

Wake and Mourning: Apollinaire and Ungaretti

The Great War is the first modern war in which a great awareness of the double role soldiers played was elaborated, as many of those soldiers were also writers and artists who kept on working on their artistic endeavor while at war. Among them, there were certainly poets who immediately earned the compound title of soldier-poets, according to an order of the two terms that remarked the priority of the urgency of the contingencies of war: they were soldier-poets rather than poet-soldiers.¹ To be sure, the definition of poet-soldier gained some popularity during the Romantic period and the Italian Risorgimento, in particular: one may think of poet-soldiers such as Ugo Foscolo, but also Lord George Byron. Even during World War I there was a poet-soldier of the caliber of Gabriele D'Annunzio. However, it is during the Great War that the compound title of poet-soldier is reversed into soldier-poet. Furthermore, another broader distinction was elaborated: that between combatant and non-combatant. It is this distinction, in conjunction of that within the compound title of soldier-poet, which proves to be crucial in order to read some war poems by Guillaume Apollinaire and Giuseppe Ungaretti as telling in regards to the attitude the soldier-poet had to take before his role as combatant or non-combatant.

At the outset of World War I, Freud published a pamphlet, which was destined to be prophetic in its main statements: "Thoughts for the Times on War and Death" (Freud 1915). Aware of "the mighty transformations which have already taken place or are beginning to take place" (Freud 1915: 288), the father of psychoanalysis proposed at the beginning of that essay the distinction between "a combatant – and so a wheel in the gigantic machinery of war –" and a non-combatant. If the former "feels conscious of disorientation, and of an inhibition in his powers and activities," in the case of the latter Freud proposes "to distinguish two among the most potent factors in the mental distress felt by the non-combatants, against which it is such a heavy task to struggle, and to treat of them here: the disillusionment which this war has evoked; and the altered attitude towards death which this – like every other war – imposes on us." (Freud 1915: 288-289) The war, in other words, has one tremendous consequence for the human community: it divides it according to the ability to fight, leaving at home mostly elderly people, women and children, who are in turn defended by the able men joining the army. This picture, of course, is even more fragmented than it may seem at first: if elderly people and children waited for the outcome of the events at home, women got actively involved in a number of ways, from the enrollment as nurses who worked very close to the front lines to the support of the troops at home. It is probably not by chance that women poets wrote on the topic of the two communities: one may consider at least Evelyn Underhill's "Non-Combatants" and Cicely Hamilton's "Non-Combatant."² Written during the war, these two poems are instances of voices defending the role of women who, although not officially involved in the war at the trenches, yet fought their battles: as the poem by the author of *Mysticism* explicitly states with the emphasis on a telling refrain at the beginning of the poem, in its development and at the end, "Never of us be said / That we reluctant stood / As sullen children, [...] / [...] Of us, this word shall not be said. / Never of us be said / We had no war to wage, / Because our womanhood, / Because the weight of age, / Held us in servitude.[...] Though from our homely fields that feathered joy has fled / We murmur not. Of us, this word shall not be said." The poetic voice speaks for a community that not only clearly includes women and elderly people, but that also recognizes its own role in the ability to utter the poetic word. To be sure, this ability is expressed in the negative form ("Never of us be said," "this word shall not be said"), as

that definition of the poetic voice and the community for which it speaks (the "Non-Combatants" of the title) carried over a negativity that even the text could not erase.

This poem obliquely confirms that there is at least one category of people who most significantly manages to escape the neat division emphasized by Freud: that of the poet-soldier.³ In the afore-mentioned pamphlet Freud himself points out (Freud 1915: 306-307): "It is an inevitable result of all this that we should seek in the world of fiction, of general literature and of the theatre compensation for the impoverishment of life." His general reference to the cathartic work of the arts on their receivers applies to the poet-soldier as well, insofar as the condition of soldier remains suspended at times (between battles or even in periods of license and permission, when one recovers from the fatigue and the stress of the war) and allows that of the poet to surface. While writing, the poet replaces the role of the soldier and, vice versa, while fighting the soldier replaces that of the poet. To be sure, the war situation inevitably shapes the work of the poet, limiting his range of topics, often forcing him to focus on the immediate and ultimate question of death that war constantly and dramatically raises. It also transforms poetry into a self-reflective enterprise. Poetry becomes self-reflective in so far as it reflects life in contrast to the immediate phenomenon of war; given the entangled identification of life and poetry, this reflection is, in turn, self-reflective. The poet is a prophetic agent speaking for the soldiers, the poet-soldier among them, and to the non-combatants, among whom the poet as such is also included.

The question of death is central to the poetry of the poet-soldiers. It is a question that is always open, especially in the context of war, when the risk and threat of death is palpable for any soldier and, perhaps, even more so for the poet-soldier. In fact, the poet-soldier takes the responsibility of reflecting on death in the context of war for the other soldiers as well, especially for those who die, as in death they lose life and voice. It is at that point that the poet-soldier finds himself in that double role, which in turn reverberates with other implications that concern his own being as well as that of the others surrounding him, whether on this or on that side of the trenches. The poet-soldier, treating death in the context of war, mourns the deaths of his peers, even those who fight for a different flag and cause than his own, and at the same time fears for his own life, inevitably, feeling life in the highest degree.

In another crucial essay written during World War I, "Mourning and Melancholia," Freud distinguishes between those two feelings not only for the degrees of healing they represent, but also for the degrees of self-awareness each entails (Freud 1917: 152-153): "wherever it is possible to discern the external influences in life which have brought each of them about, this exciting cause proves to be the same in both." One remembers the telling distinction Freud draws between mourning and melancholia ((Freud 1917: 155): "[...] melancholia is in some way related to an unconscious loss of a love-object, in contradistinction to mourning, in which there is nothing unconscious about the loss." Leaving aside other details of the psychological distinction, what is relevant here is Freud's ambivalence about the degrees of overlap and difference between the two conditions (Freud 1917: 161):

[...] On the one hand, like mourning, melancholia is the reaction to a real loss of a loved object; but, over and above this, it is bound to a condition which is absent in normal grief or which, if it supervenes, transforms the latter into a pathological variety. The loss of a love-object constitutes an excellent opportunity for the ambivalence in love-relationships to make itself felt and come to the fore.

The double binding that characterizes mourning and melancholia seems to be at the heart of the one between poet and soldier: the two roles overlap, yet they are also sharply distinguished, each vital for the mourner assuming both of them. At the risk of oversimplifying the dynamics at stake, we might identify the psychological condition of the combatant, hence the soldier, with melancholia; whereas mourning would properly belong to the psychological condition of the non-combatant, hence the citizen. What is troubling in the position of the poet is that he is at once soldier and citizen: soldier while at war, yet citizen while writing about war. Thus, the poet shares both the social and the psychological conditions of combatant and non-combatant. It is telling that Freud goes further by specifying (Freud 1917: 161):

[...] The occasions giving rise to melancholia for the most part extend beyond the clear case of a loss by death, and include all those situations of being wounded, hurt, neglected, out of favour, or disappointed, which can import opposite feelings of love and hate into the relationship or reinforce an already existing ambivalence.

It is easy to recognize, among the causes of melancholia, not only some that affect the rise of mourning, but also and more importantly situations that are visible effects while Freud writes this essay: the war. The war not only kills, but it also wounds and hurts both body and mind of the soldiers; it neglects and disappoints the soldiers, especially when it takes the shape of the glory of the land those soldiers defend. The worthiness of the country for which they sacrifice their safety is the meter by which the soldiers' neglect or acceptance, satisfaction or disappointment can be gauged. Yet, the soldier who is poet lives the loss of the object (that is, one's own life seen gone through the lost life of the comrade; the land lost through the aftermath of the battlefield) through the writing of poetry: it is in poetry that the ambivalence between mourning and melancholia resides for the poet-soldier and it is in poetry still that the "regression of libido into the ego" (Freud 1917: 169) takes place.

The poets here taken as exemplary are poet-soldiers who fought in World War I: Guillaume Apollinaire and Giuseppe Ungaretti. I have chosen them not so much as representatives of different European countries fighting in World War I, but as poets who assume a different attitude toward death and its aftermath revealed by the poet's decision to discuss in the poem either the preparation for the battle or the situation after the battle. In particular, the two poems by Apollinaire and Ungaretti, although bearing the same title, refer to two opposite situations.⁴

I would like to take the general distinction that Freud elaborates between "combatants" and "non-combatants" and elaborate it in terms of uniformity (that is, a uniform entity) and humanity: in other words, the distinction between soldiers and citizens.⁵ The role of poets that some of the soldiers in World War I maintained helps to blur the sharp distinction between "combatants" and "non-combatants," between uniformity and humanity, and to reconcile these two sides of the coin that Freud himself in the 1932 article "Why War?" identifies with death and eros.⁶

Ungaretti and Apollinaire knew each other in the years 1912-1914 that the Italian poet spent in Paris after arriving from Alexandria of Egypt, where he was born and had lived the first twenty-four years of his life. Those years in Paris were

also the years in which they both got to be very close to the Futurist movement, so much so that Apollinaire published his manifesto-synthesis "L'antitradizione futurista," the format of which was characterized by the two sections "MER...DA" and "ROSE," in the Florentine journal *Lacerba* (September 15, 1913), which is the same journal in which Ungaretti published his first poems.⁷ If Apollinaire translated Ungaretti's poem "In Memoria," although he never published it, Ungaretti referred several times to his friend and his poetry. In fact, the exhausted soldier Ungaretti, who wrote several letters to his friends (Papini, Soffici, Marone) asking them to intercede with the officers and grant him a leave, paid homage to his by now dead friend Apollinaire in November 1918. In writing to Soffici, Ungaretti has words of praise for *Calligrammes*, a book that he considers close to his own *Il Porto Sepolto* (*The Buried Harbor*), which he had published in 1916. When Ungaretti wrote "Punto di mira," a 1924 lecture on his own poetry, he divided the poems of *Allegria di Naufragi*, the title he gave to his first collection in 1919, into two groups, the second of which owes much to French Symbolist poets as well as Apollinaire.

Apollinaire and Ungaretti, good friends during the avant-garde years in Paris, shared several intellectual experiences in the French capital before enlisting as volunteers in the French and Italian armies, respectively. Wounded in 1916, Apollinaire died in November 1918, just before the day of the Armistice. Complications after the surgery on his wound never resolved in those last two years he spent in Paris, and finally defeated the vitality of the corpulent poet, right after the publication of his *Calligrammes*. Ungaretti, instead, overcame the nervous breakdown that threatened him in the war years, especially in 1916, the year in which he published his first collection (*Il Porto Sepolto*) (*The Buried Harbor*). In fact, Ungaretti went on to live a long and full life until 1970.

Both poets lived first-hand "the disillusionment of the war" (Freud 1915: 107), even though they had been at first supporters of the respective countries' intervention in the war. They both presented, oddly enough, "two among the most potent factors in the mental distress felt by non-combatants, against which it is such a heavy task to struggle, and to treat them here: the disillusionment which this war has evoked; and the altered attitude towards death which this – like every other war – imposes on us." (Freud 1915: 108)

Born away from the country they recognized as their own (Apollinaire in Rome from a Polish mother and an Italian father; Ungaretti in Alexandria in Egypt from parents emigrated from Lucca in Tuscany), they "have exchanged their native home for a foreign dwelling-place, and made their existence dependent on the conditions of intercourse between friendly nations." (Freud 1915: 109) The two poets founded their friendship on the common passion they shared for the novelty in the arts, which, as they proposed, had to proceed with the constant awareness of tradition. In this respect, they found in their own friendship an alliance between the two nations with which they identified: France and Italy. To be sure, their friendship was heightened by the admiration of the young Italian émigré from Egypt for the erudite and versatile French poet, as Ungaretti never failed to recognize on several occasions during and after the war (GU:SI 20-26, 615-619, 655-657).⁸

Among the common traits of Apollinaire's and Ungaretti's understanding of the renovation of poetry there are some rhetorical devices and typographical techniques, which they adopted with the mediation of the Futurist tenets expressed especially in the "Manifesto del Futurismo" ("Manifesto and Founding Manifesto of

Futurism") and in "Distruzione della sintassi – Immaginazione senza fili – Parole in libertà" ("Destruction of Syntax – Imagination without Strings – Words in Freedom" (Apollonio 19-24, 95-106; Rainey – Poggi - Wittman 49-53, 143-151). But the most relevant aspect here is the approach to war they reflected upon in their poetic writing. Ample sections of the two collections they wrote in the war years are dedicated to that event and, even though their attitudes are not identical, the issues they faced were understandably similar. In fact, the attention to the Futurist innovations becomes telling in light of the praise of war one finds in those manifestoes, especially in the two just mentioned. In the "Manifesto del Futurismo" Marinetti exalts war as the only hygiene of the world. In the "Manifesto tecnico della letteratura futurista" the war is the model upon which the new avant-garde wanted to shape its new art.

I would like to focus, however, on two poems from each of the two authors in order to illustrate how they lived the relationship between war and writing: "Veille" ("Night Watch") (GA:C 130-133) and "Veglia" ("Vigil") (GU:TP 25; Frisardi 2002: 18-19) specifically engage in the act of writing as the immediate remedy against the destruction of war and the overpowering presence of death; "Ombre" ("Shadow") (GA:C 134-137) and "San Martino del Carso" (GU:TP 51; Frisardi 2002: 47-48), instead, are examples of poetry as testimony. To put it again in terms used by Freud, whom the French poet had recently discovered, "Our own death is indeed unimaginable, and whenever we make the attempt to imagine it we can perceive that we really survive as spectators. Hence the psychoanalytic school could venture on the assertion that at the bottom no one believes in his own death, or to put the same thing in another way, in the unconscious every one of us is convinced of his own immortality." (Freud 1915: 304-305) In this belief and defense "of his own immortality" one might say that the two poets, as did many others, enlisted in the respective armies. One need to read poems such as "A l'Italie" ("To Italy") (GA:C 262-271) and "Popolo" (GU:TP 16-17) to find confirmation of that. Yet, when war becomes the everyday reality and death all around takes shape constantly in the forms of comrades, the two poets (each in his own distinct and often contradictory way) elaborate a poetics of mourning and testimony.⁹

Written both in 1915, practically in the first months of the war experience, the two poems bearing essentially the same title "Veille" and "Veglia" are a good starting point for appreciating Apollinaire's and Ungaretti's approach to war through the mediation of writing. In fact, both poems focus on a specific moment of military life, that of the night watch, peculiar in so far as one soldier is responsible of the safety of his comrades, whom he protects by staying awake and alert to the signals of attack. It becomes crucial to consider whether this interval, highlighting not only the night, but also the time span between one battle and the next, is perceived by the self as taking place before or after the battle. In other words, the self's own understanding of his own position in time determines his attitude toward war and, in turn, toward writing. In fact, the fluidity of the condition of poet is attracted toward the poles of war and peace (or at least truce), according to the temporal privilege given to the battle as an event that has already happened or that is about to happen. In the former case, the poet finds himself reconciled with his own sense of humanity; in the latter case, the poet considers his own condition as inevitably moving toward that of the uniform. Apollinaire and Ungaretti set these two possible

stages in their poems. The parallel is made even more striking by the reflection of writing as correspondence between human beings.

In "Veille" Apollinaire makes his strategy apparent at the first line: the poem is indeed a letter addressed to the poet's friend André Rouveyre, in a fashion that Ungaretti himself adopts in a poem of his, which is a sort of manifesto of his poetics ("Commiato" "Envoi") (GU:TP 58; Frisardi 2002: 52-53). The first two stanzas of "Veille" may have been written to the tune of a song. Whether Apollinaire was thinking of a specific traditional song or invented his own tune, the detail helps us to appreciate the lightness one is supposed to breathe in the first half of the poem. To confirm this, one reads sexual puns already in the second line of the poem: "Troudla la Champignon Tabatière" ("Tra-la the Mushroom Snuff and Tobacco") suggests the tune of a song (according to Bates 1975, the tune of "Marlbrouck"), and penis and backside through *fin-de-siècle* slang terms. Punning continues in the second stanza, where "Mars" is both the month of the beginning of spring (the poem was in fact written in March) and the Greek god of war (Apollinaire had already made the same associations in two poems of *Alcools*, "Aubade" and "La Chanson du Mal-Aimé"). Finally, even the term used to indicate the work he has sent to the *Mercur de France* is indistinguishable from the material on which it is written, as it is "mon papier / Sur papier" ("my paper / on graph paper" ll.7-8).

The first two stanzas are also those that had been more revised, whereas the rest of the poem had gone through only slight changes, which concern the last image. The second part of the poem opens with two long lines in which the noise of war enters the poem. More importantly, it includes that immense image, which unifies the self in his uniform, the sky and the gray smoke of the battle approaching from the road: "Un grand manteau gris de crayon comme le ciel m'enveloppe jusqu'à l'oreille" ("A huge mantle chalky gray like the sky covers me from head to toe" l.10). At this point, the poem drips, so to speak, on the canvas of the paper and each word fills the entire verse, while the cosmic imagery resounds through facile rhymes: the sky itself, the Milky Way, has become a sad road, in which "the / Pale / Smile / Of the moon [...] watches me write." Thus, the poem ends with a reaffirmation of the act of writing as objectively observed from a distance that cannot be disturbed even by the approaching threat of war. By the end of the poem, the surrender to ignorance expressed among the puns of the first two stanzas (ll.3-4: "On ne sait quand on partira / Ni quand on reviendra") ("We don't know when we're leaving / Or when we're coming back"), all the more powerful in his annihilation of the self into impersonality, is redeemed in the gaze of the moon fixed on the act of writing of the self, which recognizes him as, first of all, poet. In this respect, the puns of the first two stanzas and the impersonal sentences describing the fluctuation of the soldiers with no certainty about their journeys are strategies of deferment culminating in the split of the action of the title. The soldier's "Night Watch" redefines the role of the soldier himself, as the moon watches him not as soldier any more, but as poet.

In Ungaretti's "Veglia" ("Vigil"), instead, the battle has already taken place and the self recognizes himself as survivor after the carnage: the whole length of the night is marked right away in contrast with the other night into which "a slain comrade" lies in his anonymity, reduced to a "body." Both the self and the comrade still share the dejection in which they have been "thrown." The difference, however, lies in the self's possibility to denounce that state through the very description of the

"comrade:" "con la sua bocca / digrignata / volta al plenilunio / con la congestione / delle sue mani / penetrata / nel mio silenzio" ("his mouth snarling / at the full moon / his clawed fingers / ripping / into my silence"). It is at this point that the horror of death and war pervades the self and invites him to write as a form of protection and, to put it in his terms, attraction and indeed attachment to life. The "lettere / piene d'amore" ("letters / full of love") are the link between the soldier and the world of "non-combatants," with which the writer needs to connect in order to feel his own life, while engaging himself in a "Veglia," which is not only a "Watch" but a "Wake" or a "Vigil." The ambiguity of the title is stressed by the fact that one battle is over and now there is at least another one ahead: this is not necessarily the battle to undertake with the enemy line, but one with death itself. It is death, in fact, that reminds the writer of its presence through the dead body of the comrade. In this respect, the letters are the work of Eros to counterfeit and undo that of Thanatos, in order to reconstruct a relationship with life itself.

In this respect, other poems by Apollinaire and Ungaretti aim at the accomplishment of the same task, which I would like to put in terms of testimony. "Ombre" and "San Martino del Carso" are only two examples among the several poems both poets wrote on the loss of friends and of human lives in general during the Great War. One only needs to think of Apollinaire's poems such as "La Colombe Poignardée et le Jet d'Eau" ("The Bleeding-Heart Dove and the Fountain") (GA:C 122-123) and Ungaretti's poems such as "Sono una creatura" (GU:TP 41). Both collections, moreover, were dedicated to lost friends: *Calligrammes* "À la mémoire du plus ancien de mes camarades René Dalize mort au Champ d'Honneur le 7 mai 1917", whereas *Il Porto Sepolto* (*The Buried Harbour*) opened with a poem "In memoria" ("In Memory of") of Mohammed Sheab, Ungaretti's Egyptian friend who committed suicide even before the war.

In "Ombre" Apollinaire combines the shadow of his dead friends (l.4: "Souvenirs qui n'en faites plus qu'un" "Memories composing now a single memory") and that of his own living body into one (ll.7-8: "Apparence impalpable et sombre qui avez pris / La forme changeante de mon ombre" "Impalpable dark appearance you have assumed / The changing form of my shadow"). This process of assimilation closely resembles that of mourning in the poet's awareness of the burden that now he is supposed to carry instead of "mes compagnons morts à la guerre" ("my comrades dead in battle"). In fact, that burden is the comrades themselves, the memories of their lives. In the middle of the poem the turning point of such awareness is marked by the recognition of the lack of sensation that now affects the dead, whereas the living poet affirms his own ability to feel by focusing on the dead's inability to know "les poèmes divins que je chant" ("the divine poems I sing"). By the same token, the poet states his own role as chanter of divinity, a divinity that is made, however, by the very shadow he calls upon as protecting agent. The last lines ("Ombre encre du soleil / Ecriture de ma lumière" "Shadow solar ink / Handwriting of my light") and especially the very last ("Un dieu qui s'humilie" "A god humbling himself") end the poem on a note of sadness, or impotence for those lost lives. Nevertheless there is the recognition that it is those dead lives that make the very light of poetry, an oxymoronic light of darkness, as they themselves write the poems and make it a humble divinity, aware of the gift which poetry is and at the same time has received.

In "San Martino del Carso" the final comparison between the destroyed village and the poet's heart runs through a stanza that recalls the sense of correspondence that the "letters full of love" remarked in the "Veglia." In the image of "tanti / che mi corrispondevano" ("the many people / who used to be like me") there is the suggestion of an imaginary exchange of letters between the poet and the dead, besides the sense of sharing at least the risk of the same destiny. The image of the heart as the most crowded cemetery reinforces the poet's desperate desire to install his own self as testimony of the carnage of war. In this respect, the mention of the cross is free from explicitly Christian undertones, but it still is the symbol of the suffering the dead went through. The awareness of this suffering makes the heart "il paese più straziato" ("the village / most smashed to pieces"), as the final recognition that the survivors cannot escape the duty of passing on the memory of those who fell under the destruction of the war.

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Guillaume Apollinaire, "Étendards – Veille"

Mon cher André Rouveyre
Troudla la Champignon Tabatière
On ne sait quand on partira
Ni quand on reviendra

Au Mercure de France
Mars revient tout couleur d'espérance
J'ai envoyé mon papier
Sur papier quadrillé

J'entends les pas des grands chevaux d'artillerie allant au trot sur la grand-route où moi je veille

Un grand manteau gris de crayon comme le ciel m'enveloppe jusqu'à l'oreille

Quel
Ciel
Triste
Piste
Où
Va le
Pâle
Sou
rire
De la lune qui me regarde écrire

Guillaume Apollinaire, "Ombre" (from *Calligrammes*)

Vous voilà de nouveau près de moi
Souvenirs de mes compagnons morts à la guerre
L'olive du temps
Souvenirs qui n'en faites plus qu'un
Comme cent fourrures ne font qu'un manteau
Comme ces milliers de blessures ne font qu'un article de journal
Apparence impalpable et sombre qui avez pris
La forme changeante de mon ombre
Un Indien à l'affût pendant l'éternité
Ombre vous rampez près de moi
Mais vous ne m'entendez plus
Vous ne connaîtrez plus les poèmes divins que je chante
Tandis que moi je vous entends je vous vois encore
Destinées
Ombre multiple que le soleil vous garde
Vous qui m'aimez assez pour ne jamais me quitter
Et qui dansez au soleil sans faire de poussière
Ombre encre du soleil
Ecriture de ma lumière

Ernesto Livorni, "Wake and Mourning," *AmeriQuests* 12.0 (2015)

Caisson de regrets
Un dieu qui s'humilie

Giuseppe Ungaretti, *Veglia* (from *L'Allegria*)

Un'intera nottata
buttato vicino
a un compagno
massacrato
con la sua bocca
digrignata
volta al plenilunio
con la congestione
delle sue mani
penetrata
nel mio silenzio
ho scritto
lettere piene d'amore

Non sono mai stato
tanto
attaccato alla vita

Giuseppe Ungaretti, "San Martino del Carso" (from *L'Allegria*)

Di queste case
non è rimasto
che qualche
brandello di muro

Di tanti
che mi corrispondevano
non è rimasto
neppure tanto

Ma nel cuore
nessuna croce manca

È il mio cuore
il paese più straziato

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Notes

¹ During and right after World War I, several anthologies were published that addressed the peculiarity of the soldier-poets, often gathering them even beyond the boundaries of the trenches on which they fought: Adcock 1918; Kyle 1916; Moore 1920. See also Powell 1993; Stallworthy 2002.

² Both poems were first published in *The Westminster Gazette*: Cicely Hamilton, "Non-Combatant," in *The Westminster Gazette*; now in Cunliffe 1917: 125; Evelyn Underhill, "Non-Combatants," in *The Westminster Gazette*; now in Foxcroft 1918: 19-20.

³ To be sure, the term 'poet' may very well be replaced by a connotatively larger term such as 'writer' or even 'artist' for the purposes of this article, strictly dealing with poets writing and fighting during World War I, I will use the term 'poet.' I would also like to distinguish the 'poet-soldier' from the 'soldier-poet.' The distinction is not a futile one, if one thinks of the titles of several anthologies that were published during or right after World War I: Kyle 1916 and Adcock 1918 are good examples. In the preface to the 1916 volume, Kyle writes (7): "This volume has grown out of a suggestion made by a firm of booksellers who were inspired by a letter in *The Times* in April last, headed "Soldier Poets," which directed attention to the fine spirit animating the poems by Corporal Streets, whose sonnet "Gallipoli" had appeared a few days previously." When dealing with the title chosen for the volume, Kyle writes (8): "For one may claim that this volume represents the soldier as poet rather than the poet as soldier." However, the question is considered a mute point, as it is recognized the primary role of these authors as soldiers turned into poets:

Any objection that, since practically all men of active age have been drawn into the Army willy-nilly, the term "soldier-poet" is ambiguous, has already been met. Even a

cursory glance at this volume will show that the authors are soldiers, whose military service dates back in most cases to the early days of the war, if not earlier, and not conscript poetasters who have found a new stimulant to jaded literary exercises. [...] The soldier poets leave the maudlin and mock-heroic, the gruesome and fearful handling of Death and his allies to the neurotic civilian who stayed behind to gloat on imagined horrors and inconveniences and anticipate the uncomfortable demise of friends.

More recently, in the anthology she edited (Powell 1993), Powell assumes the definition "soldier-poet" at face value, without questioning its essential nature (xi): "Over the last fifteen years I have researched the lives of more than eighty British soldier-poets for this book. My touchstone was that each one must have had a volume of war verse published, or to have appeared in an anthology, and that they all died on the Western front." At the risk of attributing semantic value to the hyphen, I state that the order of the two terms also means a temporal sequence, in which the second term is considered temporary and destined to be reabsorbed in an ideal and tacit third term, which is nothing else than the representation and affirmation of the first term. In other words, the 'poet-soldier' is that poet who happens to be soldier (as well as poet) during the time of war, but is moving toward a return to the status of poet once the war is over. It must be said, however, that once the 'poet-soldier' returns to the condition of 'poet' alone he finds this role ineluctably marked by the ceased condition of 'soldier.' By the same token, the reversal of the terms would suggest the opposite process, which is not the case at least for the poets under consideration: the sequence 'soldier-poet' would apply to those soldiers who discover the writing of poetry during the war, often quitting writing once the pressure of the war situation is over. The question would remain of what becomes of a 'soldier-poet' once the war is over and therefore their role as soldiers and the need to write ends with the release of that pressure, hence the disappearance of their role as poets. This argument seems to prove that the category of 'soldier-poet' interpreted according to the lines here suggested is an ephemeral one, ontologically weak.

⁴ Some anthologies were organized around this basic principle in which the event around which the anthology is organized is presented by terms such as war, battle or simply action, whereas the poems are divided into sections sequentially organized by the time before, during and after the event. Thus, Osborn 1917 includes a section titled *Before Action* (perhaps inspired by the poem bearing that title by William Noel Hodgson, in Osborn 1917:22), whereas Hussey 1967 focuses on poems divided into the following three sections: *Before Marching*, *Marching*, *After Marching*. Other poems related to the topic in question include at least the following: Wilfred Owen ("Cramped in that Funnelled Hole," "Strange Meeting," in Owen 1994: 35-37, 89), Wilfred Wilson Gibson ("Battle," in *The Nation*; now in Foxcroft 1918: 97-99), Ivor Gurney ("To the Poet before Battle," in Osborn 1917: 30), W. G. Hole ("Prayer before War," in *The Dublin Review*; now in Foxcroft 1918: 253-254), Alfred Lichtenstein ("Gebet vor der Schlacht," "Die Schlacht bei Saarbùrg," in Lichtenstein 1962: 97, 100; English translation by Patrick Bridgwater "Prayer before Battle," "The Battle of Saarbùrg," in Cross 1988: 165), Habberton Lulham ("Before Battle (Spring, 1918)," in *The Spectator*; now in Foxcroft 1918: 19-20), Siegfried Sassoon ("Aftermath," in Sassoon 1984: 118), R. E. Vernède ("Before the Assault," in Trotter 1920: 37-38).

⁵ About this distinction, see the introductory pages of Andrew J. Kunka, "The Evolution of Mourning in Siegfried Sassoon's War Writing," in Rae 2007: pp.69-84.

⁶ Freud 1932.

⁷ Among the studies exploring Ungaretti's relationship with these poets, see at least Conti 1972: 279-295; Contini 1947: 62-65; Cavalli 1953: 119-128; Livi 1989; Dadour 1988: 691-784; Rebay 1962: 35-48, 70-103; Giorgio Barberi Squarotti, "Ungaretti e la poesia italiana del primo Novecento"; Paola Montefoschi, "Ungaretti, Laforgue e l'humour nero"; Giorgio Luti, "Ungaretti e 'les compagnons de route' dell'avanguardia fiorentina"; Giuseppe Savoca, "Nota sul linguaggio del primo Ungaretti", all in Bo Petrucciani Bruscia Angelini Cardone Rossi 1981: 247-261, 263-276, 277-303, 1319-1325. Ungaretti's interest for Apollinaire's poetic writings is well known: among Ungaretti's articles one wants to mention at least "Pittura, poesia, e un po' di strada" and the later writings "Guillaume Apollinaire" and "André Breton," all in G.U.S.I: 20-26, 615-619, 655-660. Apollinaire translated "In memoria" in French, even though he never published it: see Ungaretti's correspondence in Bruera 1991: 217-238. See also the letter n.19 to Ardengo Soffici (in Ungaretti 1981: 25-26: without date, but probably written in May-June 1918; see also Ungaretti's letter to Soffici n.41, 52-53, sent on November 12, 1918, in which the poet informs his friend of Apollinaire's death):

Apollinaire si porta bene. Ha avuto una polmonite che l'ha tenuto a letto diverso tempo; ma ora si porta bene; sano d'anima e pieno di salute fisica. "Calligrammes" è un libro di poesie; la maggior parte scritte in tempo di combattimenti; una specie del mio "Porto" ma un altro modo; meno siccità e oppressione d'anima e meno partecipazione liberatrice alla natura, ma un senso più vivace, slogato, acrobatico dell'artificio guerresco, la brutalità metallica delle grandi ore d'attesa e di mischia tramutata in un turbinio di fiocchi luminosi voluttuosi; una gran baldoria di colori serici svolazzante in un'ubriacatura di cristallami scaraventati al sole estivo. Qualche cosa di ambiguo, di fascinante, di perverso, di liquido per una stasi lontana di fiume d'un tratto morto, come dall'eternità.

It is an important letter for the distinctions that it draws between Apollinaire's work and Ungaretti's first poetic adventure; next to it one can place the letter that Ungaretti writes to Giuseppe De Robertis on April 9, 1942 (Ungaretti – De Robertis: 30):

[...] Ciò che può esserci di somigliante nel Porto e in Calligrammes è l'assenza di punteggiatura; ma è fatto, nella sdomigianza non in se stesso, superficialissimo.

[...]

Il non usare punteggiatura fu in me cosa naturale, dal momento ch'essa era sostituita dagli spazi bianchi. Ed era naturale ch'io procedessi per isolamento della parola o dell'emistichio, dal momento che la parola doveva riacquistare per le stesse esigenze interne della mia poesia, e "la sua innocenza" e "la sua memoria."

Bologna (Bologna 1979: 124-125) also points out aspects of Ungaretti's poetry that may derive from Apollinaire's poetic experimentations.

⁸ On Apollinaire's influence on Ungaretti's poetry see at least Bruera 1991; Conti 1972: 279-295; Del Serra 1977: 14-38; Rebay 1962: 70-103 (English version in Rebay 1968: 451-472); Tordi 1997: 71-100; Zingone 1995: 381-403, 491-494 (François Livi, "Dal Boulevard Raspail alla Closerie des Lilas: Ungaretti tra Papini e Apollinaire;" Valerio Magrelli, "Ungaretti e Apollinaire: tra autonominazione e «calligramme»").
[[[this note should merge with note 7]]]

⁹ Specific studies focusing on the importance of war for the poetry of Apollinaire and Ungaretti are: Beaup 1988: 357-367; Debon-Tournadre 1980: 134-146; Harrow 2002: 821-834; Jones 1990; O'Connor 1981: 201-218; Por 1996: 121-144; Rinsler 1971: 169-186; Shattuck 1958.