

Lecture 7 World War I Poetry in England

Hopeless gulfs of misery. Cruelty. The War. Change. Oblivion.
Human vitality.---Virginia Woolf, notes for *To the Lighthouse* (1927)

Shall we lay the blame on the war? When the guns fired in August 1914, did the faces of men and women show so plain in each other's eyes that romance was killed? Certainly it was a shock (to women in particular with their illusions about education, and so on) to see the faces of our rulers in the light of the shell-fire. So ugly they looked---German, English, French---so stupid.--Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (1929)

The reason why it is easy to kill another person must be that one's imagination is too sluggish to conceive what his life means to him---the infinite possibilities of a succession of days which are furled in him, & have already been spent.---Woolf, *Diaries*, August 27, 1918

It is really an instinct with me, & with most people, I suppose, to turn any sudden noise, or dark object in the sky into an explosion, or a German aeroplane. . . . It always seems utterly impossible that one should be hurt.---Woolf, *Diaries*, February 1, 1915

One went to bed [at the end of the war] fairly positive that never again in all our lives need we dread moonlight [meaning the threat of air-raid attack at night].---Woolf, *Diaries*, October 18, 1918

Image List

---*Poems* by Wilfred Owen (London: Chatto and Windus, 1920); dustjacket [Beinecke]

--- *Poems* by Wilfred Owen (London: Chatto and Windus, 1920); frontispiece and title page [Beinecke]

---*The Hope Song of the Soldiers' Sweethearts and Wives* by Thomas Hardy (London: private printing, 1917); title page [Beinecke]

---*Poems* by Edward Thomas (London: Selwyn & Blount, 1917); frontispiece and title page [Beinecke]

---Photograph of Siegfried Sassoon in uniform in France, 1916 [Hodgson Papers, Beinecke]

---*Counter-Attack and Other Poems* by Siegfried Sassoon (London: William Heinemann, 1918); title page and facing page [Beinecke]

---*Poems* by Isaac Rosenberg (London: William Heinemann, 1922); title page and frontispiece [Beinecke]

---Self-portraits by Isaac Rosenberg c. 1911 and in uniform in France, 1917 [source: *Collected Works of Isaac Rosenberg*, ed. Bottomley]

---*Severn & Somme* by Ivor Gurney, "Private, of the Gloucesters" (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1917) [Beinecke]