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Women's Pacifism during the First World War

Abstract

Women's pacifism in the course of the First World War is a chapter of collective memory that has never become a shared memory. The idea that war is "men's business, not ladies", is largely responsible for it. Paul Fussler summarises this attitude: correctly or not, as he writes in *The Great War and Modern Memory*, the current idea of the Great War derives primarily from images of the trenches in France and Belgium. Given this, it is not something unusual that outstanding events such as The Hague International Congress of Women (April-May 2015) is still a neglected chapter of women's history. This paper focuses on the event and other significant experiences in women's participation in the Great War.

Keywords: pacifism, internationalism, history, autobiography

Oh, don't let's talk about the women. They were splendid, wonderful. Such devotion, such devotion! How they comforted the troops! Oh, wonderful, beyond all praise! They got the vote for it, you know. Oh, wonderful! Steel-true and blade-straight. Yes, indeed, wonderful, wonderful! What ever should we have done without them? White feathers, and all that, you know. Oh, the women were marvellous. You can always rely upon the women to come up to scratch, you know. Yes, indeed. What would the Country be without them? So splendid, such an example¹.

[...] they had acquired a sort of mythical and symbolical meaning for him. They resented and deplored the War, but they were admirably detached from it. For George they

¹ Aldington, 2013, p. 179.

represented what hope of humanity he had left; in them alone civilisation seemed to survive. All the rest was blood and brutality and persecution and humbug. In them alone the thread of life remained continuous².

In these extracts quoted from Richard Aldington's *Death of a Hero*, the voice of the narrator highlights a peculiar aspect of the contradictory attitude towards women during the Great War: on one hand, the misogynist perspective, which considers their position as something separate and protected from the conflict, while, on the other hand, their role as mothers is emphasised. To the hero of the book, women are something precious in a world where humanity is lost; to him they are still «human beings; he was merely a unit, a murder-robot, a wisp of cannon fodder. And he knew it. They didn't. But they felt the difference, felt it as a degradation in him, a sort of failure»³.

Aldington wrote his book in 1929, nearly eleven years after the end of the war and ten after the conquest of the vote for women. Significantly, the book underlines the gulf which divided the men of that generation from the women; an aspect of the conflict which is still part of an untold story, a chapter of collective memory that has never become a shared memory.

The way women's position was resented, as in the examples quoted, was common knowledge during those years when «women encountered impossible incompatible representations of themselves: from being inessential to national identity to being central to it; from being patient wives to mobile women»⁴.

Given this, it is not an easy task to read women's experience within a context that is traditionally reputed to belong to men, in spite of what was at the time the commitment of a generation of women⁵. The First World War was a total war and it blurred the lines between men and women, between soldiers and civilians. In those years «a greater number of urban women (and of the working classes too) had access to literacy. They could, therefore, participate in the widespread impulse to report and shape the meaning of the war»⁶.

Like the Second World War, the conflict inspired an inexhaustible flow of women's literary productions in form of memories and autobiographies. Vera Brittain's

² *Ivi*, p. 202.

³ *Ivi*, p. 203.

⁴ Lant, 1996, p. 19.

⁵ Cfr. Higonnet, 2004.

⁶ *Ivi*, p. 192.

Testament of Youth, the «undisputed classic book about the First World War written by a woman»⁷, is a successful example of the urge many women shared to write about the war that had changed their life.

After reading these books, I began to ask: why should these young men have the war to themselves? Didn't women have their war as well? They weren't, as these men make them, only suffering wives and mothers, or callous parasites, or mercenary prostitutes. Does no one remember the women who began their war_work with such high ideals, or how grimly they carried on when that flaming faith had crumbled into the grey ashes of disillusion? Who will write the epic of the women who went into the war⁸?

«With scientific precision, I studied the memoirs of Blunden, Sassoon, and Graves. Surely, I thought, my story is as interesting as theirs. Besides, I see things other than they have seen, and some of the things they perceive I see differently»⁹. Brittain's words reflect a widespread attitude toward war experiences written by women. Nevertheless, it is certainly true that the situation has changed and for more than three decades a more inclusive canon of war literature has been established thanks to the acceptance of the gendered approach in history studies. Feminist scholars, in particular, have successfully pointed out the intersection between war, writing and gender; women's narratives of war are now part of the canon.

Nevertheless, the difference Brittain alludes to represents a chapter of a still unfinished book. Correctly or not – as Fussell writes in his *The Great War and Modern memory*¹⁰ –, the current idea of the Great War derives primarily from images of the trenches in France and Belgium. Fussell admits that, for most of the nations involved, The First World War marked a radical split with the past, from which a modern collective memory was born, and with it the perception of new categories in accounts of history. Precisely in relation to these aspects, and whenever women are involved, many omissions come to light.

One is the way women worked for peace, their active commitment from 1915, when The Hague *International Congress of Women* marked the official starting-point of a new leadership in the women's movement.

⁷ Williams, 1978.

⁸ Brittain, 1979, p. 77.

⁹ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰ Fussell, 1975.

From April 28 to May 1, more than a thousand of women from both warring and neutral nations, from Europe and North America, gathered at The Hague, in Netherlands; the aim was to discuss women's commitment to promoting peace. Most of them were suffragists, members of *The International Woman Suffrage Alliance*, who usually met every year. Originally, the meeting place was intended to be in Berlin but, because of the conflict, a group of women led by Aletta Jacobs, a Dutch physician and suffragist, was put in charge of choosing differently. These women were responsible for the creation of the *International Committee of Women for Permanent Peace*. The American Jane Addams assumed the role of chair of the Congress and president of the newly formed association. The participants, coming from different nations, classes, creeds and parties, presented themselves as «united in expressing sympathy with the suffering of all, whatever their nationality, who are fighting for their country or labouring under the burden of war». They asked

the neutral countries to take immediate steps to create a conference of neutral nations which shall without delay offer continuous mediation. The Conference shall invite suggestions for settlement from each of the belligerent nations and in any case shall submit to all of them simultaneously, reasonable proposals as a basis of peace¹¹.

In the first point of their resolutions, the women denounce «the madness and the horror of war»; they declare to «oppose the assumption that women can be protected under the conditions of modern warfare», and vehemently protest «against the odious wrongs of which women are the victims in time of war and especially against the horrible violation of women which attends all war».

The resolution adopted was in favour of a continuous mediation with the belligerent nations, and it was also decided that a selected delegation would meet political leaders and demand putting an end to the war.

As in other turning points in women's history, the meeting sees the merging of individual identities into a collective one. The congress delegates state their *collective force* as «one of the strongest forces for the prevention of war» and demand equal rights with men and «since women can only have full responsibility and effective influence

¹¹ Quotations from *Appendix 3 Resolutions Adopted by the International Congress of Women at The Hague, May 1915*, in Adams, Balch, Hamilton, 1916, pp. 72-77.

when they have equal political rights with men, this International Congress of Women demands their political enfranchisement»¹².

Their political awareness of themselves as a political body that still has no full access to citizenship is strictly connected with the terrible moment humanity is living and with the way to prevent wars in future. In the same document they ask for «the organization of the Society of Nations [...] on the basis of a “constructive peace”».

The value of this document which demands peace and internationalism in the middle of a war, when discourses in favour of peace were mostly read as an act of treason, cannot be overestimated. The American delegates, in particular, took an outspoken internationalist position when their country still maintained an isolationist or pro-war mentality. Their activity would bear fruit only later; many of their proposals would be incorporated into President Wilson's *Fourteen points*, and it is to them we owe the first idea of a *League of Nations* (then founded in 1920) and of the *United Nations*, not to be established until 1945. Because of their commitment in favour of peace, Jane Addams together with Emily Greene Balch, another protagonist of the Congress, won the Nobel Prize in 1931 and 1946 respectively.

Many relevant things happened in the course of this outstanding event which was, incidentally, the only successful effort on the part of international organizations to meet after the war broke out (others continued to be divided along national lines).

In the course of the meeting, pacifism was advocated in many ways, including a rhetoric quite different from the language of male diplomats and politicians. Women's role in conceiving and incubating life was remarked upon; it was part of the «virtue of our womanhood»¹³, and explained why the sanctity of life was valued by them far more than by men. Nevertheless, the idea was far from being expressed with emotion and sentimentality; quite the opposite, the participants recognised themselves as «more rational» and with «a closer tie to the specialness of life». Precisely because of this, they felt the duty to «plan means and produce conditions to avoid future wars». The vote was of course a mandatory condition for all the delegates. As the males, half of humanity, had clearly been shown to have failed in any attempt to avoid the use of arms in settling international disputes, it was «the sacred duty of every woman»¹⁴, to be involved in a new attempt, otherwise they might rightly be accused of having refused «to assert

¹² *Ivi*, p. 74.

¹³ *Report of the International Congress of Women, 28 April-May 1st, 1915*, published by the International Women's Committee for Permanent Peace, Amsterdam, 1915, p. 6.

¹⁴ *Ivi*, p. 7.

clearly and courageously the sanctity of human life, the reality of the things of the spirit»¹⁵.

The idea of a new kind of society, where national boundaries were put aside in favour of international unity among states, is another relevant point. Before the war, Europe – said Addams – was already, in many ways, a single society; a consideration which will be resumed during her encounters with European politicians. Actually, after the Hague, in order to carry out the decisions of the Congress, Addams, together with a group of other women, ventured far from home, travelling throughout Europe from May 7 through July 8. They faced a troubled time and yearned for peace when such expressions went against the policies of their governments and the wishes of many citizens, women included.

Reading their political travelogues, many aspects emerge. From their words, it is evident that, for the first time, and in a way absolutely unthinkable before, they are perceived as leaders of a political group. The institutions they referred to in the course of their dangerous expeditions admitted their specific difference *as women*; one of them went so far as to say to Addams: «he had wondered many times since the war began why women had remained silent so long, adding that as women are not expected to fight they might easily have made a protest against war which is denied to men»¹⁶.

It is a chapter of history which, nevertheless, is not to be read as something separate from the history of war. What Addams and her friends write of relations between men and women, old and young, sexes and mentality, institutional and cultural forms, exhibits new categories of analysis that give a more faithful account of the way people perceived what was happening to everybody.

Addams focuses the state of mind of a generation of young people who are obliged to face the dramatic changes in their life, the tragic awareness of death most of them feel as cruel and unjust.

In every warring nation Addams and her friends visited, and contrary to what was generally asserted, they were to discover that enthusiasm for the war was far from being universal among the young men who were doing the fighting. They were told everywhere by the people they spoke to that they did not want the war and and that they considered the older men responsible for it, accusing the old generation of having deceived them as regards the rightness of the conflict.

¹⁵ *Ivi*, p. 22.

¹⁶ Addams, Balch, Hamilton, 1916, p. 45.

In her pages, Addams refers the tragedy of many young men who after the first months returned or for the first time went into the trenches «with a divided mind»; they could not «reconcile the thought of killing other men with what they have always held as their ideal of conduct, and yet who cannot refuse to respond to their country's call»¹⁷.

The young people they met in the numerous hospitals they visited, frequently asked: «We don't know why we are fighting. Can't you women help us? We can't do anything»¹⁸. That is the very question we are trying to answer, Addams explains. To her, as to her female friends, one way is their faithful recording of voices and words which distinguish themselves from the rhetoric of war.

What impresses one in regard to these young men – she writes – is that it is so desperately irrevocable, that it is their very lives which are demanded. The older men who have had honour and fullness of life and have been put into high places in the state, who are they to deprive even one of these young men of that which should lie before him¹⁹?

Addams reports the words of one of the mothers she met, who said: «It was hard to see my boy go because he did not believe in war; he did not belong to a generation that believes in war»²⁰.

«A generation that does not believe in war». Indeed, one of the main points Addams points out is the gulf created between generations; the conflict between fathers and sons now has a new connotation. In her pages, she gives voice to the *j'accuse* against the fathers' society. This letter, published in the *Cam* magazine in Cambridge, is an outstanding example:

Just when the younger generation was beginning to take its share in the affairs of the world, and was hoping to counteract the Victorian influences of the older generation, this war has come to silence us – permanently or temporarily as the case may be. Meanwhile, the old men are having field days on their own. In our name, and for our sakes, as they pathetically imagine, they are doing their very utmost, it would seem, to perpetuate, by their appeals to hate, intolerance, and revenge, those very follies which have produced the present conflagration²¹.

¹⁷ *Ivi*, p. 25.

¹⁸ *Ivi*, p. 11.

¹⁹ *Ivi*, p. 32.

²⁰ *Ibidem*.

²¹ *Ibidem*.

Addams comments on the extent «to which the purely nationalistic appeal has been weakened»²², among young people who are no longer emotionally involved in the reasons of the conflict, and wonder what is going to become of their lives.

The voices of a generation to whom the future has been taken away testify to the changes in mentality and attitude towards life. From them we learn, for instance, that, even if they did not talk much about internationalisation, nevertheless, they lived in a world where «common experience has in fact become largely internationalized»²³.

Addams observes that, before the Great War, a new world had already been born where people travelled and went to live or work far from their home country. This starting internationalization in human relations contributed to making the idea of the “enemy” something one could not identify oneself with. She reports the words of one of these young men who told her that, even if he could be ordered into the trenches and to go through the motions, «the final act was in his own hands and with his own conscience»²⁴.

In the course of her meeting with soldiers temporarily on leave from the trenches, it is this prevailing state of mind that Addams and her friends record: young people who declare that they «never shoot in a way that will kill». Dozens and dozens of young men did likewise, officers among them too.

It is this feeling, in contrast with the policy and ideology of patriotism, that, in Addams words, was responsible for the high percentage of insanity among soldiers, who could not be convinced to kill, in spite of what they were told. Addams will apprehend from the nurses, that stimulants were given to them before a charge was ordered.

These young men who «at the outbreak of the war were just beginning to make themselves felt, who were responding to the promptings towards a new order which might in the end have done with standing armies and camps», at the present moment, she writes: «feel themselves violently thrown back and bidden play a role in a drama of life which they were outgrowing»²⁵.

The picture of the soldier who is totally concentrated on the duty he is expected to accomplish fades away in what they say to her:

²² *Ivi*, p. 31.

²³ *Ivi*, p. 30.

²⁴ *Ivi*, p. 33.

²⁵ *Ivi*, p. 29.

We are told that we are fighting for civilization but I tell you that war destroys civilization. The highest product of the universities, the scholar, the philosopher, the poet, when he is in the trenches, when he spends his days and nights in squalor and brutality and horror, is as low and brutal as the rudest peasant. They say, those newspapers writers, that it is wonderful to see the courage of the men in the trenches, singing, joking, playing cards, while the shells fall around them. Courage there is no room for, just as there is no room for cowardice. One cannot rush to meet the enemy, one cannot even see him. The shells fall here or they fall there. If you are brave, you cannot defy them; if you are a coward, you cannot flee from them; it is all chance. You see the man you were playing cards a while ago lying on the ground a bloody mass and you look at him and think: «Well, this time it took him; in a few minutes it may be my turn; let's go back to the cards». And all the time you loathe the squalor, the brutality, and the savage you are yourself becoming. Why should you kill men who live in other countries, men whom in times of peace you would like and respect? At least I can say that as yet I have escaped the horror of killing anyone²⁶.

The experiences Addams and her friends record comment on the war in a way that destabilises the myth of so much war literature; their leitmotif is the bitterness against the old generation, as in this letter addressed to a university professor by one of his students:

It rouse my indignation and awaken all my powers to put my thoughts in order, that, should I return from this war, I might fling them once for all in the faces of men who deceive themselves into finding a justification for all this murdering; and who further believe- Heaven knows why- that there will be great moral effects from this wholesale slaughter. As if civilized men were ever justified for any principle whatever, to sudden fall into the madness of letting loose on one another with instruments of murder.²⁷

At the end of their travels Addams as her friends cannot but conclude how it gradually became clear to us that whether it is easily recognized or not, there has grown up a generation in Europe, as there has doubtless grown up a generation in America, who have revolted against war. It is a god they know not of, whom they are not willing to serve,

²⁶ *Ivi*, p. 34.

²⁷ *Ivi*, p. 33.

because all of their sensibilities and training upon which their highest ideals depend, revolt against it²⁸.

In many of these female ambassadors, we find history written in terms of personal life and in a way that destroys the persistent vitality of the stereotype, thanks to which sense and sensibility are analysed in terms of the old antinomy between sexes. From their perspective, the material under consideration shows the extent to which war creates new categories regarding the relationship of individuals with the “symbolic order” in which they have grown up. This aspect represents the *fil rouge* that connects male and female experience although, of course, with different results.

Testament of Youth by Vera Brittain (1933) is an example. As the title clearly indicates, the book violates the specificity of a literary genre in which «the egocentric reconstructions of one’s lived experiences» usually prevails. In her preface, the author explains how she intends to speak not «for those in high places», but for her generation of «obscure young women». Actually, in her long tale, the reader is constantly confronted with the feelings of a whole generation, women but men as well, whose youth was cancelled by war. The political meaning which the act of writing assumes is pursued through the alteration of the traditional auto-biographical model. Poems, letters, and pages of diaries are part of her book and suggest the sense of the loss, of the disappearance of all that was familiar and loved, and with it a deep bitterness for what Europe had reserved for the young generation.

«It is Europe’s fault, not ours, that we have grown to a precocious bitterness, and learnt that glamour fades, and that behind that glamour grim realities lie»²⁹, writes to Vera her fiancé, Roland.

In a similar vein to what Addams had recorded, in this book too the voices from the trenches express feelings alien to the traditional image of the soldier. Roland writes of his sensations in a day full of light when, in spite of what was happening all around, the sun at sunset throws its light over the trenches.

It is a pity to kill people on a day like this. In a way, I suppose, it is a pity to kill people on any kind of day, but opinions – even my own- differ on this subject³⁰.

²⁸ *Ibidem*.

²⁹ Brittain, 1979, pp. 172-173.

³⁰ *Ivi*, p. 196.

I don't think [...] that when one can still admire sunsets one has altogether lost the personality of pre-war days. I have been looking at a blood-red bar of sky creeping down behind the snow, and wondering whether any of the men in the trenches on the opposite hill were watching it too, and thinking, as I was, what a waste of life it is to spend it in a ditch³¹.

Roland and his friends who now live in the trenches, far from everything familiar and reassuring, confront themselves with the education they have received, including the idea of how a man is supposed to behave in facing death, and their fear of being inadequate, of being unable to be what they are expected to be, is a moving leitmotif of their letters.

«I only hope I don't fail at the critical moment as truly I am a horrible coward; wish I could do well especially for the School's sake»³², writes Geoffrey, one of Vera and Roland's friends. His words testify to the crisis many young men felt: «No, I am not a brave soul, in fact as Shakespeare says "the valiant never taste of death but once". I am one of the cowards who died many times before their death!»³³.

At the outbreak of war, Vera, the would-be writer, journalist and pacifist, was only twenty-one. Like many young girls of her generation, she had never left her family, but when she became member of the V.A.D. (*Voluntary Aid Detachments*) in London General Hospital in Camberwell, she was to discover a new freedom which would have been inconceivable for any middle-class young woman whose occupations, interests and even most private emotions were supervised from each day's beginning to its end.

Wartime modified social conventions and started the free and easy-movements of girl war-workers. Consequently, new kinds of relationships between the sexes as among individuals were set in motion. The "natural order" under which generations of women had learned to imagine their life was radically changed; an incredibly great number of them entered the arena of war, taking over men's jobs and risking their lives as nurses and ambulance drivers at the front, to list just some of their jobs in those years. The provincial young ladyhood of a female generation was completely removed. War put an end to the glorious Victorian age, and Britain lived the change with the awareness of the difference it makes for a woman. War forced new conjunctions in her life as in that of many other women, and this called for expression; in her writing War becomes a great container of interior and exterior experiences.

³¹ *Ivi*, p. 228.

³² Bishop and Bostridge, 1998, p. 338.

³³ *Ivi*, p. 334.

Women like her, who had never worked before, now bore long, exhausting hours among dead and seriously injured men.

Each morning at 7 a.m. we were due at the hospital, where we breakfasted, and went on duty at 7.30. Theoretically we travelled down by the workmen's trams which ran over Champion Hill from Dulwich, but in practice these trams were so full that we seldom were able to use them, and were obliged to walk, frequently in pouring rain and carrying suitcases containing clean aprons and changes of shoes and stockings, the mile and a half from the hostel to the hospital. As the trams were equally full in the evenings, the journey on foot had often to be repeated at the end of the day [...]. We went on duty at 7.30 a.m, and came off at 8.p.m., our hours including three hours' off-time and a weekly half day-all of which we gave up willingly enough whenever a convoy came in or the ward was full of unusually bad cases- thus amounted to a daily twelve and a half. [...] Night duty, from 8 p.m. to 8 a.m. over a period of two months, involved a twelve – hour stretch without off-time, though one night's break was usually allowed in the middle³⁴.

Vera, who had just started her university education at Oxford when the war broke out, like many others, would probably never have been able to imagine such an entry into adult life. Women who, like her, had chosen to be nurses would never have imagined that leaving their homeland for the first time would be a journey into the middle of a war, when every moment might mean the concrete possibility of death. In her pages, Brittain records the excitement and the terror she felt when she was ordered to carry out foreign service in Malta. On September 23^d 1916, together with a party of excited and apprehensive young women, Vera embarked on H.M. Hospital Ship Britannic, due to sail next day for Mudros, in order to bring home the sick and the wounded from various campaigns.

In her book, Brittain alternates pages of diaries with her reminiscences of that experience, and her pages capture the atmosphere of places: the crowd at Waterloo station, the attitude of the Sister- in-charge of the Malta contingent and of the men and women she happened to meet. She quotes her diaries when she describes what was a real event for many young women who were about to leave all that was known to them for an adventure they had never thought they would experience. The education most of them had received had hardly prepared them for what they were going to live through.

³⁴ Brittain, 1978, pp. 207-209.

The mingled depression and exhilaration of that day still lives in the pages of my diary. [...] «We left the hospital with Miss C. in a bus and met Principal Matron at Waterloo. I hated Waterloo and the Southampton express; there was such a general bustle and noise and confusion which somehow seemed to intensify the feeling that we were going away... I felt acutely miserable, not so much at the idea of leaving England and everybody (for since Roland went the long, long journey no place in the world seems so very far away from any other place) as because everything was so unsettled and I hate things to be unsettled and not know at all what is going to happen to me... [...]». At 4.0 we all assembled on the dock... As we left the harbour a transport of the R.F.C. cheered us and waved their hats³⁵.

It has frequently been observed how women's experiences of war dramatically contrast with the official emphasis on heroism and valour, aimed at mobilising national support. In their tales, on the contrary, the emphasis is on death and deprivation. Vera Brittain is no exception.

Poems, letters, and pages of diaries, which are part of her book, suggest the sense of the loss, of the disappearance of all that was familiar and loved. In one of her poems she records the fear that everything might vanish, even the image of the man she loves; new and disturbing feelings which one of her poems express:

I shall remember miraculous things you said / My whole life through- / Things to go unforgotten till I am dead; / But the hundredfold, adorable ways of you, / The tilt of your chin for laughter, the turn of your head / That I loved, that I knew- / Oh! While I fed on the dreams of them, these have fled! / Words which no time can touch are my life's refrain, / But each picture flies. / All that was left to hold till I meet you again, / Your mouth's deep curve, your brows where the shadow lies, / These are the things I strive to capture in vain, / And I have forgotten your eyes, / And the ways that your hair spun curls in the beating of rain³⁶.

Brittain's book highlights another aspect too that will characterises the first and the second post-war period: the symbolic order of everyday life where women are identified with categories referring to family and domesticity was only temporarily removed. With the end of the conflict, the ideology of the female "proper sphere" regained its favour in public opinion.

³⁵ *Ivi*, pp. 292-293.

³⁶ *Ivi*, pp. 186-187.

At the end of the conflict Vera comes back to Oxford and, to her utmost disconcertion, perceives a sort of embarrassment and hostility; an attitude difficult and painful to accept for a girl who had not sat out the War in classrooms: «All over Oxford, university and college authorities were quaking in their carpet slippers at the prospective invasion of war-hardened, cynical, sophisticated youth»³⁷. For a woman could not but be even worse. «Obviously, it wasn't a popular thing to have been close to the war; patriots, especially of the female variety, were as much discredited in 1919 as in 1914 they had been honoured»³⁸.

War-girls were discredited precisely because their role during the years of the conflict had put in discussion the separation of the two spheres that up to then had seemed to constitute the “natural order”. The two spheres, which are strictly connected to sexuality, are restored to the point that girls like Vera are regarded with diffidence and suspicion:

During the War the tales of immorality among V.A.D.s [...] had been consumed with voracious horror by readers at home; who knew in what cesspools of iniquity I had not wallowed? Who could calculate the awful extent to which I might corrupt the morals of my innocents juniors³⁹?

Her emotional response to the feeling of isolation and solitude is writing. Vera contributes with an article to the *Oxford Outlook*, an undergraduate production. Her article is an analysis of post-war Oxford from the point of view of a woman.

The woman student is now in a stage of transition, and this is the conclusion of the whole matter. With the signing of the Armistice she passed from the all-important to the negligible. [...] Her sudden relegation to her old corner in the university has shaken her into confusion, but time will prove that she can survive the shock of peace as surely as she has weathered the storms of war. Finally she will both claim and deserve the right to grow out of the corner till, side by side with Oxford's new manhood, she will inherit the wider future which the university owes both to its living and its dead. And in this gradual renaissance the woman student who felt the claims of war upon her, and departed thence, and after many days came

³⁷ *Ivi*, p. 477.

³⁸ *Ivi*, p. 490.

³⁹ *Ivi*, pp. 476-477.

back again, will find her play at last. Because she is the connecting link between the women who remained and the men who have returned, she too will play her own momentous part⁴⁰.

Indeed, Vera and the women who left home because they felt “the claims of war upon them” played more than one part and wrote a chapter of history which was to lead them in England as in other European countries to full citizenship and to the right to vote.

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⁴⁰ Ivi, pp. 482-483.

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