

- 10- F. R. Leavis, *New Bearings in English Poetry*. (London: Chatto and Windus, 1961), P 65.
- 11- G. E. Wood berry.
- 12- .I. M. Greagson, *Poetry of the First World War*. (Great Britain: The Camelot Press Ltd, 1976), PP. 13-4.
- 13-J. H. Johnston, P. 33.
- 14- Sec E. Blunden, War Poets, P 18.
- 15- Ibid, P. 18.
- 16-For more details, see .I. 11. Johnston; P. 34.
- 17- Some critics described his war sonnets as rather silly, even schoolish. See for example, Julian Tennyson, *Anthology of War Poetry, 1914-1918*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1943), P. 31.
- 18- In a letter dated 1912 written by Charles Sorley, a colleague poet of Brooke, he declared that Brooke's high sacrificial soul was of a jingoist patriot. Because it is the turn of circumstances over which he had no control that made him face to face with fighting. This letter is quoted in John Press, *A Map of Modern English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), P 142.
- 19- n. a. "Out in the Dark-Poetry of the first World War", web site: <http://www.warpoetry.co.uk/Brooke2.htm/>. Rwtrieved: 31/01/2004.
- 20- See David Craig and Micheal Egan, *Extreme Situations* (Thetford: Lowe and Brydon Printers, 1979), PP 1-2.

Notes

- 1- Timothy Rogers ed.. *Georgian Poetry 1911-1928* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977), P 346.
- 2- W. W. Robson, *Modern English Literature*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), P 67.
- 3- n. a. "War Sonnet", Web site: http://www.emory.edu/English/Lost_poets/Sonnet.htm. Retrieved: 31/10/2004. Quotations from Brooke's poems are referred to hereafter.
- 4- J. Johnston elaborates this idea justifying the use of the static epic form in this literary period, deriving its motive and effect not only from the physical conditions of the war but also from a consciously exercised contrast to the Georgian mode. See *English Poetry of the First World War*. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton Universally Press. 1964), PP5-12.
- 5- *Rupert Brooke: A Reappraisal and Selection*. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1917), P. 184.
- 6- Kenneth Hopkins, *English Poetry: A Short History* (London: Phoenix House Press, 1962), P. 537.
- 7- Timothy Rogers. PP 325-6.
- 8- *War Poets 1914-1918*, (Great Britain: Long man, 1958), P. 51.
- 9- G. E. Wood berry "Brooke, Rupert. 1916. Collected Poems", Web site: <http://www.barlleby.com/232/1000.htm>. Retrieved: 31/01/2004.

regarding the going to war of himself as a highly intense, remarkable and sacrificial exploit⁽¹⁸⁾. What happened in his sonnets is that the heart rules the head to such an extent that intellect is always second to emotion and is readily sacrificed when the two conflict. Thus the sonnets conclude with a glad acceptance of the supreme sacrifice that never confronts the ugly reality of death in war.

Based on the two main qualities of his war sonnets- his preoccupation with death and his facility for sound effects, Brooke has clothed his attitude in fine words; but he has taken the sentimental attitude. His previous experience of personal life,⁽¹⁹⁾ and his poetic experiment did not arm him well to write about the brutalities of war in explicit terms. This might be justified by the fact that the writers fully alive in this age have naturally tended to create a literature of crisis. And this is why the first impulse towards evaluating and studying it has not yet been academic⁽²⁰⁾.

Unfortunately for his poetic reputation he was not given the time and the fighting experience to change his attitude towards the war, and to modify the techniques with which he expressed his first reaction.

Accordingly, the chief value of these war sonnets becomes a matter of reconsideration: Depicting the view point of main critics of war poetry mentioned above, the chief value of these war sonnets in a study of war poetry should be assessed according to the specific duration of time through which they were written, Their value lies not in their poetic quality or in depth of thought and feeling alone. Written at the very beginning of war, their real value lies in the fact that they summarize the jingoist, truculent patriotic spirit of the time.

Conclusion

Elegant, melodious, rich in texture, decorous and dignified in tone, the 1914 sonnets do not deal with war; they reveal a sophisticated sensibility contemplating itself on the verge of war. Brooke's sonnets were inspired by a great moral and social crisis, represented by identifying the dilemma of war. What happened is that instead of defining that crisis, Brooke merely resented its effects on his own range of responses.

Actually, the earnest, self-revelatory nature of the sequence and its progression to the eloquent intimacy of sonnet V leave no doubt about the highly personal nature of the jingoist sentiments expressed there in.

The sonnets are a whole history and revelation of Rupert Brooke himself. To him the call for sacrifice was the opportunity for purification. He was far too obsessed with his own sacrifice,

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

There is mysticism about the notion that the treasures listed earlier—the sights, sounds, happy dreams and laughter—are to be given back "somewhere" to English. What becomes clear here is that Brooke is once again beguiled by his preoccupation with sound effects and desire to convey what is to him the vague but attractive idea of peace in death.

Yet, the poet did attempt here to establish a relationship between himself and the values of the world in which he moved. He implied in this sonnet that his world is worth dying for. Brooke has been blamed for not enlarging this idea of sacrifice to be that of a nation, morally aroused and deserving to be of historical necessity.⁽¹⁶⁾ This assures the fact that he couldn't mix his thought or the result of it with his feeling. He could only think about his feeling.

So, in spite of being an expression of inborn patriotism which excuses the death for the land, Brooke's war sonnets are abstract. They are unconnected with the particulars of war experience. Almost all critics of war poetry agree that had Brooke lived longer time to witness real war battles, he would not continue to write the same type of poetry.⁽¹⁷⁾

The last of the five sonnets. *The Soldier* is regarded by many critics as the most famous and most anthologized of all Brooke's 1914 sonnets. It begins:

If I should die, think only this of me:
That there's some corner of a Foreign field,
That is for ever English. There shall be
In that rich earth a richer dust concealed;

What attracts the attention about this sonnet here is that Brooke had expressed the feelings of the people towards the war at that time. Even the most plain recruit who had not the gift of style "said to himself in his own way exactly the same thing about the immortal hour as Brooke was saying more eloquently here"⁽¹⁴⁾. Hence it is out of Brooke's consideration that the poem later came to be regarded, and actually used, as "not so much a great poem as a great piece of war propaganda"⁽¹⁵⁾.

It is easy to realize that there is no hint of the internationalism one might expect of an acclaimed scholar in sincere but thoughtless egotism of "in that rich earth a richer dust concealed".

However, the sestet of the sonnet has more serious, and by now more familiar, defects of the superiority of the sound over the sense:

And think, this heart, all evil shed away,
A pulse in the eternal mind, no less
Gives somewhere back the thought by England given;

And wondering loveliness, lie leaves a white
Unbroken glory, a gathered radiance,
A width, a shining peace, under the night.

Here, his facility of sound effects is of great beauty. This apparent poetic strength reveals within it a potential weakness. We can sense a quiet slow rhythm and a series of failing cadences which give the sonnets an effective dignity of sound when read aloud.

The rich images and delicate music of this sonnet compose an achievement in poetic technique. Still, this achievement is strangely out of contact with the actuality that inspired it. Thus any attempt towards apprehending sense rather than the sound of these lines diminishes their impact. The reason why implications to death are avoided throughout the sequence, not because of ignorance or fear of the truth but:

because the poet felt compelled to elaborate a Personal
and "poetic" concept that would be understood
and accepted by his contemporaries⁽¹³⁾.

This justifies the reference to a common experience and the tendency to elaborate a few poetic themes. His death wish and his too readily indulged talent for verse music lead him in this sonnet into an intellectual vacuum. The only connection with war is that the war seems to Brooke to provide an honourable outlet from life and thus a starting point for the sentiments expressed.

of the sonnet. He even used grand abstractions such as "immortality", "holiness" and "honour" to support a consistency of effect which is typical of the most telling use of the sonnet form.

Brooke seems to have seized the opportunity of the war to project the private poetic preoccupation with death noted earlier into a generalized context. His talent for melodic invention has led him to a celebration of death. Again in this sonnet we tend to see that despite the obvious care with which the lines have been turned and the sound effects worked out, the final effect of the sense of the poem is one of intellectual self-indulgence.

Sonnet Iv *The Dead* starts with characteristic Georgian versification and language:

These hearts were woven of human joys and cares.

Washed marvellously with sorrow, swift to mirth.

The years had given them kindness. Down was theirs,

And sunset, and the colours of the earth.

The octave presents a summation of human experience on the sensuous and emotional level. Death, as the sestet pictures it, asserts these pleasurable activities, but it gathers and immortalizes rather than cancels the range of experience with which Brooke was familiar:

These arc waters blown by changing winds to laughter

And lit by the rich skies, all day. And after,

Frost, with a gesture, stays the waves that dance

Again the emotion sings, the cadences fall, the ideas are not investigated beyond their surface attraction, We tend to realize the jingoistic spirit of sacrifice quite clear in the above lines. War is again viewed in terms of its personal effects on the past. Though it is apparently in the nature of that war to provide a kind of moral regeneration for those who volunteer to fight it, the nature and the purpose of the struggle remain undefined. On the one hand, they stand as vast premises because of the grandure of the words used in describing the moral and spiritual value of the war. While on the other hand, the artful shifts of paradox would let the door open towards what the poet has been and what he hopes to be.

The next three sonnets are concerned with the implication of death, not in terms of its physical reality, but as a species of translation from physical life to a retrospective awareness as a means of eternal mind. Notice the musical quality of the first lines of sonnet III:-

Blowout, you bugles, over the rich Dead!

There is none of these so lonely and poor of old.

But, dying, has made us rare gifts than gold.

It reveals a considerable mastery of the sonnet form as well as the usual melodic persuasion. There is evidence here of a willingness to turn his mastery of sound effects to more varied purpose to make it the poet's servant rather than his master. The long syllables and falling cadences echo the obvious starting-point

Brooke's war sonnets are poems which are managed by mass emotions. Yet, "he has a control on these emotions for he uses poetic techniques of versification and cadence of full effect to convey that emotion"⁽¹²⁾ What happens is that the heart rules the head to such an extent that intellect is always a poor second to emotion, and is really sacrificed when the two conflict. Thus the sonnet concludes with a glad acceptance of the supreme sacrifice that never confronts the ugly reality of death in war:

Nothing to shake the laughing heart's long peace there
 But only agony, and that has ending;
 And the worst friend and enemy is but Death.

The words have a joyous lilt, but the deeper music of the feeling is grave. The sestet proceeds to round off a comforting paradox, emotional rather than intellectual in content. The sufferings of warfare bring a spiritual peace in battle.

Sonnet II, *Safety* is also developed in terms of paradox, the moral crusade, by its nobility, safe guards a kind of spiritual safety and immortality:

We have gained a peace unshaken by pain forever.
 War knows no power. Safe shall be my going,
 Secretly armed against all death's endeavour;
 Safe though all safety's lost; safe where men fail;
 And if these poor limbs die, safest of all.

Two main qualities in Brooke's earlier poetry are clearly present in the war sonnets. The first is a preoccupation with death. It is this disenchantment with life which makes him willingly embrace war as a heroic purposeful variant to his own rather aimless life. A soldier's death would be an honorable escape. Indeed he was rarely indulged in any battle or heroic feats. His Feelings reminded him of the time of his mental breakdown with his girlfriend Katherine Cox. Ever since, he seemed "unable to make a deep personal commitment to any one nor did he seem able to commit himself fully to any ambition or any cause"⁽¹¹⁾ This lack of commitment was clearly reflected in his first sonnet. Death is a theme of all the five war sonnets; and two of them are actually titled "The Dead".

The second element in Brooke's work which should be underlined is his facility for sound effects of great beauty. This perplexing feature is both an apparent poetic strength and a potential weakness at the same time. If we examine *peace*, we tend to notice a fine ring and a single telling image: "as swimmers into cleanness leaping". But sound is sometimes exploited at the expense of sense:

Glad from a world grown old and cold and weary.

The three epithets "old" "cold" and "weary" are chosen for the cumulative sound effect of their long syllables. Here sound is used to reinforce sense, so that meaning is heightened and reinforced by sound effects.

Few of those were in the early phase of war service as Brooke was in 1914 and 1915 and heard his "music" will ever have forgotten it, even though they might serve into years of deepening despair and horror which for them made its graces unsuitable⁽⁸⁾.

More than a view point regarded Brooke's sonnets are full of that sensation of being gathered up. Regarded by one of the critics as an element of success, he called that sensation "me Lange" that is: "the method of indiscrimination by which [Brooke] gather up experience, and pours it out again in language, with full disregard of its relative values". But this indifference to values, this apparent lack of selection in material modernizes the verse. It "yields, too, an effect of abundant vitality"⁽⁹⁾. This effort to modernize poetry brings it closer to life. Though, F.R. Leavis sees that this poet has earned notoriety by his realism; for he "managed to reconcile the sordid facts of life with the rosy mists of poet's experiences"⁽¹⁰⁾.

The sestet proceeds to round off a comforting paradox, emotional rather than intellectual in content:

Oh! We, who have known shame, we have found release there,
Where there's no ill no grief, but sleep has mending,
Naught broken save this body, lost but breath;

The suffering of warfare bring a spiritual peace in battle: "The worst friend and enemy is but Death".

The search for solitude, the relief from crowds, the open door into nature; the sense of flight and escape; the repeated thought of safety, the insistent fatigue, the cry for sleep—all these bear confession in their faces. Brooke himself, the most talented of the Georgians, seems to have realized that his ruminations among "the shade" and "loneliness" of the "last land", his speculations on life and death were all far from poetic reality. And he was determined to overcome this defect with new and serious verse. Yet his determined trial to be modern was deemed unpoetic, because he ventured occasionally on unpleasant or unromantic subject.

What concerns us here are mainly the five war sonnets: *Peace*, *Safety*, *The Dead*, *The Dead* and *The Soldier*, which happened to coincide with the national mood of that time. The feeling has never been better expressed than in the noble lines which begin sonnet I, *Peace*:

Now God be thanked who has matched us with his Hour
And caught our youth, and wakened us from sleeping.

It propounds the idea that war is clean and cleansing, like sacred, purifying water. A grand change, in fact, from all the little emptiness of love and from "half-men" and their dirty songs. The only thing that can suffer in war is the physical identity of the fighter. Indeed the "God he thanked" sentence was used as a recruiting slogan at the very beginning of the war. Edmund Blunder wrote that

war, nor the nations either"⁽⁶⁾. Jingoism, honour and love of one's country are not despicable things. When the war of 1914 began, the title "Soldier-poet" became the counterpart of war poetry. And it was impossible that the poets of this generation should not be over-conscious of their own position, of their own emotions. The attitude of patriotism or even jingoism into which the moment threw them was the only reality seen at that critical time.

They knew that their only choice was to fight: and for them as poets of war "it was inevitable that sentimentalism should rage and the early war poetry was of a predominately sentimental character". It was later, when some of them experienced real war in the trenches, that a more solid and more actual war poetry began to be written⁽⁷⁾. Brooke indeed was almost the only poet to react in a way, with results that have made it difficult to estimate his real significance. He never experienced real war in the trenches. Even his death in 1915 was because of blood-poisoning as a result of scorpion bite; it was not heroic. Brooke's prewar verse are comprehensible in terms of the new social consciousness that poetry assumed in the twenties. There is something like a premonition can be seen recurring. A love-sonnet dated 1909 powerfully includes it:

Oh! Death will find me, long before I tire
 Of watching you; and swing me suddenly
 Into the shade and loneliness and mire
 Of the last land!

was attained by a sacrifice which inevitably became fatal to poetry. It is the tragic loss of contact with contemporary reality⁽⁴⁾. The Georgians described their art as a timeless refuge from a reality which is difficult to confront.

Through reading the early poetry of Brooke-one of which is the above quoted-the impression revealed is that they are not more than a young man's exercises in writing poetry. He himself deemed all the new poems as "unimportant prettiness" and could be a further barrier to a fair appraisal. This is because, as Timothy Rogers states it, "he never quite succeeded in fusing body and soul" which is one reason why he appeals to adolescence⁽⁵⁾. This may be due to the fact that being a Georgian poet, Brooke seldom delved below external appearances.

This pastoral element that was characteristic in Georgian poetry represented an attempt to escape from the realities of modern urban and industrial life.

Generally speaking, the 1914 war sonnets are the brief perfection of his achievement. They have been regarded for a long time among the few supreme utterances of English patriotism. English war poetry before 1916 was nearly all concerned with glory, victory and patriotism.

And so far as the war poems go, these were written "when none of the poets had discovered just what exactly was meant by

It is unquestionable that the extraordinary popularity of Rupert Brooke is due to the excellence of his verse to the tact with which it was presented to the public. But it is also due to a vague perception of his representative nature; for he was already a poet of established reputation. His verse exhibits a genuine sensuousness. There is always a note of undergraduate brilliance and cleverness in Brooke's work. He was a glamorous figure. Yet, under this glamour some personal immaturities and defects tend to appear. His most famous pre-war poem, "Grantchester" has been described as the prize poem of Georgian poetry:

Say, is there Beauty yet to find?
 And Certainty? And Quiet Kind?
 Deep meadows yet, far to forget
 The lies, and truth, and pain? ... Oh! Yet
 Stands the church clock at ten to three?
 And is there honey still for tea? ⁽³⁾

It is a string of wistful home thoughts from abroad. Marsh's optimism of putting on a new strength and beauty of English poetry stuck with what the Georgians actually produced. Since the accent was on "Beauty", "Certainty" and "Quiet Kind", the tendency was "to for get / the lies, and truths and pain". This "new" poetry took its main inspiration from traditional pastoral themes, which gave it a kind of stability. Yet, it is this stability which as J. Johnston asserts,

emotional relief in war. Hence the portrayal of jingoism depicted in his sonnets versus his personal life.

In spite of the title of this paper, a few words on Brooke's early poetry will not be out of place. At his death there is no doubt what poetic party was uppermost, since the first of Edward Marsh's anthologies, "The Georgians", had been the fashion. The term "Georgian" is vague and it may seem meaningless to use one label for a group of poets so dissimilar. It cannot be said to signify a coherent school of poetry with consciously agreed upon principles.

Georgian poetry denoted a group of conservative poets who began to publish verse during the first two decades of the twentieth century. The label "Georgian" though very happily chosen, had an exceedingly vague connotation. The poets gathered under this somewhat refined banner shared certain qualities. Their verse had at its worst a gentlemanly quality. It expressed the entirely praise worthy reactions of the cultured and sensitive man of letters. It was soothing and reassuring. The verse was "neat and expressed with many a pretty turn of fancy. The ordinary things of life were observed anew".⁽¹⁾ The Georgian poets felt that they must break away from the conventional language of the late romantic tradition. Yet, unfortunately, as soon as they are serious, they lapse into it again. This led one of the main critics of Modern English literature to describe Georgianism as "a sunset that was mistaken for a dawn"⁽²⁾.

Jingoism Versus Personal Life in Rupert Brooke's War Sonnets

Ghada Bakr Marie^(*)

Introduction:

The outbreak of war in 1914 stirred many young soldiers of poetry to express their new-found sense of the beauty and clearness of the homeland which they might never see again. Rupert Brooke's verse as a whole has been a subject of controversy for many critics. Regarded by some as beautiful, wonderful versification of poetry, the war sonnets were considered by others as silly, adolescent and has no inside.

In this paper I am chiefly concerned with Brooke's war verse, specifically the main war sonnets of 1914. Though being rich in texture, dignified in tone and melodious, these sonnets do not reveal actual war. Rather, they represent Brooke's own range of responses.

I intend to shed light on the lightly personal nature of the sentiments expressed there in the sonnets. The melodic expression of the theme of death reveals an explicit personal application. Accordingly, the sonnets could no longer be read as a clarion call to arms. Rather, they are an attempt by a tormented man to find

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