilogy* and *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* exceed the constraints of national and nationalist poetic frameworks and make "more visible the intergeographic mappings and postnational skepticisms of modernist poetry" in a world at war (Ramazani, 2009a: 34). Ramazani posits that Modernists

> translated their frequent geographic displacement and transcultural alienation into a poetics of dissonance and defamiliarization (2009a: 25).

Yet, H.D. and Wingfield problematize the binary experiences of alienation and belonging inherent in Ramazani's conception of a transnational Modernism.

For H.D., who had experienced both World Wars, *Trilogy* is the culmination of creative changes which commenced during the First World War and is the outcome of mature reflection of her experiences of both conflicts. In this sense, MacKay's observation that "what the Great War initiated, the Second World War realised" is true of *Trilogy*. (2007: 9).

In *Trilogy* and *Beat Drum, Beat Heart* H.D. and Wingfield continue the disruption of what constitutes the accepted canon of war poetry. These disturbances include redefining and transforming poetic form and practice to accommodate their responses to love and war; their transhistorical view of warfare; pressuring the limits of language to express their horror of war through the ages; sensitivity to the gendered impact of warfare; and the obliteration of private / public boundaries wrought by the Second World War. Since the 1990s the reconsideration, reconfiguration and revision of the canon of war poetry facilities the valid inclusion of Wingfield and H.D. in the canon of World War poetry.

CONCLUSION

Canons are generally accepted as providing measures of what is considered valuable in a literary field - critical standards against which to assess the value of particular texts. Jason Harding argues that the "process by which canonical reputations are made is … finely grained, subtly contextualised, and gradual" (2007: 225). Harding's assertions are pertinent to this thesis' examination of the wartime poetry of Letts, Ridge, H.D. and Wingfield and consideration of their contributions to the still unfolding literary accounts of the World Wars. A further complexity is that the wartime writing of this cluster of women poets demands inclusion in canons of both Modernist writing and war poetries. Santanu Das's observation that little connection is drawn between the "parallel if occasionally intersecting careers" of war studies and Modernist scholarship extends to both literary canons (2013: 22). Despite recent expansions, the fields of Modernist writing and war poetries remain largely separate spheres, seldom integrated in scholarship. By bringing the two major strands of scholarship into dialogue, this thesis argues for the accommodation of the wartime poetry of Letts, Ridge, H.D. and Wingfield into both the Modernist canon and the evolving narrative of the World Wars. As Robert Aston observes, the concept of a literary canon is "not entirely stable and has shifted over time" (2020: 43).

The poetry examined in this thesis intersects a number of dominant critical paradigms in the scholarship of Modernism, Transnationalism and War Studies. While each of these critical perspectives contributes to greater understanding of the literature of the World Wars their individual efficacy is challenged in this thesis' examination of the poetry of four women writing in turbulent periods of world history. These poetries fit neither easily nor wholly into any one paradigm, resulting in the virtual occlusion of the poetry of Ridge, Letts, H.D. and Wingfield from critical consideration.

This thesis argues that even the flexibility presented by Jahan Ramazani's paradigm of a transnational poetics has limitations in adequately addressing the wartime writing of this quartet of women poets. Their work challenges notions of alienation, displacement, dissonance and defamiliarization which are central to Ramazani's framework. Despite their complicated national identities and experience of cultures

outside of their birthplaces, these women poets assimilate, absorb and interact with the localities from which their wartime poetry organically emanates. In their wartime collections, each writer stakes a claim and demonstrates attachment to the sites explored in their poetry. In the years of the First World War this kinship is apparent in the attraction of Ridge's nameless narrator, in "The Ghetto", to the vibrancy of immigrant life in New York City as the United States enters the conflict; Letts' empathy with wounded and dying combatants and with the bereaved stems directly from her VAD experience. In the midst of aerial bombardment in the Second World War, the American-born H.D. claims closer kinship with the denizens of a war-torn London, while Wingfield opens her collection in demonstrating exquisite sensitivity to the daily intimacies of a pre-war community soon to be torn asunder by war. This thesis calls for a new and innovative fusion of critical frames of reference for analysing women's World War poetry which is alert to a diversity of experiential, political, cultural, social and economic historical nuances and trajectories.

Scholarship to date has tended to treat the World Wars, and the literature produced by these conflicts, as separate entities. The recent scholarship of Das, which recognises the global and colonial dimensions of the First World War, chimes with the concerns expressed in the poetry of Letts and Ridge. While arguing for the new primacy of the civilian experience of the Second World War, Marina MacKay, too, concentrates on the differences between and distinctiveness of the World Wars. These influential perspectives, among others, consider the World Wars as largely 'stand-alone', if seismic, crises.

A similar propensity is apparent in Modernist scholarship, which tends to polarise Modernist writing into temporal, pre- and post-First World War, phases, its zenith achieved in the 'high' Modernism of the post-war decade. At the other end of the temporal spectrum, scholars - with the notable exception of MacKay - associate the advent of the Second World War with the end or 'nadir' of Modernism. This thesis, in its comparative examination of the poetry of four women across the two World Wars, disputes the narrative that Modernism had stalled and ceased to evolve by 1939.

This dissertation challenges the strict critical demarcation of the two World Wars in identifying and exploring connections and commonalities in the writing, produced in both wars, of Ridge, Letts, H.D. and Wingfield. The wartime poetry of these women writers unsettles periodising conceptions of Modernism and questions the largely separatist literary treatments of the World Wars. Considering the first half of the twentieth century as a continuum, rather than a period marked by two separate World Wars, offers the possibility of reconsidering and reframing artistic responses to women's poetic Modernism and war poetry in the twentieth century. This critical expansion suggests new avenues and rich veins of exploration in its reconsideration of Modernist literature and the formation and content of the canon of modern war poetry.

In various ways each of these four women writers problematizes the canon of modern war poetry so long dominated by the combatant and male perspective. By extending the experiential paradigm of the two World Wars and exploring the impact of war in non-combatant and civilian spaces and places, these women writers open up alternatives to the dominant narrative of the World Wars. Indeed, even when venturing into combatant zones, these women join with male combatant poets in raising issues such as battlefield desertion and combatant regret. Letts, Ridge, H.D. and Wingfield explore 'othered' perspectives and complicate received paradigms of World War poetry. This thesis also advocates for a critical reassessment of the conceptions of 'war poetry' and 'war poets' in a world at war in the first half of the twentieth century.

The wartime poetry of the quartet of women discussed in this thesis refuses containment within a national literary paradigm, transcending national boundaries to connect with universal issues in a world at war. Within Irish Studies, Letts, Ridge and Wingfield have received inadequate and problematic treatment to date. Their poetic responses to their historical moment is complex - cosmopolitan and transnational, for example in their exploration of Irishmen wearing British uniforms while their fellow countrymen are fighting for freedom from colonial rule; the events and immediate aftermath of 1916; the subsequent partition of Ireland, and the period of the 'Emergency' during the Second World War in which Ireland remained neutral. Evolving conceptions of Irish Modernism have the potential to embrace and

accommodate the ‘national hybridity’ of Letts, Ridge and Wingfield. However, despite the significant work of scholars such as Lucy Collins and Alex Davis in recuperating their writing in an Irish context, the contributions of Letts, Ridge and Wingfield remain on the margins of Irish literary debate. Their wartime poetry is also virtually occluded from the canon of Irish Modernist writing. Indeed, none of these three women writers is mentioned in Joe Cleary’s recent *Modernism, Empire, World Literature* (2021). A comprehensive challenge and contribution to evolving notions of Irish Modernism and Irish Literature, arguing for requisite attention to Letts, Ridge, and Wingfield, is needed. Their wartime poetry, which contests binary oppositions, resists confinement in narrow national paradigms and explores sensitive and still thorny historical events and issues, enriches and enhances our understanding of the Irish literary legacy in Modernism and in recently-expanded paradigms of war poetry.

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Appendix 1: Closing Sequence of *Beat Drum, Beat Heart,* (1946), (1954), (1977) and (1983)	
Beat Drum, Beat Heart, (1946)	*Beat Drum, Beat Heart,* (1954)[52] *Beat Drum, Beat Heart,* (1977)[53] and *Beat Drum, Beat Heart,* (1983)[54]
O chance, you that unbind, Shatter my tameness Break it down, And when I'm free again Give me the yoke I hanker for: Sharp belief In the authority And overbearing deeds Of some one person Who will be The provenance of right And strength, And in the transactions Of his mind And any tragedies That follow. Admit That the devout must have Sanction from Church, The man of crime, From others' failings, The privileged From custom, Scholar from book And I, from discipline Of great and terrible truths	O random Fate, who rout And shatter and unbind The elbow-leaning, tame, Demurest pieties - Free me that I may wear A yoke I hanker for And name: precise belief In the authority And overbearing deeds Of a loved mortal, one Whose strength and tongue shall be The provenance of right; A part in all transactions Of his mind and any Tragedies which follow. Admit that the devout Must have sanction from Church, A thief from others' failings, The privileged from custom Scholar from book - and I From discipline of great And terrible truths. Hold Me, Pour back my soul, let me know Life the unfinished: so Reflood the desolate ebb: Renew me, make me whole.

[52] Included in *A Kites Dinner: Poems 193 - 1954* (1954): 31-106.
[53] Included in *Her Storms: Selected Poems 1938 - 1977* (1977): 23 -74.
[54] Included in *Collected Poems 1938-1983* (1983): 19-72.

Pour back my soul: let me know Life the unfinished: so Renew the desolate ebb: Remake me, make me new	