GÜLLÜBAĞ, MUSTAFA (2026). "Birinci Dünya Savaşi: Sinirlar Koyan ve Kaldiran Savaş".
***Karadeniz Araştırmaları*. XXIII/89: 523-542.**

BİRİNCİ DÜNYA SAVAŞI: SINIRLAR KOYAN VE KALDIRAN SAVAŞ[1]

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ÖZ

Bu makale, Birinci Dünya Savaşı Özelinde, savaş olgusunun insan ilişkilerine yaptığı etkiyi "sınır" mecazı üzerinden Yeni Tarihselci bakışla incelemektedir. Gerçek ve mecazi anlamda sınırı aşmak bir çatışma sebebidir. Dört yıl süren Birinci Dünya Savaşı bittiğinde insan ilişkilerinin bazılarına yeni sınırlar örmüş bazılarının sınırlarını kaldırmıştır. Savaş öncesinde kadınlar yoğun olarak ev işleri ve çocuk yetiştirmekle ilgilenen bireylerken erkeklerin savaşa katılmasıyla boşalan pozisyonların yerini dolduran kadınlar kadın-erkek görevleri arasındaki sınırı kaldırmıştır. Bunun yanında savaşa okul bitirip giden ve savaş öncesi hiç yetişkin hayatı olmamış olan gençler savaşın sonunda ayrıldıkları topluma yabancılaşmışlar. Bunun yanında savaşın dehşetini en derinden yaşayan erkekler hayal edilemez tecrübelerini iletememenin yabancılığını içinde aileleri ve eşleriyle olan ilişkileri arasına görülmez sınırlar çekmiştir. Diğer taraftan "tümüyle-erkek" ordu yapılanması içinde askerler arasındaki ilişkilerde beklenmedik yakınlaşmalar gelişmiş, İngiliz sınıfsallığının sınırları da bu savaşta aşınmıştır. Bunun yanında savaşan askerlerin çektikleri çileye karşın ülkede normal akışında devam eden yaşam askerleri içine doğdukları topluma yabancılaştırmıştır. Yine savaş travmalarından dolayı başkalaşan eşler acı kaynağı olmuştur. Bunun yanında benzer tecrübelerden geçen askerler dost-düşman sınırını kaldırırken, sivillerin bu sınırı hep koruduğu gözlemlenmiştir. Bu çalışma yazar ve şairlerin eserlerinden faydalanarak savaşın İngiliz toplumu üzerine koyduğu ve kaldırdığı sınırları incelemektedir.
Anahtar Kelimeler: Sınır, Yabancılaşma, Travma, Homo-erotizm, Kadın

WORLD WAR I: THE WAR THAT LIFTED AND THRUSTED BORDERS

ABSTRACT

This article examines the effect of the phenomenon of war on human relations through the metaphor of "border" by the New Historicist approach in the context of the First World War. Crossing the border, both literally and metaphorically, is a cause for conflict. Border is of importance in terms of measuring and distinguishing the phenomena, such as woman-man, right-wrong, normal-abnormal, friend-foe, etc. The First World War that lasted four years created new borders for some human relations and removed the borders of others. Before the war, women were mostly concerned with housework and raising children, but women filled the positions left vacant by men's participation in the war, and this removed the boundaries between male and female roles. In addition, young boys who have finished their school and gone to the war and never had an adult life before the war became alienated from the society they had left, and the war made the society they were born into alien to them. In addition, men who experienced the horrors of the war most deeply felt alienated due to ineffability of their unimaginable experiences, and invisible boundaries were drawn between their relationships with their families and wives. On the other hand, an unexpected intimacy developed among the "all-male" army constitution, and the boundaries of English class system also got eroded during the war. Despite the suffering endured by the fighting soldiers, the normal course of life in the country continued, which alienated the soldiers from the society they were born into. Again, the spouses who changed due to the traumas of the war became a source of pain. In addition, it has been observed that while soldiers who went through similar experiences removed the boundary between friend and enemy, which civilians always maintained. This study examines the boundaries that the war lifted and thrusted on English society drawing examples from works of writers and poets.
Key Words: Border, Estrangement, Trauma, Homo-eroticism, Woman

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Araştırma Makalesi
Makale Gönderim Tarihi: 03.11.2025
Yayına Kabul Tarihi: 16.03.2026

[1] This article contains passages from my previously published work: *Half the Splendour: World War I English Poetry*, Kayseri: Tiydem, 2018.

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Introduction

Borders are the outer edges or extreme ends of anything possessing substance, such as an abstract idea. Violation of a border is, in most cases, a reason for conflict. Such is how many wars in human history began, as did World War I. On crossing the Belgian border August 3rd, 1914, Germany actually started the war, a war that would tear down many a social border as well as build new ones among peoples. Though we may not very consciously be aware of the presence of borders among concepts, they are there to mark the limit in-between: normal-abnormal; male-female; right-wrong; moral-perverse, etc. This paper will examine how and how much World War I had impacts on the socio-cultural, socio-economic, psychological, and sexual borders of English people as this actual war changed the borders on the map.

When the war began, the course of action for the men of England was supposed to seem "clear and straightforward: enlist and fight" was all that was expected of them (Robb, 2002, p. 32). When the war broke out, many young men welcomed it as an opportunity to prove their manhood. Richard Aldington portrays this point through his protagonist, George Winterbourne, who returns from leave in England, exclaiming to himself on seeing other soldiers: "By God' … you're men not boudoir rabbits and lounge lizards … you're the first real men I've looked upon. I swear you're better than the women and the half-men, and by God! I swear I'll die with you rather than live in a world without you!" (Aldington, 2013, p. 228). There was therefore now a border between combatant and non-combatant males. The border between man and woman had not yet been lifted that high in the early days and many recruiting propaganda posters included image of women sending their husbands, lovers, and sons off to war.

Women are Off to Work

Women had no clear path to follow on their way toward the 'war effort', and there were efforts to keep them in their homes. George Robb elucidates:

> Domestic magazines like *Everywoman's Weekly* and *Woman's Own* published war recipes and military sewing patterns but urged women not to be seduced by the glamour of war into 'inappropriate' war work. When a group of women offered their services to the War Office in 1914, they were curtly instructed to 'go home and sit still!' No doubt many feared that unconventional war work might 'unsex' women and lead to a further breakdown of patriarchal authority (2002, p. 39).

Yet this new war of a new century was highly industrialised and mechanised, demanding tremendous amount of material and men. It would soon become clear that women's support was indispensable for the victory. If the war was the means for men to prove their manhood, it was there for women to prove their 'true nature', mostly, as caretakers. "Many upper-class women established charitable organisations to assist the families of soldiers or Belgian refugees. A widespread response by middle-class women was the knitting of scarves and socks for soldiers – an acceptable occupation, but one that hardly satisfied everyone's desire to be useful" (Robb, 2002, p. 38-39).

A number of women took means and ways for more active duties than knitting, sewing or serving tea to Red Cross doctors. By the spring of 1915, more men joined the armed forces, which gave rise to shell shortage and resulted in a need for a women's workforce. "The war produced a leap in women's employment from 26 percent of the workforce in 1914 to 36 percent by 1918" (Robb, 2002, p. 40). Nurses were one of the earliest female labour recruited for

the war effort. Professional nurses were supplemented by Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) nurses who were "recruited from genteel upper- and middle-class backgrounds. Working-class women were deemed too immoral to mix with young soldiers. Furthermore, VADs received no salary; they paid their own way" (Robb, 2002, p. 40). In terms of earning money, women in munition work were much luckier than VAD females. "Although women in munitions work made only about half the wages of men, their pay was considerably higher than anything most working women had ever known" (Robb, 2002, p. 43). The border between men and women in the labour market was slowly lifting, and women seemed very happy about the developments. Madeline Ida Bedford's poem "Munition Wages" is a case in point. In their new-found social and economic freedom, the persona, a munition worker in a cockney voice condescending to an uppity interlocutor, is portrayed spending her hard-earned money on fine apparel, going to pubs and cinemas, and dining out in posh restaurants:

> Ye'are asking some questions —
> But bless yer, here goes:
> I spends the whole racket
> On good times and clothes. (4-7)
> …
> I drive out in taxis,
> Do theatres in style.
> And this is mi verdict —
> It is jolly worth while. (25-28)

Gallipoli veteran Vivian de Sola Pinto's sister, May, was one of those women who enjoyed the war in full. Of her, Pinto ironically notes:

> … and my sister had bought a V.A.D. nurse's uniform and had been photographed in this becoming costume. As far as I could gather, however, her 'war work' was confined to attending sewing meetings, where bandages were made and tea was drunk. She spent much of her time going to dances with smart young officers. Later she told me she had never had such a 'good time' in her life as during the war. 'Oh, what a lovely war'2 it was for her and many young Englishwomen of her class (1969, p. 186).

Into Battle and Horror

While the women at the home front were enjoying their new place in the war, millions of young men out on the front were experiencing the horrors of trench and modern warfare. This technologically advanced impersonal war had the capability of destroying troops miles away and a far cry from chivalric fantasies the young soldiers had dreamed of. What they found was horror, quite unlike chivalric codes of knighthood. Moreover, "the war seemed to have turned the world upside down, liberating women and enslaving men. Soldiers felt cheated and betrayed, not only by politicians and generals, but by civilian society as a whole, which seemed to prosper while they died like flies. The fact that so many women appeared positively to enjoy the war inevitably led to male resentment and escalation of misogynist rhetoric" (Robb, 2002,

[2] My emphases.

p. 47). Susan Kingsley Kent elucidates the resentment felt by the soldiers on the front toward women safe at home as follows:

> [T]he representation of war as unleashed sexual desire gave way to visions of sexual disorder, a blurring of gender lines as women went off to factories and the front to do war work and men found themselves immobilized in trenches. Toward the end of the war, sexual disorder came to be depicted as sexual conflict and polarization between the sexes, or sex war, as men perceived women to be emasculating them (1999, p. 283).

A bitter critic of the war, Siegfried Sassoon condemns women in his poem "Glory of Women" for uplifting the romantic image of war's nobility:

> You love us when we're heroes, home on leave,
> Or wounded in a *mentionable place*.[3]
> You worship decorations; you believe
> That chivalry redeems the war's disgrace. (1-4)

Sassoon's anger is directed not only towards women but also toward every kind of war profiteer. When he was on leave in London, he notices how people enjoy the war and depicts it as "a sting in the tail", discourse peculiar to himself:

> From the visible world I sought evidence which could aggravate my quarrel with acquiescent patriotism. Evidences of civilian callousness and complacency were plentiful, for the thriftless licence of war-time behaviour was an unavoidable spectacle, especially in the Savoy Hotel Grill Room which I visited more than once in my anxiety to reassure myself of the existence of bloated profiteers and uniformed jacks in office. Watching the guzzlers in the Savoy (and conveniently overlooking the fact that some of them were officers on leave) I nourished my righteous hatred of them, anathematising their appetites with the intolerance of youth which made me unable to realise that comfort-loving people are obliged to avoid self-knowledge – especially there is a war on. But I still believe that in 1917 the idle, empty-headed, and frivolous ingredients of Society were having a tolerably good time, while the officious were being made self-important by nicely graded degrees of uniformed and un-uniformed war-emergency authority (2000, p. 211-12).

This is what a combatant soldier observes on his leave in London. He feels estranged from the country and people on behalf of which he has been fighting.

[3] My emphases.

Yet, in the meantime, Jessie Pope was an ardent supporter of the war and leading figure of "white feather campaign" which urged young men to join-up and serve the country.

> Wilfred Owen's bitterly anti-war "Dulce et Decorum Est" with its violent imagery of gas-caused 'vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues' was originally entitled "To Jessie Pope" and then to Horace's 'Dulce et decorum est / Pro patria mori.' In the words of women propagandists as well as in the deeds of feather-carrying girls, the classical Roman noble patria must have seemed to become sinister, death dealing matria (Gilbert, 1987, p. 209).

Galling was an urging instrument in the hands of civilians who knew nothing of the awful reality of the war and who were in no danger of being sent themselves. Jessie Pope's "The Call" is a typical example of such attitude:

> Who's for the trench—
> Are you, my laddie?
> Who'll follow French—
> Will you, my laddie?
> Who's fretting to begin,
> Who's going out to win?
> And who wants to save his skin—
> Do you, my laddie? (1-8)

Owen's poem "Disabled", with certain echoes of "To an Athlete Dying Young" by A. E. Housman, shows his misogynist anger at women and mutilated soldier's helplessness in the face of a devastating war. Having done his best for his country, the soldier returned home but not cheered as heartily as he had been sent. Presumably he was wounded in an *un-mentionable place*, and "his main welcomer was one curious not about his face, his youth, his back, or his colour, but about a sexless attribute not at all visible" (Fussell, 2000, p. 293):

> Some cheered him home, but not as crowds cheer Goal.
> Only a solemn man who brought him fruits
> Thanked him; and then inquired about his soul. (37-39)

The role of this doughty soldier as a man seems to have changed from "putting a girl into bed" to "being put into bed" by a woman. By the glory of war he was somehow reduced to some passive object in need of protection and help:

> Now, he will spend a few sick years in institutes,
> And do what things the rules consider wise,
> And take whatever pity they may dole.
> Tonight he noticed how the women's eyes
> Passed from him to the strong men that were whole.
> How cold and late it is! Why don't they come
> And put him into bed? Why don't they come? (40-46)

A great deal of poetry produced by Sassoon and Owen were directed at the civilians, especially jingoists and the old men of the Church and government. Owen used Prophet Abraham and human "seed" imagery to show how "the old men of England" sacrifice their sons for the ends that could be achieved by negotiations[4]:

> But the old man would not so, but slew his son,
> And half the seed of Europe, one by one. (15-16)

The war that thrust borders between combatant and non-combatant lifted some other borders between them. A new psychological disorder, "termed as 'shell-shock', which mirrored the symptoms of hysteria, a condition exclusively attributed to women before war" was now a mental disorder of the nation's heroes (Robb, 2002, p. 47).

Both Owen and Sassoon and Robert Graves suffered from this mental case. They stayed in the famous Craiglockhart Military Hospital to get treated for "shell-shock". Shell-shock cases could briefly be defined as a flight from an unbearable reality through illness. Yet the definition was a medical "no-man's land" of language that "defied definition", because the line between the "mad" and the "sane" was not as clear as during pre-war years. Soldiers' psychological state was too complicated for somebody who knew nothing about the war. Incessant artillery shelling and bombardments put an intolerable strain on soldiers' nerves. Some soldiers endured it, some failed to do so. In William Noel Hodgson's poem "Before the Action", the soldier prays for courage in the beginning and his only wish is to perform his duty. The first stanza ends in 'Make me a soldier, Lord' (8) and the second 'Make me a man, Lord' (16), and the third stanza depicts natural beauty against the on-going "blood-sacrifice", which the persona of the poem finds unbearable and wishes his own death:

> I, that on my familiar hill
> Saw with uncomprehending eyes
> A hundred of thy sunsets spill
> Their fresh and sanguine sacrifice,
> Ere the sun swings his noonday sword
> Must say good-bye to all of this; -
> By all delights that I shall miss,
> Help me to die, O Lord. (17-24)

One may think that there would not be such a thing as a tragedy like this and that this poem is just an exaggerated expression of an imminent death. However, there are many cases where soldiers preferred to get a "blighty" wound or be killed rather than to be relieved of the torture of suspension. Sandra Gilbert elucidates this eerie feeling:

> The battlefield was 'empty of men' yet it was saturated with men. Inevitably such sinister invisibility combined with such deadly being created a sense of what Freud calls unheimlich, the uncanny. Yet, of course, a No Man's Land was real in its bizarre unreality, and to become

[4] See Sassoon's "A Soldier's Declaration" on https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Finished_with_the_War:_A_Soldier%E2%80%99s_Declaration

> a denizen of that real kingdom was to become, oneself, unreal. Practically speaking, moreover, such a feeling of unreality or uncanniness was actually realistic. As Robert Graves notes: "The average life expectancy of an infantry subaltern on the Western Front was, at some stages of the War, only about three months" so that a universal sense of doom, often manifesting itself as a desire for death (1987, p. 202).

Rosa is one of the *poilus* (a hairy, "Doughboy", infantryman) who is seized with such fear. Rosa is a French soldier who was shot through his mouth in Mary Borden's *The Forbidden Zone*, where Borden herself is a nurse and the narrator of the book. The author calls him Rosa because there is no possibility to have verbal contact with him because of the condition in which he is struggling for life. Rosa is the only word he pronounces in his agony and the narrator decides to call him so. After a careful examination, the narrator finds out that Rosa's mortal wound renders him unfit for battlefield conditions. Furthermore, though his wound is rather a deadly one, the life in him pounds so strongly that the narrator is quite hopeful for his survival. And the operation is a success. Then she enquires about the cause of this wound and finds out that this is a suicide attempt, which would land him in front of a court-martial. On this matter, she has a talk with the General. The General explains to her:

> But, Madame, we have epidemics of suicide in the trenches. Panic seizes the men. They blow their brains out in a panic. Unless the penalty is what it is – to be court marshalled and shot – the thing would spread. We'd find ourselves going over the top with battalions of dead men. The same penalty applies to men who wound themselves. That's the favourite device of a coward. He puts the muzzle of his rifle on his foot and fires (Borden, 2008, p. 68).

The narrator attempts to explain that this soldier "was not afraid of being killed, but of not being killed, that his luck was out when the enemy missed him; that he had kept waiting too long, had shot himself in despair because Germans wouldn't shoot him; and a woman called Rosa let him down, or perhaps she died. Perhaps he simply wanted to go to her" (Borden, 2008, 68). Seeing that there is no way to change the direction of consequences things were heading toward, the narrator retorts: "And here you are with your army regulations asking me to save him for you so that you can shoot him. You expect us to tie up his head every night and prevent his dying so that you can march him off to trial and stand him up against a wall" (Borden, 2008: 69). Before they could try and shoot him, Rosa manages to bleed himself to death. Yet the trauma of this experience remains with Mary Borden. The other soldiers with battle wounds were similar to those who had attempted suicide. They were sent back to battlefields to be killed by the enemy.

Not So Glorious

In Helen Zenna Smith's fictionalised diary of Winifred Young, *Not So Quiet*, Nelly is an ambulance driver in France and carries thousands of wounded men from battlefields to the hospital. Many young men die on the way and in the hospital. She also feels uneasy about her fiancé's, Roy's, whereabouts all the time. At some stage, her anxious waiting culminates in her

wishing him dead, just like the soldiers waiting in the trenches who commit suicide. And all she has been doing is to help the wounded to be "patched up" and sent to their eventual deaths[5]:

> Roy? Killed, I suppose? I am not surprised. Everyone else is killed. Trix was wiped out in an air-raid on the hospital five months ago, Etta Potato was torpedoed crossing the Channel within the last three weeks … everyone killed. If the submarines, the aerial torpedoes, the poison gas, the liquid fire, the long-distance guns, the hand grenades, the trench mortars, and all the other things injure without killing them, they are sent back again and again after being patched up until they are killed. It is only a question of time. Why should Roy expect to escape? He is better dead (Smith, 1988, p. 224).

After experiencing such heartrending scenes and the difficulties as an ambulance driver, she comes home on leave. She is expected to take part in a recruiting campaign but she is reluctant to do so: "Why should I encourage people to do what I have no intention of doing myself?" (Smith, 1988, p. 182). She adds, "I hate war. I disapprove of the whole principle of licensed killing" (Smith, 1988, p.182). She believes that she is not in something to be proud of. "Other girls on leave go out with their mothers in uniform and are proud to see their mothers are proud of them … I won't allow my mother to be proud of me" (Smith, 1988, p. 181). She does not want this because her speech is now too corrupt for a lady: "Once I was a sweet happy girl, happy and interested in local things, now, I'm bitter and snappy and sarcastic and with a tongue like an adder, yes, and not above swearing, either, actually *swearing*" (Smith, 1988, p. 181). The war corrupted not only their language but also some other moral codes.

The war provided women with the opportunity to work outside the home and to experience more personal freedom, which enabled them to have affairs without the vigilant eyes of chaperons. Accounts by the Press "reflecting fears of women's sexual independence denounced girls for running after soldiers, apparently unable to resist the attractiveness of uniforms" (Robb, 2002, p. 51). Nursing gave young nurses the opportunity to gain experience about male anatomy. "On the subject of erotic release, a severely political writer like Vera Brittain is notably restrained. Yet even she implies, at least subtextually, that she experienced some such phenomenon, for while she expects her "gratitude" to the men from whom she learned about "masculine functioning," she goes on to thank the war that delivered their naked bodies into her hands for her own "early release from … sex-inhibitions"" (Gilbert, 1987, p. 212). "Given the apocalyptic atmosphere of the war, adherence to the old codes seemed pointless to many" (Robb, 2002, p. 50). Such view seems to have found repercussion in the conversation among ambulance drivers in *Not So Quiet:*

> I've been on leave twice with different subs and they're both dead: Jerry was one. I liked Jerry awfully, but he died—they don't think anything rotten of a girl who sleeps with them nowadays, just that she's a fool if she doesn't. Cast-iron virgins they call those who won't. There

[5] Katherine Mansfield, as a sister who had lost a brother in the war wrote, a short story titled "The Fly" where a man, talking about his family's visit to their only son's grave in Belgium, notices a fly in his inkwell on the table. He saves the fly. Then he plunges it with a drop from his pen and saves it once more. After drying it, he blots it again and saves it. But this time the fly is dead. This is rather suggestive of Nelly's outlook on her job. Trudi Tate. (1995). *Women, Men and the Great War: Anthology of Stories,* New York: Manchester UP, p. 68-72.

> aren't many of them knocking about by all accounts; a lot of them swank they are, but they're not. Easy for the plain ones, the men don't worry them much; but I've got to the stage of wondering what's wrong with my appearance if a sub doesn't ask me to sleep with him —that's what the war's done for me— pretty isn't it? Here to-day and gone to-morrow, that's what they tell you, and it's true, it's true, people dying all around you. Makes you determined to get a bit of enjoyment out of life while you're alive to take it (Smith, 1988, p. 200).

In the meantime, death toll of war was mounting and the problem of depopulation and degeneration required new ways of thinking.

There was a phenomenon of "war babies" and it needed a solution that would not hurt. "The conservative MP Ronald McNeill argued that 'the mothers of our soldier's children are to be treated with no scorn or dishonour, and that the infants themselves should receive a loyal and unashamed welcome'" (Robb, 2002, p. 52). The war's exigencies found new solutions to the new problems. Ella Wheeler Wilcox, "in her poem "War Mothers," the unmarried mothers present their case for honourable acquittal before the 'clergy of the land', by drawing the clergy's attention to their (the clergy's) condoning of the unchristian act of killing one's fellow men" (Khan, 1988, p. 75):

> Because we were not wives
> We are dishonoured. Is it noble, then,
> To break God's laws only by killing men
> To save one's country from destruction?
> We took no man's life but gave our chastity,
> And sinned the ancient sin
> To plant young trees and fill felled forests in. (59-65)

Sexual intimacy during war period growing among women had rarely been a subject to talk about, but the literature produced during the war contains a great deal of homoerotic images.

Due to the long duration and stagnant nature of trench warfare, close and affectionate feelings developed between men at the front. Under incessant artillery shelling, men huddled together in fear or cuddled together in winter colds to keep themselves warm. All male environment of the military furthered the intimacy between men more strongly than it is in civilian life. "Among officers these relationships often mirrored the romantic friendships of their public school days. To what extent these relationships were homosexual is difficult to say, and many of the men involved were not entirely clear about their own feelings" (Robb, 2002, p. 57). Robert Graves admits that such acts were homosexual indeed, but innocent in spirit because the public school system made them despise the opposite sex and encouraged them to behave in the way they did:

> In English preparatory and public schools romance is necessarily homosexual. The opposite sex is despised and treated as something obscene. Many boys never recover from this perversion. For every one born homosexual, at least ten permanent pseudo-homosexuals are made by the public school system: nine of these ten as honourably chaste and sentimental as I was (1998, p. 19).

This must be the reason why Richard Aldington states emphatically:

> [T]hat there was nothing sodomitical in these friendships. I have lived and slept for months, indeed years, with 'the troops', and had several such companionships. But no vaguest proposal was ever made to me; I never saw any signs of sodomy, and never heard anything to make me suppose it existed. However, though I was with the fighting troops, I can't answer for what went on behind the lines (2013, p. 19).

Behind the lines there were such-like affiliations. Subalterns and senior officers shared quarters before their deployment. On one occasion like this Stuart Cloete, who was not aware of homosexual conduct, shared a room with a senior officer. "He was homosexual and made a pass at me. I opened my new jack-knife, put it under by pillow and said: 'If you try to get in my bed again I'll stick it into you.' He did not try again" (Cloete, 1972, p. 200).

One should keep this in mind that this was a long-standing war which kept the troops together for much too long in the stagnant trench warfare. They had to endure long hours under the constant menace of death in the rat infested, dirty trenches that are wet and cold all through winter, hot in summer. Such and such-like conditions brought men even closer to each other, "the disillusionment soldiers experienced in the trenches and the compensations many found [relief] in male comradeship and love" (Robb, 2002, p. 57). And the severing from the company was something hard to endure when the ceasefire was declared. "Looking back at those firm ranks as they marched into billets, to the Fusiliers' march, I found that this body of men had become so much a part of me that its disintegration would never tear away something I cared for more dearly than I could have believed. I was it, and it was I" (Chapman, 1985, p. 276).

Yet not all men's feelings for his fellow men are as brotherly as Guy Chapman's. There are a great number of poems and anecdotes in memoirs that explicitly reveal homoerotic feelings for the brother in arms. Some socially-stigmatised forms of love seem to be experienced much freely in trenches. In this context, the Great War has provided men of deviant sexual orientation with a freer environment. As for what goes on in Herbert Read's poem "My Company, Part 3", "men kiss and embrace each other passionately in public, behaviour for which they could still be arrested (in Britain) if it were happening in the street" (Barry, 1995, p. 153).

> A man of mine
> lies on the wire;
> And he will rot
> and first his lips
> the worms will eat.
> It is not thus I would have him kiss'd
> but with the warm passionate lips
> of his comrade here. (4-11)

A similar necrophiliac attraction may be found in T. E. Lawrence's epic work *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*. "The dead men looked wonderfully beautiful. The night was shining gently down, softening them into new ivory. Turks were white-skinned on their clothed parts, much whiter than Arabs; and these soldiers were very young. Close round them lapped the dark wormwood, now heavy with dew, in which the ends of moonbeams sparkled like sea spray" (1991: 308). Law-

rence never talks about the gore and mangled bodies of the dead, his attention is on "the nakedness and youth of the dead men, and writes as if they were satisfied lovers, merely asleep" (Woods, 1987, p. 64).

Wilfred Owen's "Futility" depicts a similar scene, but this time the dead body is in uniform and still warm with life. This poem is very suggestive of homoerotic implication, where an officer, grieved over the death of the soldier, orders his men to move him into the sun with the hope that it might rouse him again:

> Think how it wakes the seeds—
> Woke once the clays of a cold star.
> Are limbs, so dear-achieved, are sides
> Full-nerved, still warm, too hard to stir?
> Was it for this the clay grew tall?
> —O what made fatuous sunbeams toil
> To break earth's sleep at all? (8-14)

Obviously, to these men "seeing men killed was as horrible as if you or I had to see a field of corpses of women" (Egremont, 2014, p. 257). In "Ten Years After" W. G. Thomas blatantly declares his love for his men is greater than that for women:

> I found in hell
> That love of men
> For men– a love more true
> Than women tell
> Since love began. [6]

It is not possible to ascertain that Siegfried Sassoon felt the same way as W. G. Thomas, for example, *did*; but it should be noted that he wrote his famous protest known as "A Soldier's Declaration" during his convalescence after "[a] German bullet had passed through me leaving a neat hole near my right shoulder-blade and this patriotic perforation made a different man of me" (Sassoon, 2000, p. 172). Though he protested against the unnecessary prolongation of the war, there are several points that he felt accountable for the sufferings of the troops and of his own men. He condemned everybody who had a share in this mismanaged war, and he defended his fellow soldiers who were being needlessly sacrificed:

> I am making this statement as an act of wilful defiance of military authority, because I believe that War is being deliberately prolonged by those who have the power to end it . . . I am not protesting against the conduct of the War, but against the political errors and insincerities for which the fighting men are being sacrificed. On behalf of those who are suffering now I make this protest against the deception which is being practised on them (Sassoon, 2000, p. 224).

We should also note that the fictionalised character Dick Tiltwood in Sassoon's memoir is David "Tommy" Cuthbert Thomas. Thomas' death accelerated the process of the declaration. Tommy Thomas was Sassoon's beloved. Sassoon soon came to know that he was ill-advised about the

[6] Martin Taylor, *Lads*: *Love Poetry of the Trenches*, London: Constable, 1989, 151; line numbers are unavailable.

matter and he felt guilty at the "mutinous" declaration and his being safely out of the fighting that his regiment was enduring at Passchendaele. His sonnet "Banishment" reveals his anguished state of mind.

> . . . Love drove me to rebel.
> Love drives me back to grope with them through hell;
> And in their tortured eyes I stand forgiven. (12-14)

Another poem he wrote when he was in Craiglockhart War Hospital was "Sick Leave", where his personal dilemma in relation to the men he left behind in the trenches emerges. He feels guilty for leaving them in the trenches and being safe in the hospital. When he is asleep, 'the noiseless dead' (2) come and ask why he is not with them. Then he wakes up:

> In bitter safety I awake, unfriended; (9)

The battle hardened soldiers developed an understanding for their enemy's feelings. They were not *enemies*, but *duty performers* just like they themselves. Even at the very beginning of the war, it did not take them long to establish brotherly relations with the enemy. As for civilians, on the other hand, they still were just enemies and did not deserve a decent treatment. By September 1914, thousands of British officers and men were missing. Captain Arthur Hargreaves of the Somerset Light Infantry was one of those captured British officers. Van Emden quotes from Hargreaves: "On our arrival there [at Torgau], a vast crowd was assembled at the station. From the station to the Brückenkopf barracks (where we were to be imprisoned) was a seething mass of screaming men, women and children. The anger on their faces was terrible to see. They shook their fists, spat at us, and yelled themselves hoarse" (2010, p. 71). (We should note in passing that it was at Torgau that Soviet and American forces met in 1945 near the end of the war, on the 25th of April.)

Second Lieutenant Brian Horrocks, taken prisoner at Ypres, October 1914, was taken injured to a hospital in Lille. After being found fit, though he was not, he was transferred to a prisoner-of-war camp. The two occasions are significant as they reflect the beastly demeanour of civilians and the patient friendliness of soldiers. Horrock relates:

> At the station I was leaning out of the carriage window when a German Red Cross girl passed along the platform carrying a large bowl of soup with an appetising smell. She stopped, and then, seeing that I was an Englishman, spat into the soup and threw it on the platform.
>
> There was a bellow of rage from my escort. He made me sit well down in the carriage while he leant out and collected food from all who passed, every bit of which was passed back to me. On another occasion we went to the station-master's office to find out about trains. As there was no one in the room, my Feldwebel [Sergeant] pushed forward a chair for me to sit on. Suddenly, the door burst open and in came a typical fat, German railway official.
>
> "Why is this English swine seated in my office?" he shouted "Get up!" The Feldwebel walked slowly over to him, bent down towards the little

> turkey-cock and said: "This is a British officer who was wounded fighting, which you are never likely to be. He will remain seated." And I did. Afterwards, he apologised for his fellow countryman, saying: "All front-line troops have a respect for each other, but the farther from the front you get, the more bellicose and beastly the people become" (1961, p. 18-19).

The British soldiers without battle experience were no different from those civilian German crowds. In the last days of the war, Corporal Fred Hodges has been detailed to take a bunch of prisoners to a POW cage. Hodges relates their march as follows:

> As these fresh troops passed us on the road, they shouted insults at the Germans, and one of them, seeing the German officer at my side, shouted as he passed, 'Make that bloody bastard Boche carry your pack!' I made no reply, and reflected that the nearer one is to the battle, the less hate there is. Some of these boy soldiers going up to the front had probably not been in action. I felt a certain strange kinship with my prisoners (qtd. in van Emden, 2010, p. 307).

The Truce and Great Rift

The war of attrition at last ended on November 11, 1918. It was a happy moment for those who were alive, but not all. For the war severed men from women, soldiers form civilians. The combatant soldiers and the women in auxiliary corps, who are rarely mentioned: sisters, wives, and fiancées, did not rejoice the end of the war as the crowds in the street were doing. One of them was Ernest Parker; he was not so happy because:

> Soon lorries carrying munition workers began joy-riding through Trafalgar Square, the passengers dancing on the floors of the lorries and screaming at the top of their voices. Alas, I could not share their high spirits, for the new life which was now beckoning had involved an enormous sacrifice, and would be yet another challenge for those like myself who had had the good fortune to survive the perils of the long war. Surrounded by people whose experiences had been so different, I felt myself a stranger and I was lost in thoughts they could not possibly share (qtd. in Holmes, 2004, p. 616-17).

As mentioned earlier, the munitions workers' pay was significantly higher than anything most working women had ever received. This imparity was too visible for an ex-combatant soldier like Ernest Parker; for, while they were risking their lives for their country, some made fortune and stole their jobs, which is a plausible enough reason for his indignation. Whenever "high profit" was pronounced in passing, "munition manufacture" was also rumoured. An ex-combatant, Charles Carrington explains the widening rift between the fighting soldiers and the high ranking officers and civilians as follows:

> The fighting troops had no sympathy with the "base wallahs" whom they regarded as little better than the profiteering munition-makers in England. The schism in the nation was between the fighting soldiers and the civilians, a psychological cleavage far too wide to be bridged by

> any political agitation in the back areas, and the question still to be answered was, how would the fighting troops behave after they were demobilised (Carrington, 2015, p. 256).

At the end of the war, a quarter of the soldiers who returned home were crippled with psychological or physical trauma. Those who were without any problem and preparing to return had some other handicaps. "Of the 148,000 officers in the Army, the vast majority were between 18 and 25" (Lewis-Stempel, 2010. p. 307); and many of them had not had normal adulthood before joining up, and they did not have any notion of a life of their own. Charles Douie wrote:

> To me, as to a multitude of other young men, acclimatisation to the new conditions of peace was not easy. Since I had left school more than four years before, I had known the world only under the conditions of war. I had no memory of a man's life as it had been before the war on which I might build up a new life for the future. I found it hard to envisage life on an ordered plan covering a period of years; I do not find it easy today. Throughout the war, in common with most of infantry, I had lived solely for the day (qtd. in Lewis-Stempel, 2010, p. 307).

Charles Edmonds was aware of the "mental barrier" that war made:

> Middle-aged men, strenuously as they attempt to deny it, are united by a secret bond and separated by a mental barrier from their fellows who were too old or too young to fight in the Great War. Particularly the generation of young men who were soldiers before their characters had been formed, who were under twenty-five in 1914, is conscious of the distinction, for the war made them what they are (1929, p. 192).

Like Charles Douie, Robert Graves did not have a normal adult life before the war. He left his studies in Oxford and joined up. Moreover, now, he was having very strange daydreams. "[N]ot only did I have no experience of independent civilian life, having gone straight form school into the Army: I was still mentally and nervously organised for War. Shells used to come bursting on my bed at midnight, even though Nancy shared it with me; strangers in daytime would assume the faces of friends who had been killed" (Graves, 1998, p. 287). These were only personal problems that Graves had to tackle by himself. But some others might cause trouble in the public: "Other loose habits of wartime survived, such as stopping cars for a lift, talking without embarrassment to my fellow-travellers in railway carriages, and unbuttoning by the road-side without shame, whoever might be about" (1998, p. 287). Apart from these, Graves was able to observe some indications that limit his personal abilities: "My disabilities were many: I could not use a telephone, I felt sick every time I travelled by train, and to see more than two new people in a single day prevented me from sleeping" (1998, p. 288).

Robert Graves had sworn on the day of his demobilisation never to be under anyone's order. He had to find a solution and found one. He started a shop but it did not last too long; only six months later, he went bankrupt due to the drop in wholesale prices. Then he decided to "live by writing" (1998, p. 288). Stuart Cloete suffers from an incompatibility with society life because of the Army's deep-rooted hierarchy where a man is not supposed to comprehend but to obey: "No one, as thousands have since found out, is less fitted for business than an ex-officer

who has learnt only to obey orders and to give them" (1972, p. 317). Ghoulish spirit of the war loomed in front of them at every corner they turned. Richard Aldington reflects another trauma that surviving soldiers felt after the war. It is the "post-traumatic stress disorder" which, as mentioned earlier, woke Graves from his sleep and made Cloete have "terrible nightmares, in one of which I almost strangled Eileen [his beloved], thinking she was a German" (1972, p. 317). This found its utmost expression perhaps in Richard Aldington's *Death of a Hero*:

> What right have I to live? … When I meet an unmaimed man of my generation, I want to shout at him: "How did you escape? How did you dodge it? What dirty trick did you play? Why are you not dead, trickster? It is dreadful to have outlived your life, to have shirked your fate, to have overspent your welcome …. You, the war dead, I think you died in vain, I think you died for nothing, for a blast of wind, a blather, a humbug, a newspaper stunt, a politician's ramp. But at least you died. You did not reject the sharp, sweet shock of bullets, the sudden smash of the shell-burst, the insinuating agony of poison gas. You got rid of it all. You choose the better part …. But why weren't we one of them? What right have we to live? (201, p. 178-79)

These were the stories of those who can express their feelings, sentiments, indignation or anger. Yet there are some who cannot tell their stories. There were two reasons for this: the indescribability or ineffability of war, and the impossibility to imagine the horrors of it. In this context, the last paragraph of Sassoon's "A Soldier's Declaration" may be the best expression of this inconceivability: "On behalf of those who are suffering now, I make this protest against the deception which is being practised upon them; also I believe it may help to destroy the callous complacency with which the majority of those at home regard the continuance of agonies which they do not share and which they have not enough imagination to realise" (2000, p. 224). Many soldiers remained silent over the years, probably failing to find the appropriate word to depict what they experienced and what they felt. "A well-known consequence of their experiences was the extraordinary number of men who never mentioned World War I for much of the rest of their lives. They didn't talk about it freely when they came home, and only in their seventies did some of them begin to describe what they went through, in detail and with much emotion" (Adie, 2013, p. 171).

This was the "male" cost of war. There was another price to be paid by women during and after it. As soldiers were fighting for their king and their lives, the womenfolk at home were waiting in disquietude for news. And when the big day came, when the beloved husband, son, fiancé or lover returned home, they turned into being somebody else. Margaret Sackville tells the story of this estrangement and inconceivable nature of the war and "callous complacency" of those at home in her poem "The Women to the Men Returned" of 1920:

> You cannot speak to us nor we reply:
> You learnt a different language where men die,
> Are mutilated, maddened, blinded, torn
> To tatters of red flesh, mown down like corn,
> Crucified, starved, tormented. Oh! Forgive
> Us, who whilst all men died could bear to live
> Happy – almost, excited, glad – almost,

Extravagantly, counting not the cost –
The cost *you* paid in silence. Now, speech is vain,
We cannot understand nor you explain
Your passion and your anguish; we are deaf
And blind to all save customary grief.

The poem summarises almost all the aspects of Sassoon's "Declaration". Sackville is the civilian counterpart of Sassoon's sentiments. Elinor Jenkin's poem "I Loved in the Days That Were" deals with the estranging effect of the war wrought on her lover. "The poem ends the woman proclaiming that the tragedy of women whose lovers return alive, yet dead to their womenfolk, outstrips that of women whose lovers are killed" (Khan, 1988, p. 173):

You grieve your lovers are slain,
'Tis worse for me,
My love come back in vain,
Yet 'twas not he.[7]

The most widely known female personality of the war should be Vera Brittain. From her writings we know that she was extremely sentimental and humane and had a deep love for her brother Captain E. H. Brittain. When she received the letter that told Edward was wounded, she wrote the poem "To My Brother" expressing her pain at the news.

Your Battle-wounds are scars upon my heart,
Received when in that grand and tragic 'show' (1-2)

"Roundel" voices her pain felt for the dead, presumably for Roland, her fiancé:

Because you died, I shall not rest again, (1)

As a nurse and sister she was one of those who best conceived what the battle-wound and loss of a brother would mean. Yet being exposed to such ordeals day and night, months and years must have wrought changes in her, not in the sentimentality of her personality but in the psychology of her character. However, by the time of her visit to her brother's and fiancé's graves one year after, she seems finally to have been stripped of all her sentimentality, as her word "unperturbed" suggests in her self-depiction:

> The strange irony which determined the fates of Roland and Edward seemed to persist even after death: the impetuous warrior slept calmly in this peaceful, complacent earth with its suave covering of velvet lawn …. I left Louvencourt, as I thought, unperturbed; I had read the inscription on Roland's grave and gathered a bronze marigold to keep in my diary without any conscious feeling of emotion (Brittain, 1994, p. 533-34).

Post-war years in England were not so turbulent in terms of the war of the sexes. Yet in 1918, women were granted the vote for their contribution to the war effort; initially, the grant was for women over 30 in order to secure the majority of voters would be men. Age restriction was removed in 1928. The war, in its early days, had already become melting pot for different

[7] Quoted in Nosheen Khan, *Women's Poetry of the First World War*, Worcester: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1988, p. 173; line numbers are unavailable.

social classes. As early as "May 1916 *The Times* maintained 'the titled woman has been thrown into contact with the girl at the lathe, just as Tommy has come into close and affectionate contact with his officers. They find themselves on a new footing. Battle is a wonderful leveller, so is labour'" (Robb, 2002, p. 44). As an Anzac soldier at Gallipoli, Tom Skeyhill found equality between men and officer in death:

> Officers and men who fell
> In that first fierce rush of fame,
> They lie there side by side,
> Their rank is now the same; (33-36)

The exigencies of home front brought women and titled women together, battle conditions brought men and officer together. Officers usually came from titled families and served in the same trench with the sons of relatively lower classes. They became comrades under battlefield conditions, as, Lewis-Stempel puts forward: "One of the less acknowledged truths of war is that the rubbing of shoulders together in trench-land lessened class differences" (2010, p. 312). Like Tom Skeyhill, the Honourable Charles Lister fought at Gallipoli and a few months before his death had written to Mrs. Cornish that in their "greatest intimacies we still reach out over deep gulfs of class differences. Perhaps the dead of the war, side by side, may fill these up" (Lord Ribbersdale, 1917, p. 171). Bernard Martin, who had fought for fifteen months with the men, thinks that one other function of war is to erode the border between classes. Bernard Martin wrote: "What the war ought to be doing, I thought, is reducing class barriers, making less difference between rich and poor" (1987, p. 40-41).

With menfolk at the front and old men at home, women's entry to the work force through war-work would leave them a permanent place in the social strata. "Alice Meynell, a long time suffrage fighter, who accurately foresaw that through one of the grimmer paradoxes of history the Great War might force recalcitrant men to grant women, the stereotypical peacemakers, a viable inheritance in patriarchal society" (Gilbert, 1987, p. 208). Women would assume the role of their father:

> Our father works in us,
> The daughters of his manhood. Not undone
> Is he, not wasted, though transmuted thus,
> And though he left no son. (1-4)

Strongly associative of Wilfred Owen's "Parable of the Old Man and the Young", where the old man, instead of sacrificing the ram which metaphorically represents the ends that could be achieved by negotiation, halves the seed of Europe one by one, which thrust nearer the border the combatant and that of old men. "Now that your sons are dead and gone, you are expected", as Meynell ends her poem: "to Approve, accept, know them daughters of men. / Now that your sons are dust." (27-28). D. H. Lawrence's short story "Ticket Please" expressed his resentment at women's new-found freedom. The train conductor, who has been found unfit for military service, dates all the female conductors and tries to assert his authority. At this he was flogged badly by the girls. (1922, p. 67). Now the border of work between men and women lifted as did the sexual border. The commandant, chief manager of the ambulance corps in *Not So Quiet*, who is a woman, too, addressing one of the drivers, says: "Personally, if I were choosing women to

drive heavy ambulances their moral characters wouldn't worry me. It would be 'Are you a first-class driver? Not 'Are you a first-class virgin?'" (Smith, 1988, p. 126).

As soldiers, nurses, and other auxiliary forces did their best on battlefields, a new order had been established at home, "a war economy". Women were enjoying their relative freedom and spending their money on whatever they like. They were now out of boundaries of their fathers and husbands. They seem not to heed the whereabouts of those on the battlefield. "The stubbornly mundane nature of home-front life fuelled the bitterness of war poets like Sassoon and the shame-ridden civilians like Edith Sitwell. Her poem "The Dancers" is a strident attack upon wartime merriment (DeGroot, 2014, p. 314):

> The music has grown numb with death –
> But we will suck their dying breath,
> The whispered name they breathed to chance,
> To swell our music, make it loud
> That we may dance, – may dance.
> We are the dull blind carrion-fly
> That dance and batten. Though God die
> Mad from the horror of the light –
> The light is mad, too, flecked with blood, –
> We dance, we dance, each night. (6-15)

As the gap between civil and combatant grew wider, the solidarity between men and officer grew stronger. Sassoon wrote: "[T]he man who had really endured the War at its worst was everlastingly differentiated from everyone except his fellow soldiers" (2000, p. 211). In "Blighters" Sassoon expresses his disgust for such "merriments":

> I'd like to see a Tank come down the stalls,
> Lurching to ragtime tunes, or "Home, sweet Home,"
> And there'd be no more jokes in Music-halls
> To mock the riddled corpses round Bapaume. (5-8)

Like soldiers, nurses also suffered from such estrangement from the society. Zenna Smith's heroine Nelly feels no longer proud of serving the country because she has been helping a system that patches up the wounded soldiers and sends them back to battle zones to be killed. Vera Brittain becomes the mourner of the Lost Generation. By ascribing her own feelings to a fellow nurse, Mary Borden reveals her true thought about her existence: "She is no longer a woman. She is dead already, just as I am – really dead, past resurrection" (2008, p. 43).

Conclusion

Some soldiers felt estranged from the society they came from. Some were resented by their treatment of womenfolk, and some felt estranged from their country. They had been much farther out, away from, their country for too long. They were young boys when they joined up, but now they were young adults with no idea of being a member of a society. So they preferred to remain a soldier and not to return to England. Guy Chapman is sad that "England was said to be a country fit only for profiteers to live in …. Many of us growing bitter. We had no longer the desire to go back. It was an island we did not know …. England had vanished over the horizon of the mind. I did not want to see it" (1985, p. 281). Another soldier who did not want to return

was Graham Greenwell, who was twenty-two and in Italy when the war ended. He wrote his mother: "But it will be very hard to leave the regiment after so many years …. Could you ever have guessed how much I should enjoy the war?" (qtd. in Lewis-Stempel, 2010, p. 307). Stuart Cloete left England on the grounds that only tranquillity would cure his battle-related troubles. He settled down in France, and began farming and writing (1972, p. 317). Robert Graves could only manage to get a Bachelor of Letters from Oxford and went to Egypt. Despite all his care, he failed to make England his home again and went to Mallorca for the rest of his life (1998, p. 343). In his short story "The Nightmare", D. H. Lawrence tells of his persecution wrought upon him for being a spy. At the end of the story, his persona divorces his wife and leaves England for Italy: "Then, finding the meaninglessness too much, he gathered his few pounds together and in November left for Italy. Left England, England which he had loved so bitterly, Bitterly — and now was leaving, alone, and with a feeling of expressionlessness in his soul" (Lawrence, 1923, p. 290).

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

This article examines the effect of the phenomenon of war on human relations through the metaphor of "border" by the New Historicist approach in the context of the First World War. Crossing the border, both literally and metaphorically, is a cause for conflict. Border is of importance in terms of measuring and distinguishing the phenomena, such as woman-man, right-wrong, normal-abnormal, friend-foe, etc. The First World War that lasted four years created new borders for some human relations and removed the borders of others.

Before the war, women were mostly concerned with housework and raising children, but women filled the positions left vacant by men's participation in the war, and this removed the boundaries between male and female roles in terms of making money and personal independence. This wrought great changes on women's attitude to housework, childcare and other socially established gender roles. Largely women seemed to enjoy their newfound freedom; yet the war brought about also some other backlashes like the loss of the beloved fiancés or brothers; fiancés or husbands; and children who were to grow up without the security and warmth of a father.

Besides, young boys who have finished their school and gone to the war and never had an adult life before the war became alienated from the society they had left, and the war made the society they were born into alien to them. Quite number of them decided not to return to the country for which they fought four long years. Apart from all that, the war inflicted great psychological wounds on men who experienced the horrors of the war. Most of them deeply felt alienated due to ineffability of their unimaginable experiences, and invisible boundaries were drawn between their relationships with their families and wives.

On the other hand, due to stagnant nature of trench warfare, constant heavy artillery shelling and all-male environment of army life led men and officers to develop an unexpected intimacy especially in times of heavy artillery shelling or in freezing winter colds forcing them huddle together. All this provided a space for homo-erotic intimacy as well as eroded the English class system which separated the men from the officers. Despite the suffering endured by the fighting soldiers, the normal course of life in the country continued, which alienated the soldiers from the society they were born into. Again, the spouses who changed due to the traumas of the war became a source of pain.

In addition, it has been observed that while soldiers who went through similar experiences removed the boundary between friend and enemy, which civilians always maintained. While soldiers saw their fellow enemy as "duty performers" and felt quite sympathetic with them because they endured all the horror and difficulties in opposing trenches. This study examines the boundaries that the war lifted and thrusted on English society drawing examples from the works of famous writers and poets such as Siegfried Sassoon, Wilfred Owen, Edith Sitwell, Vera Brittain, William Noel Hodgson, Mary Borden, Herbert Read, Robert Graves, Jessie Pope, Richard Aldington as well as lesser-known writers and poets.