

SERGEANT OF OUTPOSTS

SERGEANT OF OUTPOSTS:
ONE EDITOR'S ROLE IN POST-WAR BRITISH POETRY
1944 - 1987

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ABSTRACT

Poetry magazines are a reflection of the trends and the pressures of their ages: such was the case with Howard Sergeant's Outposts. Howard Sergeant was the longest continuous editor of a single literary magazine in the English language. Founded in 1943 under the pressures of the Second World War, Outposts continued under his editorial direction until ill-health forced him to relinquish the reins in 1986.

Between 1944 and 1986, Sergeant and Outposts played a key role in many of the major trends, groups and movements that shaped modern British poetry. Begun as a poetry and critical journal with a wartime "Apocalyptic" slant, Sergeant's Outposts evolved through the changes which encompassed the Neo-Romantics, the Personalists, The Movement, the Mavericks, The Group, the pop poets, and the Martians and Narrative poets of the Eighties.

Sergeant was among the first to recognize these changes in British poetry, and his magazine is a cross-section of the currents and counter-currents of the period. His major accomplishments include the founding of the British Poetry Association with Dorothy Wellesley and Siegfried Sassoon, his recognition and promotion of Commonwealth

poetry (which launched the first Commonwealth movement in Britain), and his support of poets in the earliest stages of their development as a judge for the Gregory Awards with Herbert Read, T.S. Eliot, Henry Moore, and Philip Larkin. Among the key figures whose relationships to Sergeant are discussed are Muriel Spark, Earle Birney, Kingsley Amis, Seamus Heaney, Peter Redgrove, Dannie Abse, and D.M. Thomas.

Set in the context of forty years of highly charged activity on the British poetry scene, Sergeant's story is one of prudence, critical intelligence, and perseverance. As a poet, editor, and critic, Sergeant's role in British poetry is examined and discussed, and his contributions to the art are weighed against the achievements of those he assisted.

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INTRODUCTION

The politics of writing, the sheer struggle of making oneself heard above the din of other voices, often comes into direct and damaging confrontation with the actual act of writing. Aside from skill and craft -- matters often overlooked entirely in the grand scheme of publish or perish -- the poet has little on his or her side other than luck and the fickle currents of prevailing taste, literary association and audience receptivity. This study focusses on the work of one editor who tried, and often failed, to maintain both universal receptivity and a diplomatic aesthetic neutrality in his magazine and his literary endeavours.

Howard Sergeant cannot be faulted entirely for his failures -- they are in many aspects more interesting than his successes -- for he attempted to steer a steady and balanced course through the viciousness of a literary scene that produced a discouraging record of complaint against an unprecedentedly high rate of expectation and achievement. One of the central problems with Sergeant's work as a man of literature, at least in the first two decades of his literary career, was that he operated from the facile

assumption that modern poetry was a matter of group struggles between members of conflicting aesthetic principles. That may be partially true -- certainly, the highlights of Sergeant's career discussed in this study suggest that British poetry since the Second World War has followed a pattern of action and reaction. My intent has been to examine Sergeant's role in some of the major trends of post-war British poetry and to observe and explain the forces which moved him, and often his magazine, in certain directions.

A broader and more intensive study of the period might concern itself with those who are not mentioned here. My intention is not to write a detailed literary history of the period but to chronicle one man's actions and responses to many of the so-called "groups" that made their presence felt in the past forty years. Poetry, of course, is not a matter of camps. Poets are individuals -- a perception that Sergeant struggled to acknowledge in his own work and philosophy -- and they write from what they know and what they have experienced. Theoretical principles are always secondary to the best of poets, and critical groupings, as they arose during the post-war years, were often attempts by observers to find a convenient structure for comparison, discussion and anthologization. At times, however, poets grouped themselves together in the hope that there was some safety in numbers in the harsh environment of critical

careerism. As Michael Holroyd wrote in the Fortieth Anniversary issue of Outposts in 1983, "The world of poets is more cut-throat than the academic community...."¹

If this study leaves the reader with the assumption that the poetry of the period was simply a matter of "groups" or "movements" it is because Sergeant often involved himself in such gatherings, both as a protagonist and antagonist of aesthetics which such clannish enterprises represented. A study of the period which does not focus on a specific individual would better serve those who are not mentioned here. My prime objective, in this context, is to tell Howard Sergeant's story and examine the role of one man in a literary era.

Herbert Howard Sergeant was born in Hull, Yorkshire on May 6, 1914.² His father was killed at the Battle of the Somme and Howard was raised by his mother under very strict and financially difficult circumstances. The major influence on his childhood was his maternal grandfather, a former railwayman, who taught him to read and rewarded him for memorizing passages from the Bible. Sergeant's second-last chapbook of poems, Travelling Without a Valid Ticket, was dedicated to his grandfather. His upbringing, aside from the grandfather's influence, was strict Methodist and politically liberal -- two beliefs to which Sergeant remained loyal all his life. When his mother remarried, it was to a sailor who insisted that the bookish young boy

become a boxer. His relationship with his step-father was an uneasy one. At the age of six, Sergeant had lost the hearing in his left ear, and this disability left him introspective, quiet, and at times withdrawn.

Sergeant managed to survive the boxing matches and Hull Grammar School where he received his early education, and eventually graduated with a certificate in accounting from the College of Commerce in Hull. This certificate was gradually upgraded by extensive work at night school until Sergeant became a professional accountant. His roots and his struggle for an education were factors which influenced Sergeant's life to a considerable degree. He often felt inferior to those who had received a genteel upbringing and a good education, and worked all his life to educate himself in literature and languages. Sergeant did a thorough job -- few people in England were as well-versed in contemporary poetry as he was, and he taught himself Urdu and Hindi in order to review books for journals in India. His studies in accountancy, which led to a successful career as a business teacher and writer for the Times Business Supplement, eventually took him to the position of Senior Lecturer in Management Studies at Brooklands Academy in Weybridge, Surrey. He also served as a Creative Writing Fellow at Queen Mary's College in Basingstoke, Hampshire. Sergeant was a self-made man who, when confronted with a need either for knowledge or for

methods by which poetry might be better known, filled the void with the fruit of his own labours. Among his more notable accomplishments was Outposts, the longest continuous literary magazine under a single editor in the English language. That magazine, a record of his activities and a reflection of his perseverance and adaptability, stands as the most important tribute to Sergeant. The magazine was responsible for publishing almost every significant English poet in the post-war years, with the exception of Philip Larkin, and the scope and breadth of the journal's record is no small accomplishment. As Alan Sillitoe wrote, "Outposts is one of the major magazine achievements of this century. I know of no other poetry publication which has lasted so long, or issued work of such interest and high standard, or indeed, has done so much for poetry in general."³

A literary magazine, even if it is only short-lived, reflects the attitudes, the interests, and the tastes of its editor. The more interesting journals, especially those which are considered to have played a part in shaping or formulating the literary taste of any given period, reflect the editor's sense of judgement and response to the prevailing trends of his or her time. If a journal is lucky enough to survive for forty-two years under a single editor, as was the case with Sergeant's Outposts, it serves as a useful indicator to literary

historians who might wish to examine the currents and counter-currents of a given period.

Howard Sergeant's Outposts was founded in 1944, and continued under Sergeant's editorship until ill-health forced him to relinquish the reins of the magazine in 1986. During that period, Sergeant's activities kept pace with the major currents of the British poetry scene. He played an active part, not only as an editor whose energies reflected the issues and tastes of the scene, but as an instigator and shaper of events, an active agent who contributed to the shape of post-World War Two British poetry. For his services to British poetry he received an MBE in 1978, yet the full extent of Sergeant's work, both with Outposts and with his other literary activities has never fully been explored. He became known as a "man behind the scenes", a presence who contributed to many careers but who received little notice except gratitude from those he helped and supported.

This study is not an attempt to eulogise Howard Sergeant but to detail the activities of one man for more than forty years on a complex and charged poetry scene. As an editor, poet, critic, judge for numerous poetry contests and awards, and as an organizer of groups and activities, Sergeant's role in British poetry was largely that of an "unseen hand," someone who made things happen by virtue of his participation in events or his reaction to them. His

activities, when set in the context of the period, not only reflect the major issues of the era but suggest that literary history is not simply the actions of "great" authors but the endless work of lesser known individuals.

Literary history is often measured in terms of "the greats", the work and lives of men and women who publicly dominate the literary activities of their times. Figures such as T.S. Eliot, W.B. Yeats, W.H. Auden, are the first that come to mind when any mention is made of twentieth-century poetry. Much of the activity of any given period, however, is largely the result of men and women whose work remains unrecorded or appended to footnotes in studies and biographies. The general misconception of conventional literary history is a picture far less complex than what stands as record. Nothing could be farther from the truth, for what is generally considered literature is the result of all manner of forces, pressures and activities and is influenced by those who often stand in the shadows of literary history rather than in the spotlight. The stories to be told from the shadows, however, are sometimes as interesting in their own right as those that are told and retold of the spotlight individuals. The chronicle of any period, especially those that included a number of "great" authors, is in constant peril of passing into obscurity, eclipsed by those authors who are taken to be the signals of their times.

Howard Sergeant was a toiler in the literary vineyard of the post-war era. Many of those who knew Sergeant in his later life scoffed at the idea that his role in the times represented anything of lasting value. The problem may lie in the fact that Sergeant was a well-known personality for such a long time that the breadth of his accomplishments and the notability of his failures were never measured to their full extent. Many of those who had known his work during the Forties predeceased him -- their own era was the target, until quite recently, of negative publicity and inadequate scholarship. During the Fifties when he argued against the prevailing trends, his activities were denigrated by those who did not agree with his perceptions or his philosophies. In the Sixties, Sergeant assumed the role of the elder statesman, a voice in the background who lent his experience and his advice to many younger authors who stood in the spotlight. The applause went to those who the times championed, not to those who made the champions recognized by the times. The problem was further complicated by the fact that Sergeant's faults often outweighed his achievements, although his miscalculations are perhaps as interesting and as varied as the successes of others.

What must be remembered is that Sergeant was, first and foremost, the editor of a literary magazine. Literary magazines are the flotsam and jetsam of their eras. They

are directed by the trends of the time, regardless of how hard an editor might try to steer a distinct course. They are also one of the most overlooked resources at the disposal of a literary scholar. They are a trove of information and opinion as well as a record of an editor's perceptions and tastes. If a magazine displays a catholicity of taste and a broad range of contributors, then that magazine is a reasonably good indicator of the activities of its times. In the case of Outposts, Sergeant relied on unsolicited submissions, mostly from new poets, for his contributions. Although this stance may suggest a philosophic or aesthetic weakness on Sergeant's part, the magazine does serve as a useful indicator of trends and patterns in post-war British poetry as they happened or before they happened. Poets such as Kingsley Amis in the Forties, Peter Redgrove in the Fifties, Seamus Heaney in the Sixties, to name but a few, published their first poems in Outposts. Sergeant's uncanny ability to spot new talent, especially works by new poets on the verge of public attention, made him a suitable judge for the Gregory Awards (given each year to the most promising young poets in Britain). He made a point of asking the winners of each year's Gregory Awards for work, and in this light Outposts is a useful barometer for the changes that took place in British poetry during the period covered by Sergeant's editorship. As well as being a barometer for scholars, the

magazine encouraged poets to persevere in their writing and the boost that publication in Outposts gave to many fledgling voices gave many the enthusiasm to continue writing. To innumerable young poets, Sergeant was a friend and an ally, someone to whom they could show their work with the knowledge that it would be given a fair reading and an honest assessment.

The poetry magazine is, possibly, the least static medium in which verse can be studied. A poem in a literary magazine, even if it is not prey to typographical accidentals, is far from being finished. The poetry magazine version of a work represents a kind of "halfway house" in a poem's evolution, a way-station where the poem is subjected to the pressures of public critical reaction and appearance in printer's type, both of which often alter a poet's view of a work. Editors of literary magazines, for the most part, are sensitive to their transitional position with regard to the development of a poem, and are often the first critics for poets. Sergeant made it an editorial policy to comment, if asked, on every individual poem he received, and many of the poets who published in Outposts were grateful for his small, neat, handwritten notes that contained useful suggestions and helpful comments. In this sense, Outposts functioned as a workshop where poets could test their work on a well-trained and usually unbiased critic.

Sergeant realized that writers alone do not make a literature. This is a study of the sum of all the parts that went into the making of a magazine: the philosophy, the desire, the debate, the poets, the critics and the editor. It is also the study of a period in British poetry when poets confronted social, political and economic changes at an unprecedented pace. The fact that there is any poetry at all is a signal that Sergeant's efforts were not in vain.

NOTES TO INTRODUCTION

¹Michael Holroyd, "Letter to Outposts," Outposts Fortieth Anniversary Number 138 (Autumn 1983) 11.

²Howard Sergeant, "Curriculum Vitae," Private Collection of the Estate of Howard Sergeant.

³Alan Sillitoe, "Letter to Outposts," Outposts Fortieth Anniversary Number 138 (Autumn 1983) 5.

CHAPTER ONE
A SENSE OF VALUES

Howard Sergeant founded Outposts in 1943 under the pressures of wartime restrictions on paper, accessibility to printers, and an uncertain market more concerned with political and national survival than literary achievement.¹ Those same pressures, however, generated an environment where the poet, as an individual voice, suddenly stood in the spotlight of both political and aesthetic attention and demanded to be heard not only by his peers but by the populace at war. The British war poets of the 1939-1945 conflict were the products not only of the war itself but also of the drives and tensions that sprang from the literary activity of the previous decades.

One of the lessons learned from the literary history of the twentieth century, if indeed there are lessons to be learned from literary history, is that societies respond to national conflicts not only in political and military terms but also in imaginative ways. As an antidote to mass slaughter or the destruction of cities and civilizing elements in society, societies seek out imaginative alternatives, the alternatives manifested

in the form of literature, and in particular poetry. Poetry in wartime becomes the vehicle of response, the forum of both persuasion and protest, and the natural medium for propaganda whether pro or con the attritions. The inherent sanctity of verse, if sanctity is not too precious a term for the value of poetry to express national conscience, acquits it of the crime of censorable agitation while allowing poets to protest. What is more important than the subversive or critical stance of poetry, however, is the role that verse plays in bearing the drives and ethics of a nation. Verse, at least from the perspective of a social historian, is an indicator of what a society values. The poet, in wartime, dreams for the group which cannot dream for itself and the alternative reality he creates provides a kind of emotional safety valve in the midst of the pure insanity of one nation legalising the murder of another.

The poets of the First World War, whether they were British such as Owen and Sassoon, or German such as Trakl, used poetry as a vehicle for their moral reactions to the war and all its absurdities. Such reactions, through poetry, could be presented for public scrutiny in a form more palatable to public tastes and expectations than more outright forms of disapproval. Poetry, in this role, operates as a distancing mechanism between the individual and the unutterable, a response to unmitigated horrors of human creation, and a reservoir for vision and reason.

Coincidental with the 'reactive' or 'protest' poets of the First World War were poets who used their verse to convey a sense of the 'national ideal.' The Rupert Brookes and the Julian Grenfells make war aesthetically pleasing, if not inviting, and their idealising of glory and national service, makes war acceptable to society and, at least from the propagandist's point of view, winnable. A society at war needs poetry because the lies of poetry not only support the noble lie of society but, in the context of the twentieth-century experience, provide a soothingly abstract outlet for expressions both for and against the sufferings of a society. Thus, war poetry, at its best, becomes a catalogue of what a society believes. When the question is raised "What are we fighting for?" or "What is the reason for our society?" the answer is often more easily and accurately found in poetry than in the speeches of politicians or pacifists.

Poetry proliferated with the outbreak of war in 1939. Many new poets, Howard Sergeant included, were easily encouraged by a climate which suspected that it needed poetry. Such poets were partly deluded by the resurgent interest in poetry. The bevy of people writing poetry did not indicate that there were genuine poets among the plethora of enthusiastic amateurs. In his introductory essay to the anthology Poetry of the Forties (1970), Sergeant recalled how the poetry of the Second World War

developed:

To some extent this revival of interest in poetry was inevitable. With the loss of personal freedom and the restrictions imposed upon the individual by the necessities of modern warfare, people are driven back upon their emotions and it is natural that they should seek an outlet, if not a reality, in the arts most accessible to them, music and poetry. In the presence of suffering and death on a vast scale, they become more aware of themselves, their loneliness and nostalgia, their unvoiced fears and aspirations, and they experience a powerful urge to make themselves articulate.²

Stephen Spender remarked (during a reminiscence in Toronto in the autumn of 1987) that both he and Cyril Connolly felt that the war had become almost an excuse for individuals to declare themselves poets. Sergeant, on the other hand, took a different view of the poetry 'explosion' of the war years. In the same introduction he stated:

Despite the restrictions of wartime, a considerable number of young men and women discovered in poetry a vital form of expression (most people over school-leaving age were in the Forces or some branch of national service). Poems were written under all sorts of conditions -- in crowded billets, bars, factory and Naafi canteens, isolated nissen huts; on active service or in between working shifts. It would be absurd to suggest that these young writers were responsible for any work which could be described as of major importance; under the conditions in which they were compelled to write, it would have been astonishing if they had.³

Poetry during the war seemed to be everywhere and Sergeant was in an ideal position to witness its pervasiveness

throughout both the civilian population and the Forces. His work as an accountant for the Air Ministry dictated that he travel throughout the British Isles and almost everywhere he went he found poetry being written. While staying near an airbase in Stanford, for example, he met Lionel Monteith who would become his closest friend and who would play an important part in the founding of Outposts.

On May 16 1943, Sergeant was lodged at a hotel in Edinburgh. He noted in his personal diary that, while he was sitting in the lobby, he met a young Canadian officer reading a copy of Ralph Gustafson's Penguin anthology, Canadian Accent, at that time one of the largest-selling poetry volumes in the English-speaking world.⁴ The discussion with the young officer eventually shifted away from the anthology to the fact that Sergeant was himself an aspiring poet and had, that week, visited the offices of Chamber's Journal in Edinburgh over the publication of his first poem, "Thistledown Magic".⁵ To the literary scene, the publication of "Thistledown Magic" was an unmemorable event; but to Sergeant, this initial success was a claim to fame, a chance for a working-class, self-educated and socially ambitious young man from the slums of Hull to ascend a rung in the class ladder. The publication and the preceding failures and rejections emphasized to Sergeant the need for more forums for poetry where poets such as himself, regardless of their lack of university background

or their social standing, could voice their individual ideas and feelings. Like the war, poetry was making inroads in the levelling of the class-structure. In his diary, early in 1943, Sergeant confided:

In all the biographies and autobiographies I read the person concerned seems always to meet interesting personalities quite early in his career...I wonder if I shall ever meet people other than non-entities. Will it always be like this? Dreaming and longing for opportunities to do something big, and to have all my efforts squashed? I firmly believe that I have a certain amount of talent and given the right opportunity to prove it; but I must admit that there are many occasions when I lose confidence. Should I forget this ambition and concentrate the whole of my energies on my professional life?⁶

The sudden emergence of new poets was frowned upon by the elder generation, partly from jealousy, partly from an arrogant claim to experience over enthusiasm, and partly out of the class distinction which, in Sergeant's eyes, pervaded British poetry. Sassoon, Owen, Graves, Sorley, Brooke, Grenfell -- the war poets of the previous conflict -- had all been upper- or middle-class and all had received educations at good schools. There had been "working-class" poets of the First World War, poets such as Edward Thomas, Isaac Rosenberg, or Ivor Gurney, but for the most part they stood in the shadows of their more well-to-do compatriots, at least in the perspective offered by the anthologies available to Sergeant in 1939. Sergeant's lack of education spurred him towards self-education and he accomplished a

great deal simply through his own motivation; but all his life, both during and after the war, he lamented the fact that university poets had things much easier.

In his 'Introduction' to the Penguin anthology Poetry of the Forties, Robin Skelton suggests that the Forties poets were working not only against the difficult conditions for writing but also against the wariness of established poets towards the new generation.⁷ The established poets, Skelton suggests, measured success by their own terms rather than the demands of the time. "Newspapers asked 'where are the war poets?' and mourned the absence of latter day Grenfells, Sorleys and Brookes." To add to this pressure on young poets, not only to write but to be published and recognized in an increasingly competitive literary scene, C. Day Lewis (who by 1939 was considered an 'established' poet) published his small invective verse against his succeeding generation, "Where are the War Poets?" and, in doing so, outrightly condemned what had not even blossomed. In the last stanza, Day Lewis claimed:

It is the logic of our times,
No subject for immortal verse,
That we who lived by honest dreams
Defend the bad against the worse.⁸

Day Lewis' assertion that the struggle at hand was a mere matter of defending "the bad against the worse" left little room for either patriotic idealism or heroic individualism.

The cutting rhyme of "verse" with "worse" in the second stanza caps an opening stanza which declares that the war was only a capitalistic game in which the working class (an issue and a cause célèbre for Day Lewis at this time) and the poet were reduced to propagandist versifiers who must serve the "borrowed language" by propagating further falsehoods. The poem was not an encouragement to young writers facing both a test of skill and a test of spirit and the outlook to young enthusiasts such as Sergeant must have seemed bleak, a factor which may contribute to the overwhelming air of dismay or pessimism in much of the Forties poetry. Such a factor may also have been one of the raison d'êtres for the founding of magazines such as Outposts by poets who felt excluded and initiated their own forums in order to be heard.

Francis Scarfe in his critical commentary

"Observations on Poetry and War" in Auden and After (1942) fired back at Day Lewis with an apologetic salvo which shows that the younger poets were at least full of fight if not poetry. Scarfe blamed the lack of "war poets" on the pressures applied by their preceding generations of poets who attacked rather than encouraged new poetic developments:

In writing on this subject, around which there is bound to be great controversy before the war is over, there is little the critic can do save to set out his own opinions and await contradiction. In this battle criticism

will be keenest when directed by "War Poets" of 1914-1918 against poets of the present generation, who have already been accused in the newspapers of not rising to the occasion. It will be bitterest when voiced by the younger poets, whose many gestures since the war began have been ignored or misunderstood; it will be most cynical, perhaps, from those who, slightly older but not middle-aged, played Cassandra for ten years before this war broke out, and who have hurriedly withdrawn from the arena.⁹

Aside from the allusion to the Anglo-Saxon poem, "The Battle of Maldon", and the subtextual references to Shakespeare's Troilus and Cresida, Scarfe was attempting to goad the established poets such as Graves and Eliot into open discussion and confrontation over the accusations. Both Graves and Eliot were active during this period -- Graves primarily as a novelist and philologist, and Eliot as a spokesman for a meditative Christian aestheticism which he expressed admirably in Four Quartets -- but their roles were much overshadowed by the far more contemporary poets of the Thirties. If Eliot is remembered for any contribution to the poetry of the Forties other than Four Quartets, it is because of his assertion that a poet's work was a matter of "belief", an aspect of the Forties verse that Roy Fuller acknowledges in his 1956 essay "Poetry: Tradition and Belief." Fuller cites Eliot's remark that "I cannot see that poetry can ever be separated from something which I should call belief,"¹⁰ a statement that stands as something of a motto or creed for the poets of this period.

Most poets of the Forties would certainly have agreed with such a statement. The question which undercut the verse of the period, however, was "what do we believe and how do we go about our actions within the structure of such beliefs?" Fuller, although speaking from the privilege of retrospect, summed up the poet's dilemma in 1939:

Poets who have successively emerged from their youth since 1914 have usually felt their greatest problem to be one of belief. No doubt a minority has accepted Christianity or Marxism: accepted, that is to say, a dogmatic ideological system to be worked out in poetry. But most have inherited the vague and difficult humanism of the Western World, and even those nominally Christian or socialist (or both) have not often found their dogmas of sufficient vigour to dictate the attitude of their verse.¹¹

Needless to say, the confusion between philosophy and poetry, or at least the blurred distinction between the two was a concern not only from a critical standpoint in 1939 but from the perspective of poetic practice. A poet had to believe in something and this necessity was a precept which the poets of the Thirties had willed to the poets of the Forties.

In all fairness to the poets of the Second World War, the comparison of their fate or duty with that of the First World War poets, especially on Day Lewis' part, is absurd. The need for "nationalistic spokesmen for the people," as Linda M. Shires calls them in British Poetry of the Second World War,¹² precluded rational belief that poetry grows from the experience of a situation rather than

from the need to inspire people to act accordingly in a given circumstance -- a view held not only by Sergeant but by most of his contemporaries during the Forties. Spender, like Day Lewis, put the cart before the horse, so to speak, when he called on the new poets to assert the "strength of faith in a civilization which will be able to conquer and survive," and present some vision of the future that might be worth fighting for.¹³ Credit should be given to the poets of the Second World War for being wary of the type of wayward idealism that made for the unconscious self-mockery and self-righteousness one finds in Rupert Brooke's finely crafted sonnets. That kind of idealism is exactly what Day Lewis and Spender wanted and it was exactly the kind of idealism that the cynical new generation had been programmed to avoid by their immediate predecessors of the Pylon poetry. What is ironic in the 'complaints' of Day Lewis and Spender is that they took the accusative tone to defend their own poetic inertia or indifference to the war. Fuller points out, with some irony, that "almost all the best poets who were under 35 in 1939 never served in the armed forces at all and so missed the impact of the universal experience of those years," a fact that was not lost on the new generation of poets who chose to ignore the political dogmas of their predecessors in favour of inward critiques and spiritual self-assessments.¹⁴

Scarfe, in "Observations on Poetry and War,"

makes a direct assault on the poets of the Thirties, the generation, including C. Day Lewis, of poets with "classical" rather than "romantic" leanings.¹⁵ Such an assault, at least from the perspective of a young poet and critic such as Scarfe, would not have been without justification. G.S. Fraser, in his 1956 essay "The Poet and his Medium" (another piece of retrospective reassessment), sees the "classical" versus "romantic" dichotomy as one of the essential tensions of the period:

These different class-alignments express themselves not only in two different attitudes towards poetry (so that Dylan Thomas, in the old Nietzschean dichotomy, is a Dionysian poet and W.H. Auden an Apollonian one). They also express themselves in the difference of the social opportunities lying in the way of poets from one or another of Great Britain's 'two nations'...And the English social system, with its elaborate system of in-groups and out-groups, its complicated pecking-order, has, ironically, no cosy corners for the man who merely wishes to practice his art in modest independence.¹⁶

Like Sergeant, many of the Forties poets saw their aesthetic tendencies as being wholly involved with their pursuit of social ascendancy, a fact that is not lost on Fraser, although a substantial number of war poets during this period were university or upper- to middle-class products. On the whole, however, the anxiety which pervaded British poetry in 1939 was not simply one of class tension but of the survival of English poetry itself at the moment

when not only a shift in aesthetic values was taking place but a change was taking place in the established guard of the country's verse.

The Auden generation, the generation which had shown so much promise and so much command during the middle years of the decade, had deserted Britain in her time of need, or had at least given that appearance to aficionados of the contemporary scene. By 1942 Auden had already settled in New York. Spender was a member of the Fire Service and was about to found Horizon with Cyril Connolly, but his output, symptomatic of his career, was minimal, self-conscious and wavering between romantic idealism and the sterner political and often classically informed stance of his immediate contemporaries. Neither were the heirs-apparent to the Auden group, Barker and Gascoyne, present on the scene as active forces. George Barker returned to the United States where he worked for the British Information Services and pursued Canadian poet and novelist Elizabeth Smart in a relationship that would become the basis for her novel By Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept. David Gascoyne, the precocious surrealist, had also vanished from the scene and was believed, at least by Sergeant during the Forties, to have died in an air raid (he later re-emerged in the Fifties as a critic and a somewhat renewed poetic voice). In light of such developments, Day Lewis' question may be seen not only

as a challenge to the younger generation of poets to motivate themselves toward action, but as a statement of dismay at the retreat of his own contemporaries from the challenge they had long desired. "Where Are The War Poets?" and its teasingly paradoxical question also may have been a rearguard action on Day Lewis' part, the last gasp of a declining generation of poets, determined to scorch the earth in their retreat from the literary scene.

As a concession to Day Lewis and his "apologia" for the decline of his compatriots, it would be fair to concede that the older generation could not have conceived of modern warfare as it evolved during the Second World War, although events such as the bombing of Guernica and the devastation of Spain (events that influenced the writings of such poets as Spender and Cornford, Roy Campbell, MacNeice, and the novelist George Orwell) only a few years before the outbreak of the Second World War, offered grim foreshadowings of the horrors that were to come. Nor could the older generation have envisioned the "romantic" response that would be uttered by the new poets to emerge during the World War II -- a response that sprang more from Hopkins, Yeats and Wordsworth than from the more classical models upheld by Auden, Graves or the previous war poets of the century.

G.S. Fraser suggests in The Modern Writer and His World that British poetry in the twentieth century was

reliving its stages of development from the past three hundred years, beginning with a renewed interest in the Metaphysical poets during the pre-war and post-war years, then moving to a refocussing on the Augustan poets as manifested in the verse of Auden. Fraser explains:

One might say, in fact, that the re-exploration of English poetic culture, which has been one of the most fertilizing influences on the original poetry of this century, has in the last thirty or forty years worked forward from the early seventeenth to the early nineteenth century and that the time is now ripe for an objective reevaluation of the later romantics and even the great Victorians.¹⁷

Such a theory, although not wholly convincing, explains the interest of the Second World War poets and their immediate contemporaries in Victorian literature; in fact, it may even explain in part Philip Larkin's interest in Thomas Hardy's work. Derek Stanford, a contemporary and friend of Howard Sergeant, for example, gained greater recognition for his studies in nineteenth-century literature than for his own poetry. Whether one is inclined to agree with Fraser or not, the point he is making is that within a short period of time the active voices of the English poetry scene reacted against each other in the way that previous generations had reacted against their immediate predecessors. In such a climate, the need for the poets of the Second World War to be different from the poets of the First World War must have been an unspoken tension felt by many poets.

The First World War had been a soldier's war, albeit on a massive and tragic scale. The events of the war, however, were "over there," the consequences and realities safely distanced and at arm's length from the reading public in England. For all its horrors, it was a war that could not be described as it was witnessed but only abstracted and communicated with great difficulty through a sensitive and doomed persona. Poets such as Sassoon, Owen, Sorley, Brooke, Grenfell and others were youthful "Adonis" figures, tragic heroes offered up for sacrifice on the altar of society and all its perceived decencies. In this sense they became the media through which the events of the war could be translated -- they were tragic because they were seen by readers as individuals rather than "millions of mouthless dead,"¹⁸ to borrow Sorley's phrase. For the readers of the Great War's poetry, the suffering and the slaughter became a personal experience where poets had names, faces, pasts, lives, families, hopes, dreams, wishes, and ambitions. Each poet was perceived to be speaking as an individual for the collective cause of his country and his generation.

The specificity and individuality of the First World War poets is what Day Lewis may have been searching for in his question. Day Lewis may also have been seeking a poet to step forward and fill the role of social critic as

Owen had done, and thereby play an active political part in the events at hand. Owen's statement regarding the role of the poet was probably in the back of Day Lewis' mind:

"Above all I am not concerned with Poetry...All a poet can do today is warn. That is why the true Poets must be truthful."¹⁹ The poet of the Forties might well have responded by asking "truthful to whom?" G.S. Fraser, in The Modern Writer and His World, noted that "the outbreak of war in the late summer of 1939 caused, quite apart from social movements, a widespread shift in the themes of poetry from public events to personal experience."²⁰ In this context, Eliot's dictum about poetry as "belief" stands at the core of much of the poetry from the Second World War because, as Fraser states (albeit ten years after the war but in the sentiments of wartime uncertainty, a trait he preserved throughout his literary career):

It seems to me that both poets and men of good will generally now are groping towards the formulation of some similar broad, sustaining ideal. This, in a period of immediate crisis like the present, may appear a risky generalization, or a strained analogy: but we may be permitted at least to hope (and the present tendency of poetry, at least, does not forbid us to hope) that some such deep integrative process is at work today under the confused and troubled surface of our time.²¹

If the ideal of the First World War had been the survival of humanity as perceived through individual terms, the ideal of the Second World War, at least in terms

represented by the war poets themselves, became the survival of the society as measured by the capacity of the individual to dream of better things.

At its outset, the Second World War was dubbed "the phoney war" by both press and public. The British and French sat entrenched behind the Maginot Line and after the initial devastation of Poland in September 1939, the progress of the war came to a halt while Hitler regrouped his troops for the Battle of France and the unexpected occupation of Belgium and Holland. The poets, at least in 1939, had very little to write about other than their own sense of anxiety over what was to come. As Linda M. Shires notes in British Poetry of the Second World War,

The Second World War did not immediately produce outstanding 'war poets', and the nature of the war partly explains why. In the autumn and winter of 1939, England and Germany were officially at war but no actual fighting began until spring 1940 when Hitler's armies marched on Belgium and Holland. Until then, this 'phoney war' created a strained and unreal atmosphere in England. Starting as a war of nerves, the Second World War stunned the imagination instead of liberating it. There was no development from initial optimism about war to rejection of it, a development clearly evident in the poetry of the First World War...Like a cancer, war gradually spread to a wide series of fronts. As Stephen Spender said, it had 'no stage setting easily visualized.'²²

But when the overall impact of the Second World War is considered against that of the First World War, as Shires

suggests, the obvious difference is that the Second World War had no permanent or clearly demarcated front line. War, when it did become a fully-fledged conflict, was ubiquitous.

The blitz attacks on the cities, especially in England, forced the reading public into the position where the war could not be abstracted, either through geographical distance or through singular poetic personas. What came under attack between 1939 and 1945 was not nationality or principle but society as a whole and, for the first time in history, poetry was forced to cope with an experience that was real to everyone rather than real solely to those in uniform. Under such conditions, the poems of the Second World War were open to broader criticism than those of the First World War because the experience of the war was not limited to combatants alone. Thus, the poets of the Second World War in England were not simply soldier poets, and the line between a war poet and his or her public ceased to exist in the way it had during the First World War. This, in part, may explain Fuller's comment that so few poets of the period who are considered war poets were actually part of the Forces. Anyone who wrote poems about the war, its anxieties and social pressures, became a "war poet." In this context, the role of the poet in the poetry of the period became much more complicated than that of his or her predecessors because the war challenged the domestic issues of life as well as

the heroic issues of poetry. The tragic poet was replaced by the tragic society.

The war, however, was not without its share of tragic poet-figures like Edward Thomas or Wilfred Owen. Sidney Keyes, Alun Lewis, and Keith Douglas in particular, were the war poets whom Day Lewis demanded, yet the position they command in the literary history of the period was acquired after their deaths and late in the war (Keyes died as a P.O.W. in 1943 and Douglas and Lewis were killed in 1944). The problem created by the presence of these three figures in the context of World War II poetry is that they stand outside the core of much of the wartime writing, especially the theoretically based writing that was to dominate and confuse the entire picture of wartime poetry in England. G.S. Fraser notes in The Modern Writer and His World, that "At the end of the war, a critic's picture of the contemporary situation would be bound to be a confused one."²³ Sergeant, in his "Introduction" to the anthology Poetry of the Forties, suggests that many of the war poets, Douglas, Lewis and Keyes included, were lost in the morass of critical debate and theoretical verbosity that has since obscured much of the war poetry:

Alun Lewis was one of the most outstanding poets of the war years but his reputation as a poet has been obscured by the tendency of critics to 'write off' the forties as a period when 'poetry lurched into a kind of

nervous breakdown', though the phrase has no relevance at all when applied to Lewis' poetry.²⁴

The publication of Raiders' Dawn in 1942 was the first major response of the new generation to the question "Where are the war poets?" As Sergeant noted in his "Introduction" to Poetry of the Forties, more than a third of the verse in Alun Lewis' collection had been written before the outbreak of war in 1939.²⁵ Such a fact suggests that a new generation of poets was ready to emerge even before the hostilities began and that such a generation already had a reasonably solid idea of what it wanted to say in its verse.

In Raiders' Dawn, Lewis answers the preceding war's poets with a tribute, "To Edward Thomas." In the poem, Lewis feels the weight, or at least the responsibility of being a "war poet" and answers the test put to him in the opening lines of the fourth stanza:

Later, a whole day later, I remembered
 This war and yours and your weary
 Circle of failure and your striving
 To make articulate the groping voices
 Of snow and rain and dripping branches
 And love that ailing in itself cried out
 About the straggling eaves and ringed the candle
 With shadows slouching round your buried head;
 And in the lonely house there was no ease
 For you, or Helen, or those small perplexed
 Children of yours who only wished to please.²⁶

Not only does Lewis identify with the First World War poets as specific individuals whose dreams and plans have been

cut short by the war, but in voice Lewis assumes the role of his fated poet forebear, the tragic individual whose destiny does not include survival. In "The Sentry", a wartime poem and one anthologized by Sergeant, Lewis writes:

I have begun to die.
 For now at last I know
 That there is no escape
 From night. Not any dream
 Nor breathless images of sleep
 Touch my bat's-eyes. I hang
 Leathery-arid from the hidden roof

Of Night, and sleeplessly
 I watch within sleep's province.²⁷

The war for Lewis, at least in a poem such as "The Sentry," is an experience of personal isolation, of waiting, of longing, of nostalgia and anxiety. Unlike the First World War, however, the Second World War, at least at the point when Lewis composed the poem, was still "the phoney war." What pervades Lewis' poetry is the anxiety that comes from waiting. True to form, at least the form established by the poets of the previous war, Lewis takes personally the anxiousness and its implied suffering and communicates those feelings in a blunt tone reminiscent of Owen. If Raiders' Dawn accomplished anything in the canon of Second World War verse, it asserted the presence of a "war poet", a persona whose experience could be identified with a specific name and face. The helplessness of the poet,

especially in the predicament of facing death, was summed up by Keyes when he made the statement that "Acceptance seems so spiritless, protest so vain. In between the two I live."²⁸

The soldier poets, especially Lewis, Keyes and Douglas, write with a death-wish shadowing their verse, perhaps a direct result of existing in a kind of emotional and spiritual "no-man's land" of a war they fully expected to die in, yet a war which took so long to work itself into the full fury that many expected. Such was the case of Sidney Keyes, the second in the trio of major British war poets of the Second World War who was, as Linda M. Shires notes in British Poetry of the Second World War, the required "sacrificial boy-poet" of the conflict.²⁹ Keyes, according to Sergeant in Poetry of the Forties was "killed in the Tunisian campaign in April 1943, just before his twenty-first birthday" and "has been described as the 'spokesman of his generation'."³⁰ Sergeant perceived that Keyes, rather than Douglas or Lewis, was the "spokesman" of his generation because his verse bordered not only opposing styles and reflected the tensions of such an opposition, but because he celebrated life while ominously wishing for the heroic death in combat that would justify his verse. Michael Meyer in his "Memoir" of Sidney Keyes stresses, however, that Keyes was not to be seen by readers as "a degenerate Romantic who wooed death."³¹ Meyer makes

such a point to delineate the fact that poets of the period did not seek death in the way that Julian Grenfell had sought glory through sacrifice during the First World War. The new poets felt anxiety about death as a natural part of their will to survive, a common theme in much of the poetry written during the Second World War.

Like Douglas, Keyes had begun his university education at Oxford before the start of the war and was a friend of John Heath-Stubbs, Michael Meyer, David Wright and many of the "officer poets" who emerged from Oxford at the outbreak of the hostilities. Sergeant's remark about Keyes as the "spokesman" of his generation may have been triggered by Meyer's comment that Keyes was the "spokesman of the conscript,"³² a poet by nature who found himself in the army rather than a soldier who found himself to be a poet under fire. Keyes, however, was a commissioned officer, a fact that separates him from the more proletarian concept of the war poet that Sergeant had in mind. Nonetheless, among the three war poets in question, Keyes was perhaps the most promising yet the most tragic, partly for the shortness of his life and partly because of the foreboding and elegiac tone of much of his verse. His output, in a volume collected by Michael Meyer, varied between the neo-classical tendencies of the Auden group and the neo-romantic leanings of his own generation. Michael Meyer, in his "Memoir" to Collected Poems of Sidney Keyes

(1945) stresses that Keyes was a "watershed poet"³³ the aesthetics of whose verse formed a middle ground between the classical traits and traditions he learned at Oxford, through Heath-Stubbs, and the newer, introspective and personal poetry that many poets adopted during the war years. His poem, "The Wilderness" captures this tension of the romantic pulling toward one pole and the classical poet pulling toward the other:

O speak no more of love and death
 And speak no word of sorrow
 My anger's eaten up my pride
 And both shall die tomorrow.³⁴

The ballad-like quality of this refrain is reminiscent of "Barbara Allan" the traditional folksong, as well as Auden's "As I Walked Out One Evening." What is more surprising, however, is the personal elegiac tone, especially in the last line of the verse, where the poet muses on his own death.

Keith Douglas, considered by many to be the foremost soldier poet of Britain during the Second World War, repeats the idea throughout his poetry that the death of his enemy is a shared death which the poet himself must witness and ultimately suffer. Like Donne's famous sermon, Douglas' "How to Kill" perceives the act of killing in an almost cold and mechanistic language while expressing the profound sentiment that the act of killing is shared by

both the killer and the victim:

Now in my dial of glass appears
 the soldier who is going to die.
 He smiles, and moves about in ways
 his mother knows, habits of his.
 The wires touch his face: I cry
 NOW. Death, like a familiar, hears

and look, has made a man of dust
 of a man of flesh. This sorcery
 I do. Being damned, I am amused
 to see the centre of love diffused
 and the waves of love travel into vacancy.
 How easy it is to make a ghost.³⁶

Like Lewis and Keyes, Douglas was fascinated by the theme
 of the killer as lover, and the lover as victim.

"Vergissmeinnicht" or "The Lover", perhaps Douglas' best
 known poem, continues the theme he had established in "How
 to Kill":

But she would weep to see today
 how on his skin the swart flies move;
 the dust upon the paper eye
 and the burst stomach like a cave.

For here the lover and the killer mingled
 who had one body and one heart.
 And death who had the soldier singled
 has done the lover mortal hurt.³⁶

Like Owen, who used half-rhymes to underscore the
 disjointed and jostling thrust of the poem's statement,
 Douglas was a poet who became a better poet for the
 experience of the war. Ted Hughes, as Sergeant notes in his
 Introduction to Poetry of the Forties, said that for
 Douglas "war was his ideal subject; the burning away of all

human pretensions in the ray cast by death."³⁷ The war freed Douglas of the theoretical and thematic constraints that exist in his earlier work while at Oxford. His language is the language of war, cold, swift, and of merciless reportage. Had he survived the Normandy campaign (he had seen heavy action during the North African war) his post-war poetry might have settled many of the questions of diction, clarity and style that Fraser claims were "the confused issues" in the years immediately following the war.

Douglas belonged to no single poetic school. His voice is that of the individual who confronts the question and the event at hand. Critics since the war have tried to group him with Lawrence Durrell and other members of "The Cairo Group" who found themselves collected in Egypt as a result of the fortunes of war. One of the most important links between the poets of the First World War and those of the Second may lie in the fact that Douglas, while at Oxford, had been a student of Edmund Blunden and the influence of Blunden, particularly on the soldier poet in Douglas, cannot be ignored.³⁸ What Blunden gave to Douglas was a sense that war poetry thrives on its own sense of urgency. What must be remembered about Douglas' career as a poet is that he was constantly rushed and he wrote most of his poetry under the impossible wartime circumstances that Robin Skelton mentions in his Introduction to the Penguin

anthology Poetry of the Forties.³⁹ As well, Douglas wrote under the threatening knowledge that death was not far off for him. His first collection of poems, in triumvirate with J.C. Hall and Norman Nicholson, and published by M.J. Tambimuttu (the ubiquitous entrepreneur of wartime verse in England and editor of Poetry London) appeared in 1941 and was to have been followed by the volume Bête Noire.⁴⁰ Douglas' friendship with J.C. Hall is of significance to any discussion of Howard Sergeant and his work because Hall was included in Sergeant's Mavericks anthology of 1957 (co-edited with Dannie Abse). Although such supposition is mere speculation, had Douglas lived, his role in the Fifties might have been that of a "Maverick" poet because of his independent voice, his association with Hall, and his clear but romantically informed language. Ted Hughes, who remained a neutral throughout the Maverick/Movement debate of the Fifties, was fascinated by Douglas' verse and edited a selection of his work for Faber and Faber in 1964. Douglas' role in later poetry cannot be overlooked. Although he may have been the best poet of the war, the delayed publication of his Collected Poems until 1951, as Ian Hamilton points out in his essay "The Forties," spared Douglas' reputation the damage that most poets of the period acquired simply by having written in a decade which later lost face among poets and critics.⁴¹

As almost a foreshadowing of the literary and

aesthetic "side-taking" of the Fifties (which shall be discussed at length in Chapter Three), Larkin, the most 'Movement' of The Movement poets (if one respects such delineations), adopted Sidney Keyes as an early model for his own verse (largely on the urging of Vernon Watkins, himself a 'war poet') because of Keyes' more formal diction and verse style. As Larkin said in his "Introduction" to The North Ship, Keyes "could talk to history as some people talk to porters, and the mention of names like Schiller and Rilke and Gilles de Retz made me wish I were reading something more demanding than English Language and Literature."⁴² Although the soldier poets, Douglas, Lewis and Keyes played minor roles on the home-front literary scene, their works reflect many of the concerns that would preoccupy post-war poetry. In this sense, they are the forebearers of many of the developments that would become key issues in the poetry of the late Forties and early Fifties.

The question, then, is one of how poets and poetry dealt aesthetically with the new circumstances and the new realities that confronted them. As the soldier poets demonstrate in their verse, the poets of the Second World War chose to build their poetry from an amalgamation of inward feeling as a reaction to outward stimuli, and chose to address themselves rather than the reader in both voice and image. In this shift in interplay between the poet and

the self rather than the poet and the reader, the struggle or essential conflict of much of the poetry took place in the unconscious. Through Freud, the poets of the Forties found in the unconscious a reservoir of images and perplexities that paralleled the outward horror and upheaval they sought to express and understand through their verse. As Ian Hamilton points out, however, "Freud's main discovery was that it is impossible to talk nonsense,"⁴³ and later critics interpreted the "psychological" or Freudian slant of the Forties poets as self-conscious gibberish which excused itself as subjective or "personal" expression.

In its earliest manifestation, this inward domain expressed itself in the poetry of Surrealism. Surrealism had gained a foothold in European poetry in the wake of the First World War when many artistic dissidents abandoned belief, not only in their societies and in traditional aesthetic principles, but in logic, rational intent and linear thought. As surrogates they took absurdity, irrationality and disintegration as their creeds and cornerstones. From the translations of French poets such as André Breton, Paul Éluard and Tristan Tzara, Surrealism filtered into English poetry very gradually. In English poetry, however, Surrealism met with a skeptical resistance and, although it played a major role as a source of objection on which later poetic doctrines unified their

objections, the principles and playfulness associated with the movement never took a commanding hold of the literary scene. Most English poets distrusted Surrealism's loose interplay of images, ideas and metaphors and excused it as, at best, a liberating poetic therapy, a means to an end for those who used it to access the recesses of their unconscious imaginations. In "What About Surrealism" in Auden and After (1942), Francis Scarfe writes:

I consider it only as a means to an end, and not as an end in itself. I still think it is possible, and perhaps a good thing, for a poet to write automatically for his own purposes, as a way of getting his mind to work freely and spontaneously. After that, however, the artist in him must do a certain amount of selecting and editing.⁴⁴

Scarfe's warning lies at the root of the general British perception of Surrealism. Geoffrey Thurley, however, in his essay "David Gascoyne: Phenomena of Zero" in The Ironic Harvest, takes an opposing view of Surrealism. For Thurley, from a critic's point of view rather than a poet's, Surrealism was not meant as an access route to the unconscious:

Surrealism does not of course have any magic formulae or any privileged access to the unconscious. The man who believes he has the unconscious on tap understands neither psychoanalysis nor his own mental processes. But to choose Surrealism as a mode is to reject certain patterns of thought and the imaginary collateral to them, and to reject also certain strict entailments of mental activity regarding suitability, order and logic.⁴⁵

Rather than acting as a free-flow or undisciplined mode of expression, Thurley argues, Surrealism was a new discipline which replaced the worn dogmas of romanticism and classicism. In terms of Eliot's dictum, that poetry was inseparable from belief, Thurley suggests that Surrealism was in itself a new belief which celebrated freedom within the substructure of absurdity rather than freedom within the substructure of form, and therefore carried with its practice a political as well as an aesthetic connotation:

Surrealism, despite its whimsical by-products, was essentially a moralistic idiom, a product of a world-situation of plethora and horror... and the body of...indignation is carried not in social comment, but in the Surrealist attempt to create purity in form out of ordure.⁴⁶

But moralistic or not, Surrealism's scope defied definition and therefore became loosely identified with dreams and the suppression of the dreamer's ego in favour of the dream images themselves. Broad and unwieldy in its terms, Surrealism carries an ominously large scope of interpretation that has been misinterpreted, perhaps, more frequently than any other aesthetic dogma of the twentieth century. As a case in point, Howard Sergeant's poem "Man Meeting Himself" from the sequence "For Children Everywhere" was included in the Penguin anthology Surrealist Poetry in English edited by Edward B. Germain.⁴⁷

The poem, when taken in sequence, is about a man finding his lost innocence in the guise of his own children. Taken out of sequence, in the process of selecting the poem from a magazine appearance rather than from Sergeant's The Headlands, Germain misread the poem as a Surrealist piece, and included it in the anthology. Sergeant stated on numerous occasions that he never was nor had any intention of becoming a practicing Surrealist. When asked why he did not protest the poem's inclusion, Sergeant replied that the editor offered him a reasonable sum of money for its use and, therefore, he found the request hard to refuse. Sergeant insisted that he had written the poem out of a free association of ideas but that he was at all times in logical and complete control of the poem's language, images and directions.

Although Germain's Surrealist Poetry in English contains the work of numerous British poets of the Thirties and Forties, including George Barker, Francis Scarfe, Henry Treece, Dylan Thomas and John Bayliss, the most representative practitioner of Surrealist poetry in England during the late Thirties was David Gascoyne. From his precocious first publication, Roman Balcony, when he was sixteen, Gascoyne's career followed the rise and the fall of Surrealism in England.⁴⁸ At the height of interest in Surrealism in Britain, Gascoyne, along with Dylan Thomas (who never completely professed to belong to any single

movement yet played an influential role in many groups) embraced Surrealism not only for the freedom it allowed their thoughts and language but for the properties which Surrealism presented as a foothold for disbelief. Dissidence, not only in form but in content, logic and perception, is the cornerstone of Surrealism. Gascoyne, who had been a Communist during the Thirties, felt that the verse of the Auden generation, for all its political intent and discontent, had not afforded the avenues to freedom that poetry required for its survival. Surrealism, on the other hand, was embraced because it offered the young and the astute poets of the late Thirties the opportunity to participate in what Thurley terms "the first real international style since Symbolism."⁴⁹

The Symbolists may have been the primary link between Gascoyne and Surrealism. His interest in French literature and his capabilities as a translator gave Gascoyne his first introduction to the new movement. As Robin Skelton points out in his "Introduction" to Gascoyne's Collected Poems (1965), Gascoyne prefaced his first collection of poems, Roman Balcony, with a translation of Paul Éluard's poem "Critique of Poetry:"⁵⁰

Of course I hate the reign of the bourgeois
 The reign of cops and priests
 But I hate still more the man who does not
 hate it
 As I do
 With all his might

I spit in the face of that despicable man
 Who does not of all my poems prefer this
Critique of Poetry⁵¹

What may have doomed Surrealism in England was the fact that the movement followed on the heels of a politically charged group of poetic "elder brothers" who infused verse in their country with the social necessity not only to warn (to use Wilfred Owen's phrase) but to teach and inform the masses. Although Gascoyne and others may have seen Surrealism as an antidote to the political poetry of their Pylon predecessors, the very act of using the movement in such a counter-attacking manner undid Surrealism's apolitical stance by thrusting it onto the literary scene as a weapon in the politicized struggle of aesthetics and counter-aesthetics, a struggle which seems the natural law of British poetry in the twentieth century. Gascoyne's role in British poetry and indeed his role in Surrealism as a force in English poetry was summed up by Francis Scarfe in Auden and After:

David Gascoyne is, I think, the only English writer who integrally accepted Surrealism and abandoned himself to its tender mercies... The greatest objection that can be raised against his Surrealist poems is that they sometimes appear forced -- as though they were concocted rather than spontaneously written....⁵²

Scarfe's appraisal of Gascoyne's Surrealism is the response of a contemporary and in these remarks lies the ironic sense of distrust that many poets of the Forties and late

Thirties felt for Surrealism. On one hand, they appreciated the idea that Surrealism offered personal freedom of expression, especially of the psychological kind, yet at the same time, they doubted the significance of verse which on the surface appeared uncontrolled, regardless of the internal "disciplines" the poet may have practiced.

Many poets, Sergeant included, felt that Surrealism could not bring to the language the dignity of personal statement that the new poets demanded. These new poets wanted the freedom to speak as individuals. Surrealism, however, stressed the negation of the individual personality in favour of free association. On this issue, most poets of the Forties were willing to part company with Surrealism as they realized that the times demanded an identification of the individual, not the mass or the unconscious, as the key note of the poetry they felt impelled to write. The American poet and critic Robert Bly's off-hand but apt remark in "Surrealism, Rilke, and Listening" (in Leaping Poetry), although directed at the reservations of his own countrymen, offers something of a reasonable explanation for the failure of English Surrealist poetry:

The reason we have Surrealism in this century is because we are really interested in this century in how the brain works. The reason surrealism is weak in the United States is because North Americans are obsessed with unity and identity.⁵³

The English poets and readers of the time may not have been as obsessed with identity as they were with unity, the unity of object and sense. What may have led to the rise of Surrealism in England may also have contributed to its downfall, if Bly's comment is any indicator. By the late Thirties, and especially in the early Forties, young poets such as G.S. Fraser, Henry Treece and even Howard Sergeant, wrote out of an increasing sense of curiosity and interest in psychology. They believed that the mind had its own definite system of logic, and its own interpretive mechanisms that explained the individual's personality. This fascination with the workings of the brain, however, was set against the backdrop of uncontrollable historical events that enforced a pessimism, or at least a profound desire for connection between people, ideas, images and things, over the development of their poetry. The obsession with "unity and identity", to use Bly's phrase, seemed more important in 1939 than the need for disconnection, and most poets at the outbreak of the war would have declared that they were willing to risk their lives to maintain "unity and identity" not only in their society but in the poetry that influenced and reflected their society.

The one movement or aesthetic which offered the young poets of 1939 a chance to achieve personal freedom through the revelation of the unconscious while simultaneously striving for social unity and personal

identity was Apocalypticism, or the poetry of the New Apocalypse. In British Poetry of the Second World War, Linda M. Shires argues that later generations, chiefly the Movement poets of the Fifties who became detractors of the Forties' verse, erroneously targeted the Apocalyptic movement as the principal force on the poetry scene because it represented the extreme opposite to their own ideals.

Shires notes:

The Movement and others not associated with it directly distorted the previous decade when they chose the Apocalyptics (a group headed by Henry Treece and J.F. Hendry) and Dylan Thomas to typify the poetry of the period. The romantic Apocalyptics with their cannon and firework display of images and inferior quality of even their best work stood out as a prime target.⁵⁴

Apocalypticism, per se, became a target of later poets because the poets involved in the neo-romantic movement and the poetry typified by Apocalyptic ideas, adopted the stance of bardic voices. The "firework images," of which Shires speaks, together with their preoccupation with cadence over meter, made the Apocalyptics prime targets for the rising tide of poetic conservatism that sprang to life in England after the Second World War. In terms of G.S. Fraser's theory of the progress of twentieth-century British poetry through a kind of historical reference to previous poetry, especially nineteenth-century verse, Apocalypticism draws on the most mysterious qualities of

fin de siècle poets such as W.B. Yeats, and distorts and reduces their revival of ancient national mythologies into personal cribs of image and event. Larkin, for instance, condemns the Forties poets and the Apocalyptics, for their attraction to Yeats' work. In his introduction to The North Ship Larkin points a back-handed accusing finger at Watkins who introduced him to the work of Yeats:

As a result I spent the next three years trying to write like Yeats, not because I liked his personality or understood his ideas, but out of infatuation with his music (to use the word I think Vernon used). In fairness to myself it must be admitted that it is a particularly potent music, pervasive as garlic, and has ruined many a better talent. Others found it boring.⁵⁵

What lies at the heart of Larkin's protest is the fact that the bardic aura was all-pervasive, contagious and ubiquitous in Forties verse chiefly because of the high profile and attractiveness of the Apocalyptics and their verse during the war years. In retrospect, the attraction has faded, a fact attributable to the rebuttals the Apocalyptics suffered at the hands of later critics and poets.

In Poetry of the Forties, Sergeant acknowledges the unsympathetic treatment given the New Apocalypse, not only because as a poet Sergeant made personal claims to be a member of their ranks, but because the Apocalyptics stand as possibly the most over-theorized and most misinterpreted

group of poets in the history of English literature.

Sergeant declared:

Probably more nonsense has been written about the poetry of the 1940's than any other period in literary history. So much is the case that before the period can be seen in anything like its right perspective and discussed in meaningful terms, it becomes necessary to expose the biased and inaccurate version of the forties put forward by the predominant group of poets in the following decade... .56

In the Freudian sense (adopted and adapted by Harold Bloom in his theory of "the anxiety of influence"), the best way a new or distinct gathering of poets can establish itself is through a thorough and damning renunciation of their immediate precursors. Dylan Thomas, for example, a poet often associated with the bardic poets of the Apocalypse such as Treece (who, although from the Midlands, was believed by many to have been a Welshman -- a myth that Treece himself promoted to support his claims to the bardic voice), suffered critically at the hands of Movement critic John Wain in Preliminary Essays (1957):

I think, then, that he is a fine, bold, original and strong poet whose work is marred by two great drawbacks. First, a disastrously limited subject matter. There are really only three subjects treated: (i) childhood, and the associated topic of what it is like to remember one's childhood; (ii) viscera; (iii) religion... This leads on to the second great flaw which keeps Thomas's poetry at a remove from greatness: the suspicion (which has, goodness knows, been voiced often enough) that his writing, in the more 'difficult' poems, is quasi-

automatic....Meanwhile we want a little less gas about Thomas, and some criticism that really talks turkey and gets down to particular instances.⁵⁷

According to Sergeant, Wain's diatribe against Thomas was to be expected, a natural part of the literary cycle which witnesses the rise and fall of literary generations. In a 1983 interview, Sergeant remarked:

New poets often form groups of one kind or another as a means of securing an audience and in order to establish their claims to a hearing or to emphasize certain aspects of poetry which they feel may have been overlooked. They invariably call attention to themselves. They denounce the ideas and styles of the preceding generation of poets. Anyway, it is all part of the established procedure for capturing the limelight. During the last fifty years, English poetry has been extraordinarily susceptible to such literary manoeuvres... .⁵⁸

The Apocalyptics were not without their favoured "straw-men" to set up and knock down for their own advancement. They turned, with a great deal of fervour, on their immediate predecessors, the Surrealists. Their attack on the Surrealists, however, was not completely destructive -- many in their own ranks such as Thomas had links with the Surrealists -- and they borrowed many aspects of Surrealist verse for their own purpose: the reliance on the unconscious as a well-spring of images; a trust of the personal or dream-world over the outward or "real" world; and the assertion of individual identity (partially a misinterpretation of pure Surrealism) as the central aspect

of a poet's work. The distance between Surrealism and Apocalypticism, in fact, may not have been as great as retrospection implies. Sergeant, in the 1983 interview, jokingly suggested that "some of us went too far and became Surrealists."⁵⁹ Edward B. Germain's Introduction to Surrealist Poetry in English, while acknowledging the fact that the Apocalyptics reacted strongly against the Surrealists, flirts with the notion that the Apocalyptics were degenerating Surrealists rather than a direct poetic response in opposition to non-rational verse.⁶⁰

The principal objection to Surrealism among the Apocalyptics came from J.F. Hendry who declared:

Artists more responsible than Surrealists find that art is not merely the juxtaposing of images not commonly juxtaposed, but the recognition, the communication of organic experience, experience with personal shape, experience which (however wild and startling in content) is a formal whole.⁶¹

One of the principal criticisms that the Apocalyptic movement levelled against the Surrealists was that they were irresponsible, not only in their "wild and startling content" but in their attitude to their readers. Random association, as they saw it, implied no poet's presence behind a poem. The key word in Hendry's comment is the word "personal." For poets such as Hendry, responsibility rested on the shoulders of every individual, and each individual, whether poet or reader, had a responsible role to play as

an individual in the building of a new and more human society at the end of the hostilities. The Apocalypticists argued that, although Surrealism had been founded on the essentially acceptable grounds of personal freedom of association and the liberating effects such a practice would have on the individual, the movement had drifted into a dangerous interplay between self-indulgence and aesthetic irresponsibility where the artist had no one to answer to but himself. As Scarfe notes, the original perception of Surrealism had been liberating:

So, paradoxically, Dadaism and Surrealism, which appear completely anti-intellectual, completely insane, were methods of preserving sanity, and even certain intellectual values, by affording an easy release into a world of make-believe. And something similar will happen after this war unless some sort of rational modus operandi can be achieved to make Europe worth living in.⁶²

What lies couched in Scarfe's warning against Surrealism (in the true form of a poet such as Wilfred Owen) is the sense that non-rational poetry will not lead to belief but make-believe. Eliot's dictum, although not in a conscious sense, underscores Scarfe's comments. Make-believe, the world of the pretend, the practice of turning from outward reality toward inward reality, suggests Surrealism's playfulness and its potential danger in trivialising belief, faith and doctrine.

The Apocalypticists were pragmatists at heart who thought that poetry could play a central role in reshaping the society of the post-war years. Their goal was to confront reality through their own set of personal beliefs rather than retreat from reality into the disconnections of irrationalism. The "easy release" into fantasy was distrusted not only for its inability to communicate thoughts, ideas, and dreams from one mind to another, but because such free association, if given too large a hand in either poetry or society, could become an enforced code of absurdity governing both political and imaginative aspirations. Scarfe's comments suggest that by 1939, when Apocalypticism began to gather momentum, Surrealism had become a programmed response to the mechanistic philosophies such as Vorticism or "Pylonism" to the point where it was in danger of itself becoming a mechanistic program for irrationality, a de-rationalization of the arts.

So intense was the fear that Surrealism was becoming mechanistic that Scarfe commented in "The Apocalypse:"

Apocalypse is, then, a demechanizing, or a dematerializing, of Surrealism. Above all, the individual is to be liberated from that purely clinical interest in the workings of the mind which the Surrealists were almost promoting into a new religion. The Apocalyptic writers intend to use this very deliberately and not be slaves to it, and according to Hendry, they will exact the choice and control of the artist.⁶³

"Control" is the key word here. The Apocalyptic, rightly or wrongly, chose to walk the line between controlled poetry and the freer, more playful verse of the Surrealists. To the Apocalyptic, such control was a means of preserving an intellectual basis for their poetry, sanity, and individual creativity, so that poetry could function as both an aesthetic response to reality and a political response to historical events. In this sense, the Apocalyptic were "conservative" in their values. Their stance was that of artistic compromise which challenged the known quantities of society and politics, whereas Surrealism had sought to challenge the unknown by nihilistically denying society and its political structures. Scarfe quotes G.S. Fraser, prominent Apocalyptic, who struck this compromise between control and free association: "Apocalypse is, as it were, a 'dialectical development of Surrealism, embodying all that is positive in Surrealism.'"⁶⁴ The break between Apocalypticism and Surrealism is, therefore, not a clean one. The later movement fed off its predecessor, drew many of its more functional ideas to itself, and set up the irrationalities of the continental aesthetic to knock down as irrelevant principles of "straw men."

"Apocalypticism," which drew its name from the Apocalypse in the Book of Revelations, was meant to imply a new way of seeing, in both the sense of 'bearing witness'

(an extension of Owen's dictum of warning) and of learning from the events witnessed and applying the lessons of poetry to the needs of society. In their Introduction to the first major announcement of Apocalypticism, the anthology The New Apocalypse (1939), edited by J.F. Hendry and Henry Treece, the organic stance of Apocalyptic writing was declared:

Apocalyptic writing is therefore concerned with the study of living, the collapse of social forms and the emergence of new and more organic ones. Hence, it occurs where expression breaks through the structure of language to become more organic, without thereby impairing language as a means of communication....⁶⁵

The pragmatic aspect of Apocalypticism is evident in such a statement. The movement had to concern itself with living and with the problems confronted by the individual in a time of crisis. Unlike the Surrealists, the Apocalypstics felt that their view of the world, a view drawn from both poetry and psychology, could change the social structure. In political terms, they borrowed the need to alter society from the Pylon poets of the Thirties. Unlike the Pylon poets, however, the Apocalypstics were more or less politically naïve in their assumption that society would settle for an "organic" solution to its woes rather than a dogmatic or purely economic answer. The social urgency and political outlook of the Auden generation could not establish itself in Surrealism (especially in the English

Surrealism of poets such as Gascoyne who were Communists for only a brief period); the desire by the Apocalypticists to maintain a political stance represents a compromise between Surrealism's "organic" or self-referential perspective and the mass movement beliefs of Auden and Spender at their most political point. The very nature of compromise built into the Apocalyptic viewpoint may have been a prime reason for the uneasiness felt by many readers toward the movement. The Apocalypticists' zone of poetics was not demarcated by the political ends they asserted largely because they relied on no single existing doctrine. Theirs was the argument of compromise and synthesis, the strange amalgam that symbolizes so much of multiplicity of thought that characterizes the Forties. What must be remembered is that the Forties was an era of ideological confrontation, not only between nations but between individuals, and strange bedfellows resulted in the effort to oppose Fascism, which was itself equally murky in definition. The debate of the day was "what are we fighting for?" and the answer concerned all parties.

The Apocalypticists addressed their poetry to their "concern with the study of living" in an effort to engage poetry with more than a mere observation of life. One of the leading powers in the movement, G.S. Fraser, was a disenchanted left-wing theorist of both literature and politics, and his presence in the group added a politically

pragmatic dimension to the otherwise obtuse and abstract aesthetics of the poets in the movement. At a meeting in a "garret in Leeds" (as Treece would later term the first gathering) Fraser, Hendry and Treece formulated the first Apocalyptic manifesto:

(1) that man was in need of greater freedom, economic no less aesthetic, from machines and mechanistic thinking.

(2) that no existent political system, Left or right; no artistic ideology, Surrealism or the political school of Auden, was able to provide this freedom.

(3) that the machine Age had exerted too strong an influence on art, and had prevented the individual development of man.

(4) that myth, as a personal means of reintegrating the personality, had been neglected and despised.⁶⁶

For the younger poets of 1938, Apocalypticism seemed the answer to both Fascism and Communism. The new movement was a neo-romantic philosophy of virtues based partly on a need for tradition and partly on a need to dispel the less attractive elements inherited from the past: a contradiction in terms. Point by point, Apocalypticism was seeking a balanced outlook, a calm in the storms of debate carried over from the Thirties, a perspective that paid homage to recent aesthetic developments and traditional values by way of Jungian psychology, Bullfinch's Mythology, nineteenth-century Hobhousian Liberalism, Wesleyan Methodism, and counter-Marxist, anti-mechanistic thinking that predated the modern era in the thinking of General

Ludd. They placed their ideas firmly upon the shoulders of the individual and sought to place the individual in the romantic perception of Neo-Rousseauian harmony with nature which they acquired from Wordsworth. This amalgam of possibilities created problems not the least of which was how such ideas could be translated into publicly acceptable and lucid writing. Ideas do not equal poetic style and, in the case of the Apocalyptics, often paint poets into stylistic corners from which they cannot emerge. That, in fact, was the major criticism eventually levelled against the movement by their successors of the Fifties.

In "The Apocalypse", Scarfe was aware of the problematic process of translating the best of intentions into an acceptable poetry:

...we are in great need of a revolution against the arbitrary academic tradition of poetic form, which has little conception of the nature of poetry and replaces such a conception by the counting of stresses and syllables and a stuffy nature of decorum.⁶⁷

To solve the problem of "greater freedom", at least in the poetic sense, the Apocalyptics (including such later members of the movement as Sergeant) preferred to let the poem take its own form, a measure which underlined the desire to return to the "organic". Much of the poetry written by members of the Apocalyptic group is free verse which turns on phrase and cadence rather than the line. The

lines are measured out according to their linguistic strength rather than their apparent metrical achievements, and the power created by the best poems from the movement relies heavily on often violent juxtaposings of sounds, adjectives and images. The Apocalyptics believed that the freedom of the voice was the primary concern of their poetry -- a concern for which they were attacked by their successors who accused them of lacking in both content and traditional literary technique. The voice, however, was the hallmark of the individual in the Apocalyptic way of thinking. Technique, they argued, could be learned and was ultimately artificial. Voice could not be invented and was the organic factor in the often less than organic process of poetic composition.

In his study, Poets of the Apocalypse, A.E. Salmon quotes Alex Comfort (a friend of Sergeant and a fellow poet) on the matter of the Apocalyptic's problem with language:

Apocalypse was a planned attempt to inject more eloquence and a more archimagical touch into the poetry which had become a bit dry in the hands of our immediate predecessors -- rather as one injects butter into a basting turkey. It leaned heavily on what was in effect Bardic diction (of that we didn't learn more from Yeats) and some of its purpler rhetoric reads very much like a translation from Welsh set Bardic odes.⁶⁸

The bardic tendencies which the Apocalyptics sought to incorporate in their verse sprang largely from their

interest in myth and from the mythical role of the poet as "sayer" that was practiced by Yeats in much of his early poetry. G.S. Fraser's theory, associating various groups of twentieth-century poets with parallel historical trends and movements, suggests that the Apocalyptics were at least on target chronologically in their desire to mimic the Celtic twilight of the eighteen nineties. The problem with "archimagical language" at any point in literature is that it puts mystery ahead of lucidity and the Apocalyptics, especially in retrospect, now seem far more mysterious than lucid. In effect, their desire to honour myth in their poetry compromised their dedication to communicate, which, in turn, undercut the strength of much of their verse.

The question of language and the question of style also troubled the Apocalyptic poets at the core of the movement. In their introduction to the first Apocalyptic anthology, The New Apocalypse (1939), Hendry and Treece admitted the difficulty of their situation with regard to style:

The technical problem of how to write organically is today almost one with the human problem of how to act organically, if we accept action as the social expression and fulfillment of a whole personality. This is true, or is becoming true, not because thinking is action, but because both are aspects of living -- which is the central problem.⁶⁹

The possible interpretations of "organic writing" are numerous, a fact made evident by the plethora of styles used by the Apocalypticists. Song, as a form which applied to both the organic aspects of their thinking and the need to present a "bardic" stance, appealed to poets such as Treece who practiced the "bardic song" poem almost to the point of excess. In the realms of language and poetic style, the Apocalypticists made no major contribution to the art of poetry in the English language and their derivativeness, especially in reference to the Romantics and the fin de siècle bards of the Celtic twilight, sullies their reputation and makes a defence of the movement difficult.

One defensible aspect of the Apocalyptic movement, however, was their insistence upon the individual as the key unit of society and upon the individual's personal freedom as the cornerstone for all artistic, social and political endeavours. To this end, they stressed the importance of mythology, both the collective kind and the personal. Mythology, as such, was the hallmark of both the individual and the society. Myth, they claimed, lay at the root of belief and translated belief into metaphor where ideas, images and feelings could easily be adapted for poetry. The very nature of myth as an interpreted story allowed the individual a certain amount of freedom within the context of a given archetype and in this sense myth served the poet as a mechanism by which he could identify

his personal outlook with that of the mass (again, a compromise between the mass-oriented and mechanistic Pylonism and the private, often solipsistic notions of Surrealism). The poet, as interpreter of myth, was more or less a member of an "elect" who by virtue of his role in society assumed the right to speak for society and express not only personal dreams but collective ambitions.

The Apocalyptic manifesto, or the Leeds document of 1938, stated that myth was a "personal means of reintegrating the personality" in pursuit of the "organic whole" for the man who would inherit the earth. Scarfe was quick to recognize the Apocalyptic view which stressed that man and his beliefs are inseparable and that life itself is a matter of belief:

there is a great insistence on myth, man as myth, which is one of the most original ideas of this school: Hendry speaks of "the symbolic or prophetic myth (which) consists in the projection of the self which it actually involves in everyday life."⁷⁰

The Apocalypitics may not have been as "original" as Scarfe suggests -- they were, after all, following Eliot's dictum of belief, a pronouncement that pervaded the age rather than simply the movement. One of the essential phrases in Scarfe's statement, however, is "man as myth." The Apocalypitics, at least in their philosophy, believed that the great stories, miracles and legends were as much products of human activity as the invention of the wheel.

They believed that man was not only capable of living within myth in his day-to-day activities, but that he was actively engaged in making myth, adding to it, and participating in it (notwithstanding the literary references to the Battle of Maldon in Scarfe's "Observations on Poetry and War"). History was omnipresent. The present, in this light, was perceived as heroic (a factor partially attributable to Winston Churchill's fine war rhetoric), and the defeat of Nazism was not only the defence of man as an organic individual but a major step toward the building of a new democratic society, where the ascendancy of the individual would be carried through on the strength of compassion, feeling and caring. Like the poets of the First World War, the Apocalypticists of the Second World War believed that poetry could be a vehicle for raising the consciousness of a society engaged in a barbaric struggle.

What separates the Apocalyptic perspective on the Second World War from the trench poet perspective on the First World War is that, for the Apocalypticists, the philosophy predated and even anticipated war rather than emerging as a result of the conflict. Apocalyptic poetry was, therefore, a poetry of anticipation rather than a poetry of consequence or protest, a verse which sought to fill a need in society before society, especially the society familiar to Cecil Day Lewis, announced its desires.

By 1942, the Apocalypticists must have experienced a surge of self-congratulation: they had prophesied and their predictions had come true. Their detractors, on the other hand, claimed that they created the need for their ideas out of a very carefully planned media campaign which promoted Apocalyptic ideas through a huge amount of published work in poetry magazines and anthologies.

In their New Apocalypse introduction, Treece and Hendry were aware that they were implying an awkwardness in terms of poetics:

The writers in this book have in common the fact that they alone are seeking and finding the optimum living synthesis of man and exterior world; the fusion of man and object in philosophy through the collapse of totalitarianism and "state" as a superhuman concept; fusion of man and art, by bringing art to actual life.⁷¹

The "fusion of man and art, by bringing art to actual life" implied that art should be homo-centric and should concern itself, not with machinery or illogical associations, but with simple compassionate concerns such as love, death, and childhood. John Wain's comments in Preliminary Essays upon Dylan Thomas' poetry are more an attack on Apocalyptic verse than on Thomas' poetry. The Apocalypticists, in fact, attempted to woo Thomas to their ranks but with no success. Wain, among others, was upset by the movement's sense of "seeking and finding" through poetry, an aspect of the Apocalyptic philosophy which connotes its experimental

nature. Treece drew the movement not only into the bardic tradition but into the experimental vein of English poetry by following the precedent set by figures such as William Blake who saw the "post-scientific" as a reasonable "fusion of man and object in philosophy" and "the living synthesis of man and exterior world" to determine and identify the scope of the individual. In "How I See Apocalypse," Treece wrote:

Apocalypse is the most militant movement seen in Britain for the last hundred years, evening in the ordinary connotation of the word, since all but one member of the group are serving or waiting to serve in the Armed Forces; also the Apocalyptic tradition is British and not French, since it has roots in Blake, in Webster, even in Revelations. Though it is wrong to speak in terms of nationality, since it begins with man's first knowledge of his man-ness; it starts with the first itch of the hand, the fever in the head. It is the beginning of awareness and the answer to despair.⁷²

Aside from the fact that, in this instance, Treece claimed English nationality for St. John of Patmos, the association of the movement not only with the upheaval of the times but with potential revolution and utter change was merely wishful thinking on the part of its members. The militancy of Apocalypticism was not a standard under which the early members rallied. Later Apocalyptics, Sergeant included, made overtures in that direction that amounted to nothing more than open discussion for social change.

In 1943, Treece began to alter his view of the name

and purpose of the new wartime poetry. The importance of the individual, not only as a unit in society but as the central cause in the fight at hand, identified itself in his writings. If all individuals in society were required to do their utmost for the war effort, Treece realised, that what was required from poetry was an identification of the importance of the individual, his depth of mind and his power to create in the face of destruction. Treece broke with many of the more destructive-minded, catastrophe-driven poets of his generation and declared a new phase in the literary cycle, the Personalists. In the total picture of British poetry of the Second World War, the Personalists individualized Apocalypticism, toned down its anxieties, humanized the concerns of previous groups and made the poem an instrument of subjectivity, personal psychology and intimately focussed detail.

In British Poetry of the Second World War, Linda M. Shires describes the gradual disintegration of the Apocalyptic movement that occurred by 1943:

Treece already spoke of his Apocalypstics disbanding in Transformation (1943), an anthology edited with Stefan Schimanski. Yet there he and Schimanski also proposed a new group, Personalism. Sounding remarkably like the New Apocalypse, Personalism, they explained, was different. 'Its survey of personality is wider reaching, broader rather than deeper.'⁷³

The Transformation anthology signalled the main break of the Personalists from the Apocalypticists. Treece and Schimanski, in their essay in Transformation Four, "Towards a Personalist Literature," hailed the romanticism of Herbert Read outlined in Politics of the Unpolitical:

...romanticism admits that the working instrument, the artist, is a sensitive or subjective element and it suggests his view of the world is necessarily affected by his emotional reaction to what he sees.⁷⁴

What emerges from beneath all the rubble of wartime theorizing is not so much a definition of what a poet must do in time of war, but an elemental statement of the role of the poet in his society and, correlatively, the role of the reader. The Personalist poet was purely subjective in his utterance: each voice was presumed to be unique and peculiar and, therefore, had to be considered separate from the dictum of the mass. The reader, in turn, had to accept, if not look for and demand, that the poet speak as an individual rather than as the voice of a group or a movement. This is a key point to remember in light of Howard Sergeant's activities as an editor of Outposts and as a participant in the various groups and movements in post-war British poetry, for it is the Personalist aesthetic to which Sergeant subscribed when he began his magazine, and the essential philosophy in which he rooted his magazine for the next forty-two years. At exactly this

point in the poetry of the Second World War, Sergeant, who was then a young Air Ministry accountant from Hull with one magazine appearance to his credit, wrote to Henry Treece and expressed a willingness to be part of the new Personalist movement.

In a 1983 conversation, Sergeant discussed his view of where he stood, as a poet, in July 1944 when he sent Treece a copy of his poem, "Though They Speak With the Tongues of Men and Angels," which Treece rejected for Transformation. Sergeant recalled:

I think, in a sense, that we were all Personalists in the sense that we believed in a society with a set of values: we wanted to do something in literature and we were romantics and were interested in Jung and Freud. We were interested in images from the subconscious. It would be difficult to pinpoint what a personalist was because it covers such a wide variety of individuals and thoughts and actions.⁷⁵

For Treece, at least, Personalism was not a style as much as it was a direction. The craft of the poem itself was secondary to the implications of what the poem tried to achieve as a vehicle for individual expression. At the core of Treece's Personalist aesthetic was the perception that the poet, as an artist, was an "instrument" for reaching the universal truth contained in the subconscious. Poetry, therefore, could unlock the subconscious and reveal the hidden mysteries not only of individual personality but of the world as man perceived it. In "Towards a Personalist

Literature," Treece and Schimanski struggled to convey the balance that Personalism was trying to strike:

...phenomena present themselves to that sensitive recording instrument, the writer, in such a way that the absolute truth is not immediately apparent to him, yet with an aura of urgency and magnitude, such that he is convinced of an underlying though hidden validity in what he sees. It is then his function, I believe, to use his individual perception and personality in order to erect a law from the chaos of his impressions; that is, his own personality must give form and life where none had existed before....76

As a break from the remaining tendencies of Surrealism that found refuge in the Apocalyptic aesthetic, the Personalists declared that the artist was 'responsible' for his work of art because he alone was the sole instrument of control within the work of art itself. The poem, therefore, was an expression of the individual and his personality because personality alone became the seat of aesthetic judgement and the governing force behind both the inspiration, the observation and the composition that went into a piece of writing. Sergeant saw this as the justification he needed to claim his place among the more educated members of the poetic community. Personality, rather than class background, education or even rank in the armed forces, was the sole criterion against which a poem could be measured.

Although Treece rejected Sergeant as too young and too inexperienced to participate in the Personalist movement, the ideas expressed in Transformation stayed with

Sergeant all his life, as both an editor and a poet, and became (by way of his own personality) his credo. In 1983 when asked what particular function he felt poetry had, Sergeant replied:

I happen to believe in poetry as such, quite apart from its value as literature. When I am with a group of school children, running one of my workshops, I will say to them "look, it is worthwhile writing a poem quite apart from the fact that you get it published, it is worth it because you have learned something out of yourselves, you have learned something about other people, you have learned something about your society in which you operate." In that sense, it is therapeutic...The writing of poetry does help the individual express himself or herself. Therapeutically it is good. In the developmental sense, it helps you to understand yourself. It helps you to order your experience. It helps you to understand yourself more and it helps you to develop as a personality.⁷⁷

From the Personalists, Sergeant gleaned the idea that poetry admits the poet to the inner sanctum of his unconscious, an issue in the Personalist doctrine that remains contentious. The Personalists opposed poetry as therapy or as a means of accessing the subconscious. These ideas, they argued, were too close to the Surrealist vein. Sergeant, however, adopted the prospect and this stance is what may have led Germain to mistake Sergeant's poems for Surrealist works in Surrealist Poetry in English.

During the summer of 1943, Sergeant's work was rejected by almost every existing poetry magazine in Britain, including Treece's Transformation. In despair, and

partly out of the hope that some sort of publishing activity of his own would bring him the recognition he craved as well as contact with other poets, Sergeant wrote to another young poet, the Ulsterman Robert Greacen, who was editing Ulster Voices and who had also rejected Sergeant's work. Sergeant noted in his diary on Tuesday, September 29, 1943:

As Ulster Voices is issued quarterly, there isn't much hope. Greacen approves of my suggestion that I might inaugurate a broadsheet myself, and gives a few details. This started a train of thought -- should I undertake the production of a broadsheet. Perhaps Douglas Gibson would help? What printers should I tackle? Whom should I approach for publication? For criticism? Obviously it isn't worthwhile unless it will pay for itself. Still, it is a very attractive thought and might bring one into touch with other writers.⁷⁸

With this set of questions in mind, Sergeant began what would become the longest continuous editorship of a literary magazine in the English language. Sergeant saw the publication as a forum for the new writer, the younger poet like himself, who felt that he had something to say and yet had been excluded from the mainstream publications by virtue of age or individuality. In an advertisement pamphlet to announce the birth of the publication which he had decided to call Outposts, Sergeant declared:

Outposts has been established to cater for the increasing demand for poetry during these days of wartime restriction, and to provide a convenient platform for the younger writers.

We are concerned not only with the publication of outstanding poetry at a reasonable price, but also in assembling those poets, recognized and unrecognized, who by reason of the particular outposts they occupy, are able to visualize the dangers and opportunities which confront the individual and the whole of humanity, now and after the war.⁷⁹

The name was meant to imply that in wartime even the individual was a defensible position and that individualism, not simply nationality or politics, was the real issue of war. In Sergeant's eyes, the answer to the question "what do we believe in" was the single voice. The magazine was to be a public forum for individuals, but rather than give the publication an abstract name such as Transformation or a generic name such as New Writing or New Poems by Individuals, he chose to name it after those it would serve -- the poets. The low price, a factor which the magazine maintained throughout Sergeant's forty-two year editorship, was to be low so as to offer poetry to the widest possible audience, regardless of class. Sergeant saw poetry as an instrument in breaking down the barriers between the classes, and an affordable magazine, he maintained, was the best vehicle for free expression. Nor were there to be barriers as to which poets would appear in the publication -- submission and publication would be open to all, regardless of background, political or aesthetic stance, or even verse form. In this sense, Outposts came to represent a fairly catholic cross-section of British verse

for more than forty years. Both recognized and unrecognized poets appeared in its pages. As is the case with most literary magazines, however, the unrecognized poet predominates throughout the pages of Outposts.

On July 29, 1944, shortly before the appearance of the first issue, Sergeant wrote to the prominent poet and playwright, Herbert Palmer, inquiring if Palmer had some work he might offer to Outposts. The zeal and sense of mission that had infused the struggle for a war poetry in Britain in the face of almost insurmountable difficulties and cynicism just five years before now filled Sergeant's editorial aims with an energy and resolve that bordered on devotion:

It seems to me that a new faith is necessary, a faith that needs no rose-coloured spectacles -- so many of today's poets seem to be wandering disconsolately round Eliot's Waste land -- and that faith can come into being only through ourselves, a new generation of poets with a sense of values.⁸⁰

If the war served to question and define those values which Eliot sought at the root of all poetry, then the ensuing peace more than put them to the test. The next six years saw not only the rise of Sergeant and Outposts but the challenge and consolidation of everything a generation had fought hard to achieve. Throughout his life, Sergeant stressed the importance and the necessity of spiritual and pragmatic values. His reliance on belief was an attribute

he learned not only from his Methodist upbringing but from the Forties. Outposts was founded on a set of beliefs applicable to the time, and the magazine and its editor stood by those values for the next forty years.

NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

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³Sergeant, Poetry of the Forties. 1.

⁴Bruce Meyer and Brian O'Riordan, "Interview with Ralph Gustafson," 26 May 1985, Montreal. (forthcoming in Poetry Canada Review).

⁵Howard Sergeant, Personal Diary, 1943. Walton-on-Thames: Private Collection of the estate of Howard Sergeant.

⁶Sergeant, Personal Diary, 1943.

⁷Robin Skelton, "Introduction," Poetry of the Forties (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1968). 15-31.

⁸C. Day Lewis, "Where Are the War Poets?" Collected Poems of C. Day Lewis (London: Jonathan Cape, 1954). 228.

⁹Francis Scarfe, "Observations on Poetry and War," Auden and After: The Liberation of Poetry, 1930-1941 (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1942). 169.

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¹¹Fuller, "Poetry: Tradition and Belief." 74.

¹²Linda M. Shires, British Poetry of the Second World War (London: Macmillan, 1985). 52.

¹³Shires, British Poetry of the Second World War. 52.

- ¹⁴Fuller, "Poetry: Tradition and Belief." 84.
- ¹⁵Scarfe, Auden and After. 169-183.
- ¹⁶G.S. Fraser, "The Poet and His Medium," The Craft of Letters in England, ed. John Lehmann (London: The Cresset Press, 1956). 112.
- ¹⁷G.S. Fraser, "Poetry: 1930s and War Years," The Modern Writer and His World (London: Derek Verschoyle, 1953). 265-266.
- ¹⁸Charles Hamilton Sorley, "XXVII: 'When you see millions of the mouthless dead,'" Marlborough and other poems (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1916). 69.
- ¹⁹Wilfred Owen, "Preface," The Collected Poems of Wilfred Owen, ed. C. Day Lewis (London: Chatto and Windus, 1963). 31.
- ²⁰Fraser, The Modern Writer and His World. 263.
- ²¹Fraser, The Modern Writer and His World. 266.
- ²²Shires, British Poetry of the Second World War. 53.
- ²³Fraser, The Modern Writer and His World. 265.
- ²⁴Sergeant, Poetry of the Forties. 4.
- ²⁵Sergeant, Poetry of the Forties. 4-5.
- ²⁶Alun Lewis, "To Edward Thomas," Raider's Dawn (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1942). 21.
- ²⁷Lewis, "The Sentry," Raider's Dawn. 20.
- ²⁸Sidney Keyes, The Collected Poems of Sidney Keyes, ed. Michael Meyer (London: Routledge, 1945). ix - xxi. Michael Meyer applies the term "Apollonian" to Keyes' work, a term that was later used by Dannie Abse in reference to the poetry of The Movement.
- ²⁹Shires, British Poetry of the Second World War. 53.
- ³⁰Sergeant, Poetry of the Forties. 6.
- ³¹Keyes, The Collected Poems of Sidney Keyes, ed. Michael Meyer. xix.

³²Keyes, The Collected Poems of Sidney Keyes, ed. Michael Meyer. xii.

³³Keyes, The Collected Poems of Sidney Keyes, ed. Michael Meyer. xix.

³⁴Keyes, "The Wilderness," The Collected Poems of Sidney Keyes, ed. Michael Meyer. 110.

³⁵Keith Douglas, "How To Kill," Complete Poems, ed. Desmond Graham (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979). 112.

³⁶Douglas, "Vergissmeinnicht, or The Lover," Complete Poems. 111.

³⁷Sergeant, Poetry of the Forties. 6.

³⁸Douglas, Complete Poems. x.

³⁹Skelton, Poetry of the Forties. 15.

⁴⁰Douglas, Complete Poems. ix.

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⁴²Philip Larkin, "Introduction," The North Ship (London: Faber and Faber, 1973). 9. Larkin, in this instance, may be using irony as a back-handed way of attacking Keyes' work.

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⁴⁴Scarfe, Auden and After. 152.

⁴⁵Geoffrey Thurley, "David Gascoyne: Phenomena of Zero," The Ironic Harvest (London: Edward Arnold, 1974). 101.

⁴⁶Thurley, The Ironic Harvest. 101.

⁴⁷Edward B. Germain, ed. Surrealist Poetry in English (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1978). 203.

⁴⁸David Gascoyne, Collected Poems, ed. and introd. Robin Skelton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965). ix.

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- ⁵²Scarfe, Auden and After. 149.
- ⁵³Robert Bly, "Surrealism, Rilke, and Listening," Leaping Poetry: An Idea with Poems and Translations (Boston: Beacon Press, 1975). 72.
- ⁵⁴Shires, British Poetry of the Second World War.
xiii.
- ⁵⁵Larkin, The North Ship. 8-10.
- ⁵⁶Sergeant, Poetry of the Forties. ix.
- ⁵⁷John Wain, Preliminary Essays (London: Macmillan and Company, 1957). 181-182.
- ⁵⁸Meyer, "Interview with Howard Sergeant."
- ⁵⁹Meyer, "Interview with Howard Sergeant."
- ⁶⁰Germain, Surrealist Poetry in English. 25-54.
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- ⁶³Scarfe, Auden and After. 158.
- ⁶⁴Scarfe, Auden and After. 158.
- ⁶⁵J.F. Hendry and Henry Treece, eds. The New Apocalypse: An Anthology of criticism, poems, and stories (London: The Fortune Press, 1939). TMs, Austin: Harry Ransom Humanities Research Centre Reading Room Collection, University of Texas at Austin.
- ⁶⁶Scarfe, Auden and After. 155.
- ⁶⁷Scarfe, Auden and After. 158.
- ⁶⁸A.E. Salmon, Poets of the Apocalypse (Boston: Twayne Publishers). 9.
- ⁶⁹Hendry and Treece, The New Apocalypse. TMs.
- ⁷⁰Scarfe, Auden and After. 158.
- ⁷¹Hendry and Treece, The New Apocalypse. TMs.

⁷²Henry Treece, "How I See Apocalypse," TMs.
Austin: Harry Ranson Humanities Research Centre Reading
Room Collection, University of Texas at Austin.

⁷³Shires, British Poetry of the Second World War.
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⁷⁴Henry Treece and Stephan Schimanski, "Towards a
Personalist Literature," Transformation Four, TMs. Austin:
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⁷⁵Meyer, "Interview with Howard Sergeant."

⁷⁶Treece and Schimanski, "Towards a Personalist
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⁷⁷Meyer, "Interview with Howard Sergeant."

⁷⁸Sergeant, Personal Diary, 1943.

⁷⁹Howard Sergeant, "Advertisement for Outposts,
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CHAPTER TWO
THE PERSONALIST YEARS

From a theoretical standpoint, Outposts began at an opportune time. The question "where are the war poets?" had been answered by an explosion of activity on the poetry scene. The war demanded a cultural reaction to events, a delineation of ideals, and a vocalization of repulsion and protest against those forces which threatened Britain's survival. Ideally, poetry should have functioned as the vehicle for unifying and motivating sentiments.

From a practical and actual point of view, however, poetry mattered little in the total picture of the Second World War. As a medium of communication, poetry was forced to compete with radio and film and required a cultivated and educated audience in an age which favoured mass communication. The war period was the worst possible time to start a poetry magazine, at least from the perspective of supply and production. Paper was in short supply, especially in 1943 when the Battle of the Atlantic raged and cut England off from the pulp mills of North America. What paper remained available was requisitioned and diverted to war work. Printers were occupied with wartime contracts and to their way of thinking standing type was

money lost. A printer would not risk the chance to lose money made through a government contract while a poet or a reviewer dithered over minor changes in a line of verse or a critique. From the perspective of sales, the war gave people more money, but the question remained, would they spend that money on something as inessential as a poetry magazine? The result of all these factors was a pervasive belief among both public and printers that poetry was a good idea but not a necessity. What confronted Sergeant, as he began his search for poets, paper and printers, was the conviction that British poetry needed new poets and that those poets needed a new forum. Armed only with that conviction and with absolutely no money in hand, Sergeant set about the task of producing the pamphlet that would serve the voices of the emerging poetry.

In 1983, Sergeant recalled the dilemma facing him as he began Outposts:

Going back to why I started Outposts, all the magazines had gone out of print. We were having difficulties printing our work and all paper was rationed, so that to persuade a printer to use his paper to print poetry when he thought it wouldn't pay and he could do more profitable things with his supplies, was something that had to be considered.¹

What Sergeant needed was a printer who had publicly gone on record as saying that poetry would not pay. With such a statement in hand, he was convinced that he could persuade the printer to recant his views and print the magazine if

only to prove the printer wrong. The magazine would be a gamble. After several approaches to various printers and publishers who outrightly rejected the concept of a literary magazine, Sergeant found his target in A.E. Lowey, owner and printer of the Favil Press. In the same 1983 interview, Sergeant recounted his introduction to Lowey:

I think it started when I picked up a letter of A.E. Lowey's in which he complained that poetry wouldn't pay. I pointed out to him that it was largely an issue of how you sold it and how you marketed it.²

On November 2, 1943, Sergeant recorded in his diary that he had called ^{on} _A Lowey at the Favil Press and described him as

a small man, speaks fluently though sometimes gropes for words -- wears horn-rimmed spectacles, dark hair, brown face, about 35...I think he overstates the need for a particular type of poetry. I agree with his opinions on the need for constructive poems, and his distaste for morbid, pseudo-Freudian stuff.³

Lowey, as Sergeant's comments suggest, was anti-Apocalyptic, or at least anti-Personalist or anti-Surrealist. A growing perception existed in England by 1943 that poetry should be a functional art in much the same way that the cinema and the radio had played functional roles in the war effort. Poetry, therefore, could not be an escape from reality but a device by which reality could be directed. Whatever "constructive" meant, there was, at least, some sense of agreement between Sergeant and Lowey

on the new poetry. Both felt that a balance had to be struck between negative and introspective individualism and the pressures and necessities of the external world. Lowey was persuaded to print the first issue of the new pamphlet provided that Sergeant could find the paper. After a week of rushing around London, making inquiries here and deals there, Sergeant found enough paper to print the first issue.

On November 17, 1943, Sergeant wrote to his close friend and London room-mate, Lionel Monteith, to apprise him of the developments:

A.E. Lowey of the Favil Press has confirmed that he will undertake the printing of Outposts, so you can go right ahead with the plans you have made. The folio will be on sale at the price of one shilling and one penny, post free.⁴

Printing the magazine, Sergeant believed, would be the easy part of the operation. In order for Outposts to have any impact as a forum for the new poets and their poetry, it needed to be sold, promoted and advertised. Throughout his career Sergeant believed that poetry magazines could manage to exist and last on a nominal budget, without outside funding for the most part, if they were priced with accessibility in mind, kept within a strict production budget which never exceeded available funds, and promoted themselves through whatever inexpensive or free publicity that could be garnered from a wide range of sources. What

was most interesting about this formula for endurance was that it was the product of necessity at the time, yet it lasted for more than forty years.

In Sergeant's mind, promotion of the magazine could be translated into sales. In the 1983 interview, he recollected:

I was cashing in, having no money, no funds, and I was trying to get as much free publicity as I could so I wrote to just about every newspaper in the country to tell them what I was doing with Outposts and I got a lot of free publicity in the forms of correspondence, on what could be done out of nothing.⁵

To promote the venture, Sergeant wrote letters to other young poets who had also started wartime magazines of their own, and, surprisingly, they agreed to mention Outposts in their own magazines. Astonished at the support among younger poets and editors for the magazine, Sergeant wrote to Lionel Monteith on November 29, 1943:

Everything is going well -- Alex Comfort is going to publicise the venture in Poetry Folios, Kenneth Hopkins in Grasshopper Broadsheets, Tambimuttu in Poetry London and Robert Greacen in Irish literary circles.⁶

The new generation networked information and work among themselves and by beginning their own forums for poetry staked their claims to the poetry scene without having to pay either lip service or homage to members of the establishment. Some established figures, however, were

supportive and enthusiastic. The most surprising and enthusiastic vote of confidence came from Vita Sackville-West, who endorsed Outposts in her column in The Observer on April 6, 1944, just after the first issue had appeared:

Outposts, "a folio established to provide a convenient platform for the younger writers," struck me as a little pioneer well worth supporting. Its future, we are told, will depend upon the support it receives. A subscription of 4s. 4d. seems a modest price to ask, and should be sent to Howard Sergeant, 59 Orchard - avenue, Squires Gate, Blackpool.⁷

As well, Sergeant enlisted the support of his close friends to sell subscriptions. His wife at the time, Dorothy, looked after the incoming funds while Sergeant remained in London doing war work. By the time the first issue went to press, on the weekend of January 13, 1944,⁸ the funds for production were only thirteen shillings short, an amount which Sergeant made up out of his own pocket. Bookstores across the country and Boots Chemists chain agreed to carry a few copies. Several small publishers, sensing that something might come of the magazine, offered to distribute small numbers of copies within their territories. So successful was the initial issue that Sergeant did not have enough copies to supply W.H. Smith and on April 25, 1944, he cabled Monteith in London:

Return unsold Outposts immediately. Urgent. Success. Depleted stock. Howard.⁹

Enthusiasm aside, the qualities that sustain a magazine for any length of time are literary and financial acumen. Sergeant had the advantage of a good literary eye, the ability to spot good work from new or unheralded poets. He was also a Chartered Accountant. From the perspective of a literary critic or literary historian, the life of a poetry magazine may be determined by the shifting sands of taste or the rising and falling stars of the poets and writers a magazine chooses to support. The reality, however, of a literary magazine's life is more often than not measured in the ability of its editor to balance the account book. Sergeant believed that the genuine arbiter of literary taste was not idea or creativity but finance. Outposts could not afford to be extravagant when it began in 1944, and throughout its long life under Sergeant's editorial guidance the magazine never attempted to acquire a rich look or expensive production and remained in a saddle-stitched folio that exceeded forty pages only for anniversary numbers. Each year Sergeant made sure that the budget balanced out evenly and wrote his expenses for the forthcoming year, debits from such items as stationery and postage, against the closing year's credits. In the 1983 interview Sergeant argued his approach to editing:

...if you examine the number of poetry magazines we've had in this century and how many have collapsed, you'll find that ninety-nine per cent of them collapsed because of the financial end of it. I'd say yes -- I

have treated Outposts as a business. Running a magazine is a publishing business and you might as well recognize it. Since I had business experience and had business qualifications, particularly in accountancy, it was pretty obvious that I was going to run Outposts on business-like lines. If an editor has no business sense, then he should be assisted by someone who has. The pragmatic angle on all of this is essential. Without it a magazine dies very quickly regardless of what it does in the literary sense.¹⁰

The other side of the argument, however, is that a well-managed magazine cannot make an impact unless it is edited by an individual or group of individuals who have an awareness of the new, the vital and the promising in the literary arts. Such instincts are rarely the product of pure or blind inspiration: they are the result of curiosity, thousands of hours of reading, sifting, assessing, and a perpetual dissatisfaction with the contemporary establishment. In 1983, for example, Sergeant calculated that he read in excess of sixty thousand poems per year as editor of Outposts and as a judge for the anthologies and contests which he adjudicated each year. This figure translates into an impressive number of almost two hundred poems per day. His daily routine consisted of rising at about six-thirty in the morning. By seven, he was usually at his desk to do his accounts. At eight o'clock, when the first mail delivery arrived, he began editing for the day, sorting through the submissions and answering each letter by hand. By noon, when the second mail arrived,

Sergeant had already dealt with all the incoming submissions for Outposts. The noon hour was usually spent banking and at the post office, and the afternoon, from about two until dinner time, was taken-up with judging for the various contests that he adjudicated. In the evening, the work continued but at a more relaxed pace, when the mailing envelopes for Outposts were addressed by hand. Aside from these duties, Sergeant also read over ninety per cent of all the poetry books published in England each year in order to determine whether or not they were suitable for review in Outposts, and more often than not simply out of a sense of enthusiasm for poetry and the personal enjoyment it gave him.

Editors of literary magazines, particularly those which concern themselves with poetry, cannot but become good readers. If a poetry magazine is advertised or distributed, poets will seek it out with submissions. The result of Sergeant's eager promotion of Outposts during the closing months of 1943 was a deluge of submissions. The poets that he had envisioned, the ones in the "naafi canteens" and the "nissen huts," were responding through their verse to the pressures of the war. The war poets did exist but in such overwhelming and prolific numbers as to blur the natural delineations of talent that normally exist on a literary scene. The process of separating the good from the bad, let alone the passable from the less

acceptable (which is the more common task of a poetry magazine editor), seemed an arduous task for the editorially uninitiated Sergeant in 1943. On December 12 of that year he confided his modus operandi for the magazine to Monteith:

The principal object of Outposts is to help the unknowns but I am insisting on quality. Obviously I cannot compete with the established periodicals unless I give value for money. Don't forget that Outposts gives only eight pages for one shilling and that magazines like Poetry Review give about sixty for the same money. That means I shall not reject established poets on the ground alone; but where any unknown compares favourably with the established writer, I shall definitely choose the unknown.¹¹

Outposts, right from its inception, was the magazine of the underdog. Sergeant believed that a new poet was more likely to do "new" things with his or her verse and he felt that the magazine could immediately take the leading edge of the poetry scene by upholding such an editorial stance.

Sergeant also identified himself with the struggling poet, with those voices who were intent on making a statement for the first time. In his heart he hoped that others would offer him the same chance that he was offering them. By publishing certain authors, such as Henry Treece who had previously discounted the young editor as a poet and had excluded him from the Apocalyptic and Personalist circles, Sergeant hoped to gain admission by association to the groups of theorizing poets who seemed to dominate the

literary milieu.

The first issue of Outposts contained the work of several editors who were also poets. Kenneth Hopkins, Robert Greacen, and Douglas Gibson were featured as was Henry Treece, whose inclusion in the issue was not only an act of magnanimity on Sergeant's part but an effort directed to raise the magazine's profile. Treece, after all, was considered by many to be one of the leading younger poets of the day. His presence, Sergeant felt, would draw others of that same generation to the magazine and give the publication immediate status in the ranks of the Personalists and the Apocalypticists.

Unlike later issues of Outposts where the content was determined by submissions rather than solicitations, the first issue drew on work that had already been published or broadcast. Outposts Number One, was a "review" in the sense of the word -- a magazine composed of previously published work that had been selected like the work in an anthology. Maurice Lindsay's "In Memory of Leslie Howard," for example, had been broadcast on the BBC before Sergeant selected it. Sergeant's poem "Today's Heroes" and Andrew Keith's "Seed-time and Harvest" had appeared previously in Peter Ratazzi's Tomorrow. The intention to draw upon the decisions of other editors in order to fill the pages of Outposts Number One suggests a tentativeness on Sergeant's part, the desire to be cautious

with the first issue until the magazine had established a firm base of popularity. On the other hand, the use of tried and tested work was an attempt to ensure that the magazine would be an overnight success, a reflection of the tastes that Sergeant hoped to please.

Maurice Lindsay's "In Memory of Leslie Howard"¹² reflects what Sergeant felt was the reigning attitude of the new poetry. The poem is an elegy in quatrains, a pastoral "sea-death" poem which, like Milton's "Lycidas," laments the passing of a hero whose untimely death has left the persona with an overwhelming sense of emptiness. The tone and diction of the poem are elevated and epideictic. The lines are intended to convince the reader that Leslie Howard's death left an absence in the world which can only be filled with grief. Unlike Milton's "Lycidas," "In Memory of Leslie Howard" is no masterpiece. The poem's diction is muddled to the point of absurdity and its self-conscious "Englishness" and wartime pleading for values drag the poem into a quagmire of ambiguity and mock-elevation. The fourth stanza is an example:

So let us honour now his silent going,
 whose gestures lent belief to mudded years,
 who died upon the apex of unknowing
 the hollow mocking on the heavenly stairs.

What does Lindsay mean by "mudded years" or "upon the apex of unknowing" or "the hollow mocking on the heavenly stairs?" The lines have a pleasing music but what do they

mean? As Alex Comfort suggests in his criticism of Apocalyptic poetry, a poem such as "In Memory of Leslie Howard" leans too heavily on the bardic tradition, the idea that a poem must be decoded from its heightened language to be understood. Sergeant may have included the poem as a private joke among his closest friends. During the Forties Sergeant bore a strong resemblance to the actor, Leslie Howard, and friends, including Muriel Spark, nicknamed him "Leslie." Whatever inside jokes may have been at work in the issue, Outposts Number One contains poems on a variety of themes common to the Apocalyptic aesthetic: the sea, childhood, dreams, heroes and the war. If the poems are weak, and many of them are, it is because the poetry of the period focussed on subjects that are at best difficult or cliché to communicate in poetry. The language, aside from the themes which the Apocalyptic writers of the Forties used, embodied a self-consciousness and an imprecision that were excused by hurried writers as trademarks of "individuality."

Douglas Gibson's "Sunday Evening," however, is a poignant reminder of what the war poetry and Outposts were striving to communicate:

Almost I can imagine, this Sunday evening,
 With the church bells tolling gently through the
 city,
 That the war is an evil dream, and we have woken
 Out of the strife and anguish, to find the happy
 Land of our childhood unclouded by war's
 afflictions.

Though it is false, it is all we have ever known
 Of peace and safety; though even then there was
 sown
 The germ of war...13

Gibson suggests that the war was inherent in the preceding peace, an "age of anxiety" as Auden called it, in which ideas called for action yet found no genuine outlet for release. The war, for poets such as Gibson, was the first taste of the adult world and in contrast made the realm of childhood all the more appealing, easy and innocent. Whatever anxieties the previous years may have presented, the time before the war was all that a generation of fighting men had known of peace and it was on memories of that period that they based their hopes for a new world. Gibson continues:

 ...Hearing these bells again
 I wake from dreaming, to know that their peaceful
 sound
 Mocks at my generation...

Gibson's "church bells" are also a signal of England's predicament. The church bells were to be rung in the event of an invasion, and many who heard them during the war years ceased to associate their sound with peace. Instead, the bells became identified as a symbol of the nation's fight for survival. The war and what it would do for the poet and the public is one of the chief concerns echoed by the first issue of Outposts. Gibson's poem reflects the anxieties that the war created -- both public and poet

could dream of peace but the elements of peacefulness that remained in full view of society were 'mocking' reminders of a lost innocence and a calm before the storm that had somehow betrayed a whole generation and its aspirations.

In an editorial to the third issue of Outposts, which was released early in 1945, Sergeant felt confident that the new poetry would lead to a new world:

We believe that out of the chaos of our time a new positive spirit is emerging, a spirit that is capable of discerning the need for a revitalized sense of values. This is no blind acceptance of political and sociological panaceas, but a recognition that the only workable pattern for a free society must be one which is based on moral and spiritual truths. Having no illusions, the younger poets have yet sufficient courage to look beyond the immediate scenery of the Waste Land. It is only through the medium of the little reviews and magazines that the work of these poets can be made known.¹⁴

The literary or 'little' magazine, as Sergeant saw it, was a vital element in the creation of the new world that would arise from the ashes of the war-torn past. The poet, the voice and guardian of "moral and spiritual truths," would make his forum in journals such as Outposts where the spirit of democratic selection and social opportunity prevailed. From the Personalist perspective to which Sergeant subscribed, the little magazine was the ideal vehicle for the individual voice, not only because so many little magazines existed, but because they were the most accessible forum, a journal which catered to the new rather

than the established. Through such journals, new thoughts, ideas and voices could flourish and influence society. Although Sergeant later denied that poetry itself could play a profound role in manifesting social change, there were those in the literary milieu of the time who saw poetry as a tool in the struggle to overhaul the economy, the political system and the social structure. One such writer who professed an active role for poetry was Peter Ratazzi, the editor of New Generation, Tomorrow, and several other short-lived journals. Ratazzi is today remembered best (if remembered at all) for his work with Sergeant in organizing a post-war movement aimed at fulfilling the dreams of the fighting man.

Ratazzi's thinking was a product not only of Apocalyptic poetic idealism, but of a disdain which resulted from a first-hand experience with the events and pressures which led to the war. In his memoir, Inside the Forties, Derek Stanford describes Ratazzi:

Peter Ratazzi, our General Secretary, of Dutch-Italian parentage, had once been a member of Hitler's Youth Movement. Falling out of love with Strength through Joy and Truncheon, he had fled to England and immediately asked to enlist in the British Army. This generous gesture was, of course, suspect; and Peter spent the next two months in prison in Manchester, raging equally against Churchill and Hitler. Released, he became a staff sergeant and was soon organizing Service magazines to boost the morale of frustrated Forces tyros. He intrigued me vastly, though I never got to know him well.

He was such a mixture of idealism and self-interest; so thrusting and dynamic, whether on behalf of himself or some cause.¹⁵

As the war came to a close in the summer of 1945, Ratazzi attached himself to the rising star of Howard Sergeant and his new literary magazine. Ratazzi did this partly out of a belief that the magazine would serve as an ideal vehicle for publicity for whatever cause he might embrace, and partly out of a misguided neo-romantic belief in the power of poetry and poets to legislate a better world into existence. The result was the founding of a movement called "The Front Line Generation" which Ratazzi and Sergeant began early in 1946.

The "Notices" section of Outposts Number Six (Autumn 1946), carried a small announcement of the founding of a new group aimed at putting into practice the ideas that poetry had attempted to confront during the war years:

A new social-literary movement known as Front Line Generation has been founded by Peter Ratazzi and Howard Sergeant, with its principal object 'to express the need for a complete revolution in the approach to the problems of our time, a change of heart in the individual, and a transformation of social values.'¹⁶

In the mould of various literary groups of the Apocalyptic era, the Front Line Generation was an attempt to fuse the power of literary activity with the process of social change. As the Apocalypitics had stated, the world was in

dire need of a change and the changes necessary to make a better world would only be possible through the amalgamation of imagination and social action in the individual. To accomplish this end and to further the cause of literature (and promote Sergeant's Outposts and Ratazzi's New Generation) discussion groups were set up in London and encouraged throughout England. The number of provincial groups that actually came to fruition remains a mystery. The movement never numbered more than thirty individuals at the most and a realistic estimate of its size would probably count about ten members. The London group, which consisted largely of Sergeant, Ratazzi, Derek Stanford, Lionel Monteith, and a handful of other young literati, evolved into nothing more than another literary discussion group, a bi-monthly meeting, usually in a pub, where large ideas were bandied back and forth and new poems were subjected to workshop conditions with the philosophic and aesthetic guidelines which the group laid out for itself in its manifesto. Like their predecessor group, the Apocalyptic (who originally gathered in garrets in Leeds and Cambridge), the Front Line Generation was, for the most part, a theoretical movement which produced little in the way of writing but a great deal in terms of publicity and controversy.

Both Sergeant and Ratazzi saw the Front Line Generation as an extension of the Apocalyptic movement. For

them, the Front Line poet was writing in response to the war, in answer to the threat which totalitarianism had posed to the individual. In an article, "Poetry and the Front Line Generation," which appeared in 1946 in Ratazzi's New Generation, Sergeant wrote:

During a totalitarian war, with the loss of personal freedom and the restrictions imposed upon the individual by military discipline, men are driven back upon their private emotions and it is natural that they should seek an outlet, a reality, in both music and poetry. In the presence of suffering and death on a vast scale, they become aware of themselves, their loneliness and nostalgia, their hopes and fears, and in bewilderment, they experience a real urge to make themselves articulate.¹⁷

As Gibson's "Sunday Evening" suggested, the war made individuals more aware of themselves and their own pasts. Such an awareness became a keystone in the thinking of the Front Line Generation. The privateness that the war had brought to the surface was almost an antidote for the sense of mass participation and mass dehumanization that the war had inflicted on everyone. In the formation of the Front Line Generation, Sergeant and Ratazzi were attuned to the notions which poems such as Gibson's stressed, the idea that the post-war world would witness the pendulum's swing in the opposite direction towards a personal, introspective and individual world view.

Sergeant excused the deficiencies of Apocalyptic poetry by arguing that the urgency to utter the values of

the individual under the pressures of war precluded the necessary literary polish of good poetry. None the less, the new poetry was a kind of renaissance in which unbridled energy and unrestricted expression counteracted obvious literary failings. Sergeant concluded:

There is every reason to believe that this is a real renaissance, and one in which the poets of the Front Line Generation will play an important part.¹⁸

The spirit of post-war optimism that led to the founding of the Front Line Generation may have blinded it to the realities of what it could do in a practical sense. The assumption underlying poetry during the war had been that theory was the equivalent of practice and that ideas and principles mattered more than application.

Day Lewis' question of "Where Are the War Poets?" still remained an issue in 1946. Sergeant argued that the new poetry was different from that of the First World War because the conditions of the war itself had been different. The "front line" had existed everywhere a bomb had dropped or a ditty-bag had been stuffed, and to some extent the victory had been won on the home front as much as it had been won in distant combat. The blitz on the cities and the total war effort of society gave the Second World War a universal flavour: everyone was involved and therefore everyone was justified in their creative response to it. The Front Line Generation, therefore, was

established in the hope that it would become a popular movement, a philosophy which hoped to grow out of the popularity and accessibility of poetry. Sergeant explained:

Many of our established poets and critics have been quick to seize upon this as the sole explanation for the phenomenal output of the war years. It is true that nothing has been written which can be matched with the pity, indignation and bitterness of Wilfred Owen or the violent satire of Siegfried Sassoon of the last war, but it should be remembered that these poets were meeting the horrors of modern warfare for the first time. The young poets of the Front Line Generation were in a completely different position. For years their minds had been prepared for all the terrors associated with war under the vilest and bloodiest conditions, and their imaginations had painted an even ghastlier picture -- so much so that they regarded the first few months of inactive warfare as "phoney." The actual fighting could add nothing to the hopelessness and disillusionment to which their minds had been conditioned during their fruitless pilgrimage through the Waste Land. Their mood was that of the betrayed, yet they faced the predicted carnage with determination and almost animal courage.¹⁹

Sergeant perceived that the poets of the new Front Line Generation had inherited a certain set of preconditions and preconceptions that made them distinct from previous poets. The new poet had been "conditioned" to the horrors of the modern world and modern warfare and accepted his lot with a stoicism -- the type of stoical acceptance of soldiering that is seen throughout the work of Keith Douglas. Surrealism, at least for poets, had paved the way for disconnection and perceptual dislocation in art. Reality,

therefore, no matter how horrible and absurd it might become, had its equivalent in an understood aesthetic mechanism which was quite capable of coping with the conditions at hand. The suggestion underlying Sergeant's statement on the Front Line Generation of poets was that they had been preconditioned to the war both by the previous war and by the developments of art in the years between the wars. If they were mediocre in their response, and at the time that suggestion would have been greeted with disapproval, it was because they had nothing left to do as artists, no new ground to break or struggles to cope with, and had merely to witness and convey the events through their own individual personalities. What is now considered the best war poetry from the Second World War, such as Keith Douglas' "Vergissmeinnicht" or F.T. Prince's "Soldiers Bathing," is largely a poetry of reportage, a writing which has little concern for contemporary aesthetic theory. Sergeant realized that the poets of his generation presented a "mass of seeming contradictions." Their failure as poets was a failure to "assimilate their experience." The virtue of the new poets, however, was that they responded to their experiences not only with poetry but with a strange marriage of artistic theory and political ideology. The Front Line Generation, represented by Sergeant on the purely literary side and Ratazzi from the more political point of view, sought a union between

politics and art -- something which was not new but which formulated a strange compromise from all the pressures asserted by the times on the often awkward bedfellows of poetry and ideology.

The union of poetry and ideology is the core of the manifesto of the Front Line Generation. As a manifesto it was a work of astounding naïveté. Derek Stanford in Inside the Forties comments that the "Ten Points" drawn up by the Front Line Generation was a "dodo document," which "in a very loose fashion" summarized "what many young people then desired:"

- 1)To preserve and extend the wartime spirit of comradeship, born in danger and suffering on all fronts, fields, offices and factories.
- 2)To maintain an anticapitalist, antitotalitarian platform, and to insist upon the individual's personal responsibility towards the creation of a free society, based upon moral and spiritual values.
- 3)To fight for the humanization of industry and a more responsible share in its control and development in order to achieve a dignified way of life for the common man.
- 4)To encourage individual forms of expression, local culture and craftsmanship, and to study their relationship to world patterns of thought, belief and behaviour.
- 5)To oppose restrictive monopolies from financial interests to literary cliques.
- 6)To combat snobbery, cruelty, exploitation, warmongering, and bureaucracy wherever they are found to exist.
- 7)To express the need for a complete revolution in the approach to urgent problems of our time (social conditions, reconstruction, economics,

culture, education, etc.), a change of heart in the individual, and a transformation of social values.

8) To cooperate with all progressive and active thinkers at home and abroad, and to foster this new articulate spirit throughout Britain and Europe.

9) To propagate by books, press, meetings, discussion and social groups the aims of our Front Line Generation.

10) To assist ex-Servicemen and workers in obtaining suitable occupations in which they can best serve the community, and to encourage their participation in local and national government with the ultimate aim of forming a Front Line Generation Government.²⁰

Most of these ideas were unrealistic yet all of them had their roots in the poetry of the Forties. The Front Line Generation, if it stood for anything, was an attempt to make literary ideas the standards for society based on the assumption that social, economic and political thinking had gone amiss.

In the first point of the Front Line Generation manifesto, Sergeant made sure to include office workers in his plan for the new society -- a move that would ensure his own participation in the future. The fifth point, aimed at combating literary cliques, was also Sergeant's work. He believed that cliques damaged poetry, and the fact that he was excluded from the Personalist movement by Treece may have been a factor in his thinking. For Sergeant, the movement was intended to be a study group. Ratazzi had other ideas. Points such as two, seven, eight and ten

clearly have their roots in left-wing literary thinking of the Thirties -- a philosophy that was counter to Sergeant's beliefs and the beliefs of the Apocalyptics. These points were Ratazzi's contributions to the program; Sergeant maintained a relatively apolitical stance throughout his life, voting for social democratic parties and ideas when the opportunities arose. Sergeant believed, even in 1946, in the capabilities of the individual and put individuality ahead of mass-oriented ideologies. Point number nine, for example, reflects the pragmatic aspects of the movement -- the publication of their ideas through creative enterprise in literature. For Sergeant, the Front Line Generation was merely a literary movement which blurred the distinctions between the potentialities for poetry and the possibilities for society.

Sergeant's interest in the role of the serviceman, not only in the Front Line Generation but in Outposts as well, was inspired by the Beveridge Report of 1942 which, optimistically, foresaw a greater post-war role for servicemen as a means of avoiding the social and economic chaos which ensued after the First World War in Britain. In his commentary in Poetry of the Forties, Sergeant described the Beveridge Report and the sense of expectation it instilled in those servicemen who read it:

The emphasis of the wartime slogan "We're all in it together" was suddenly switched to all possibilities of the "New Britain for a better

world," about which so much had been heard in the classes and publications of the Army Bureau of Current Affairs. In 1942, at the request of the Coalition Government, Sir William Beveridge had conducted a survey of social insurance and, in his Report, had put forth specific proposals for the elimination of "Five Great Evils...Want, Disease, Ignorance, Squalor and Idleness," by means of a comprehensive system of national insurance which provided for a free health service, children's allowances, and full employment. Unlike most government publications, the Beveridge Report was widely read and received the general approval of both civilians and servicemen.²¹

In terms of social history, the Beveridge Report was not only a factor in the election of Attlee's Labour Government, but a foreshadowing of the welfare state that established itself in Britain in the wake of the war. Sergeant pointed out in the same essay that most people, the rank and file of society, came to identify the Report with a statement of war aims, the answer to the question "what are we fighting for?" that the war poets had been attempting to answer with their verse. The declining role of poetry during the war years may, in fact, be attributed to schemes such as the Beveridge Report which placed the reason for fighting the war on social freedom and improvement rather than on poetic and national ideals. Poetry could not hope to communicate the practical values that social reform offered in political documents. The Front Line Generation was aware of this problem and sought to bridge the widening gap between poetry and politics. The fervour of wartime propaganda (much of it inspiring the

language of the poetry of the period), the publication of the Beveridge Report and, in some part, the Labour Party's manifesto, Let Us Face the Future, were the chief factors behind the formation of the Front Line Generation and its urgent appeal for largely impractical but long-desired aims.²² In its most essential terms, the Front Line Generation was simply an expression of social expectations, and the poets who wrote and backed the manifesto were not radicals or lunatics but simply the first to announce what society wanted, a role that poets and poetry claim.

MI5, however, took a less sympathetic view of the Front Line Generation manifesto. Points seven, eight and ten were couched in the language of political dissent, a problem of tone often encountered by the makers of manifestos. Lionel Monteith later reported that the Front Line Generation was put under investigation by MI5 as a potentially subversive and alien organization (the tip-off came from a girl-friend of Monteith who was a secretary for MI5 and who pulled the file on the Movement), a claim that was supported by Sergeant himself in the 1983 interview.²³ When asked how he thought the authorities felt about the Front Line Generation, Sergeant responded:

They little regarded us at all because what were we? A few editors, a few dreamers? I suppose we had meetings in London where we got together and talked and read poetry. It was purely literary, you see. But the fact is, we were noticed. Many years later Lionel Monteith had a girl-friend who worked in MI5

and she looked him up and found that he was mentioned in connection with me and they noted my activities in Front Line Generation. MI5 listed me! They had their eyes on this very innocuous literary group as if they didn't have better things to do.²⁴

Regardless of how much attention the Front Line Generation attracted, of either the public or confidential kind, the gradual dissipation of the movement was symptomatic of the decline of optimism in the years following the Second World War. Austerity, frustration and failed dreams became the surrogates for the impossible and impractical world that had been the expectation of dreamers such as Sergeant and Ratazzi. Although it was not apparent at the time, the new sense of values sought by the war poets and editors failed to materialize.

The Forties was an era of aspiration in British poetry but a time that sorely needed a leader figure. This figure failed to materialize. Granted, Dylan Thomas stands as a prime candidate but his diction, as critics in the Fifties would later point out, was not clear enough to carry the succinct message that the times demanded and his sense of imagery baffled readers, among them the new university poets such as Kingsley Amis, Philip Larkin and John Wain. Their gradual emergence during the next decade would come as a result of a reaction to the Forties poetics rather than as an addendum to its achievements. Potential leaders such as Alun Lewis, Sidney Keyes and Keith Douglas

(figures whom Larkin would later excuse as having been plausible poets of the era) were victims of the war.

By 1946, as Sergeant noted in his essay "Poetry and the Front Line Generation," British poetry was divided into three distinct camps -- the Personalists, the Christian group, and the anarchists:

Two distinct groups have emerged since 1939: The Personalists (via the Apocalypse), led by Henry Treece, G.S. Fraser, and J.F. Hendry, and the Christian group of Norman Nicholson. Kathleen Raine, and Anne Ridler -- the various and outstanding poets professing an anarchist outlook (Alex Comfort, George Woodcock, etc.), are far too individualistic to constitute a collective group. Both these movements have exercised a strong influence upon modern poetry, but the significance of the younger generation of poets lies not so much in their ideological and philosophical connections, as in their vitality and awareness of life. As yet, they are a mass of seeming contradictions and many of them have still to assimilate their experience.²⁵

Sergeant's belief that the Forties had failed to produce an ideological or creative spearhead, at least in poetry, underlies his choice of selections for Outposts. The inclusion of all or most of the members of the disparate groups and camps in the magazine gave the publication a sense of being a "middle ground," an aesthetic neutrality that suggested the lack of a defined editorial stand. Sergeant, however, held to his assertion that the magazine had to serve the spectrum of poetry and not the clique, an assertion that not only was evident in the manifesto of the Front Line Generation but in the editorial practice of the

magazine during the forty-two years that Sergeant was at the helm. Between issues Two and Seven during the period from 1945 to 1947, Outposts contributors included Treece, Norman Nicholson, Maurice Lindsay, Emmanuel Litvinoff (often associated with Alex Comfort, Dannie Abse and Poetry and Poverty), Hugo Manning, Nicholas Moore, Peter Ratazzi, Derek Stanford, Paul Dehn (who later became a noted Hollywood screenwriter and included among his credits the screenplay for The Planet of the Apes), Wrey Gardiner (editor of the Grey Walls Press and a key figure in the logistical side of the Apocalyptic movement), and a young medical student named Dannie Abse (with whom Sergeant would edit the 1956 anthology, Mavericks). The early issues of Outposts, to a large extent, influenced the direction that the magazine would take over the next three decades, and associations which developed during this period became crucial to events in Sergeant's later life.

For Sergeant, the lack of a core aesthetic or ideology on the poetry scene served the intent of Outposts -- a forum where the voice of the individual could be heard. The Forties, in fact, set the course for the magazine's future, at least in terms of editorial philosophy. Sergeant felt that poetry had a definite connection to belief, and a responsibility to speak for social aspirations -- a stand that he carried with him into the Fifties and used against the Movement. His assumption

may have been based on an approximation of literary practice rather, ^{than} popular critical belief. If poets move as groups, the product is likely to be as dissimilar between poets within a group as it is for those who do not subscribe to a manifesto. Manifestos may offer a critic an easy avenue into the works of those poets which the manifesto encompasses, but the reality is probably that manifestos explain the work of those who write them rather than those who by practice or coincidence are categorized by them. The gradual failure of the manifestos of the Forties, and with them the failure of Apocalypticism, Personalism and Neo-Romanticism, points to the fact that the realities which poetry attempted to confront were beyond the capabilities of the language and aesthetic perspective they had at their disposal. In his commentary in Poetry of the Forties, Sergeant pinpointed the cause for the "defeat" of his generation of poets:

What could poetry say that public events had not already made abundantly clear? For many poets there seemed to be no recognizable pattern of values by which to integrate their experience of both inner and outer worlds. It is not surprising that some poets confined themselves to finding a personal solution to their own problems; or that others, in circumstances so unfavourable to the publication of poetry, were struggling desperately just to make their voices heard.²⁶

The war poets had found their "sense of values" but those values failed to be formed into a recognizable and

applicable aesthetic.

A general feeling of diminution pervaded the literary and social ethos of Britain in the years following the war. Sergeant's 1946 anthology, For Those Who Are Alive, echoes the keynote of social dissipation in its title.²⁷ The failure of the anthology to make any major statement on the status of poetry in post-war Britain is not only a fault of the poets or their anthologist, but a symptom of the state of exhaustion which the country faced. In the "Introduction" Sergeant wrote:

If it is true that many of the younger poets have shown a certain preoccupation with 'the single poetic theme of Life and Death,' it is also true that by their very acceptance of death, the emphasis has been thrown upon life and an attempt to express those human and spiritual values which are essential to the fulfillment of life. The search for a more satisfying faith, combined with a sense of responsibility to future generations, at a time when the forces of science, bureaucracy, and industrialism seem to be united against the human spirit, is a basic element in the work of all the contributors to this volume.²⁸

Like Orwell's 1984 (written during this period), which struck at the same question of social exhaustion but from a different perspective, For Those Who Are Alive was a vain attempt to rekindle the spirit of enthusiasm and optimism which had guided the poets of the war years. In an effort to show that the war had, in fact, produced a solid and recognizable body of poetry, Sergeant hastily overlooked

the shortcomings of many of the contributions in the volume. In retrospect, For Those Who Are Alive stands more as a tragic testament to the loss of such potentially fine poets as Douglas and Keyes than to the achievement of those who survived the war. Unlike Tambimuttu's Poetry in Wartime, which presented a very strong cross-section of some of the more major voices of the war era, Sergeant's anthology failed to include or introduce voices that demanded a second hearing. A.T. Tolley in his study Poetry of the Forties concludes that the anthology was a failure inasmuch as it tried to signal the rise of a new generation of poets who had nothing new to say and poetically could not pass muster.²⁹ The anthology was even a larger failure in that it was an attempt by Sergeant to promote the fledgling achievement of Outposts before the magazine had established a claim to such a project. The implied association between For Those Who Are Alive and Outposts and the identification of the anthology poets with those in the magazine hurt the magazine. Proponents of the Movement in the Fifties would later set up many of the poets in For Those Who Are Alive as straw men to knock down for the purpose of building their own apology. Sergeant's identification with the project, as shall be seen, would have effects that lasted far into the 1980s. Tolley commented:

For Those Who Are Alive, published by the Fortune Press in 1946, was described by Sergeant as "The First Outposts Anthology." It contains work by John Bayliss, Paul Dehn, James Kirkup and Norman Nicholson -- but these are the heavies. Of the unpublished poets among its fifty or more contributors, virtually none were to make a career in poetry -- a remark that almost goes for the published poets.³⁰

Tolley, however, goes on to note that Sergeant's sense of "catholicity" in poetry would prove to be helpful in assisting in the rise of later talents who found their first publication in the pages of Outposts.

In terms of statistics, the period immediately following the war was a bad time for literary magazines, particularly those concerned with poetry. The need for poetry, as a means of articulating the values of society, diminished as the war ended. Society no longer needed to know what its purpose was. As vehicles for poetry, the demand for literary magazines decreased although the number of poets writing, most of whom had begun writing as a result of the war, remained the same. The prospect which faced poets in 1947 was a plethora of poetry and a declining market for verse. A total of nineteen poetry magazines ceased publication between 1946 and 1947, an unusually high rate of cessation. Among these were such important wartime magazines as Geoffrey Grigson's The Mint (1946 and 1948), Peter Ratazzi's New Generation (1946-1947), John Lehmann's New Writing (which stopped after a

brief amalgamation with Daylight), Edwin Muir's Orion (1945-1947), Maurice Lindsay's Poetry Scotland (1944-1947), Derek Stanford's Resistance (1946), Nicholas Moore's Seven (1938-1947), Henry Treece and Stefan Schimanski's Transformation (1943-1946) and D.V. Baker's two magazines, Voices (1944-1947) and Writing To-day (1943-1946).³¹

The decline in the number of poetry magazines placed a new burden on the shoulders of those editors who continued their journals. Their decline also provided the editors of surviving journals with a new popularity, a celebrity status which thrust them into the company of writers and literati.

The survival of Outposts gave Sergeant the password to the recognition that he had craved as a young and unpublished poet. Sergeant suddenly became a figure in demand at dinner parties, welcomed into heated conversation in pubs, and acknowledged by radio producers as an "authority" on modern poetry. Dylan Thomas became a drinking partner. In 1983, Sergeant recounted an evening with Thomas:

I was in the Mandrake Club with him one evening and there was just the two of us. The manager came down and he knew that Dylan was there and whispered in Dylan's ear that the Turkish Ambassador was there and that he particularly wanted to see him, to meet a real poet. So, Dylan grunted because he didn't particularly want to see anybody, but the manager brought this ambassador down from upstairs. The moment this man appeared, Dylan seemed to switch

from being the friendly human being I had been talking to, to a very legendary Dylan expected to play tricks and do something outrageous. So, Dylan took his shoes and socks off and swung his bare feet on the Turkish Ambassador's lap!³²

As well as gaining an acquaintance with Dylan Thomas, Sergeant also became a regular visitor at Dorothy Wellesley's literary salons at her house, "Penns-in-the-Rocks." One weekend while he was staying there he accidentally woke the entire household by knocking over a suit of ancient armour as he ventured to find a toilet down a dark corridor. The editors of magazines that had once rejected his work now became Sergeant's dinner companions. In his diary entry of September 20, 1947, Sergeant recounts one such evening at the home of Kenneth Hopkins:

Was most interested to meet Mrs. Muriel Spark and to hear that she wishes to reorganize the Poetry Review -- she wants more real poets -- there is the belief that Harding will be thrown out if he does not resign -- apparently he's attempting to coerce Muriel Spark into running things the way he wants them.³³

The chance meeting with Muriel Spark was to prove to be a turning point for Sergeant, not only in his literary career but in his personal life. They soon embarked on a relationship that would influence not only many of Sergeant's activities and plans, but a novel by Spark, a movement to promote poetry within the British Commonwealth,

and a new direction for Outposts. Their relationship, stormy as it was, formed a kind of high-water mark in the literary activity of the Forties, a last gasp of optimism in a world that was growing increasingly cynical. Together they wrote love poetry and put to a test the principles that Personalism had only preached. Yet, as relationships go, theirs was a rocky affair. Lionel Monteith later noted:

I could only describe the relationship of Howard and Muriel as tumultuous. I remember so many occasions when Howard came back, having seen her, when he was in modern parlance 'over the moon,' really carried along by a great sense of love and significant things.³⁴

In Spark, Sergeant found another editor and poet whose enthusiasms and drives were directed toward shaking the poetry world and questioning its sense of values.

Spark, at the time she met Sergeant in 1947, was editor of the Poetry Review, the publication arm of the Poetry Society in Portman Square. She had come under fire from the 'old guard' of the Poetry Society for her efforts to include the 'new ' verse in her magazine. In Inside the Forties, Derek Stanford recalls Spark's battle with the establishment at the Poetry Society:

Muriel had a clever manner and a quick mind, added to which there were the attractions of her person, themselves of no mean order. First as the Secretary of the Poetry Society and then as both Secretary and Editor of The Poetry Review she had her own backers among the male officers

of the Society and among the men and women who made up the General Council. Always, however, she was aware of the opposition element out to get her. The old gang did not take at all kindly to her introduction of much new work by younger poets, and though she invariably showed respect for the formal well-made poem and what we used to speak of as 'tradition,' she little favoured the conventional composition which so many less well read readers tended to confuse it with.³⁵

Spark's struggle to assert the New Romantic or Neo-Romantic (as the Personalists came to be called) style through her forum was viewed by younger poets, such as Sergeant, as a chance to proclaim the work of the war generation right under the noses of the literary establishment who, for the most part, remained Georgian in the outlook by which they governed the Society's proceedings. (Stanford refers to the Poetry Society as "an old folks home for retired Georgian poets.") When Spark's editorship of the Poetry Review was challenged by the Poetry Society's establishment, poets such as Howard Sergeant, Herbert Palmer, Derek Stanford, John Bayliss, Tambimuttu, among others, jumped to her defence (and most of her defenders were regular Outposts contributors). Spark, they believed, was a literary warrior, a vanguard in the age-old struggle of the old versus the new. Sergeant also had political reasons for supporting Spark's editorship of the Poetry Review. In 1946, the previous editor of the Poetry Review had allowed Sergeant to be attacked by the "old guard" of the Poetry Society. On September 11, 1946 Sergeant wrote to Lionel

Monteith:

Poetry Review have taken two whole pages to attack me for being a 'hieratic' -- the critic leaves himself wide open -- hope you feel like entering the battle!³⁶

Sergeant likely believed that a change of editorship of the magazine would be a good idea and that his best defence against such attacks would be to have Spark at the helm of the magazine. Lionel Monteith recalled the feeling of optimism that followed Spark's accession to the position of editor for the Poetry Review:

Prior to Muriel's time as editor of the Poetry Review, as I recall a man named Galloway Kyle³⁷ seemed to feel that any verse which didn't fairly closely follow the model of Wordsworth's was errant modern nonsense, and of course when Muriel had a hand in editorial matters she began to blow like a fresh wind through the society, backed by Howard who became a member of the Council.³⁸

Sergeant's alliance with Spark was not only a political measure on his part. Her aptitude for attracting controversy around the Poetry Society, and the wrath of the old guard that she incurred made her a victim of those things which Sergeant despised. He came to her rescue out of a sense of chivalry -- she became a cause for him. Sergeant noted in his diary on September 23, 1947, the extent of Spark's battle:

I was astonished to learn the situation at the Poetry Society. Apparently, Harding wanted Muriel to edit the magazine as he thought it ought to be done, and that she should go to bed with him. As she wouldn't cooperate in either way trouble is brewing. Muriel asked me to judge this year's Greenwood Competition [a poem by Sergeant had won the year before, and gave him an added boost of recognition].³⁹

The first in a series of battles for control of the Poetry Society and the Poetry Review came to a head in early October of 1947 when the General Council of the Society asked for and received Harding's resignation.⁴⁰ With this temporary victory in her hand, Spark invited Sergeant to write criticism for the Poetry Review, nominated him to sit on the General Council, and made him an editorial advisor to her magazine. For Sergeant, who had been an unknown only two years before, the sudden rise to a position of power in the poetry world was a dream come true.

The link with Spark and the Poetry Review proved beneficial to Outposts as well as to Sergeant. Sergeant noted in his diary on October 23, 1947, that Muriel Spark had telephoned him to tell him that both Roy Campbell and Dylan Thomas had promised to send poems to Outposts. Neither, in the end, sent any work to Outposts. Spark's approval and support of Outposts, however, proved to be a boon to the magazine. Not only was the magazine the domain of the younger poets, as it had been when Sergeant founded it three years before -- among them Denise Levertov (then known as Levertoff), the American Anne Sexton (published

under the misprint name of Anne Saxton), James Kirkup and Dannie Abse -- but now it was a forum for recognized poets, such as Treece, Vernon Watkins and Nicholas Moore, who viewed Outposts as an established magazine.

Spark, for Sergeant, was not only a young leader among poets. Gradually, as they worked together, planning issues of their magazines, discussing poetry and the business of the Poetry Society, she became an object of his amorous attentions. Spark was particular about the type of male company she kept. The men she dated, according to Derek Stanford in Inside the Forties, had to meet a strict set of criteria:

When I first knew Muriel she assessed males in terms of a descending hierarchy of values: intelligence, first; charm, second; with good looks alone, an honoured third. She was too much of an elitist to promote number three to a higher place.⁴¹

Sergeant offered a combination of all three elements. Although he was self-educated, he was intelligent and very well-read, especially in current events, philosophy and poetry. His charm was based on a quiet sense of diplomacy, a tactful silence and a reserve that he used throughout his life to present an image of neutrality in public. Such charm was useful to him later in life when he served on various arts council and contest committees. In looks, Sergeant's resemblance to Leslie Howard must have been a factor in Spark's attraction to him; he had blond hair,

grey eyes, was tall, and had a strong face and chin. Spark, for Sergeant, was a beautiful woman. She was not simply a "dittsy blond" as Derek Stanford commented she was, but an articulate, energetic and intelligent young woman who attracted attention. Sergeant confided to his diary on October 13, 1947, that he was afraid that Spark

is getting rather keen on me from a personal angle. Dangerous. Must watch this relationship. I notice that she takes particular care over her looks when she knows she will be seeing me. Or am I conceited?⁴²

Sergeant was married at this time. His wife, Dorothy, lived in Blackpool while Sergeant worked in London. Each week Dorothy collected the manuscripts and mail for Outposts that arrived at their Blackpool home and forwarded them to London where Sergeant was rooming with Lionel Monteith. Their first child, Deirdre, had been born several years before. Sergeant not only felt guilty about being away in London but about his developing relationship with Muriel Spark. His diaries are fraught with anxiety and tension over the matter. One evening in late October, 1947, just after they had dined together, Spark and Sergeant crossed Green Park together and he realized he was in love with her. They spent the next weekend together in Maidenhead. Sergeant confided to his diary:

Muriel left me at Victoria Station and went to the office. Whilst I was waiting I saw a cat tormenting a mouse and the sight

increased my nervous tension; was almost sick.⁴³

As they became closer and Sergeant's sense of guilt increased, he found his only refuge and comfort in working on Outposts. In early November, Sergeant headed north to Scotland on a business trip and he stopped off to see Dorothy in Blackpool. There he told her about Spark. He wrote to Lionel Monteith from Scotland, while on the business trip, on November 11, 1947:

I believe that Muriel has told you briefly the situation at Blackpool. The trouble is, of course, that Muriel, not knowing Dorothy, is rather tempted to see Dorothy in the wrong light. As you know, Dorothy is essentially a very good type even if we are unsuitable. The tragedy is that we are married. Dorothy says that she will never divorce me. She still loves me and will not let me go. You will appreciate what a dreadful business it was. I hated hurting her.⁴⁴

The relationship, as Sergeant later said, was one of torment for him emotionally and he was torn between his heart and his responsibilities.

If the diaries are any indication, the relationship between Spark and Sergeant was a stormy one, both emotionally and intellectually. They argued constantly over poetry, debating not only what they liked but the methods by which they came to their conclusions about their tastes. While Sergeant was in Edinburgh, Spark arrived to visit her son, Robyn, and her parents. Sergeant read Eliot's "Dry Salvages" and this became a topic of heated conversation.

Sergeant recorded the episode in his diary on November 17, 1947:

Then followed a discussion of objective versus subjective criticism -- I argued that criticism should be objective if it were to be of any value; Muriel thought that it should be subjective. It led to one or two cutting remarks such as Muriel's crack at my 'whirlwind study of English literature' and mine that [A.V.] Bowen's 'pony' poem was of the sort that Dorothy would like. Muriel resented my criticism of the poem because it reflected upon her as an editor and I object to her method of dragging in the 'great critics' of the past as though she were the only one who had read them.⁴⁵

Together, however, they arrived at a critical "neutral zone" in their argument of the subjective versus the objective approach to criticism and editing. Sergeant, throughout his career as an editor, advocated the possibility of a universal critical standard, a criterion or at least a methodology by which a poem could be read and understood.

The "neutral zone," a combination of objective and subjective approaches, was published jointly by Sergeant and Spark in a pamphlet titled "Reassessment."⁴⁶ Lionel Monteith recalled that Muriel Spark's one great ambition in life at the time she knew Sergeant was "to be a really good literary critic." The intent of the project, whether it was to be a magazine for poetry reader or a series of broadsheets detailing various critical approaches to subjects ranging from literature to government, remains a

mystery. Only one pamphlet was published and it has been overlooked by scholars of the work of Muriel Spark and of post-Second World War British poetry. Sergeant and Spark stated that the "aims of 'Reassessment' are to initiate a true critical standard of judgement of poetry by a system of analysis, assessment, and synthesis." The method was designed to take "into account the psychological experience of both poet and critic and at the same time establish the relative value of the poem with the poetry of all time, as well as with contemporaneous poetry, and thus to provide a comprehensive criterion."

Both poets saw the "Reassessment" pamphlet as an attempt to counteract the abuse heaped on poetry by those who either knew nothing at all about the art and flattered themselves with their ability to deflate the work of others, or to counterbalance the criticism by other poets who sought to increase their own status by down-grading the work of others. The concept, as well, may have been an attempt to find a common value or set of rules beneath the vogue of individual likes and dislikes, the 'personal' or subjective approach, which the Apocalyptic critics and poets had promoted through their assertion of the primacy of the individual. Whatever the case, Sergeant and Spark felt that a methodological apology was in order both to answer critics of their own poetry and to rebuke those who questioned their own editorial aims. In Spark's case, the

pamphlet seemed an expediency when considered in the light of the challenges to her editorship of Poetry Review. Like point number six of the Front Line Generation manifesto, the assertion of a universal standard or system of judgement, analysis and selection was a necessary step in the battle against literary cliques.

The methodology itself stemmed from a combination of close reading, biographical criticism and personal relevancy. A thorough knowledge of literature and particularly of poetry was essential as all new work was to be measured against what had already been written and adopted into the working canon of verse and fiction. The first step in the "Reassessment" process dealt with a close reading of the literary structures and properties of the poem:

Under the heading of analysis the Reassessor breaks down the poems into its constituent elements of Imagery, Content, Form, Style and Significance, and records against these sections his initial subjective impressions.⁴⁷

Once a "Sparkian" or subjective interpretation had been established, the process was shifted to the objective method of interpretation:

At the next stage the Reassessor examines such impressions objectively, by distinguishing between his own and the poet's experience evoked by each section; and having thus identified the communicable experience of the poem he proceeds to relate it to the communicable experience of his conception of all

literature. (A high degree of literary knowledge is assumed).⁴⁸

The problem in the methodology to this point was that it demanded a paradoxical stance of informed ignorance on the part of the reader, a sense of literature and literary development based on wide reading, yet at the same time relying on a simple 'gut' reaction to the work at hand. The question of "Significance" seems an odd interjection in the initial 'subjective' stage as it assumes, in a very 'Forties' way, that a poem has importance beyond its own status purely as a work of art. The assumption was that all art has "significance" because a beholder responds to it both emotionally and intellectually. In the Forties perception of the role of poetry, the beholder also had to respond to a poem psychologically and socially, if not politically. The question of "communicable experience" that could be gleaned from a poem was also contentious. Sergeant and Spark assumed that "communicable experience" in the process of reading a poem was not a variable but a constant. The problem with this, as post-Freudian critics such as Harold Bloom pointed out in his study The Anxiety of Influence, is that the possibilities for misreading in the process of reading are endless, subjective and personal.

Sergeant and Spark foresaw the problem of potential misreading from placing too much reliance on the subjective

or initial response. In a move that foreshadows Bloom's dilemma of misreading, Spark and Sergeant interjected a codicil in the middle of their methodology:

Before continuing with the analysis of the poem the Reassessor must discard his first subjective reactions and suspend what he recognizes to be opinions arising from these reactions.⁴⁹

Sergeant and Spark realized that the subjective experience or response to a work of poetry was the response of the poet in everyone, the urge to recreate a piece of writing in the image of the reader's own experience and mind. By divorcing the evaluation or reassessment of the poem from the subjective aspects of interpretation, they were concluding that the critical process takes place outside the creative process, and follows the perceptual and conceptual methodology of scientific inquiry. Like science, the canon of literature was the record of discovery, a body of tried and tested laws or rules for the structure and function of linguistic and imaginative, as opposed to natural, phenomena. Thus, Sergeant and Spark followed their codicil on 'misreading' or subjective interpretation with the assertion that a critic or reassessor should measure or test the poem in question against the established rules of poetry as they are found in the accepted or total canon of English literature:

The Reassessor should then classify each section of communicable experience in its relation to his "awareness" of the literary tradition, in terms appropriate to the section's peculiar properties, completing the analysis of the poem.⁵⁰

Spark and Sergeant were casting aside Eliot's notion of the supremacy of the critic over the poem, the dictum that it is the duty of every good critic to rescue the poem from the poet. The poet, under "Reassessment," was to be part of the process of criticism and not a victim of it. They insisted that the critic had to be on guard against his own experience and suggested that what poetry needed was critical responsibility.

Sergeant and Spark concluded the pamphlet by stating that they were not attempting to impose a rigid methodology on the critical process but instead were attempting to formulate and synthesize their own suspicions about the way their minds confronted the editorial and critical practice:

The method as described above is not intended to formalise or limit the function of criticism in any way; it will be found that, correctly applied, it establishes itself in the mind of the critic as a natural process, allowing full scope to the individual outlook.⁵¹

The key word in this conclusion is "individual." As was the case with Apocalyptic poet/critics such as G.S. Fraser, Sergeant and Spark felt that certain conclusions about

literature could be drawn by examining their individual or personal approaches or experiences.

As Sergeant and Spark's friendship intensified, they put into practice the theory that seemed to surround them on the poetry scene: they launched into a dialogue in poetry, a communication between their own dream worlds, and a discourse between their poetic selves. In a series of point-counter-point love lyrics, written between them during the years 1947 and 1948, Sergeant and Spark put into practice the ideas of Personalist poetics. The concept of inner truths manifesting themselves through the amalgamation of dreaming and poetic practice became the basis for the dialogue of individuals, soul to soul, who were united by mutual love. The entire dialogue may have been composed of eight to ten poems each and, although it is impossible to reconstruct the full extent of the dialogue, typescripts by Spark that were found in Sergeant's files point to some of the key poems that connect with poems by Sergeant. Many of Sergeant's poems from the dialogue appeared in his 1953 collection, The Headlands. Several of Spark's poems are included in Going Up to Sotheby's. Those Spark poems inscribed "To Howard" and signed by her, are the most likely candidates for the apparent dialogue, and elements in the imagery and content of the poems themselves seem to answer images and questions posed by Sergeant in his poems to her. Spark's poems also

answer a great many questions and enigmas presented by Sergeant's poetry of this period and may suggest that he was not as difficult a poet as some later critics suggested when they dismissed his writings.

For example, Spark's poem "Song of the Impious Lover" reads:

Come for the devil kisses and the incautious
 Sunday when souls make fine excursions. Let
 the delectable angels wait upon heretics
 to the Sunday's end, but lovers take sanctuary
 in the dark valley of angels. (Look well to it
 that the wassail-song is hymn and canticle; praise
 the rare invention of heavens and see that a prayer
 rebukes the impious meridian, the unshriven
 hourglass, the crude and seven-day clock;
 censure the spinning sacrilege of earth.)⁵²

The initial stanza of the poem is an answer, although somewhat coded in the blurred language of dreams that is the hallmark of the Personalist poetics, to Sergeant's last stanza of "Morning Song for a Lover:"

So in my morning presence fall
 the attributes I defied,
 leaving the unknown, this shy grave
 enigma sleeping at my side.
 Desire is stilled beneath the wave
 and cannot now be reconciled
 with a reverence such as this.
 But dream, my Darling, in the child
 and I shall call you with a kiss.⁵³

The connection between the last lines of Sergeant's poem and the first lines of Spark's is that she answers his "kiss" or his desire to communicate with her through the kiss with a "yes." Spark misread the phrase "this shy grave

enigma sleeping at my side" and took the meaning of "grave" as a place of burial rather than as an expression of seriousness. Hence, in her reply, the lovers take sanctuary in "the dark valley of angels" or death. In terms of Personalist poetics, specificity was not as important in the overall picture of the poem as the personal feelings which the poem communicated and evoked. The sense of punning on "grave" is not only an example of poetic invention through misreading, but of the subjective identification of the message in Sergeant's poem with Spark's different but genuine feeling at the moment of reply.

In other fragments of the dialogue, Sergeant's "Song" is answered with Spark's "Standing in dusk," a poem she presented in a signed and dedicated typescript to Sergeant on November 10, 1947. Sergeant writes:

Cairn, castle and protecting wall
Follow their builders back to dust;
Keen sword and scabbard rest in rust;
And Time, impartial, takes them all.⁵⁴

The metaphor of the castle is answered by Spark with a like image:

Standing in dusk, high trees and parapets
assert their structure, being silhouettes
made poignant by absence.⁵⁵

The castle in Spark's poem is a dream castle, built purely from the imagination. Sergeant, in his poem, makes no

delineations about the castle's substance. Both poems, however, conclude with a pledge. Sergeant's says:

So come my love, we have a tryst
Time cannot reach for all his skill.

Spark's poem, likewise, utters a pledge which rises out of anxiety and despair:

In despair
at the bright day ended, bare branch and tower
rise on the skyline like terrestrial forms
that probe the dark, impetuous with arms
ambitious for light, reaching upward as I
reach, in the long night of extremity
for you, my love, needing your steadfast sun
wherewith my whirling earth would make a dawn.

The dialogue, regardless of biographical considerations, stands as one of the more interesting sequences of love poetry written in this century. In it, the meeting of two minds and two poetic viewpoints can be seen, and the dialogue is a reflection of Personalism at its high-water mark because of the psychological complexities and details which it presents.

For the most part, however, the time Spark and Sergeant spent together was taken up with the pragmatic issues of editorial work and literary politics. The politics of the post-war literary scene in England were complex, uncompromising, and in the case of Muriel Spark merciless. The relationship with the old guard at the Poetry Society, which included such figures as Marie

Stopes, was only temporarily in a state of truce and they were quick to seize upon an opportunity to reassert themselves and depose Spark as editor and General Council member. In Inside the Forties, Derek Stanford recounts the story of Spark's deposition from the Poetry Society:

One of her misdemeanours, it seems, in the eyes of the Old Guard was that during her regime the funds of the Society had diminished considerably. The reason for this was that she had paid for all the work contributed to the magazine, and at a higher rate than had previously been the practice in those cases where payment had been made. Muriel's defence was that if the review were to carry good verse and prose, it must pay for it in a manner that would attract professional writers. This, of course, meant younger members of the Society itself, whose poetaster rentier ranks did not take kindly to this innovation. They on their part were glad enough to have their names published without payment, and in some instances would indeed have been prepared to pay to have them made public.⁵⁶

By early 1948 the battle-lines again began to take shape. Lionel Monteith recalled the events on the eve of Spark's dismissal and Sergeant's last-minute but futile efforts to persuade enough of the neutral members of the Council to preserve her editorship:

The Council was all powerful in hiring and firing editors and in everything else that went on in the Society, and was composed of a number of distinguished people, many of whom knew very little about writing and less about poetry. The most weighty was Christmas Humphreys -- he was the son of a Lord Justice and himself later became a Lord Justice and was, at the time, President of the Buddhist Society of Great Britain: a very distinguished

man and a very influential one in the Poetry Society. I remember that the balance of forces, so to speak, in the Council of the Poetry Society was always very finely poised and it was a concern of Howard's lest the conservative element should gain the upper hand at any time and throw Muriel out. It was therefore important to keep Humphreys persuaded that her editorship was good and in the best interests of the Society.⁵⁷

Humphreys' role in Spark's fall from the Society is a cloudy one. On one hand, it appears that his vote against Spark cast the balance of power against her, while on the other hand he was the first to console her and support her after the events had run their course. Monteith recalled:

There was an occasion on which Howard and I went to see Christmas Humphreys at his St. John's Wood home and sought to persuade him that the conservative element was doing the Society a great deal of harm and that its future lay with Muriel's editorship. He sat on the fence and I think that in the end it was his influence which probably told against her.⁵⁸

Regardless of how well Sergeant may have tried to organize the defences for Muriel, the meeting of the General Council of the Poetry Society at which Spark's editorship met its end was high theatre bordering on comedy. Tambimuttu spoke in Spark's defence but it was a defence that backfired, an illogic that was eloquent and well-meant but damning in the eyes of conservative-minded members. Derek Stanford described the situation:

Tambi once unashamedly admitted that he did not possess a Western sense of time. Neither did he possess a Western sense of money, as

demonstrated by his defence of how Muriel had diminished the Society's funds. He began by saying that he had heard that during Mrs. Spark's editorship the resources of the Society had fallen gravely. That was very good; that was how things should be. A poetry society ought to be for poets, not shopkeepers or stockbrokers. Poets needed money, very badly indeed. Shopkeepers and stockbrokers did not need money. They had plenty of it already. If you paid your poets well, your funds would sink. That was proof you were doing your job...The real test of a good poetry editor was perhaps that he should make his publisher bankrupt.⁵⁹

With such logic behind her cause, Spark lost the battle of the Poetry Society. The battle, however, caused a huge rift in the Society. Sergeant, Stanford, Monteith, John Bayliss, Hugo Manning, Herbert Palmer, Derek Patmore, and John Waller, among others, who supported Spark, immediately resigned from the Society. Surprisingly, Christmas Humphreys also resigned in protest. Derek Stanford, in Inside the Forties recounts that Spark "like a woman scorned, angrily shook the dust of the West End from her heels and took refuge in the house of Christmas Humphreys in St. John's Wood." The group of literary "refugees" from the Society made a futile first attempt at organizing a counter society to the Poetry Society, an anti-Poetry Society Poetry Society. Stanford recalls the scene:

There had been some talk of forming a splinter movement among the Poetry Society poets who looked on themselves as Muriel's friends. John Waller, Ian Fletcher, Herbert Palmer, Howard Sergeant, Erik de Marnay, Jack Bayliss, Stefan Schimanski (literary editor of World Review and co-editor with

Henry Treece of the Personalist anthology Transformation), Derek Patmore and myself, had all been summoned to witness what was hoped would prove the birth of a new literary group.⁶⁰

The meeting, which took place at Christmas Humphreys' house, was more of a media event than a literary movement. The group hired photographers to record the moment and a photograph of Sergeant with Palmer, Stanford and others is found in Inside the Forties.⁶¹ As Stanford suggests, the meeting was a failure. The battle with the Society had diffused a great deal of the energy that had existed within Spark's camp of supporters. Spark lost interest in the question of forming a new group and soon founded the short-lived literary magazine Forum with Derek Stanford. For the moment, Sergeant was the odd man out in the battle. He still had support among the younger poets who had supported Spark -- in fact all of those mentioned by Stanford who attended the meeting to found the new movement, with the exceptions of Schimanski and Patmore, were contributors to Outposts at the time. John Waller published "When Sadness Fills a Journey" in Number Eleven (Autumn 1948); Ian Fletcher's "Parable" had appeared before the events of early 1948 in Number Five (Spring 1945); Herbert Palmer's "Backwards" was published in Number Fifteen (Winter 1949) and Palmer had been a supporting influence on Sergeant during the founding of the magazine; Erik de Marnay gave "Derelict" to Number Fourteen; and Bayliss was a regular

contributor throughout the late Forties and published three poems in Outposts between Numbers Four and Eight. The pages of the magazine during this period reflect Sergeant's efforts to make the voices of the new generation heard above the din sent up by the old guard. Although the energy for making 'movements' seemed to have faded from his contemporaries, Sergeant was far from exhausted and he fought back against the Poetry Society in a way which he thought would circumvent the spheres of influence of the old guard. He looked to the detached establishment and to the new political association of states formerly comprising the British Empire, the Commonwealth.

Spark's battle with the old guard of the Poetry Society was probably a contributing factor in the founding of the Commonwealth movement and the expansion of Sergeant's fledgling organization called the British Poetry Association, both of which were unique attempts to draw poets together by virtue of their language rather than their styles, aesthetics or nationality. The British Poetry Association, which Sergeant began not as a counter-movement to the Poetry Society in 1947 but as a tandem organization aimed at assisting younger poets who he felt were not served by the Poetry Society, was a rare moment in literary statemanship when poets from Britain, the Commonwealth and the United States banded together in an international effort to promote poetry. Sergeant was not

only the President of the British Poetry Association but he was its moving force, its founder, organizer and promoter. True to his past efforts, the Association was intended to support the efforts of "young and unestablished poets by impartial criticism, advice on markets, and publication of their work."

The British Poetry Association was, to some extent, an extension of Outposts, a fact recalled by Lionel Monteith:

It was going to promote poetry in every possible way, and particularly indiscriminating as far as names were concerned, to accept good work from whomever might come and give an opportunity to publication to people who were so far unknown. That was a typical idea of Howard's.⁶²

The founding committee composed of Sergeant, Monteith, Wrey Gardiner, Herbert Palmer, Hardiman Scott (the poet, journalist and editor who had been publishing work in Outposts) and Robert Greacen (the Irish editor and poet who had given Sergeant the initial idea for his magazine), drew up a list of aims. These founding principles, much like a manifesto but without the political biases of previous declarations, were directed toward poetry promotion and greater contact between poets both at home and abroad. The British Poetry Association members believed they could serve the interests of poetry by having regular meetings, not only in the hub of London, but at branches throughout

the country, thus decentralizing literary culture in England and allowing for a greater regional input to the larger scene. Sergeant felt this was a particularly important aim. He had published An Anthology of Contemporary Northern Poetry in 1947 (which included poems from Arnold Vincent Bowen, Paul Dehn, Roy Fuller, James Kirkup, Norman Nicholson, Herbert Palmer, Kathleen Raine, Herbert Read, Dorothy Una Ratcliffe, Alan Rook, Francis Scarfe, Stanley Snaith and Dorothy Wellesley) and although it had failed to make an impact both in sales and in favourable critical reaction, Sergeant still believed that regionalism played a vital role in the total milieu of British verse.⁶³ The decentralization concept would also circumvent the Poetry Society's control of the London literary scene. Sergeant also believed that the provinces contained a vast number of new poets who had not previously been served by an organization. The Association planned festivals, competitions and intramedia events with organizations from other arts in order to give the poetry scene an infusion of energy from sculpture, dance, music and theatre.

The new movement needed some support from the establishment if it were not to be labelled an organization of new poets by both critics and media. Sergeant began his search for an advisory committee that would bring instant recognition and a much needed guiding hand to the British

Poetry Association. Little was chronicled about the founding of the British Poetry Association until 1987 when a file of letters was discovered at the back and bottom of Sergeant's filing cabinet. The file contained correspondence from those to whom Sergeant had turned for leadership and direction in his efforts of 1948. The first poet contacted was T.S. Eliot. Eliot, sensing that the BPA could dissolve into a politicized organization like the Poetry Society, declined on the grounds that he had too much to do both as an editor and a playwright. The next established poet contacted was Herbert Read who responded with encouragement and support for the new movement but declined to head the list of Vice-Presidents. On his third attempt to bring a "name" poet to the organization, Sergeant contacted Siegfried Sassoon and Sassoon agreed to lend whatever support he could to the movement. Sassoon also put Sergeant in touch with his friend Brigadier-General Sir George Cockerill and with the writer L.A.G. Strong and they were soon heading the list of Vice-Presidents. With Sassoon's endorsement, Sergeant turned to Dorothy Wellesley, the Duchess of Wellington and a poet admired by Yeats, and she readily agreed to head the mast of the organization as "Patron." Sergeant, on the strength of his "names" within the organization, then persuaded Henry Treece to join Paul Dehn and him on a committee which was responsible for choosing the "Book of the Year." With

his cast assembled, Sergeant began the business of moving the BPA toward its goals.

Publication was a large part of the British Poetry Association's agenda. Hardiman Scott was designated to edit the publication arm of the new movement, a journal called Poetry that ran until the early Fifties. Lionel Monteith was chosen to edit a new venture, Poetry Commonwealth, a magazine intended to publish work not only from Britain but from Australia, New Zealand, Canada, South Africa, and Ireland. Of the two magazines, Poetry Commonwealth stands as the most significant achievement of the British Poetry Association.

Poetry Commonwealth⁶⁴ began with a Summer issue in 1948 and lasted eight issues until it concluded in the Spring of 1951 with a Canadian issue edited by Earle Birney. Physically, the magazine was modelled on Outposts, a small saddle-stitched folio that contained on average sixteen pages per issue, and sold for one and six pence. Sergeant acted as an editorial advisor to Monteith who chose the work for the issues, oversaw production and kept in contact with poets overseas regarding developments in poetry in their particular countries. The magazine also ran reviews of books from overseas, a fact that may not have been important to British poetry of the time but which was a boon to writing being published in Canada and Australia. Through Poetry Commonwealth the writing of such

Canadian poets as Earle Birney, Dorothy Livesay and Ralph Gustafson, was given a broader hearing on the British market, and enlarged the audience that Canadian Accent had already established. In the second issue editorial, Monteith commented:

That the interest of British readers in overseas Commonwealth poetry is growing cannot be doubted, and recent months have seen some unique and encouraging developments.⁶⁵

The first issue of Poetry Commonwealth contained the work of both Sergeant and Spark and later issues carried poems by such Outposts supporters as G.S. Fraser, Robert Greacen, John Waller, Dannie Abse, Hugo Manning, Hardiman Scott, C. Busby Smith (later John Smith), Norman Nicholson, Margaret Crosland, Michael Redgrove, Emmanuel Litvinoff, and Wrey Gardiner. The magazine, as an instrument of the British Poetry Association, could have been charged as simply a forum for the BPA clique had it not been for the fact that it offered first British publication to a whole range of authors from overseas who later developed into leading poets of their respective countries. From Canada the magazine featured the work of Earle Birney, Dorothy Livesay, P.K. Page, Raymond Souster, Louis Dudek, Norman Levine, Ralph Gustafson, Anne Wilkinson, E.J. Pratt, Roy Daniells, and F.R. Scott. With the exceptions of Levine (who later made a name for himself as a novelist), Louis Dudek, Roy Daniells and Anne Wilkinson, the other

Canadians published in Poetry Commonwealth went on to win or had won the country's highest distinction for poetry, the Governor General's Award. Among the notable Australian poets featured were Judith Wright who became a regular contributor, as well as Rosemary Dobson, David Campbell and Robert D. Fitzgerald. The New Zealanders were well represented by James K. Baxter, Kendrick Smythyman, and Louis Johnson, all of whom also contributed work to issues of Outposts contemporary with Poetry Commonwealth. The two magazines became sister publications, each running exchange advertisements for the other. Sergeant also became a regular reviewer for the magazine.

From a purely critical point of view, Sergeant saw the Commonwealth nations and their struggle to assert their own culture and sense of themselves in the modern world as a situation parallel to the challenges faced by the contemporary writer in Britain. The end of the British Empire, marked by the independence of India in 1947, offered the emerging nations of the English-speaking world a chance to express themselves in ways they had not dreamed before. Doubtless, Sergeant thought, a new type of literature would emerge from all of the historical developments of the time and the British Poetry Association, under his leadership, would take the lead in exploring and promoting such new writing. The British Poetry Association marked one of the earliest attempts to

acknowledge and explore Commonwealth literature and Sergeant's efforts in this area were pioneering. In his introduction to the 1967 anthology, Commonwealth Poems of Today, which featured work from twenty-three Commonwealth nations or areas, Sergeant stated:

It has frequently been observed that a nation's level of maturity can, to some extent, be gauged by the progress it has made towards the establishment of a thriving indigenous culture. Since such a culture must obviously have its roots in the traditions, beliefs, and ways of life of the people, and reflect the whole racial and social pattern of the nation, it will take its own time to emerge and will develop in its own natural manner -- an organic process which may well extend over a number of centuries, for, while eliminating restrictive conventions, it must fuse what has been thought worth preserving from the past with the realities of the present, to say nothing of aspirations for the future.⁶⁶

Sergeant held the belief that the use of the English language did not imply a wholesale adoption of English culture by English-speaking nations. Culture, Sergeant insisted, was the result of time, place and event rather than an inherited and static entity that could not be challenged by ideas or progress. As he had discovered in the Poetry Society fiasco, poetry needed to be in a constant state of development -- new voices and new ideas had to be encouraged. When he observed the conservative element on his own poetry scene, he could not find the energy and the dynamism which he felt were the hallmarks of

a healthy literature. The Commonwealth, on the other hand, with its tentative and fledgling national literatures, as yet relatively undiscovered by British readers and critics, offered that sense of adventure for which Sergeant was searching.

To promote the BPA's connections throughout the Commonwealth, Sergeant called upon various foreign nationals who were living, writing or studying in England at the time, and arranged for them to be representatives of their respective countries for the organization. South Africa was represented by George Erroll Wilson; Australia by R.G. Howarth and New Zealand by poet Louis Johnson. From Canada, Sergeant enlisted Earle Birney, whom he had met at the close of the war while Birney was convalescing from a severe bout of meningitis. Birney, at the war's end, had returned to Canada and had inherited the editorship of the Canadian Author's Association magazine, Canadian Poetry Magazine from E.J. Pratt.

In his memoir, Spreading Time: Remarks on Canadian Writing and Writers, Book I: 1904-1949, Birney recounts that he too was having problems with the conservatives of the organization which backed his journal. To combat their respective critics, Sergeant and Birney agreed to exchange edit each other's magazines. Birney also agreed to edit a special Canadian issue of Poetry Commonwealth. Birney recalled his achievements with Canadian Poetry Magazine:

Among the other "firsts" were the earlier version of Pratt's "Behind the Log", two translations from Eskimo; and an entire issue given over to British poetry of the day, selected by Howard Sergeant, editor of the London Outposts. At the same time I prepared a Canadian number of his journal -- an international exchange which resulted not only in the sly smuggling of fresh Canadian poetry into London but in the appearance first in Canada of new poems by such well-known poets as Treece and Heath-Stubbs, and by others who have since moved to the foreground: Comfort, Muriel Spark, Kirkup, Abse and Denise Levertov.⁶⁷

Sergeant felt that the exchange would be beneficial to British poets, especially those whom he wanted to serve with Outposts.

In his introduction to Canadian Poetry Magazine, Volume 11, Number 3 of March 1948, Sergeant expressed his sentiments that British poetry needed some life injected into it from outside:

There can be no doubt that the poets on either side of the Atlantic have much to learn from each other -- and a careful study of modern world poetry has convinced me that the work of leading Canadian poets is amongst the most virile being written today.⁶⁸

Sergeant also seized the opportunity to expound on his feelings towards regional literature within Britain, a fact attributable to the failure of his Anthology of Contemporary Northern Poetry of 1947. In an answer to his critics (and it is doubtful that any of them saw the introduction to the issue) Sergeant fired back:

It was paradoxical that in an age dominated by power-politics and over centralisation there was growing a counter-active tendency towards the development of art and poetry along regional lines. Maurice Lindsay and Robert Greacen, previously connected with the Apocalyptics, broke away to form Scottish and Irish groups, and Keidrych Rhys encouraged a similar movement in Wales. In these circles, the trend towards a revitalized regionalism was identified with nationalism but in actual fact it was informed by the same spirit of revolt that insists upon the real freedom of the artist to develop in his own natural manner. Nowhere is this spirit more in evidence than in the six northern counties of England where the poets have been more successful in avoiding a parochial outlook. They realise, at least, that each cultural region has some contribution to make to national and international patterns of thought, belief and behaviour.⁶⁹

The spirit of the Forties' poetics that pervaded many of the doctrines such as Personalism and Apocalypticism informs Sergeant's statements regarding the state of British poetry in 1948 with a kind of fervour that was gradually starting to wane throughout the rest of the poetry scene. Beneath his sense of fervour, Sergeant may have been aware of the decline of energies among his fellow poets, yet his actions suggest that he was unwilling to follow such directions himself. With a note of reservation Sergeant concluded that "since the end of the war British poetry has been going through a transitional stage and it is difficult to foresee exactly what direction it will take. Many of the younger poets have not yet been able to readjust themselves." The British issue of Canadian Poetry Magazine, which included work by Treece, Heath-Stubbs,

Comfort, Nicholson, Abse, Leonard Clark, Hugo Manning, Vernon Watkins, Wrey Gardiner, Levertov, Spark, Kirkup, Dehn, Sergeant, Patric Dickinson, Monteith, Stanford, and Ian Fletcher, was more or less a representation of the make-up of the British Poetry Association membership, and the issues which Sergeant discussed in his introduction signals some of the pressures and trends which were at work upon the group at that time.

Birney's introduction to Outposts Number Ten Summer 1948, the only foreign or special issue of the magazine ever produced, contained a much more optimistic outlook for Canadian poetry than Sergeant's did for the British scene. After all, a large number of new Canadian poets were emerging during this period, and Birney was anxious to promote them to win ground in his struggle with a neo-Victorian old guard that dominated Canadian poetry at the time. The issue of Outposts edited by Birney is in many ways a portent of things that were to come in Canadian poetry -- many of the poets he featured in 1948 were not to make a significant mark on the Canadian scene until the poetry explosion and "identity" boom of the Sixties. The issue featured the work of Birney, Patrick Anderson (the editor and leader of the Preview group in Montreal), Louis Dudek (who would later serve as Ezra Pound's secretary for a brief period in the Fifties and who would become a major influence on Al Purdy, Irving Layton and Leonard Cohen in

Montreal of the late Fifties after founding his own magazine, CIV/N), E.J. Pratt (the venerable winner of three Governor General's Awards for poetry and at the time "Poet Laureate of Canada"), Malcolm Lowry (who had just completed his masterpiece Under the Volcano, and who had met Birney while living on the West Coast of Canada), P.K. Page, Robert Finch, A.M. Klein, Dorothy Livesay, James Reaney (who would later found Alphabet, a magazine modelled on Outposts), Roy Daniells, Miriam Waddington, R.A.D. Ford James Wreford, and Ralph Gustafson. Impressive as the line-up may have been to Canadian readers, especially those who have examined the number in retrospect, the issue went almost unnoticed both in Canada and Britain. The Commonwealth movement was hindered by the fact that, although new and promising writers were testing their wings throughout the English speaking world, their respective countries were still attuned to an older poetry that was aesthetically centred in London and focussed on those who opposed much of the new writing.

Sergeant had hoped to have an exchange with the New Zealand publication Arena⁷⁰ and he edited issue Number 21 for them in late 1948. The New Zealand publication which included work by Stanford, Hardiman Scott, Nicholas Moore, Treece, Nicholson, Dehn, Spark, Monteith, Stanley Snaith, Abse, Elizabeth Bartlett, Hugo Manning, Sergeant and John Bayliss presented an almost catholic list of BPA poets.

Kendrick Smythyman, a New Zealander who wrote the introduction to the issue, regretted the absence of Heath-Stubbs and W.S. Graham. Graham's absence, not only from the special British issue of Arena but from the activities organized by Sergeant, suggests that Sergeant's vision during the Forties was limited as to whom he promoted and included in his literary ventures. In fact, there were numerous poets from the period whom Sergeant ignored entirely, and one of the criticisms that can be levelled against him during this period is that he created a "clique" of his own in an attempt to oppose other cliques. That said, the scope of his magazines and his editorial projects, both during the Forties and after, is, none the less, impressive.

Closer to home, Monteith founded a neighbourhood branch of the British Poetry Association close to where he and Sergeant were living in Dulwich, South London. The Dulwich Group, as it came to be known, was the hub for BPA activities and Monteith and Sergeant organized weekly readings at a local pub, The Crown and Greyhound, that attracted such notable poets as Stephen Spender, Laurie Lee, Kathleen Raine, Christopher Hassall and Marie Stopes (who quickly forgot her opposition to Sergeant and his group when they offered her money to come and read). As well, various Commonwealth poets, as they passed through London, were given special readings at the Crown and

Greyhound to celebrate their visits to England.⁷¹ (The readings continued into the Fifties, long after the BPA had faded into the background, and Sergeant was responsible for giving Theodore Roethke his first reading in England -- an event which, indirectly, led to Roethke's publication by Faber). Among those Commonwealth poets who came to Dulwich to read were Dorothy Livesay (who became a lifelong friend of Sergeant), Birney (whose friendship Sergeant valued and who lived with Sergeant and his family for part of a year in the early Sixties), Ralph Gustafson (who visited England in August 1949) and Anne Wilkinson whom Earle Birney referred to Sergeant.

As Joan Coldwell has discovered during her recent editing of Anne Wilkinson's journals, Sergeant met Wilkinson in London on October 25, 1949 during her visit to London with friend and fellow Canadian writer Catherine Harmon.⁷² Wilkinson identified Sergeant in her journal simply as "poet and editor of Outposts" and during her visit she wrote four sonnets for Sergeant, all of them unpublished to date. Sergeant took her to lunch and then gave her a tour of the Temple area of London and then introduced her to Lionel Monteith at a pub in Holborn. Monteith recalled:

Howard and I used to meet Canadian poets when they were over in England and I do remember his meeting Anne Wilkinson, I think more than once. Frankly, there was an intimate relationship between them. I remember that although he liked

her as a poet and a person, he had rather mixed feelings and felt that the relationship was too casual to go so deeply.⁷³

Wilkinson was present, by all accounts, at a reading in Dulwich on November 14, 1949 to launch Birney's Canadian issue of Outposts. Among the poets whose work was read in absentia were Pratt, Birney, Livesay, P.K. Page, Daniells, Finch, and Reaney. Wilkinson, whose work was not included in the issue, read some of her own verse. Sergeant was impressed by her work and accepted "Unbeliever" which he published in Number Sixteen. Monteith took two poems, "After Reading Kafka" and "No Amen" which he featured in Poetry Commonwealth Number 6, Winter 1949/1950. The events in the BPA also took a theatrical twist, in an effort by Sergeant to bridge the gap between the various arts. With Monteith, they staged a first reading of the Australian playwright Douglas Stewart's Fire on the Snow, which they put on at Kingsway Hall.⁷⁴ A year later, the noted director Tyrone Guthrie staged Fire on the Snow on the strength of Sergeant and Monteith's initial no-frills production. Such events as these left Sergeant little time for poetry and little time for Muriel Spark.

Although they remained friends into the Fifties when Sergeant continued to publish her work in Outposts, Sergeant saw less and less of Muriel Spark during the latter part of 1949. As early as 1947, Sergeant confided to his diary his reservations about Muriel. On December 12

1947, for example, Spark and Sergeant dined with a young actor named Peter Ustinov and Sergeant recorded in his diary that her flirtations with Ustinov were an attempt to rouse some feelings of jealousy. Sergeant also felt that his time with Muriel was cutting in to his poetry writing and he made a New Year's resolution to spend more time with poetry and less time with prose writing, criticism and Muriel. By May of 1949, Spark and Sergeant drifted apart and she wrote to Derek Stanford, with whom she had been working on Forum, on May 25:

I am so full of the sense of being a slave. I can see years of slavery ahead of me. Howard has just telephoned and has nothing much to say. It will be nothing but an oblique journey while I want to travel as the crow flies. Everyone else who wants to write feels the same. I suffer. But you must know that I need you and wish to be with you. No doubt it is all much more complex than I can imagine. Howard always thought I was promiscuous and had always to be parading before an audience. Actually, he was wrong, but he was deceived by my expression of need to compensate for my other shortcomings.⁷⁵

According to Monteith, Spark was desperately in love with Sergeant at this time and wanted to marry him. Sergeant, on the other hand, had just divorced his first wife, Dorothy, and did not want to pursue another emotional involvement. Fearing that Spark would continue to press him for marriage, Sergeant asked Monteith to have dinner with Spark while he was away on business and to persuade her that

marriage to Sergeant would not be a good idea. Monteith recalled:

I remember once taking her to dinner at Bertorelli's in Charlotte Street, a well-known restaurant that literary people used to go to in those days, and her seeking my support in persuading Howard to marry her.⁷⁶

As early as 1947, Sergeant had urged Monteith to throw cold water on Muriel's plans for marriage. In a letter of November 1947 from Glasgow, Sergeant instructed Monteith:

If the subject comes up, I want you to bring all the weight you can against the idea. I am, of course, going to tell Muriel that it can't be done, but she wants it so badly and seems to be getting advice from friends who really tell her what she wants to hear rather than what is good or right.⁷⁷

Spark was hurt by Sergeant's indifference to her and the events with Sergeant may have coloured her view of the Forties when she considered the era in retrospect in her 1981 novel, Loitering With Intent.

When contacted in May of 1988, shortly after the publication of her novel A Far Cry From Kensington (which deals with the publishing scene of the Fifties in England), about the possible relationship between the events in Loitering With Intent and those of Spark's life in 1949, Spark replied:

I can assure you that...conjectures about the personalities in Loitering With Intent

are quite wrong. No one you mention was the origin of my characters with the exception of my Solly Mendolsohn, deliberately based on Hugo Manning as a tribute. I simply didn't have Howard and his group anywhere in mind over the years. I am an inventive novelist and my characters are truly imaginary.⁷⁸

While Loitering With Intent is not a roman-à-clef novel, the novel is an elegant and poignant testament to the closing days of the Forties. In the end, those who had weathered the movements, the organizations, the associations, and the theories felt as if they were waiting for something that never happened. The new society which had been anticipated became a world of post-war austerity in England where expectations were reduced along with the availability of food and consumer goods and where aspirations were put on hold indefinitely. As early as 1946, in New Writing (which was about to draw to a close), John Lehmann had remarked on the hardship which artists and writers had borne and suffered:

Luckily, there still are in Europe some artists who are determined to remain individuals, who have hardened the shell of their creative personalities to withstand the vicious thrush-beaks of our times. It is such artists, small though their number may be in comparison with the vast number of passing artists, who give one the grain of hope to believe that, though there may be more exploitation, it will not be of less and less....If, even amid the disillusionments and undisciplined anxieties of peace, the relaxed tension that only appears to show that the elastic has perished, we have poets like Edith Sitwell and Louis MacNeice whose work seems to advance further all the time in

the range of experience it concentrates and the power of its technical means, or like Dylan Thomas and Laurie Lee who still, in spite of all that "tends to destroy the natural soil of human achievement" seem able to bring one in close and tingling contact with it, and most effectively to supply that dying faculty of the soul which art replaces....⁷⁹

Regardless of whatever optimism or pessimism pervaded the literary milieu of 1949, Sergeant forged ahead with Outposts and published both the established poets and "the passing artists" who made work available to the magazine for publication. He continued to believe in the artist as an individual, and in poetry as "the natural soil of human achievement" which he sought to enrich through his activities.

In retrospect, however, the Forties was a decade of artistic failure. No one poet took the lead although many emerged. The theories, on which so many had pinned their hopes, including Sergeant, remained theories, abstract, unpracticed for the most part, and beyond the concerns of the reading public. In his essay "The Situation of Art at the End of the Second World War" Herbert Read concluded:

What is quite obvious is that there has been no general ferment at all comparable to that of the earlier decade. Not a single new movement in art has been born, and the only new 'ism' of any significance, existentialism, does not touch the plastic arts yet. Great art, of course, does not need a theory or a movement to justify it.⁸⁰

A new generation of poets who had just come down from

Oxford began to submit work to Outposts, among them Kingsley Amis whose poem "Masters" appeared in Number Fourteen (Summer 1949) and Elizabeth Jennings who appeared in Number Fifteen (Winter 1949) and who wrote to Sergeant inquiring if she could found a branch of the BPA in Oxford. Outposts Number Thirteen (Spring 1949) carried a review of Oxford Poetry 1948 by John Wain. In the review Wain declared a sense of frustration at the volume which lacked "contemporary sensibility." He bemoaned the fact that "Pylons, nylons, pistons, cisterns, all are banished," and added "what is more, hardly a single poem is about ugliness." A new poetry was on the verge of emerging in England. Sergeant noted in his diary in 1950 that a new verse was on the horizon and that it would come from the "university poets" who were then just beginning to test their wings. In the beginning, Sergeant supported the activity of these new poets, became close friends with many of them and even baby-sat for Kingsley Amis, with whom he remained friendly all his life. The new poetry that emerged during the Fifties would be far different from anything Sergeant had imagined during the Forties, and in the change his own verse would be left behind.

Sergeant's theory regarding Commonwealth poetry may have applied to poetry in England -- the idea that poetry adapts itself or is adapted from the conditions and tensions at hand. In such a light, no amount of theorizing,

no amount of apology or doctrine can replace the sheer struggle of a poet meeting his time and his world head-on and confronting it armed only with his skill, his knowledge of literature, his belief in a set of values, and his enthusiasm to serve the language. Throughout the Forties, Sergeant followed the path of what Ian Hamilton, in his essay "The Forties," calls "the cliché of the Apocalyptic Forties." So overwhelmingly did the Apocalyptic aesthetic permeate his plans, ideas and actions, that Sergeant served their ends without homage to much of the other poetry written during the period, particularly that of Roy Fuller and W.S. Graham. In such terms, his dismissal by later critics, along with most of his Apocalyptic contemporaries, is almost forgivable, if not foreseeable. Regardless of what he did during the period, Sergeant's career suffered from the fact that in retrospect he seemed a "derivative poet" among those who blazed a trail that led nowhere. On the other hand, many would argue that the Forties did lead somewhere in terms of poetry. A group who saw themselves as inheritors of the Forties' aesthetic, poets who were both politically charged and sensitive to their "inner" selves, were gathering around Dannie Abse's Poetry and Poverty magazine which began in the late Forties. Although he could not recognize the fact at the time, the battle lines had already been drawn for the biggest aesthetic debate of Sergeant's career in 1949. The Fifties would witness the

debate in the open and the confrontation between the poets of the Movement and the Mavericks (headed by Sergeant and Abse) would not only point to its roots in the Forties, but become the major claim to fame for the editor from Hull and his magazine, Outposts. Sergeant, as his anthology title For Those Who Are Alive suggested, survived the Forties although under the impression that all he had to show for the experience was a magazine and the skills that he acquired to keep it going, not only as a virtue but as a necessity.

NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

¹Bruce Meyer, "Interview with Howard Sergeant," 6 and 7 November, 1983, Walton-on-Thames. Unpublished.

²Meyer, "Interview with Howard Sergeant."

³Howard Sergeant, Personal Diary, 1943. Collection of the estate of Howard Sergeant, Walton-on-Thames.

⁴Howard Sergeant to Lionel Monteith, London, 17 November 1943. Private Collection of Lionel Monteith, London.

⁵Meyer, "Interview with Howard Sergeant."

⁶Howard Sergeant to Lionel Monteith, London, 29 November 1943. Private Collection of Lionel Monteith, London.

⁷Vita Sackville-West, "Poets' Pens," The Observer, 16 April 1944. Page unknown. Xerox provided by the Collection of Lionel Monteith, London.

⁸Howard Sergeant, Personal Diary, 1944. Collection of the estate of Howard Sergeant, Walton-on-Thames.

⁹Howard Sergeant, Blackpool, to Lionel Monteith, London [Telegram], 25 April 1944. Private Collection of Lionel Monteith, London.

¹⁰Meyer, "Interview with Howard Sergeant."

¹¹Howard Sergeant to Lionel Monteith, London, 12 December 1943. Private Collection of Lionel Monteith, London.

¹²Maurice Lindsay, "In Memory of Leslie Howard," Outposts Number One, ed. Howard Sergeant. 2.

¹³Douglas Gibson, "Sunday Evening," Outposts Number One, ed. Howard Sergeant. 3.

¹⁴Howard Sergeant, "Preface," Outposts Number 3, ed. Howard Sergeant. 1.

¹⁵Derek Stanford, Inside the Forties: Literary Memoirs 1937-1957 (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1977). 124.

¹⁶Howard Sergeant and Peter Ratazzi, "Front Line Generation," [Advertisement], Outposts Number 6, Autumn 1946, ed. Howard Sergeant. 15.

¹⁷Howard Sergeant, "Poetry and the Front Line Generation," New Generation [Issue number unavailable; xerox provided by Howard Sergeant]. 34-36.

¹⁸Sergeant, "Poetry and the Front Line Generation." 34-36.

¹⁹Sergeant, "Poetry and the Front Line Generation." 34-36.

²⁰Stanford, Inside the Forties. 122-123.

²¹Howard Sergeant, ed., Poetry of the Forties (London: Longmans, 1970). 66.

²²Meyer, "Interview with Howard Sergeant."

²³Lionel Monteith, London, to Bruce Meyer, Toronto, 12 April 1988. Private Collection of Bruce Meyer, Toronto. And Meyer, "Interview with Howard Sergeant."

²⁴Meyer, "Interview with Howard Sergeant."

²⁵Sergeant, "Poetry and the Front Line Generation." 35-36.

²⁶Sergeant, Poetry of the Forties. 69.

²⁷Howard Sergeant, For Those Who Are Alive (London: The Fortune Press, 1946).

²⁸Sergeant, For Those Who Are Alive. 3.

²⁹A.T. Tolley, Poetry of the Forties in Britain (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1985). 118.

³⁰Tolley, Poetry of the Forties in Britain. 118.

- ³¹Tolley, Poetry of the Forties in Britain. 300-303.
- ³²Howard Sergeant, Personal Diary 1947. Private Collection of the estate of Howard Sergeant, Walton-on-Thames.
- ³³Meyer, "Interview with Howard Sergeant."
- ³⁴Lionel Monteith, London, to Bruce Meyer, Toronto, 12 April 1988. Private Collection of Bruce Meyer, Toronto.
- ³⁵Stanford, Inside the Forties. 149.
- ³⁶Howard Sergeant to Lionel Monteith, London. 11 September 1946. Private Collection of Lionel Monteith, London.
- ³⁷Galloway Kyle was the President of the Poetry Society at the time in question.
- ³⁸Lionel Monteith, London, to Bruce Meyer, Toronto, 12 April 1988.
- ³⁹Howard Sergeant, Personal Diary 1947.
- ⁴⁰H.W. Harding was Honorary Treasurer of the Poetry Society, a job, which before Spark's time, usually entailed editing the Poetry Review. Spark had been brought in as a professional editor and as a Secretary for the Society. Harding became Chairman of the Poetry Society General Council in October 1946, a job which wielded considerable power in the organization.
- ⁴¹Stanford, Inside the Forties. 152.
- ⁴²Sergeant, Personal Diary 1947.
- ⁴³Sergeant, Personal Diary 1947.
- ⁴⁴Sergeant, Personal Diary 1947.
- ⁴⁵Sergeant, Personal Diary 1947.
- ⁴⁶Howard Sergeant and Muriel Spark, Reassessment [pamphlet]. 1947.
- ⁴⁷Sergeant and Spark, Reassessment.
- ⁴⁸Sergeant and Spark, Reassessment.

- 49Sergeant and Spark, Reassessment.
- 50Sergeant and Spark, Reassessment.
- 51Sergeant and Spark, Reassessment.
- 52Muriel Spark, "Song of the Impious Lover,"
Autograph TMs. Private Collection of the estate of Howard
Sergeant, Walton-on-Thames.
- 53Howard Sergeant, "Morning Song for a Lover," The
Headlands (London: Putnam and Company, 1953). 19.
- 54Howard Sergeant, "Song," The Headlands. 17.
- 55Muriel Spark, "Standing in dusk," Autograph TMs.
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- 56Stanford, Inside the Forties. 153.
- 57Lionel Monteith, to Bruce Meyer, 12 April 1988.
- 58Lionel Monteith, to Bruce Meyer, 12 April 1988.
- 59Stanford, Inside the Forties. 154.
- 60Stanford, Inside the Forties. 160.
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- 62Lionel Monteith, to Bruce Meyer, 12 April 1988.
- 63Howard Sergeant, ed. An Anthology of Contemporary
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- 64Lionel Monteith, ed. Poetry Commonwealth. Nos. 1-
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- 65Lionel Monteith, "Editorial," Poetry Commonwealth
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- 68Howard Sergeant, "Introduction," and ed. Canadian
Poetry Magazine, Vol. 11, No. 3 (March 1948). 5-8.

⁶⁹Sergeant, "Introduction," Canadian Poetry Magazine. 7.

⁷⁰Howard Sergeant, ed. Arena, Number 21 (Autumn 1948).

⁷¹Lionel Monteith to Bruce Meyer, 12 April 1988.

⁷²From conversation with Dr. Joan Coldwell, McMaster University. Dr. Coldwell is, at the moment, working on an edition of Anne Wilkinson's Notebooks and I have been acting in an advisory capacity on this project. Also see Birney, Spreading Time. 137.

⁷³Lionel Monteith to Bruce Meyer, 12 April 1988.

⁷⁴Lionel Monteith to Bruce Meyer, 12 April 1988.

⁷⁵Derek Stanford Papers, Austin: Harry Ransom Humanities Research Centre Reading Room Collection, University of Texas at Austin.

⁷⁶Lionel Monteith to Bruce Meyer, 12 April 1988.

⁷⁷Lionel Monteith to Bruce Meyer, 12 April 1988.

⁷⁸Muriel Spark, Italy, to Bruce Meyer, Toronto, May 1988. Private Collection of Bruce Meyer, Toronto.

⁷⁹John Lehmann, ed. "In Daylight," New Writing and Daylight, Number 7, 1946. 12.

⁸⁰Herbert Read, "The Situation of Art at the End of the Second World War," The Philosophy of Modern Art (London: Faber and Faber, 1964). 45.

CHAPTER THREE
THE MAVERICK YEARS

For Howard Sergeant and Outposts, the Fifties began on a note of apprehension and with a sense of anxiety that the dreams and wishes of the Forties were not coming to fruition. Britain, one of the optimistic victors of the Second World War, had elected a Labour Government on the assumption that the post-war world would offer all the opportunities that had been envisioned in the realm of dreamers and manifesto makers only a few years before. The reality, however, was different. Within several years of the war's end Britain was pushed to the brink of economic collapse and a programme of legislated austerity came as a rude awakening. The austerity years were followed by a celebration in 1951 with the Festival of Britain, an event which promised a first glimpse of the new Britain that was long overdue. The Festival was fueled by the optimism that had been expressed by many of the war poets and many Britons felt that the promised new era was just around the corner. Britain, after all, had survived the greatest threat to her survival in history and the rebuilding of the country inspired a general feeling that the old was about to be replaced by the new. For the majority of working-

class Englishmen, the war had liberated them from the old social restrictions. Education, health care, social welfare were now theirs for the asking and with this new sense of privilege, the class from which Howard Sergeant had struggled up was now the ruling force in Clement Attlee's England.

This optimism, however, was contrasted by a subtle pessimism, a suspicion of the "new" and of the optimistic that many young poets and critics, such as John Wain, Kingsley Amis and Philip Larkin were beginning to express in their writing. For them, the new Britain promised a mediocre enthusiasm, and they began to disdain the theories and the promises in favour of trusted traditions that they found in forgotten poetic values. Amis, for one, doubted the romantic revival of the Forties, the influence of continental aesthetics on English verse, and the imprudence of a poetry that sacrificed clarity for personal expression. The picture of Britain in 1950 was one of two opposing undercurrents, each suspicious of the other, and each the result of the pressures and trends which had been at work during the Forties. The ensuing tensions between the two, especially that which embroiled Howard Sergeant in the Maverick / Movement debate, was probably unforeseeable in 1950, yet highly inevitable.

The late Forties were a time of intense but directionless activity on the literary scene in England and

it can be said with some justification that it was a period when Howard Sergeant's career as a poet reached its zenith. Like much of the activity of the Forties, the emphasis on "evident energy" and on organizing individuals into groups and associations redirected strength from more permanent activities such as writing and publishing. Sergeant's many duties left him little time for writing, and when the time became available the poems did not manifest themselves. The promoting of "great causes," except possibly the cause of survival in the nuclear age, seemed a thing of the past, and inspiration, at least for Sergeant, did not come easily. As well, the all too pervasive presence of leisure, a feature of daily living that seemed remote, if not impossible during the war years, became an important factor of British life as the Forties waned. In his diary on July 24, 1950, Sergeant worried:

Sometimes I wonder why I waste my time trying to build up the BPA instead of giving myself more leisure. I seldom have the time for relaxation or personal life...But it is a worry that I never have time for poetry these days. It's months since I wrote a poem.¹

The early Fifties were, for Sergeant, a "horse-latitudes" for his literary activity. Outposts soon became the longest surviving magazine of the time and by 1954 when the journal celebrated its tenth birthday, it was, along with Miron Grindea's Adam, one of the last vestiges of the wartime poetry boom. Sergeant's sense of personal lethargy

resulted from many factors.

Early in 1951, Lionel Monteith's Poetry Commonwealth, a magazine which had been a sister journal to Outposts, ceased publication. Monteith had grown tired of the work involved in editing a quarterly magazine, which included not only the publication of the journal itself and the selection of the work, but the correspondence to keep abreast of literary developments in the more than thirty countries which had emerged from the disintegration of the British Empire. By 1952, Monteith had abandoned literary activities almost entirely for a career in the church, and his marriage that year ended the years of rooming with Sergeant in Dulwich.²

Sergeant's diaries of the early Fifties depict the life of a man who felt lost. His various relationships had all come to nothing and, since his divorce from Dorothy, he had remained single. He had become a familiar figure on the poetry scene in London -- perhaps too familiar for his own good as he was now expected to play the role of a leader on the scene, a part he could not have felt entirely comfortable with no matter how much he may have wanted it years before. In the new-found domesticity of the Fifties, Sergeant, the dreamer and manifesto-maker, stood as the odd man out. The despair that he felt bordered on depression.

One event, above all others, saved Sergeant from complete despair in the early Fifties. A young poetry enthusiast and school teacher, Jean Crabtree, had joined the British Poetry Association in 1949 because she was interested in meeting poets, a group of people who seemed mysterious and fascinating to her. She had dated Lionel Monteith for several months but no relationship other than a lasting friendship developed between them. She had been encouraged by Monteith to join in the administration of the society and she participated by becoming the Treasurer for the Dulwich Branch of the Association. Her idol, at the time, was the President of the Association, Howard Sergeant. In 1987, Jean Sergeant recalled:

In the autumn of 1949, when I had just started to teach, a friend asked me if I would be interested in helping to set up a branch of the British Poetry Association in Dulwich, with a view to holding poetry readings at the Crown and Greyhound, Dulwich Village. So I went along, and at the suggestion of Lionel Monteith, the Chairman, I was made treasurer. The first meetings were exciting, but I became fairly disillusioned about poets -- I had expected them to live in daffodil land, but found them ordinary or odd -- but in their peculiar ways I liked them. I met the President of the British Poetry Association -- a lofty individual called Howard Sergeant, who barely condescended to speak to me (I was very shy, and I didn't write poetry).³

Jean Sergeant, by her own admission, was not an accountant, and the books of the group refused to balance under her stewardship. She took the matter to Lionel Monteith who referred her to Howard Sergeant, who was by profession an

accountant. Her first meeting with Sergeant was formal and business-like, and came to a suitable conclusion after the books balanced. Two years later, however, Sergeant began dating Jean Crabtree and in 1953 they were married. Jean Sergeant brought to Howard Sergeant's life the stability and the caring that he had lacked since his divorce from Dorothy several years earlier. Unlike Dorothy, Jean had a profound interest in poetry and encouraged Sergeant to continue with his writing and his editing when periods of darkness and despair overtook him. Her presence in Sergeant's life was a major factor in the survival of Outposts for the more than forty years that he edited the journal, and her assistance, both in logistical and emotional ways, saved Sergeant and his magazine on numerous occasions. She also made him realize that life was more than literature -- a perspective that enabled him to keep his objectivity and balance as an editor. As the Fifties progressed and his accomplishments became more and more eclipsed by changes and developments in poetic concerns and tastes, Jean's stable home-life and her interest in activities such as the church and amateur theatre, which Sergeant came to share with her, kept him from abandoning poetry and literary activities while the fashions of the times passed him by as a poet.

As the Fifties began, the glory days of the Forties grew more and more dim, and Sergeant counted his blessings

and settled down to a stable family life, a secure job as an accountant for a legal publishing firm, and the steady business of editing Outposts. As late as January 1, 1956, on the eve of Sergeant's rebirth as an editorial and literary force in the Mavericks/Movement debate, he noted in his diary the change that seemed to have come over his life and expressed his thankfulness for the way events had culminated in a sedate but secure way:

The most striking feature of 1955 seems to have been the recognition and acceptance that a new mode of life is gradually being forced on me. The days when I devoted all my leisure to writing of one kind or another, and confined my social engagements to those of a literary nature, have certainly gone; and whether that is to be regretted or not, there is little that I can do about it...indeed I could no longer meet literary people for lunch as had been my custom. A number of editors with whom I had established contact ceased to edit and I lost considerable ground. It has not, of course, been a sudden change. All this has been taking place during last two or three years. I can't say that I am less happy. Married life has been a real blessing and Jean is a wonderful person to share such a life.⁴

Sergeant's comments reflect a change that had settled over Britain. With the austerity ended, and an era of peaceful domesticity firmly established, many poets, theorists, doctrinaires and dreamers, gave up their plans for grand visions and settled down to enjoy the fruits of peace and the patterns of life that revolved around daily routine. Sergeant, like many Britons, also came to accept the new situation, to find a new type of happiness in lessened

expectations and calmer days. The Suez Crisis had not yet taken place and many people, Sergeant included, felt secure within a society that was more or less reliving the quiet of the pre-war world.

By contrast, in the Forties, Sergeant had made serious inroads into the poetry scene. Not only had he begun a successful literary magazine and founded a productive and energetic organization, he had also published his first book of poems, The Leavening Air, in 1946 with R.A. Caton's Fortune Press. For young poets such as Sergeant, Caton was "the only man that a new poet could go to to get a collection out." In 1983 Sergeant recalled:

He was a very shifty character. It was very difficult to find him. Whenever you went around to his place on Buckingham Palace Road, you couldn't get hold of him. But occasionally, if you wanted to get hold of him, you made a date and a time. You'd go downstairs to a basement and a shifty looking character would open a door a couple of inches and eye you up before letting you in.⁵

In Inside the Forties, Derek Stanford had similar recollections about R.A. Caton and the Fortune Press -- a dubious operation:

Down the unwashed area steps one went to ring at the basement door. The bell was one of those enigmatic buttons which offer the ringer no auditory proof of having functioned at all. Then, after some moments' pause, one saw through a grubby window a figure emerging into the stone-flagged vestibule from some

inner penetralia. At length the door would be opened, possibly after it had been ascertained that the caller was not a man in blue or some other suspect intrusive personage....Before entrance was granted, further stages of inspection or recognition must be gone through. 'Who's there?' or 'What do you want?' Caton would enquire suspiciously, a hat, as like as not, on his head, his shirt without collar, his cheeks unshaven. After first credentials had been offered, he would open the door less churlishly, and perhaps for several minutes one would converse on the doorstep.⁶

Caton had reason to be suspicious of visitors. Poetry was only a facade for his real work, that of a pornography publisher -- a rumour recalled by Sergeant that may have had some validity. Sergeant noted:

It is rumoured, and it would seem that there is a great deal of truth in the rumour that the poetry side -- because he couldn't have made any money out of it -- was a cover for a pornographic business.⁷

A.T. Tolley in The Poetry of the Forties supports Sergeant's rumour. In his description of the Fortune Press and its operations Tolley notes:

Caton, who began with fine printing and erotica, turned to publishing poetry on consignment in the late thirties. Fortune Press books were poorly produced, and their appearance in a variety of shades of binding for one book attests to their having been bound as occasion demanded. A standard arrangement was for an author to purchase 120 copies of his book, and the unbound sheets left when the press was sold might indicate that often few further copies got bound.⁸

As Blake Morrison suggests in The Movement: English Poetry and Fiction of the Fifties, Kingsley Amis' character 'L.S. Caton' (the L.S. possibly standing for "lazy sod") is likely based on R.A. Caton, who, for all his energies, was a shadowy and dubious character among the young poets of the Forties. In light of the number of authors who published with the Fortune Press during the Forties, many of them later to become important forces in British poetry, the assumption might be that a large proportion of the poetic energy of the period was literally underground in Caton's basement flat. The fact that Caton had to print "erotica" to make the press pay attests to the fact that even during the Forties poetry publishers were short of funds -- a symptom which many publishers of the present era claim as their eminent domain.

The list of authors for the press reads like a 'Who's Who' of the Forties and early Fifties and many authors, including Sergeant, owed their first publication to the strange operation. The back of the dust jacket of Sergeant's The Leavening Air, a collection he later regretted, carries an advertisement for thirty-four poetry books.⁹ Among the more notable titles listed there and on the inner wrap leaves are Philip Larkin's first book The North Ship, Gavin Ewart's Poems and Songs, Roy Fuller's Poems, Henry Treece's 38 Poems, George Woodcock's The White Island, two books by Francis Scarfe, three books by

Nicholas Moore, Tambimuttu's Out of This War, Dylan Thomas' 18 Poems, Christopher Middleton's Nocturne In Eden, and A Romantic Miscellany by John Bayliss and Derek Stanford, a book which rekindled much of the interest of the time in the Romantic poets. The Fortune Press was also responsible for Treece's anthology The New Apocalypse which launched the Apocalyptic movement and all the debate associated with it.

Sergeant may have sent his first book to Caton out of a sense of duty. Caton, after all, had been the publisher for the ill-fated anthology For Those Who Are Alive. The Fortune Press, however, may have been partly responsible for the anthology's dismal reception. Caton did little or nothing to promote his authors, and where reviews are found, Sergeant's influence is likely the cause for the notice. For the poets of the Forties, the business of promoting a book and advertising it by whatever means was part of the natural publication process, and the inevitable showmanship of many poets of the period could be attributed to the fact that the poets simply had to make their investment return some money.

Sergeant's "Outposts Poetry Series" which began during the Fifties, and which featured the work of Kingsley Amis, Alan Sillitoe, Ruth Fainlight, and much later D.M. Thomas' first book, was modelled on the work of the Fortune Press. Friends and acquaintances of Sergeant have charged

that the Outposts series was nothing more than a vanity press -- which, of course, it was -- but it was a system which placed the onus on the poet rather than the publisher, not only to promote the book but to finance the publication, usually on a subscription basis. The economic realities aside, Sergeant believed that a poet should be willing to stand behind his or her work even if the poet had to market, promote and fund the book. The series, which never lost money, was promoted through Outposts and published over two hundred individual chapbooks, most of them unmemorable. Like Caton's Fortune Press productions, Sergeant's Outposts Poetry Series publications were distributed by the authors. The bonus that the Outposts series offered -- if such bonuses did at all help the poets -- was that each chapbook was given a short and usually sympathetic review in Outposts. The practice of reviewing every chapbook in Outposts used valuable space in the magazine, pages that could have been devoted to new poetry or critical articles, a feature of early issues which was dropped when the chapbook series was initiated. The magazine, with the loss of the critical pieces, ceased to be the forum for debate it had been and became chiefly a vehicle for poetry and book reviews. Fred Cogswell, the Canadian poet and editor of Fiddlehead, based his Fiddlehead Press Series on Sergeant's Outposts Poetry Chapbook Series, and many of the early Fiddlehead books by

authors such as Milton Acorn and Al Purdy resemble books from the Outposts series, although the Fiddlehead books were never a vanity press operation.¹⁰

The vanity press aspect of the Fortune Press' operation suggests the plight of the young poet in the Forties, a time when the odds of being published, noticed, received and even read, were stacked against those who were not part of the literary establishment, an irony when considered against the poetry boom of the time. Such frustration, even anger, may have informed many of the manifestos and groups that sprang to their short lives during the period. The impressiveness of the Fortune Press list, Dylan Thomas' book aside, attests to the fact that poets such as Larkin, Middleton, and Sergeant were willing to stake their first claims to importance on the efforts of a dubious operation -- so great was their need to appear in print. Many, such as Sergeant and Middleton,¹¹ later regretted publication with the Fortune Press. Larkin republished The North Ship with Faber and Faber in 1966 and, in the long term, Larkin's book is probably the most successful and lasting of all the books produced by the press.

In his 1965 "Introduction" to the reissued edition of The North Ship, Larkin suggested that his book was not a vanity production and that Caton had been encouraged to publish the collection on the strength of some of Larkin's

work which was to appear in the Fortune Press anthology Poetry From Oxford in Wartime. Larkin recalled:

Before it [Poetry from Oxford in Wartime] appeared, however, the proprietor of the small but then well-known house that was producing the book wrote to some of its contributors enquiring if they would care to submit collections of their own work. The letter I received was on good quality paper and signed with an illegible broad-nibbed squiggle: I was enormously flattered, and typed out some thirty pieces on my father's old portable Underwood....Looking at the collection today, it seems amazing that anyone should have offered to publish it without a cheque in advance and a certain amount of bullying....Still, I was on the same list as Dylan Thomas, Roy Fuller, Nicholas Moore and other luminaries, and the book was nicely enough produced, with hardly any misprints....Then, as now, I could never contemplate it without a twinge, faint or powerful, of shame, compounded with disappointment.¹²

Larkin's comments are infused with a wry irony and must be taken with a grain of salt, as shortly after the publication of The North Ship, he sent the manuscript for his first novel, Jill (1946), to Caton who published the first edition of the work. In 1945, Larkin seemed glad to have been on the same list as Dylan Thomas and considered himself to have been going through a post-Oxford phase in which he was characterized by the remark that his work was "Dylan Thomas, but" with "a sentimentality" that was his "own." What is ironic about the Fortune Press and those it published is that so many diverging viewpoints and aesthetics, perspectives that manifested themselves in the

debates of the next decade, all seemed to have sprung from a single source -- a basement on Buckingham Palace Road. Sergeant (who was to co-edit the Mavericks with Dannie Abse), Larkin (the poet most often associated with The Movement), and Christopher Middleton (the poet who was later characterized, erroneously or not, by Edward Lucie-Smith in British Poetry Since 1945 as someone whose work was influenced from "abroad"),¹³ all published their first books with Caton and, at the time, emulated Dylan Thomas.

The greatest oversight among critics of Forties poetry lies in their failure to recognize the fact that the younger poets of the time did not doubt their own work as much as they doubted a generation whose zenith had passed. Larkin's immediate sense of disappointment with his published collection stands as a signal of the doubt, especially of the work of Dylan Thomas and Henry Treece, that would come into full force during the next decade. Naïve as such an assumption may be, the young poets of the Forties presented a more or less united front of verse aesthetics that dissolved only after the anxious optimism of the Forties faded into the fashionable bitter cynicism of the Fifties.

The "cynicism," (a term applied by Anthony Hartley to the new "University Wits" in The Spectator in 1954)¹⁴ or, at least, a retreat from optimism that characterized Fifties poetry, had its roots not only in the failure of

the theories and grand ideas of the Forties to manifest a new world, but in the wartime nostalgia for the ante-bellum society. Douglas Gibson's "Sunday Evening" in Outposts Number One was not only wishful thinking for a better world, it was a statement of contempt for change, a desire to return to the old world of peace, comfort, and quiet regardless of the war. The generation which Gibson claimed was "mocked" by the church bells, wanted nothing more than a return to the world they had before the hostilities. David Perkins in "In And Out of The Movement: The Generation of the 1950s In England,"¹⁵ suggests that a cause of the post-war suspicions of the poetry of the late Forties and early Fifties was an expression of "fatigue and disillusion in the aftermath of the Second World War." The optimism of the neo-romantics was answered with the cynicism of the anti-romantics when the neo-romantics failed to produce anything fruitful from their theories and grand designs. Optimism, at any time, offers no room for failure, and the fact that post-war England provided little more than survival and austerity among the ruins, while millions of American dollars were sent to rebuild Europe under the Marshall Plan, cast a heavy shadow over promises and aims proposed by such documents as the Beveridge Report and the Front Line Generation manifesto. The idealists, such as Sergeant, likely contributed to their own demise in credibility, though they could not have foreseen beneath

all the rhetoric of their schemes that their good intentions would create negative reactions. When The Movement poets began to attract the lion's share of attention in the early Fifties, they did so because they reacted against the pretentiousness of "optimism" and its abstract language which offered hope and promise yet delivered little that was concrete or tangible.

Perkins cites Ted Hughes' comments on the state of mind that prevailed among those who returned from the war who felt that they had

had enough...enough rhetoric, enough overweening push of any kind, enough of the dark gods, enough of the id, enough of the Angelic powers and the heroic efforts to make new worlds. They'd seen it all turn into death camps and atom bombs. All they wanted was to get back into civvies and get home to the wife and kids and for the rest of their lives not a thing was going to interfere with a nice cigarette and a nice view of the park.¹⁶

The essential issue in the Front Line Generation was the continuation of the "struggle" into the post-war years and the failure of the Front Line Generation lay in the fact that most people in England had had enough of struggling. The ideas of rhetoric, struggling, dark gods, the id and angelic powers and heroic efforts which Hughes mentions, were among the central themes of the neo-romantic poetry of the Forties. Like most 'romantic' movements, the poetry and poetic energies of the era burned themselves out because it

was impossible to sustain the highly keyed emotional pitch that had lent itself to the depiction of highly charged events. The new poetry, especially that of The Movement, however, followed a similar path to the poetry of the Forties in that it sought to align verse with actuality, to depict and express the situation of the times.

If the times were not highly charged, if the causes were domestic or quietly personal as in Larkin's "Church Going" or "Lines on a Young Lady's Photograph Album", then the poetry had a duty to reflect that. This may explain, in part, A.T. Tolley's remarks in The Poetry of the Forties in Britain regarding the "false starts" of Fortune Press poets such as Larkin, Hamburger and Middleton:

More pertinent is the distortion in poetic taste produced by the New Romanticism and the attendant resurgence of interest in Romantic poetry, along with the down-playing of the ironic mode. In particular, the growing adulation of Yeats turned younger writers to a model that has seldom been fruitful to imitate. Such pressures were undoubtedly operative during the war years and account for many false starts -- avowedly in the cases of Philip Larkin and Michael Hamburger....It is only when the movement of taste is recognized as being a manifestation or a larger reorientation that it is properly perceived.¹⁷

Tolley's comments seem to contradict the conclusions drawn by Alan Ross in Poetry 1945-1950 (1951). Ross felt that no major influence existed on the English scene in 1950 and that the poetry of the time was characterized as being

"sober, accomplished, mature..." and had "neither the excitements nor defects of experiment and originality."¹⁸ In part, Ross' remarks may be true. Yeats, the influence on Larkin, among others, was dead. What British poetry needed at the half-way point in the century was a living model or models who would generate enough reaction -- both for and against their ideas -- to give the poetry scene the energy it required. Without such a leader or a group of new poets to challenge the status quo, British poetry fell into a period of complacency. Sergeant fell into a pattern, if not a complacency, in his editorial viewpoint and issues of Outposts from the time suggest that a repetitive pattern had settled over the poetry scene. Sergeant continued to publish in Outposts those poets who had risen to prominence in the Forties.

Two key indicators, from Sergeant's perspective, support the idea of a poetic vacuum in the late years of the Forties and the early years of the Fifties. Sergeant's editorial to the British poetry issue of Canadian Poetry Magazine of 1948 and his preface to the British issue of Arena, the New Zealand-based publication in 1954, suggested that little had changed in British poetry. In 1948, Sergeant had claimed that the poetry scene was dominated by a "neo-romantic" group of poets which consisted mostly of survivors of the Apocalyptic movement such as Treece and G.S. Fraser. The new poets, at that

time, were perceived to be George Woodcock, Alan Rook (who participated in the British Poetry Association), Francis Scarfe, J.F. Hendry and Roy Fuller, among others. On September 8, 1950, Sergeant noted in his diary Fuller's rise to prominence and stressed to himself that he must keep up with these new voices if he were not to become lost in the literary "jungle:"

I am now in the jungle of the literary world and must be prepared to face big game like Heppenstall or Fuller; the jackals are not worth attention.¹⁹

As a poet, Sergeant, in fact, did not keep pace with Fuller, either stylistically or productively. Sergeant's failure to keep up with Fuller, a failure which stemmed from his inability to write during the early Fifties, suggests that as a poet he was not capable of grasping and assimilating the changes that seemed to be afoot, particularly those which Fuller ushered in. John Press, in A Map of Modern English Verse (1969), comments that Fuller was one of the poets from the Forties who was not outrightly condemned and even admired by members of The Movement during the Fifties:

There was one poet who had throughout the 1940s maintained most of the values associated with Auden and his coevals -- Roy Fuller. He admired and was admired by the Movement, his dry, astringent tone, his ironical disgust at the spectacle of human folly, his self-scrutiny and austere gloom all being congenial to his younger contemporaries.²⁰

Fuller's poetry is not the verse of unrestrained passions -- a characteristic that he did not share with his contemporaries during the Forties. By his own admission, to Peter Orr in an interview in The Poet Speaks (1966), Fuller noted that his own verse was:

...I suppose, intellectual. In that sense, I suppose the people who are going to get the most out of the poems are the people who have read fairly widely.²¹

Fuller's verse, like those who would acknowledge his talents in the Fifties, owed a small debt to the work of William Empson, whose fine and polished verses had been overlooked since their appearance in Michael Roberts' New Signatures anthology of 1932. As well, Fuller, like Empson and many of The Movement poets of the decade, owed a certain debt to the ideas of Cambridge critics such as F.R. Leavis and I.A. Richards whose ideas are connected with what became New Criticism in the United States. The New Criticism argued that a poem was a single work of art and therefore had to be viewed as a separate entity from either the author's personality or supporting theoretical apology. As The Group, which developed at Cambridge in the late Fifties, later argued, a poem was judged to be good or bad on the basis of "practical criticism" -- close reading and intelligent group discussion. Regardless of the theoretical developments at the universities, a great number of new writers were emerging from Oxford and Cambridge and,

although Sergeant published and promoted their work, he secretly distrusted them. Sergeant's distrust of "the university boys," as he called them in his diaries, and of a verse that ranked emotional response beneath intellectual appeal, left him in the wake of developments during the early years of the Fifties, although he acknowledged such developments in his editorial to the British issue of Arena in 1954.

The influence of Michael Roberts' New Signatures anthology of 1932 had been ignored and overlooked by both poets and critics of the Forties, yet Sergeant, in his editorial to Arena, cited William Empson as the force behind the new generation of "university poets." Sergeant, although agreeing with his earlier statements that a leader did not exist on the British poetry scene, none the less expressed an interest in the work of Empson as a major influence on the new work of the time. Sergeant explained:

At the universities there is plenty of activity, with the Oxford and Cambridge "barrow-boys" selling their poetry pamphlets on the streets, and much verse is being produced; yet there are no strong central impulses discernable, such as those which gave rise to the social-conscious group of 'thirties or the neo-romantic trend of the early 'forties. The main emphasis is upon form and discipline, and the current masters are Empson, Graves and the later Yeats. This could be a promising sign of an increasing attention to craftsmanship, but it does expose a serious lack of substance and feeling in the work of undergraduate poets. Despite their earnestness, most of them seem, so far, either to have little of particular urgency

to say, or to be afraid of exhibiting anything which might be regarded as personal emotion.²²

Poetry, in the early Fifties, was becoming increasingly "academic" in its stance, subject matter and center of activity, and many critics, including Sergeant, charged that the "academic" quality in the verse was producing an aridity both of style and content in the poems, especially those written by university poets. In his essay "Remembering the Movement," Donald Davie countered the charge that The Movement poets of the Fifties were "academic" in the pejorative sense. Davie asserted:

Academic is no bad thing to be, and in any case becomes inescapable, as the philistinism of Anglo-American society forces all artists -- not just writers -- back into the campus as a last stronghold. It is a question whether the universities can rise to this emergency. But it has been normal at every period for the poet to be a learned man; and if universities exist for or provide for the pursuit of learning, it is proper and natural that the poets should cluster round the campuses.²³

If the charge that the "academic" world produced an aridity in poetry had any credence, it arose from the fact that serious and influential verse had not been produced at British universities since the end of the Georgian period in the years immediately following the First World War, with the exception of the activity generated by the Pylon poets in the late Twenties at Oxford. What critics and editors desired in the Fifties was the re-establishment of the ties

between poetry and the universities, the link of sound reasoning with good writing, and the acquired and polished presence of intellect in the creative process in lieu of instant theories.

By 1954, the poets of the school, which was originally labelled "The Movement" and later designated as "the University Wits," were already down from their respective universities and were highly active on the literary scene in London. Amis, in fact, had become a close friend of Howard Sergeant. John Wain, likewise, was a regular contributor and reviewer for Outposts. The poets of The Movement, or at least those who were connected with the group in a high profile way, such as Donald Davie, John Wain, Kingsley Amis or Philip Larkin, were not "new" on the scene by the time Sergeant made his remarks in the 1954 issue of Arena. Their presence on the poetry scene, however, generated an uneasiness among those poets and critics who subscribed to the entrenched doctrines of Forties' romanticism. Hartley, in "Critic Between the Lines," points out that the work of these poets, even as early as 1954, was presenting a formidable alternative to the established thinking in poetry. Hartley reported:

The present divided state of English poetry makes the job of the critic a precarious one. He can hardly venture into no-man's land without having his head blown off and, if he is caught behind the lines, he is likely to be shot as a spy....He is bound to feel that the interests of poetry would be served by a judicious

slaughter of some of those writing today, but he must not plead a case, while at the same time making it quite clear where he stands.²⁴

Hartley's comments suggest that a polarization was at work on the British poetry scene, a division into camps where poets had to opt for either one stance or another. Although such comments are posed with a tongue-in-cheek tone, they suggest that in 1954 the anticipated change in poetry and poetics, and the inevitable battle that would take place in the wake of such a change, was taking shape. Sergeant's comments in the Arena preface support Hartley's observations that a duality was developing in British poetry in 1954, a duality that presented an "Empsonian" simultaneously with a poetry that perceived itself to be a reasonable development from the more emotional verse of the Forties. As Hartley perceived the confrontation, two opposing forces or aesthetics were eyeing each other with more than casual indignation. One camp, Hartley said,

stems from the early Eliot, passes through the poets of the Thirties (especially Auden and Empson) and ends with our young academic poets, the University Wits (Kingsley Amis and Donald Davie, for example).²⁵

The other camp, Hartley suggested, stemmed from a more "romantic" source and defended the bardic rather than the cerebral tradition in English poetry:

The second began with bits of Yeats, bits of Pound and a good deal of outside help from the French symbolists and Rilke. It takes in Dylan Thomas and The New Apocalypse to end in what might be called our Neo-Symbolists (Kathleen Raine and others).²⁶

The first group, the intellectuals, Hartley dubbed the "Metaphysicals" for want of a better name and suggested that their verse was "ironic, intellectual, rigorous, witty," and in the eyes of their detractors, "cynical, clever, arid, and facetious." The latter group, which he labelled "Neo-Symbolists," established their hallmark on a verse that was "rich, passionate, noble, incantory" but which in the hands of the New Criticism became "lush, exhibitionist, pompous and meaningless."²⁷ For the poet of 1954, the common ground between these two camps seemed a remote but impossible idea. What should be understood, however, was that the camps were not as precisely clear-cut as critical assumption would suggest. Poetic style, in itself, is not the product of a theory -- a fact underlined in the aesthetics of The Movement poets. Poetic freedom, as the Maverick or neo-romantic poets suggested, is an essential ingredient in determining the voice of any poet, and no amount of doctrines, manifestos, declarations or theories can package poets and their works as precisely as critics would wish. Groupings, as such, are historical conveniences, if not critical segues, to point up similarities and contrasts that are observed in the process

of criticism. Both The Movement and the Maverick poets have argued, since the time of the debate between the two camps, that they were not "united fronts" or even 'groups' in the true sense of the word, but poets who were perceived, more often by critics than by themselves, to share common aims or qualities in their works. Although the critical debate which has sprung from the era suggests that the situation was far more partisan than it actually was, the role of Howard Sergeant during the Fifties is a truer indication of the dynamics of the literary scene than has previously been acknowledged.

In the Arena editorial, aptly titled "Recent British Poetry," Sergeant struck a balance that would become a mark of his later catholicity and neutrality. Not only did he give attention to ideas that would eventually manifest themselves as major concepts in the statements by members of The Movement, but Sergeant also cited the work of several magazines which seemed to be following in the footsteps of the Forties poets. The young poet, Sergeant argued, was in no danger of going unpublished:

There are still plenty of little magazines catering for their needs: they may be ephemeral, lasting for only a few numbers or so, but as soon as one goes to the wall, another springs up into its place. And there are more permanent publications -- Outposts, which has been in existence for over ten years under my own editorship, is the oldest independent poetry magazine and has taken over the responsibility for making Commonwealth work known in England since Poetry Commonwealth

disappeared. In this connection one should also mention Poetry and Poverty, The Poet, The Window, Platform, Stand, and Departure, all of which serve a useful function in keeping poetry alive.²⁸

Sergeant's curious choice of magazines for his examples was clearly a conscious one. In 1954, a young poet by the name of Jon Silkin had come to Sergeant for advice on how to found a literary magazine. Sergeant took Silkin under his wing as an editorial apprentice and assisted with the first three issues of Stand which Silkin produced in London. Sergeant later noted that the early numbers of Stand were modelled on Outposts. The other magazine of importance that Sergeant cited was Dannie Abse's Poetry and Poverty which had begun in 1949 as an underground publication aimed at supporting both a left-wing aesthetic and a "neo-romantic" poetic stance.

Asked when he had met Sergeant, Abse replied, "I don't recall when exactly but it was around 1947, when he published an early (very bad) poem of mine in Outposts."²⁹ Sergeant had been introduced to Abse by Alex Comfort and some of Abse's early work appeared in both Outposts and Poetry Commonwealth. Abse was a frequent visitor to British Poetry Association meetings in Dulwich and read, at Monteith's invitation, at gatherings in May and August of 1949, and May and July of 1950.³⁰ On October 27, 1950, Sergeant noted in his diary that Abse had approached him at a British Poetry Association meeting, where Stephen Spender

and Laurie Lee were the featured readers, and had inquired if the organization was interested in backing a play that he had written. Sergeant also noted that he had denied the request as the sum of money was far beyond the resources of the organization at that time. Regardless of the denial, Abse and Sergeant continued to meet for lunch throughout the early years of the Fifties and the two became good friends. Sergeant also became a frequent contributor to Abse's Poetry and Poverty.

In A Poet in the Family (1974), a collection of memoirs, Abse recalled that he had founded Poetry and Poverty in 1949 with Godfrey Rubens and Molly Owen and had given the journal its title because

it pointed to our lack of money and it also summarized the editorial intention of publishing good poems (naturally) as well as focussing critically on the imaginative poverty of certain well-known contemporary writers.³¹

Sergeant supported Abse's venture because he saw in Poetry and Poverty a continuation of the values and problems which had manifested themselves in the founding of Outposts. Of all the magazines of the early Fifties, Poetry and Poverty was the most vocal in its criticism of the new "Empsonian" poetry that had become popular among university students and younger poets. Abse was also a strong supporter of Dylan Thomas' work and an issue of Poetry and Poverty carried a poignant elegy for the dead poet by Abse. With

its purpose clearly delineated and without fear of being taken prisoner (to extend Hartley's metaphor), Poetry and Poverty organized its defence of the romantic perspective and its attack on the new poets who challenged the authority and validity of impassioned verse.

Writing in Poetry and Poverty Number 2, in 1951, Emmanuel Litvinoff tried to characterise the new verse that was being written and to respond to it from his own neo-romantic perspective:

When I catch the accent of the age it seems to me to be witty, ironical, pessimistic, deprecating. It is the voice of a sophisticate who has made a fool of himself in the moral fervours of his youth and who is yet too knowing for faith and too disillusioned for hope.³²

Litvinoff decried that the poet of the Fifties was "lacking in passion and hunger," and lived in a society which is "distinguished by the brilliance of its techniques" because as a poet he could "match the manufacturers of machines and plastic toys at least in technical accomplishment." The poet which Litvinoff raged against was a poet who had shrugged off the lessons in passion and emotion learned during the Forties and who opted instead for a verse which looked to the Thirties for its cues. He concluded his article with a cry for poems to be "exploding all over the world among the menacing lies of today."³³ In terms of Poetry and Poverty's perspective, the fervour of the

Forties and its neo-romanticism had not died out.

Sergeant responded directly to Litvinoff's article in a supportive follow-up statement two issues later. Sergeant agreed that the poet of the time lacked "a sense of social responsibility." Sergeant still believed that poetry had to play an active role, a carry-over, perhaps, from his views formed during the Front Line Generation days. Sergeant, in fact, believed that the plight of the younger poet was worse than Litvinoff had claimed. He reiterated his feeling that the poetry scene of the time lacked a strong central influence. Sergeant continued:

If one is to judge by the number of innocuous, made-to-measure little poems actuated by paintings and pieces of music that are being turned out these days, or to be found decorating odd corners of literary periodicals, it would seem either that many of the younger poets, having little sense of direction (which is natural enough) deliberately avoid taking risks with anything so dangerous as moral conflicts of any kind, or that there is an extraordinary dearth of poetic imagination.³⁴

His comments probably were not directed specifically at the poets of The Movement but at younger poets in general whose malaise was the writing of an "easy poetry" which congratulated itself on small accomplishments while it ignored its major faults -- a malady common to fledgling writing in any period. Sergeant felt that the young poets of the Fifties were simply reiterating the tones and

concerns that had been uttered by their predecessors in the early years of the Thirties. What Sergeant was criticising, in essence, was the type of poetry written by the members of the Movement, or at least, propounded by Robert Conquest's "Introduction" to New Lines (1956). What Sergeant reacted against was the poem of the intellect as opposed to the poem of the emotions. In "The Making of the Movement" Ian Hamilton commented that the new style of poetry spread quickly through all levels of the British poetry scene:

Almost every young university poet had become a Movementeer, the Oxford and Cambridge magazines, the Fantasy Press pamphlets, the column-ends of many of the weeklies, were brimming over with neatly tailored ironies, with feeble neo-Augustan posturings and effortful Empsonian pastiche. The talentless had been given a verse-recipe only slightly more difficult to follow than that handed out by Tambimuttu fifteen years earlier.³⁵

The formulaic approach to poetry that the Movement claimed it decried was in itself being adapted to Movement principles almost as soon as the Movement itself was invented. The problem was not that the style itself was bad -- Larkin's poems are extremely fine and were written from concerns echoed by many of his contemporaries -- but that imitation was bad. Eliot's comment that an "immature poet imitates and a mature poet steals" has a great deal to do with the negative reaction against the Movement which was

generated, largely, by the young imitators of the group. Sergeant pointed an accusing finger at Auden's "Musée des Beaux Arts" as an example which the younger poets were following in their refusal to "take chances." Blake Morrison, in his fine and detailed study The Movement: English Poetry and Fiction of the 1950s (1980), suggests that Sergeant may have been right in believing that the younger poets of the time were turning to a model who no longer participated in the British scene. Morrison comments:

The Movement later came to think less highly of Auden and more highly of the Georgians, but in 1949, when the prevailing mode was neo-Romantic, the example of the former was felt to be more valuable.³⁶

Sergeant believed that poetry had to be a matter of belief, and a matter of emotional rather than intellectual response to life. What can be seen from Sergeant's comments, off-hand as they were in 1951, is that British poetry in the early Fifties was undergoing the first stages of an aesthetic split into two opposing camps, each suspicious of the other and both jealously guarding their positions on opposite ends of the poetic spectrum. Sergeant cautioned, however, that "after the experiences of the 'thirties," it would be unwise for poets to identify themselves "with any specific groups of ideologies," and that they should "see only too clearly the dangers of political loyalties and

associations." Anthony Hartley, likewise, in his article "Critic Between the Lines" in 1954, concluded with the comment:

The poet must keep his eye on the object, he must create his images, he must believe in them, feel them and touch them himself, he must organize them within the framework of an ordered universe which he himself has made from language. The dynamic images must be harnessed, but they must be there, reconciled with the demands of meaning and humanity (which comes to the same thing). Only an organized contact with human reality can give back to our poetry the essential guts it so badly needs.³⁷

Sergeant's comments almost parallel Hartley's and both appear to have been arguing for the qualities necessary in good poetry as opposed to the doctrines of any single group, although both are now associated with opposing camps. What finally manifested itself as a struggle, when the battle lines between the two camps were drawn, was not based on politics but on aesthetics -- the confrontation between the two warring halves of English poetry that G.S. Fraser had tried to articulate in his essay on literary influence in the Forties.

In the early Fifties, Abse and those poets associated with Poetry and Poverty continued to support the aesthetics of the neo-romantics, and even anticipated that their new group would herald a second phase of neo-romanticism. In the editorial note to Poetry and Poverty Number 4, the same issue that carried Sergeant's article in

support of Litvinoff, Abse wrote that the conflict of aesthetics was a matter of direct action against rearguard Audenesque poetics:

Like succeeding governments, each new school of poetry has denied the virtues of its predecessors. The Neo-Romantics attacked the poets of the thirties for their crude insistence on contemporaneity, on propaganda, on slick journalism, just as now the Neo-Romantics are being flailed by the young critics of this decade for their floridity, rhetoric, lack of intelligence and wilful obscurity due to an excessive private vision.³⁸

If the poetry debates of the Forties and the Fifties prove anything in literary history, it is that aesthetics never stand still and that each generation, and even groups within each generation, declare their positions in order to assert their presence, and attack those who do not share those positions. In The Movement, Blake Morrison suggests that the new poets of the Fifties who did not opt for the inheritance passed on to them by the poets of the Forties began to define their own work in negative terms, accusing the Forties poets of bad principles in an effort to define their own aims. Morrison comments:

The Movement was now, by 1950, becoming more conscious of its aims, and anti-Romanticism became an increasingly important part of its programme. It began to define the texture of its own poetry by contrasting it with 'the poetry of the 1940s'. By this phrase it meant the poetry not of Roy Fuller, Alun Lewis, Keith Douglas and Henry Reed, poets whom it on the whole admired, but of Dylan Thomas, David Gascoyne, Edith Sitwell, W.R. Rodgers and of

the poets (notably Henry Treece and Tom Scott) who had appeared in the neo-Apocalyptic anthology The White Horseman (1941). By taking these figures to be 'the poets of the 1940s' the Movement inevitably produced a distorted picture of the decade, but it was one that allowed their own work to appear to be a radical departure, the 'new poetry.'³⁹

When the reaction came against The Movement, it, too, came in negative terms, defining itself against the principles set forth by The Movement. Although Sergeant and Abse were not the only poets writing, and their lineage not the only literary pedigree on the scene in Britain after the Forties, The Movement poets painted them in such a light as to suggest that theirs was the only inadmissible standard, the prime target for their own attacks. Ironically, Sergeant had close ties with many of his accusers. In 1953 he had edited the P.E.N. anthology New Poems 1953 with Robert Conquest, who later became the chief apologist for The Movement and editor and introducer of The Movement's prime vehicle, New Lines (1956). The other co-editor of New Poems 1953 was Michael Hamburger who, when lots were drawn and the sides were determined, found himself a Maverick much to his surprise. The business of inclusion and exclusion was extremely confusing, not only for the critics of the era, both then and now, but for the poets themselves. The Fifties was an era when poets, to use Hartley's metaphor, avoided capture as best they could and changed their tunes as the situations demanded. Others,

such as Donald Davie, announced and renounced their positions as fashion dictated so that the period must be measured not by action but by reaction -- a problematic scale for critical measurement at the best of times.

Abse, and Sergeant to a lesser extent, felt aware that the new poets were going to use them as "aunt-sallies" to knock down for their own advancement. Many of the new poets who had been on the scene since the Forties simply altered their stances to suit the new set of circumstances -- poets such as Larkin, and critics such as the ubiquitous G.S. Fraser who turned on his former colleagues in the Apocalyptic movement and supported the Movement poets. Rather than find themselves as prey for advancing careers, Sergeant and Abse took the offensive.

Abse's "Editorial Note" to Poetry and Poverty Number 5, concluded with a mention of John Wain's First Reading, a successor broadcast to John Lehmann's New Soundings programme.⁴⁰ Both radio shows suffered from all too short a life to have made any long-term impact other than that created by those who reacted negatively to them. Robert Hewison in his study In Anger notes that the programme's short life was due, partly, to literary "in-fighting" of the day, an attack on Wain's perspectives voiced in the broadcasts that were unappealing to those of the "romantic" vein:

Wain has written that his programme First Reading produced some pretty brutal in-fighting; the literary world is full of people who, if they can't knock you out in the ring itself, will wait till you are going home afterwards, and then follow you down an alley with a broken bottle, which suggests that vested interests conspired against the programme.⁴¹

Abse praised the BBC for allowing a young critic/poet such as Wain to assume the role of the show's moderator, yet he was critical of Wain's biases that were evident during the programme. This is not to suggest that Abse was responsible for the demise of Wain's broadcasts -- but there was, however, a feeling that the literary scene was not quite ready for the transformation that was to take place in the current of British poetry. Those who spoke for or against one side or the other were accused, both then and later, of being part of a "conspiracy," a charge which at that time had no other basis than idle suspicions or "sour-grapes." Abse asserted that "Mr. Wain's bias was unfortunate and many of his contributors seemed immature." Clearly, at the core of Abse's remarks was the sense that a new group, including Wain and Donald Davie (both of whom are mentioned in the article as "young critics"), was challenging the precepts of neo-romanticism. Those who viewed themselves as its inheritors had to be on their guard lest they should be devoured in the oncoming wave of negative criticism that would serve only the critics. When asked by Arthur Boyars in a 1957 interview what he thought about writers "whose

reputations had been demoted because of changing tastes,"

Wain replied:

There was a time when ordinary people read great poetry for pleasure and also for something to turn to at a crisis of their lives, but I cannot see any evidence of that now, and the effect on the general level of literary taste has been appalling.⁴²

For Wain, the new poetry influenced by William Empson was not to inspire readers to either passion or social response, but to give them pleasure.

Sergeant and Abse, on the other hand, saw poetry as having a distinct social function and refused to accept poetry as decoration or simply as a work of art divorced from the pressures and responsibilities of the world. What is ironic is that almost simultaneously to Wain's remarks to Arthur Boyars, Philip Larkin uttered a similar sentiment in his now famous essay, "The Pleasure Principle."⁴³ For Larkin, poetry was not to be a matter of political announcement, or a means for improving one's function as a responsible member of society -- poetry was for pleasure. Larkin attacked the poem that commanded its attention through knotted language, difficulty, or obscurity. The poem, for Larkin, was not something to improve a person, as either a vehicle of didacticism or as a herald of vatic vision. Larkin rejected the idea that the poet should provide both the work and the standard by which it was

judged -- a heresy to the theorizing poets of the Forties who felt that their apologies were as important as their individual works. Poetry was something that one did not have to have -- it was a commodity which could be accepted or ignored. Larkin likened public consumption of verse to turning a radio on or off:

But if the medium is in fact to be rescued from among our duties and restored to our pleasures, I can only think that a large-scale revulsion has to set in against present notions, and that it will have to start with poetry readers asking themselves more frequently whether they do in fact enjoy what they read, and, if not, what the point is of carrying on. And I use the word 'enjoy' in the commonest of senses, the sense in which we leave the radio on or off.⁴⁴

Aside from the fact that Larkin felt that poetry was an entertainment commodity and therefore needed to please its audience, he stressed that verse had fallen into a state of disrepair because of a general lack of critical scrutiny on the part of the reading public. For Larkin, the "Pleasure Principle" statement was his own way of saying, in a very Fifties fashion, "enough." The opening salvos in Larkin's essay, however, read like the statements made by Sergeant and Spark in the "Reassessment" pamphlet a decade before, at the height of the very vogue that Larkin doubted. Like a blood cycle from an on-going tragedy, each succeeding generation accused the previous one of a lack of critical awareness.

Larkin divided the process of writing a poem into three stages. In the first stage the poet "becomes obsessed with an emotional concept to such a degree that he is forced to do something about it." In the next step, the poet reproduced that "emotional concept" through a "verbal device that will reproduce the emotional concept to anyone who cares to read it, anywhere, any time." The third and final stage in the process depended on the reader. The poem failed if the reader could not find that "emotional concept" in the "verbal structure." The success or failure of a poem, according to Larkin, depended on the "successful reading" in order to exist. Larkin suggested that there was a balance, or at least an interdependent relationship which was at work between poet and reader, and it was the function of both parties in the process to make the poem exist. Both poet and reader, therefore, had to be aware of each other -- the necessary precondition for criticism.

The "Pleasure Principle," at least in practical application, underlined what Sergeant hoped to do with Outposts once the fervour of the Forties had become a thing of the past. The magazine changed direction to be a vehicle for poetry rather than manifestos or programmes, a journal for entertainment as well as inspiration, didacticism or societal advancement. During the early Fifties, Outposts featured work by poets of all aesthetic persuasions. From

the Forties such poets as Kathleen Raine, Emmanuel Litvinoff, Vernon Watkins, Margaret Crosland, Hardiman Scott, John Heath-Stubbs, George Barker, Norman Nicholson, Henry Treece, and Wrey Gardiner were contributors to the magazine. New poets such as R.S. Thomas and Anthony Thwaite, as well as poets identified as being part of The Movement were also included, among them Robert Conquest, D.J. Enright, Kingsley Amis, and Elizabeth Jennings. Charges that Sergeant was biased toward one group or type of poetry are rendered false by his record during the period for judging poets on the quality of their individual poems rather than their aesthetic stance or camp. Sergeant's method of selection, on the merits of the individual poem, regardless of biography or apology, place him, in practice at least, on a very Leavisite level of editorial performance. Outposts, however, was far from being the only literary forum of the time, and as the magazine reached and passed its first decade of operation, its importance, especially as a vehicle for the work of established poets, began to decline. Sergeant had never been able to attract the work of major voices such as Spender or Auden, although C. Day Lewis contributed poems to the journal. The main objective of the magazine, as Sergeant had intended it from the start, was to publish the work of new poets, especially those who were writing worthwhile material but were denied a fair hearing by other

outlets. In this cause, Sergeant remained steadfast and the problems of publication faced by young poets in the Forties were no less severe in the Fifties. According to Sergeant, the new poets of the current fashion, the poets of The Movement, made their moves on the available media outlets and extracted the toll of their success upon the poetry scene.

Sergeant and others became concerned that The Movement poets were gaining control of the media. The irony of the situation may lie in the fact that The Movement was a creation of the media, an idea that was concocted by a group of editors at The Spectator to support literary realism, and unfortunately adopted and believed by some of the poets they named. John Press has said that "To what extent the Movement was more a lively journalistic invention is not easy to decide."⁴⁵ As Ian Hamilton noted in his essay "The Making of the Movement," "the Movement, along with the Sitwells, has its distinctive niche in the history of publicity,"⁴⁶ a charge that was echoed by Sergeant and many others who opposed The Movement's attempts to control the media. Hamilton recalled Anthony Hartley's unsigned article which launched the group and their label as an entity on the British poetry scene. Hartley's article, Hamilton noted, had a "transparently calculated tone...the tone, pushing and unblushing, of the hard sell." Hartley announced that the new "Movement"

is bored by the despair of the Forties, not much interested in suffering, and extremely impatient of poetic sensibility, especially sensibility about 'the writer and society.' So it's goodbye to all those rather sad little discussions about 'how the writer ought to live' and it's goodbye to the Little Magazine and 'experimental writing'. The Movement, as well as being anti-phoney, is anti-wet; sceptical, robust, ironic, prepared to be as comfortable as possible in a wicked, commercial, threatened world which doesn't look, anyway, as if it's going to be changed much by a couple of handfuls of young English writers.⁴⁷

The attack on the little magazines, among them Outposts, may have struck a nerve in Sergeant. In 1983 Sergeant recalled:

The Movement poets started right from the beginning with an understanding of how the media, that is the magazines, the newspapers and the radio, could be controlled by a central group. If you could get enough contacts in enough places of importance you would guarantee a certain amount of public recognition for your poetry. It is one thing that the Movement has shown. I would imagine that later groups might well cash in on that and follow suit.⁴⁸

From the perspective of those excluded from The Movement either by critics or by their own stylistics, the media attention to the members of the new group must have seemed daunting, if not depressing.

The attention, in retrospect, took several of the members of The Movement by surprise. They had not met in a garret, as the Apocalyptic had done in Leeds years before,

and they had not drawn up a group manifesto, as the Front Line Generation had done at the end of the war. The poets involved were more or less corralled by critics such as Hartley and by the enthusiastic response to new writing by John Wain, whose energies and ideas appear to have created and defined The Movement, to a large extent, in an effort to justify his own work. Unfair as such a charge may be against Wain, the resulting critical debate left him in the center stage of the discussions, an enviable position for any writer. In "Remembering the Movement," Donald Davie, whose cautious and intelligent sense of the developments left him with deep reservations, recorded his own surprise at the attention that sprang up around the poets involved:

all of us in the Movement had read the articles in Scrutiny about how the reputations of Auden, Spender and Day Lewis were made by skilful promotion and publicity; and it was to placate Scrutiny readers that we pretended (and sometimes deceived ourselves as well as others) that the Movement was not being 'sold' to the public in the same way...Of course, once the machinery was set going, there was no controlling it; and Wain, Gunn and Larkin figured in a series of 'profiles' in The Times Educational Supplement...But for heaven's sake publicity is what in some degree we all want, quite legitimately; and the prissiness which won't pay any of the price, won't use any of the channels which it knows are available, only brings about the sort of half-hearted falling between two stools which made the Movement abortive.⁴⁹

No poet, if his intelligence is as sound as his verse,

wants to be labelled against his will, even if that label serves his immediate prospects. Dylan Thomas' reasons for not joining the Apocalyptic movement ten years before underscore the importance of a poet having his own say in the direction and dictates of his work, especially when the relationship between the poet and the audience is in question. In a 1964 statement on the origins of The Movement, "The Making of a Movement," Elizabeth Jennings recalled:

I know that I myself have had a strong resistance to being linked with other poets who would seem to me to share little but a nearness in age, and sometimes not even that.⁵⁰

At the time, however, many who would have objected to being categorized, such as Donald Davie, kept silent and, in retrospect, many believed that they paid a price for their silence. Ian Hamilton noted:

the poets actually named by Hartley held their peace, and throughout the ensuing chat they tacitly collaborated in the construction and promotion of their group identity -- though at the same time quietly murmuring that the whole thing was a bit absurd.⁵¹

The theorizing, the promotion, and the criticism which was well-intentioned did not, in reality, support The Movement poets as they would have hoped. When their major statement, the anthology New Lines, was published in 1956, they rated

only a short three-column review on an inner page of the Times Literary Supplement [TLS]. If column space is any indicator of the importance of a book or a group of poets, then The Movement poets failed to attract the immediate attention they desired.

Part of the low-key reaction to The Movement's apex may rest, as Donald Davie suggests, in a necessity most of the poets involved felt to ingratiate themselves to their audience. Some of the poets went so far as to apologise for being poets. Davie noted:

Ours was writing which apologised insistently for its own existence, which squirmed in agonies of embarrassment at being there in print on the page at all....the same craven defensiveness which led us, when we were challenged or flattered or simply interviewed, to pretend that the Movement didn't exist, that it was an invention of journalists, that we had never noticed how Larkin and Gunn and Amis had something in common, or that, if we had noticed, it didn't interest or excite us.⁵²

The Movement members tried to deny the existence of the group. They were partly justified in that they never met as an entire group, although they knew each other and each others' work, and supported one another in critical reviews. The presence, however, of an identifiable group seemed to trouble some members. John Press in A Map of Modern English Verse, commented that "Thom Gunn and Philip Larkin take the view that the whole affair was largely a joke, and that the Movement had no real existence...."

Elizabeth Jennings in "The Making of a Movement," perceived a danger both in the joke and in the grouping:

Some critics viewed them as an artificially contrived gang, set up for personal advancement rather than for love of literature, while yet others felt that most of them had little in common except nearness in age, and avoidance of certain subjects and of dealing with those subjects, together with a refusal to be over-emotional, on the one hand, or too obsessed with large public events on the other.⁵³

The cycle of denials and claims for the existence of The Movement made the group into an enigma -- a mystery that served its purpose of raising public awareness of the new poets and their work. By the time New Lines was published in 1956, as Ian Hamilton noted, "the ground had more than been prepared; it had been practically churned into a quagmire."

New Lines, edited by Robert Conquest, was the apex of all the statements made by The Movement members about their poetry. The anthology included work by poets who had appeared, oddly enough, in Japan in D.J. Enright's Poets of the 1950's: Elizabeth Jennings, John Holloway, Philip Larkin, Kingsley Amis, Enright, Donald Davie, Robert Conquest and John Wain. In New Lines, Conquest added a young poet who had just come down from Cambridge, Thom Gunn. In his introduction, which became the unwanted manifesto for a group that held all manifestos in suspicion, Conquest tried, and some say failed, to

generalize on the common principles shared by members of The Movement. As he would later stress in a letter to the TLS, the thoughts and ideas he expressed in his introduction "were not 'orders' to them, but my personal generalizations about their already existing writing."⁵⁴ Critics have charged that the disparities between the members of the group were too great to be bridged by the generalizations which Conquest sketched and have pointed out that the similarities between John Holloway or Donald Davie or John Wain on one hand and Elizabeth Jennings on the other were beyond the capabilities of sound criticism or prudent prefacing. Jennings, for example, in her essay "The Making of a Movement," laments the absence of R.S. Thomas, the Anglo-Welsh poet whose verse is much closer to hers. If there was a uniting factor, as Jennings aptly points out, "it was how a subject was treated, not so much what that subject was, that really united these writers."⁵⁵ The danger of any anthology is that it groups poets according to principles that are not always part of the apparent practice, and the desire to "pigeon-hole" poets, either in print or in idea, as many Movement members protested, is not always based on prudent critical observation. The results of such categorization often strand poets in schools or camps that are purely fictional, and that have nothing to do with what the poet feels impelled to say with his work. As Howard Sergeant pointed

out in his essay, "The Movement -- An Agreed Fiction?"

it is what the individual poet is able to make of the trend that matters, not the expression of group attitudes. It will be obvious that no poet today can be completely original in the sense that his work owes nothing to the poetry of his own or any other age. The poet's originality lies in his creative power to extend, develop or change the tradition in some individual way as a result of his technical craftsmanship, his personal philosophy and/or his experience and understanding of life.⁵⁶

In fairness to Conquest, the principles he expressed in his introduction to New Lines were attempting to do what Sergeant thought the Movement failed to do -- be original in the context of established literature.

The title of the anthology, New Lines, was in itself a sad commentary on the doubtfulness of originality in anthology making. The cliché of calling an anthology "new" and then hoping that the public will be attracted to its contents is almost a leit motif in the history of twentieth-century poetry. The danger of claiming something to be new leaves both poets and anthologist open to the charge of raising reader expectations too far. In the context of Conquest's anthology, the way had already been paved for the poets and what they produced was of no surprise. The principles that they stated were not "experimental" or daring: they were simply stressing a return to the values of poetry, such as form, controlled metaphor, and realistic imagery, which Conquest felt had

been mistreated by poets of the preceding generation. In a manner of throwing down a gauntlet at the feet of the 'romantics', Conquest announced:

In the 1940s the mistake was made of giving the Id, a sound player on the percussion side under a strict conductor, too much of a say in the doings of the orchestra as a whole. As it turned out, it could only manage the simpler part of the melody and rhythm, and was completely out of its depth with harmony and orchestration. This led to a rapid collapse of public taste, from which we have not yet recovered.⁵⁷

By referring the new poetry to taste rather than theory, Conquest hoped to circumvent the dogmatists from the Forties who were more than willing to take him on in a battle of charges and counter-charges. The new poetry of The Movement was not to be based in the subconscious: game playing was out. The images had to be from this world, the identifiable, the objective, rather than the imaginary and the subjective. Conquest asserted:

The debilitating theory that poetry must be metaphorical gained wide acceptance. Poets were encouraged to produce diffuse and sentimental verbiage, or hollow technical pirouettes: praise even went to writers whose verse seemed to have been put together from the snippets in the 'Towards More Picturesque Speech' page of Reader's Digest.⁵⁸

The new poetry demanded a clear diction, and the language it used, or professed to use, was the language of the times, not the coded vocabulary of the personal mind. As

far as the technical aspects were concerned, the new poetry was not turned on technical ability alone, although Conquest suggested that certain poets, poets who had been and were the leaders of the time, presented a controlled style. These leaders were Empson, Yeats, Graves, Edwin Muir and Auden. Conquest, however, cautioned about following these models too closely. John Wain's advocacy of Empson's verse did not go unnoticed but was tempered with the suggestion that too much Empson produced a "verse of notable aridity."⁵⁹ Wain's interest in Empson, however, had been a starting point, a "way of learning the first lesson -- that a poem need an intellectual backbone."⁶⁰ The "intellectual backbone", like all the other ideas in the Movement programme, had its flaws. "Intellectual frameworks," Conquest noted, "can be filled out with bad materials as well as good, and Empsonianism has been almost as much a vehicle for unpleasant exhibitionism and sentimentality as the trends it was designed to correct."⁶¹ Conquest argued that cerebrality, the "intellectual skeleton" of the poem was useless unless it was "given the flesh of humanity, irony, passion, sanity."⁶²

The New Lines introduction is notable for its tendency to avoid adherence to any one point or idea. The TLS dubbed the Movement poets, "Poets of Moderation"⁶³ in the heading of its review of New Lines and the reviewer commented that "The danger they do run -- where their neo-

romantic predecessors regularly bit off more than they could chew -- is that of working too safely within limits."⁶⁴ Moderation, however, was not the core of their aims. In a conservative and elusive way, The Movement set out with a "negative determination to avoid bad principles." Surely such a value judgement was pure subjectivity on Conquest's part as an equal number of poets of the time could have argued a different version of what was good and bad. The attack, however, was given credibility, as Donald Davie suggests, by a "philistine"⁶⁵ element who were angry enough to condemn anything in absolute terms, and the introduction to New Lines dared to use the eschatological language of "good" and "bad" with a definite liberality. As the TLS pointed out, what lay at the core of the moderation was the argument that the poets were

cool rather than fervid, pragmatic rather than systematic, sceptical rather than enthusiastic, empirical rather than transcendental.⁶⁶

If the Movement poets were successful according to the concepts set out by Conquest in his introduction, it was because they were a reflection of the times, as Ian Hamilton points out:

they represented in their verse the moral attitudes which were excitingly appropriate to the grey new Britain of the fifties.⁶⁷

Not only did the poets answer something that the times demanded, they satisfied the nationalistic urge, the craving for a genuinely British verse, which had never been satisfied during the war when the times called for such a poetry and the poets responded with a verse that bore noticeable influences from continental writing. The TLS seized upon the opportunity to cite the new Movement poets as

a traditionally English temper of mind,
but what is surprising is to find it
put forward as a typically poetic one.⁶⁸

In "Remembering the Movement," Davie confessed that this identification with England, the "little England syndrome" as hostile critics labelled it, was a form of "insularity" which bred a philistinism of the worst kind -- the kind to which the poets themselves pandered. Davie explained:

What did for us was conceding too much,
not to the insularity which orders baked
beans on toast in Pavia and thinks all
foreigners are dirty, but to the insularity
which has ready its well-documented and
conclusive sneer at Colette and Marianne
Moore, Cocteau and Gide and Hart Crane.⁶⁹

The Movement, Davie argued, attracted a "high-brow" insularity, and New Lines, with its hostility and anger against foreign "principles" such as manifesto-making (a throw-back to Surrealism, Symbolism, and other continental influences), was masked by a veneer of restraint and

academic coolness. The Movement poets, as Charles Tomlinson argued in his poignant critique of New Lines ("The Middle-brow Muse") in one of their presumably "safe" magazines, Essays in Criticism, attracted attention from a new group in society, the educated "working-class" audience composed of "middle-brow" readers. These readers, as a social commentary of the times points out, were a new group created out of the promises and failures of the post-war years, the Jimmy Porters (as John Osborne so aptly depicted them in Look Back in Anger) or "angry young men." The term "angry young men" is somewhat of a misnomer and has been applied haphazardly to everyone from Philip Larkin to John Wain to Kingsley Amis to Alan Sillitoe to Dannie Abse. How angry they were remains an unsolved question. Their appeal to a "middle-brow" audience was an issue which Tomlinson grappled with in his review.

Tomlinson charged that The Movement poetry was a result of what he termed "democratic relativity," a democratization of verse which had resulted from the democratization and socialization of society in the wake of the Second World War. The poetry boom had also played a part in the decline of literary standards, and Tomlinson quotes G.S. Fraser's introduction to Poetry Now (1956) regarding the large number of candidates for possible anthologizing. Tomlinson questioned "Has any age ever produced two hundred poets at one time who, by any

objective criteria, were worth anthologizing? I very much doubt it."⁷⁰ Tomlinson suggested that The Movement produced "a new type of poet" who had "been advertised in the ingratiating image of the average man." He continued:

Thus Mr. Amis, according to The Express, opts for blondes, billiards, bars and progressive jazz-clubs. Mr. Larkin abominates Mozart, never goes abroad, is a mild xenophobe. The beer-mug (we learn from the Educational Supplement) 'is never far from Mr. Wain's hand.'⁷¹

Like many critics of New Lines, Tomlinson argued that The Movement had been a creation of the media, a journalistic tide that had bound together mediocre self-promoting poets with a few unfortunate genuine craftsmen and intellectuals who included D.J. Enright and Tomlinson's tutor from Cambridge, Donald Davie. He concluded by stating that "The 'movement' was in the first place a journalist's convenient generalisation."⁷² Poetry, as such, was no longer in the hands of the poets themselves but in the hands of the mass media, and Tomlinson's main assertion was that The Movement was simply a reflection of a general "loss of nerve" which had pervaded British culture in the Fifties. This "loss of nerve" marked a decline in literary culture from the point where the worst poetry ceased to be vicious and became merely dull:

Ten years ago the average level of poetry was vicious, whereas to-day it has become merely dull. If one has the choice between

vice and dullness, neither exerts a particularly magnetic attraction. At all events, the 'victory' over the type of romanticism prevalent in the forties represents not so much a creative redirection as a total failure of nerve....In short, we are asked to admire the new poetry for its negative virtues -- simply, that is, for an absence of 'rhetoric'.⁷³

Donald Davie's response to Tomlinson's review which appeared in the "Critical Forum" section of the next issue of Essays in Criticism argued the opposite -- that a sign of a healthy state of poetry was a dullness among average verse and not viciousness.⁷⁴ D.J. Enright was less kind to Tomlinson. In his rebuttal to the review, Enright struck a low blow by suggesting that Tomlinson, one of the genuine intellects of British literature since the war, was angry because his work had been turned down for the New Lines project.⁷⁵ Tomlinson replied that he had not submitted it directly -- the submission was likely the work of Donald Davie. Enright also commented that New Lines had received considerable critical abuse since its publication the year before, and that no amount of polemic could "enliven" the scene because the polemic was more or less thought to be invective on the part of The Movement poets.

The poetry scene in England in 1956 and 1957 appears to have been charged with a considerable amount of critical hostility that emerged from the debate between the new Neo-Emersonian verse and the die-hards of the Romantic school. The presence of the "two voices" or "two camps",

which some critics, such as Alvarez, viewed as simply the re-emergence of the old "classics versus moderns" debate of the eighteenth century, Swift's battle of the books, gave the poetry scene an aura of being "supercharged" with tension, animosity, and suspicion -- the sense of paranoia that may have been at the root of Enright's accusations in response to Tomlinson. In "The Movement -- An Agreed Fiction?" Sergeant quoted John Holloway on the source of the division:

John Holloway, one of the Movement poets, saw it as a clash between two available languages of poetry, the language that 'points towards a dry, even cagey intelligence' and the language that 'points towards inspiration or abandon.'⁷⁶

Whatever the basis for the clash, and there have been numerous suggestions, including the idea that the debate was simply a result of critical questions that had not resolved themselves during the war, Sergeant felt that the battle was not the real question with which poetry had to involve itself. He believed that poetry was still a matter of the individual's choice of direction and he continued to apply that philosophy to his selection of work for Outposts. Sergeant stated:

The genuine poet, then, will not hesitate to take what he needs from the tradition for his purposes; yet he must achieve something more than a mere imitation of what has already been done; he must restore and revitalize the tradition and extend its validity to his own time.⁷⁷

Sergeant's position was that of the conciliator. After all, he counted among the members of The Movement numerous friends, especially Kingsley Amis and Elizabeth Jennings. Amis, in fact, published his first poem in Outposts. What Sergeant sought was the neutral or common ground that seemed all too remote in 1957 when Dannie Abse contacted him in the hope that together they could produce an anthology which answered New Lines with a presentation of good poets who had been excluded from The Movement.

Sergeant entered the foray in the hope that his work would be of a conciliatory nature, and that it would give an equal forum to those whom the media had overlooked in their creation of The Movement. At the time he entered the debate, Sergeant had not anticipated that his support of poets who merited attention would be viewed with such repulsion and anger as an outright attack on The Movement. What resulted, however, was viewed as a direct attack on The Movement, a debate in which the two opposing "languages" or "camps" or "sides" openly attacked one another's poetry. In retrospect, in "The Movement -- An Agreed Fiction?", Sergeant noted:

Anyone interested in tracing the development of poetry in this country during the last twenty-five years can hardly fail to come across some of the many references to 'The Movement v Mavericks' controversy of the 1950s....'the dialogue between them has moulded and defined the history of poetry

in England since the war.'78

The issue in question became the insoluble differences between the two camps and, like it or not, Sergeant found himself in the centre of the debate. One of the greatest ironies of his career lies in the fact that he has been remembered by literary critics and historians more often for his role in the editing of the Mavericks anthology of 1957 with Dannie Abse than for his forty-two year editorship of Outposts; a sad commentary on prolonged achievement in the literary world.

On January 31, 1956, Sergeant noted in his diary that he had lunched with Dannie Abse, a renewal of an old habit he had thought forgotten. Sergeant recorded Abse's concerns:

He was a little more subdued than usual, and more concerned that the Kingsley Amis-John Wain crowd have now cornered almost every literary medium, exactly as I prophesied two years ago. Dannie took it rather casually and thought I was exaggerating. Now he's beginning to find that it affects him he's sitting up and taking notice -- a little too late, it might be said. Still, Dannie does fairly well himself and needn't worry about his work.⁷⁹

Both Sergeant and Abse were concerned that the rise of the Amis-Wain crowd, "The Movement," if unchecked by some sort of response on the part of the poets it excluded, would drive many good voices completely from the poetry scene.

Sergeant continued in the same entry:

But there are a number of poets who have been crowded out, and because the Movement boys hold every fort we may never know just how many poets (with opposite inclinations) are being kept out.

By "opposite inclinations" Sergeant presumeably meant poets who were not writing out of the "classical" or "restrained" tradition, but those who still favoured the romantic vein and saw themselves as the inheritors of that tradition. Abse in particular seemed concerned for he, among most of the younger poets on the scene, saw his own work as an extension of the romantic tradition. Sergeant reported:

Dannie remarked on the disappearance of the Forties poets -- Nicholas Moore, Alex Comfort, Derek Stanford, Denise Levertoff, etc., -- and said they were a lost generation. He's right at that. Sometimes I wonder whether I'm being unrealistic. The centre of activity has completely passed me by. There are many young poets who now haven't even heard of me.⁸⁰

Beneath Sergeant's sense that a "generation" of his own contemporaries was quickly becoming a "lost generation" at the hands of The Movement poets, who were using their predecessors as "straw-men" for their own advancement, lay a strong feeling of failure on Sergeant's part. He desperately needed something to re-establish himself on the poetry scene, something new and vital that would make people sit up and take notice. An attack on the reigning

group, The Movement poets, would have seemed all too tempting to refuse. Whatever the case, Sergeant needed a profound change of luck.

A play he had written for radio was rejected by the BBC on February 1 and Sergeant, in his diary, lamented:

During the last two or three years everything I have written has proved unsuccessful. Every new venture or idea has been abortive. With both the play and Evangelism talks I hoped to be able to dedicate what talent I have to God's service. It would seem that God just isn't interested. Is there any point in trying to write anymore? What annoys me most is that so much of the second rate is broadcast simply because the writer has the right contacts or has been subservient to the right people, or has the right accent. Very sick at heart.⁸¹

Sergeant's sentiments echo those expressed by Tomlinson in his review of New Lines, "The Middle-brow Muse." The "university boys" who had the "right accents" had taken over the media for creative expression, at least from Sergeant's perspective, and had made their "movement" values and aesthetics the order of the day. Rather than give up or give in, Sergeant decided to fight back.

On May 4, 1956, Sergeant and Abse lunched together in Dulwich and the event was recorded in Sergeant's diary. The lunch was to prove auspicious for at that meeting they formulated the idea for what would become the Maverick anthology. Sergeant wrote:

Lunched with Dannie Abse... He is thinking of publishing a collection of about ten

poets, "Outside the Movement" as a sort of counter-blast against the Wain-Amis set up and wants me to assist with it. We should do the editorial together, and I would write a brief critical note for each poet, and though he wants my suggestions, he would have final say in the selection of poems.⁸²

The prospect of organizing a "counter-blast against the Wain-Amis" group appealed to Sergeant. Abse agreed to cover any financial loss on the operation and to publish the work under the imprint of his Poetry and Poverty Press which had sprung from the magazine of the same name. Sergeant realized he had little to lose and cast his lot in with Abse.

If so many poets had been left out in the cold, (more than one hundred and ninety if G.S. Fraser's comments in Poetry Now regarding the existence of more than two hundred eligible candidates for anthologization were any indicator), the question was whom would they include in the project? Each had his own preferences and the possibilities seemed enormous. Sergeant noted in his diary that at the initial luncheon meeting, the names of David Wright, Thomas Blackburn, W.S. Graham, Michael Hamburger, and Jon Silkin were discussed "and perhaps F. Pratt-Green, Sydney Tremayne, Christopher Levenson, Anthony Cronin, James Kirkup, and John Heath-Stubbs." Sergeant concluded his entry of May 4, 1956 with the comments "Rather fascinated by the idea of attacking the Movement from a Romantic angle." In A Poet in the Family, his collection of

autobiographical reminiscences, Abse recalled that his initial aim for the anthology was to answer what he felt was the "prevailing critical climate" of the times. Abse recalled:

At odds with the prevailing critical climate of opinion Poetry and Poverty changed from an eclectic magazine into a crusading, dynamic one that finally found expression in the controversial anthology, Mavericks, which I edited with Howard Sergeant, and which was intended to rival the fashionable New Lines anthology which featured Kingsley Amis, Robert Conquest, Donald Davie, D.J. Enright, Thom Gunn, John Holloway, Elizabeth Jennings, Philip Larkin, and John Wain.⁸³

Clearly, what Sergeant and Abse believed they were doing was answering the Movement with a selection of work by those it had dismissed. They also believed that they were re-enforcing the romantic tradition which had spawned them as poets.

Three days later, on May 7, 1956, Sergeant began the work of editing his selections for the anthology and in an entry in his diary which seems to typify the spirit of the times he noted:

After watering my garden I got down to some serious work on this Romantic Anthology. W.S. Graham, Thomas Blackburn, Michael Hamburger, David Wright, Jon Silkin, James Kirkup all look certain starters. Others could be John Heath Stubbs, Vernon Scannell, W. Price Turner, Laurie Lee, Terence Tiller, Anthony Cronin, and Christopher Levenson. Selected a few poems for it.⁸⁴

Sergeant's sense of the anthology's direction was slightly different from what Abse had in mind. Sergeant envisioned the project as a rebuttal of The Movement on a romantic ground and he thought of including a number of established voices such as Lee, Graham, Blackburn and Heath-Stubbs, all poets who had made their reputations during the war years and who stood firmly entrenched in the romantic aesthetic. Abse, however, as the leader of the project, had different ideas. On May 8, 1956, Sergeant and Abse came to a decision that greatly affected the shape and direction of the anthology. Sergeant noted in his diary:

I worked on the Neo-Romantic Anthology and gave Dannie a ring to discuss it. We have decided to include only those poets under thirty-seven which rules out Blackburn, Tremayne, Graham, Heath-Stubbs and Laurie Lee, but the accent will be more youth.⁸⁵

By consenting to Abse's decision, which included Abse, Sergeant ruled himself out of the anthology. By doing so, he cast himself in the role of the editor rather than the role of the poet, a part he played for the rest of his career. On May 22, 1956, Sergeant met Abse at the Mandrake Club in London and together they drew up the final plan for the anthology. Their original title, up to that point, was "Outside the Movement", a choice which signalled the prime intent of the anthology. Sergeant announced the roster:

poets to be included: Michael Hamburger, David Wright, Vernon Scannell, Jon Silkin, W. Price Turner, Dannie Abse, James Kirkup, John Smith and perhaps Anthony Cronin....⁸⁶

As the anthology took shape, Kirkup, fearing that the project might be too controversial, dropped out. He was replaced by Anthony Cronin and in July, shortly before the collection went to press, J.C. Hall, the poet who had supported and encouraged Keith Douglas more than a decade before, was added. Of those included in the anthology, Sergeant had published Michael Hamburger, David Wright, W. Price-Turner, Abse, J.C. Hall, Vernon Scannell, and Jon Silkin in Outposts on a regular basis so that the anthology, although independent of the magazine, had an Outposts flavour to it. The idea of the critical introduction was put aside in favour of an epistolary means of introducing the poets:

we decided to have an exchange of letters between Dannie and myself in which the merits and demerits of the Movement are discussed.⁸⁷

By choosing to introduce the anthology through letters they hoped to avoid the arid and pseudo-intellectual prose which had drawn so much negative attention to Conquest's introduction to New Lines. The original title was soon abandoned, possibly because they wanted to attack the Movement but not in a direct fashion. Their aim with the new anthology was, after all, to promote the poets that New

Lines had excluded, and not to attack Conquest simply for creating a coterie.

The new title, Mavericks, was both apt and wrong for the anthology and appears to have been a last-minute decision on the part of Sergeant and Abse. By the choice of "Mavericks" they meant to imply that each poet was an individual. Both Sergeant and Abse, at least in their intentions, wanted to avoid the possibility of grouping the individual poets included in the anthology under any polemical umbrella or theory. The title, in this context, was meant to convey the absence of a supporting theory, although both the editors knew that what they were attempting to support with the project was a revival of the romantic among the new generation of poets. Inevitably, what the two editors did, much to their surprise, was answer dogma with dogma so that the title became a misnomer when considered against the theoretical message their introductory letters conveyed. The title also carried the negative implication that the poets included were renegades, strays who had maintained their individuality but had more or less escaped from the herd. The poets involved, as the title suggested, were to be identified, even defined perhaps, by what they were not -- an extension of the trend in the Fifties, not only in poetry but in other arts, to define and identify art in negative rather than positive terms. The statement that a poet was not in

The Movement, by implication, suggested that he or she was a Maverick, someone who was categorized by virtue of the fact that they stood outside a category -- a paradox of the most absurd dimensions. "Mavericks" implied that The Movement was a solid entity and that the poets included in the new anthology were those who had been left out. Sergeant and Abse, in this sense, undercut the whole purpose of the anthology and might just as well have taken G.S. Fraser at his word and included all of the one hundred and ninety remaining poets that New Lines did not encompass. The introductory letters did not clarify their choice of poets but merely substantiated the vagueness regarding the organization of the anthology.

The introductory letters based their arguments on the "solid Movement" perception, and took Conquest's prefatory remarks in New Lines as a dogma rather than as mere personal generalisations and observations on the poets in his anthology. Abse saw the Movement as arid, not only because it emphasised an urban toughness but because it used language in such a matter-of-fact manner. Abse wrote:

Language, The Movement believes, should be straight and unadorned. It would be all right if they were just anti-rhetorical. But the Lucky Jim attitude is -- apart from anything else -- fundamentally anti-poetic.⁸⁸

To this, Sergeant replied that "Kingsley Amis has admitted, 'the trouble with the newer poets, including myself, is

that they are often lucid and nothing else -- except arid and bald, and that, on the other hand, the strict forms seem to give some of them the idea that they can be as sentimental and trite as they please provided they do it in terza rima....'"89

Sergeant and Abse not only addressed the evident issue of language in the difference between the Mavericks and The Movement poetry, but the debate between their origins. Rather than approach the question from the perspective of the historical struggle of "the ancient versus the modern", Abse chose to approach the problem from the Nietzschean point of view of the "Apollonian" or the restrained mind versus the "Dionysian" or impassioned mind. In his defence, he offered, weakly, a line from Robert Browning: "Oh my dove, let us be unashamed of soul." By doing so, Abse immediately thrust the question into the realm of the abstract rather than the compositional. Abse wrote:

With the Movement poets the reader hardly ever receives the impression that the poem has seized the poet and that a dreadful struggle has ensued between the poem and the poet, between the nameless, amorphous, Dionysian material and the conscious, law abiding, articulating craftsman....I suppose I am equating the romantic with the Dionysian and the Dionysian with that mysterious, permanent element in poetry that irradiates and moves us and endures down the centuries.⁹⁰

Sergeant, well aware of the problems and divisions caused

by such abstract and theoretical language during the Forties, struck a more prudent stance in his letter of reply to Abse. In his remarks, Sergeant stressed that The Movement was no different from any other generation of poets (including his own, although he did not say so in direct terms) in that they were publicity hounds, grouped together for their own advancement and protection. Sergeant viewed The Movement as a matter of "safety in numbers:"

Poets usually group themselves in order to emphasise, among other things, certain aspects of poetry which they consider to be unduly neglected. Within a few years such groups, having made their point (and perhaps a few reputations) invariably disperse and the poets pursue their individual ways.⁹¹

Sergeant was probably mindful of statements he had made in 1951 in the first volume of a planned three volume study of twentieth-century poetry, Tradition in the Making of Modern Poetry (only the first volume of the series was published because the publisher went bankrupt). In that study Sergeant had noted:

Although the last fifty years have constituted a period of intensive experimentation in English poetry, it is a noticeable feature, if somewhat paradoxical, the work usually considered to be the most revolutionary in achievement is that, which, in certain respects, has been the most traditional....If it is true that every movement is, in origin, a reaction against the ideas and techniques of the preceding generation, it is also true that every new movement is a rediscovery of what has been lost, a re-emphasis upon what has temporarily been forgotten or neglected.⁹²

Sergeant realized that The Movement poets were simply trying to revive a lost tradition -- that of Georgian formal poetry, and that they had adapted it to the times. At the same time, Sergeant's apprehensions of The Movement may have been based on the idea that they were out to silence another aspect of literary tradition -- that of romanticism -- and perceived his own efforts in producing Mavericks as a form of literary conservation. The Movement, to Sergeant, was not simply a band of upstarts, but another phase in a long tradition of movements, a cyclical pattern in British poetry that Sergeant saw not only as part of a historical development but as a part of the natural course of events on the literary scene. He wrote in his introductory letter to Abse:

I wonder if any special significance can be attached to the fact that English poetry of the last fifty years has been extra-ordinarily susceptible to movements of one kind or another -- or is it merely that even poets are growing wise to the possibilities of high-pressure tactics of modern advertising? Since 1910 we have had, in quick succession, Georgians, Imagists, Symbolists, the Socio-Political movement of the 'thirties, Objective Reporters, Surrealists, Apocalyptic, Personalists, the Cairo Group, Neo-Romantics and Neo-Classicists, to say nothing of the various regionalist and nationalist movements, all struggling to take the literary scene by storm and attract the attention of a strictly limited poetry-reading public; some, let it be said, with a good deal more success than others.⁹³

Sergeant's remarks are infused with a prudence and a fear that the Mavericks were themselves in danger of being

perceived as yet another 'movement'. He saw The Movement as yet another link in the chain of reaction and termed them "Neo-Empsonians", a phrase which Conquest had held in wry suspicion. There is the suggestion in Sergeant's tone that he was tired of all the attacks and counter-attacks. Deep down, he longed for poets simply to write poetry and leave the theorizing to the critics.

The Movement, Sergeant argued, was a creation of critical minds preoccupied with a view of literature that was little more than a sophomoric cycle of fashions. When the critics had become bored with existing fashion, they had independently created a new "movement" (and for lack of a better name had applied the generic term to the poets), a matrix into which they had crammed a number of poets -- and few of the poets had any sense that what they were doing was part of a larger picture. Sergeant suggested:

If the "historian of contemporary literature" is anything like as cynical as many of "The Movement" poets pretend on principle to be, he may be strongly tempted to dismiss the whole thing as an extremely well-organized (not to say well-sustained) publicity campaign, solely designed to keep a number of poets in the public eye to the exclusion of others equally deserving of attention.⁹⁴

Rather than attack The Movement, Sergeant traced its development, charting the growth of the group from the first mentions of it in The Spectator in 1954 to Conquest's New Lines two years later. He pointed out that several of

the poets in The Movement had been contributors to Outposts as early as 1949 and that some of them, even after their initial identification by Scott and Hartley, continued to be regular contributors. Sergeant suggested that "the much-vaunted toughness" had become a pose, "as phoney in its way as anything they protested against." In statements that echoed Tomlinson's accusation that The Movement represented a loss of nerve in British poetry, Sergeant explained:

that purity of language more often than not means poverty of language; that their restraint hides a fear of exhibiting the least hint of personal feeling; that knowing glances and undergraduate sniggers make do for irony and wit; that concentration upon form is, in fact, concentration upon the same two or three forms and rhythms, repeated to the point of tedium.⁹⁵

The "loss of nerve" or the "aridity", as Sergeant thought, extended beyond mere literary techniques and into the realm of emotional and spiritual values. The Movement, he believed,

seems on the one hand, to have neither a sense of direction nor a sense of moral responsibility and, on the other, to lack any strong central impulses such as those which motivated the social-conscious group of the 'thirties or the neo-romantic trend of the 'forties; and as you so rightly point out, the poets concerned have so few ideas in common.⁹⁶

The idea that poetry was a matter of belief, a philosophy from the Forties that Sergeant continued to acknowledge, undercut the validity of The Movement poetry to Sergeant.

The Mavericks, however much they wanted to believe in something, were hard-pressed to arrive at anything new. Sergeant believed that the Mavericks were "making a valid attempt to grapple with problems beyond those of technique (important though these may be)" to "communicate, lucidly and honestly, what they feel to be significant experience." The critics, however, felt that there was little difference between the Mavericks and The Movement.

On March 8, 1957, the TLS ran a large article/review headed with the title "Too Late The Mavericks." With regard to publicity the Mavericks scored a larger victory than The Movement if column space and page location are any indicator of importance. The article appeared on the front page of the TLS and continued onto the second page. The review confirmed all of Sergeant and Abse's worst suspicions for the anthology. From the outset, the Mavericks were viewed as a single 'group'. The reviewer argued:

The editors of Mavericks insist that they "shouldn't form a school for that would be false from the start." They refuse to present Maverick poets "as a group in any way, still less as an opposing school." Nevertheless, almost all the poems included by the editors take a similar approach, and they distinguish Maverick characteristics in the light of Movement characteristics. They have no other course.⁹⁷

The reviewer, who seemed baffled by the distinctions and the charges that the two camps drew against each other,

offered a view on his own feelings of perplexity and confusion: "The distinctions drawn by either school are insufficient to isolate their characteristics." Abse's discussion of "Dionysianism" was compared with Conquest's suspicion of "Id poetry" -- both appeared to confront the nonsensical and irrelevant issue of a personal presence within the poetry itself, a question which New Criticism and both sets of editors had made meaningless. Both groups, the reviewer pointed out, had a preoccupation with personal complaint:

Occasionally Maverick and Movement authors complain of their lot. Critical attitudes developed from a basis of bland self-obsession can be offered only in terms of personal malaise. "I am sick of it." "Look what you have done to me." "I am sensitive." "Look what you do to sensitivity."⁹⁸

Both anthologies, in retrospect, suffered from an identification of the poet with his poems and heralded the poetic ego rather than the work itself as the central issue. Such a problem represents a distinct inheritance from the Forties, something that both sides protested and neither could completely shun. The reviewer from the TLS was quick to spot the fact that both sides were caught in a time-warp of poetic egotism:

Standardized by the triviality of their subject matter and their scorn for a coherent view of life, their verses are so alike that the individuality they cherish, to which they would sacrifice

everything, is destroyed, and the poetry too; pitying the plumes they forget the dying bird.⁹⁹

Many, at the time, including the TLS reviewer, could not see what all the fuss was about. Mavericks had been an attempt to show that more poetry existed than what Conquest had offered. The age, however, was charged with a polemicism that stood in the way, not only of good writing, but of good criticism. In the end, both sides cancelled each other out. With the exception of Larkin whose verses rank among the best produced in this century, there were few long-term poetry survivors from the clash and most readers and poets were left with a sense of confusion as to what the whole battle had been about.

The wounds, however, were not quick to heal. When advised by Anthony Thwaite that he should include Dannie Abse's poetry in The Oxford Book of Twentieth Century English Verse,¹⁰⁰ Philip Larkin rejected the work, although Thwaite had placed him seventh or eighth on a list of those who merited inclusion. Larkin served on the Gregory Awards panel with Howard Sergeant, T.S. Eliot, Henry Moore and others during the Sixties but always found some convenient reason for not appearing at meetings attended by Sergeant. The animosity that the battle created ran deep and the full extent of it may never be fathomed.

Both sides admitted defeat. Davie, in "Remembering the Movement," confessed his doubts as to the validity of

the whole debate. In Poet in the Family, Dannie Abse lamented the failure of Mavericks:

Yet, editorially we failed. This was because the best poets in the opposing camp had a genuine, even an exciting talent. More important, there were too few poems written during the 1950s that lived up to my editorial ideal of being written out of the heat of personal predicament and therefore imbued with a strong current of feeling.¹⁰¹

Sergeant, however, was unwilling to admit defeat. He had stood up for the individual voice and had attracted enough attention to ensure that those voices would continue to be heard above the din of publicity and literary propaganda. The fact that the second edition of New Lines in 1963 included a larger range, not only of new voices such as John Fuller, Hugo Williams, George MacBeth, Anthony Thwaite, Edwin Brock, Thomas Kinsella and Edward Lucie-Smith, as well as such older voices as Laurence Lerner and Thomas Blackburn, signalled the opening of the literary scene from its closed cliques to a much broader and accessible scene. In his editorial to the second edition of New Lines, beneath a great deal of critical back-tracking, Conquest made one illuminating remark regarding the question of accessibility -- the issue which now appears to have been the spark which touched off the flames of the debate: "To put together any anthology involves accepting limitations, and these are to some extent arbitrary ones which the anthologist comes to regret." If the battle

proved anything, it was that anthologies represent a selection process according to a critical criterion, and that more often than not a critical criterion is implicitly elitist. The lesson that both sides learned from the whole debate, as Conquest put it, was that "Poetry has no 'tasks' except to be poetry," a remark that Sergeant, for all his support of theories and groups, welcomed as the signal of a truce. A new generation of poets who followed in the wake of the Mavericks and The Movement was gradually taking shape. Many were still at university or had just come down from Oxford and Cambridge. For them, the issue was not a question of idea but a matter of practice. They met in small workshop groups, criticized each others' work and refused to categorize themselves under any single manifesto or critical umbrella. Their sole concern was the finished poem, regardless of what lineage it claimed to represent in English literature. Those poets represented the future. The era of the issues had passed.

NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

¹Howard Sergeant, Personal Diary 1950. Private Collection of the estate of Howard Sergeant, Walton-on-Thames.

²Lionel Monteith, London, to Bruce Meyer, Toronto, 12 April 1988. Private Collection of Bruce Meyer, Toronto.

³Jean Sergeant, 'Howard' MBE of "Outposts" (Fareham, Hants.: The National Poetry Foundation, 1987). 25.

⁴Howard Sergeant, Personal Diary 1956. Private Collection of the estate of Howard Sergeant, Walton-on-Thames.

⁵Bruce Meyer, "Interview with Howard Sergeant," 6 and 7 November 1983, Walton-on-Thames. Unpublished.

⁶Derek Stanford, Inside the Forties: Literary Memoirs 1937-1957 (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1977). 31.

⁷Meyer, "Interview with Howard Sergeant."

⁸A.T. Tolley, The Poetry of the Forties in Britain (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1985). 27-28.

⁹Howard Sergeant, The Leavening Air (London: The Fortune Press, 1946). Back dust jacket.

¹⁰During Sergeant's Canadian tour of September 1982, Cogswell acted as host for the eastern Canadian leg. During a luncheon conversation with Cogswell in 1982 (during a League of Canadian Poets Executive meeting), Cogswell told me of the influence of Sergeant's work on Fiddlehead.

¹¹From conversations with Christopher Middleton, Austin, Texas, August 1986 and April 1987.

- ¹²Philip Larkin, The North Ship (London: Faber and Faber, 1973). 7.
- ¹³Edward Lucie-Smith, ed. British Poetry Since 1945 (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1986). 11.
- ¹⁴Anthony Hartley, "Critic Between the Lines," The Spectator, 8 January 1954. 47.
- ¹⁵David Perkins, "In and Out The Movement: The Generation of the 1950s in England," A History of Modern Poetry: Modernism and After (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press, 1987). 418-420.
- ¹⁶Perkins, A History of Modern Poetry. 418.
- ¹⁷Tolley, Poetry of the Forties in Britain. 287.
- ¹⁸Alan Ross, Poetry 1945-1950 (London: Longmans Green and Company, 1951). 64.
- ¹⁹Sergeant, Personal Diary 1950.
- ²⁰John Press, A Map of Modern English Verse (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969). 252.
- ²¹Peter Orr, "Interview with Roy Fuller," The Poet Speaks, ed. Peter Orr (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966). 64.
- ²²Howard Sergeant, ed. "Editorial," Arena Number 21 (Autumn 1948). Unpaginated.
- ²³Donald Davie, "Remembering the Movement," Poet in the Imaginary Museum: essays of two decades, ed. Barry Alpert (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 1977). 73.
- ²⁴Hartley, "Critic Between the Lines," The Spectator 8 January 1954. 47.
- ²⁵Hartley. 47.
- ²⁶Hartley. 47.
- ²⁷Hartley. 47.
- ²⁸Sergeant, "Editorial," Arena.
- ²⁹Dannie Abse, London, to Bruce Meyer, Toronto, 10 May 1988. Private Collection of Bruce Meyer, Toronto.

³⁰List of the readings given at the Crown and Greyhound compiled by Lionel Monteith for Bruce Meyer.

³¹Dannie Abse, "Poetry and Poverty," A Poet in the Family (London: Hutchison and Company, 1974). 151.

³²Emmanuel Litvinoff, "Notes on the Poverty, No.2," Poetry and Poverty Number 2, 1951, ed. Dannie Abse. 33.

³³Litvinoff, "Notes on the Poverty, No.2." 36.

³⁴Howard Sergeant, "Notes on the Poverty, No.4," Poetry and Poverty Number 4, 1952. 32.

³⁵Ian Hamilton, "The Making of the Movement," Poetry Chronicle: essays and reviews. (London: Faber and Faber, 1973). 130.

³⁶Blake Morrison, The Movement: English Poetry and Fiction of the 1950s (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980). 21.

³⁷Hartley, "Critic Between the Lines." 47.

³⁸Dannie Abse, "Editorial Note: The Second Phase of Neo-Romanticism," Poetry and Poverty Number 4, 1954, ed. Dannie Abse. 2-3.

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- ⁴⁸Meyer, "Interview with Howard Sergeant."
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- ⁵⁰Elizabeth Jennings, "The Making of a Movement," The Spectator, 2 October 1964. 446-448.
- ⁵¹Hamilton, "The Making of the Movement." 129.
- ⁵²Davie, "Remembering the Movement." 72.
- ⁵³Jennings, "The Making of a Movement." 447.
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- ⁵⁵Jennings, "The Making of a Movement." 447.
- ⁵⁶Howard Sergeant, "The Movement -- An Agreed Fiction?" TMs. Private Collection of the estate of Howard Sergeant, Walton-on-Thames.
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⁷⁸Sergeant, "The Movement -- An Agreed Fiction?"
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⁷⁹Sergeant, Personal Diary 1956.

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⁸³Abse, A Poet in the Family. 153.

⁸⁴Sergeant, Personal Diary 1956.

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⁹⁷"Too Late the Mavericks," rev. of Mavericks: An Anthology, ed. Howard Sergeant and Dannie Abse, Times Literary Supplement 8 March 1957. 137-138.

⁹⁸"Too Late the Mavericks." 137-138.

⁹⁹"Too Late the Mavericks." 137-138.

¹⁰⁰From a tape recorded conversation with Anthony Thwaite, Low Tharston, November 1983.

¹⁰¹Abse, Poet in the Family. 153.

CHAPTER FOUR
GROUP ACTIVITIES

Although the Maverick/Movement debate of the Fifties left many commentators with the impression that the poetry scene of the era was fractured into two hostile camps -- those who supported The Movement and those who opposed it -- there was a certain amount of interplay and even friendship between poets who were aesthetically on opposite poles. Charles Tomlinson's friendship with Donald Davie, or Howard Sergeant's closeness to Kingsley Amis, suggests that poets will befriend one another and seek out each other's advice and judgement even when they appear hostile or critically incompatible with one another. The debate of the times, if it can be called that, attracted attention from all corners of the poetry scene, as evidenced by the list of subscribers to Mavericks. Among those who bought advance copies were John Betjeman, Thomas Blackburn, Charles Causley, John Cotton, G.S. Fraser, Roy Fuller, John Lehmann, Christopher Middleton, Liam Miller (editor of the Dolmen Press in Dublin), Brian Moore (who was shortly to leave for Canada where he became a leading novelist), Dom Moraes, Edwin Muir, Norman Nicholson, William Plomer, John Press, Sir Herbert Read, Robin

Skelton, Dame Edith Sitwell, Sir Osbert Sitwell, and Stephen Spender.¹ More than simply a list of names, the subscribers' roll implies an interest from all levels and components of the poetry scene -- Mavericks, Movement poets, Neo-Romantics, Socio-political poets of the Thirties, Surrealists, Georgians, English, Scottish, and Irish. Commonwealth and foreign writers also showed an interest in the project. Foreign and Commonwealth subscribers included W.S. Merwin (the American poet who was serving as Robert Graves' secretary at the time), George Lamming (who was then an apprentice novelist from the West Indies), Roy Daniells, Canadian drama critic Nathan Cohen who was living in London, and Canadian novelists Mordecai Richler and Norman Levine. While subscription to the project did not necessarily mean support or sympathy for the anthology, the interest in Mavericks suggests that the poetry scene in England was ready for some sort of new poetry to challenge the work of The Movement poets. When the Mavericks failed to offer that challenge, disappointment and disgust became the banners under which many critics gathered.

One such critic was B. Evan Owen, a regular contributor and reviewer for Outposts who reviewed Mavericks together with New Lines and G.S. Fraser's Poetry Now in Outposts Number Thirty-two (Spring 1957). In a review that must have been unpleasant for Sergeant to

publish in his own magazine, Owen wrote:

According to George Jean Nathan a critic should have the mind of a gentleman and the emotions of a bum. Though I may not possess the former I certainly have the latter in abundance. Nothing less can account for the rage of frustration and the effervescence of blasphemous indignation that constitute my reactions to these anthologies. And though I may fume with a greater degree of violence over New Lines than over the other two collections it is only a matter of degree.²

Owen decried the anthologies for their polemicism, their fear of treading on territory that had not been explored by theoretical forethought, and the sense of cautiousness that both The Movement and Maverick poets exercised in their work. The controlled voice and style of The Movement poets had left many readers wanting a freer, less cautious verse. Owen concluded his review with a plea to the Maverick poets in Sergeant and Abse's anthology:

To all the nine poets in Mavericks I would say, in the name of the Muse they are struggling to invoke: Let your hair down, spit in the eye of orthodoxy, and shout your poetic truths to the hungry skies. The poet is the enemy of the rational, organized society, the complete outsider, the constant heretic, the antithesis of bowler-hatted sobriety, the scourge of convention, the lash on the backs of the herd. Without his violent apostacy civilization will perish, and if New Lines truly represented poetry today we could be forgiven for assuming the onset of rigor mortis.³

Many critics and poets desired a new poetry that would

strike the chord of clarity ushered in by The Movement, while at the same time maintaining a passionate involvement with the emotions and with important issues that the Mavericks had attempted to confront with their verse. What the critics and their supporting poets wanted was a new poetry that was not afraid to challenge gentility or the "bowler-hatted sobriety" that had become the norm in Britain of the Fifties. Ted Hughes' The Hawk in the Rain, published in the United States in 1957, suggested that such a new poetry was possible. Hughes had been careful to keep himself "neutral" during the debates, and the fact that he was not associated with a group or a school reinforced his originality and added to his dynamism in the public perception. The questions remained, would the poets write such a verse and would they be able to battle the constant cycles of cliques and theories that clouded the scene? Even if a poet could overcome the 'groups', he would still be confronted with the riddle of English "gentility" that repelled and discouraged the long-desired poetry.

The attack on the "gentility" of British poetry was spearheaded by A. Alvarez' anthology The New Poetry⁴ (first issued in 1962 and followed by a re-edited version in 1964). In his introductory essay, "The New Poetry, or Beyond the Gentility Principle," Alvarez forged a compromise that promised new and better things for a British poetry that might put aside the theories and the

debates and settle down to the business of writing a forceful and genuine verse. The anthology, for most observers of British poetry in 1962 and 1964, represented a ray of hope. In A Poet in the Family, Dannie Abse recalled that "The New Poetry...echoed more directly, more succinctly, the sentiments I had been vocal about some eight years earlier."⁵ Abse suggested that Ted Hughes, and the Americans Sylvia Plath and Robert Lowell, produced the kind of poetry that Abse had wanted to see since the end of the war. Elizabeth Jennings, in "The Making of a Movement" which appeared in The Spectator in 1964, commented that Alvarez' anthology came on the scene as an answer to New Lines, and, although the perspective offered by The New Poetry was a purely personal one, it produced an impact simply because it was another challenge to The Movement.⁶ The challenge that the anthology represented, however, was a peaceful one, a declaration of principles rather than an assault on an existing group or style. Alvarez made his intentions clear: he was attempting to sort the good from the bad and was willing to stand behind his judgements as long as the reader was aware of the fact that his assessment was personal and not polemical. Jennings remarked:

a comparatively short time after New Lines appeared, A. Alvarez, in 1962, published in Penguin books an anthology, significantly entitled The New Poetry, which contained works by some of the New Lines poets, but

also included some interesting new names, while it omitted a number of the previously best-known and most highly regarded of the Movement poets.⁷

The anthology challenged the status quo which New Lines had introduced, and promoted the work of foreign poets whose influence, Alvarez felt, was needed in England. The first edition brought British recognition to the work of Robert Lowell, John Berryman, and Sylvia Plath, and the second added Canadian David Wevill, Australian Peter Porter, and American Anne Sexton. The intent of such additions, an expression of unease with the incestuous xenophobia which marked English poetry of the period, was to declare that England was not simply the centre of English verse and that a poetic revolution had taken place in America. This revolution, initiated by T.S. Eliot before he entered his more conservative phase during the late Thirties, was an attempt to make the language and content of poetry confront the realities of both the internal and external worlds of the poet. Psychoanalysis and modern warfare, Alvarez argued, had contributed to a social anxiety that was not given a fair or thorough treatment by the restrained and unemotional poets of The Movement. The events of the modern world could no longer be ignored by poets, either for aesthetic or for stylistic reasons. The new poetry, therefore, had to confront the questions of the contemporary world. Alvarez wrote:

What, I suggest, has happened in the last half century is that we are gradually being made to realize that all our lives, even those of the most genteel and enislanded, are influenced profoundly by forces which have nothing to do with gentility, decency or politeness. Theologians would call these forces evil, psychologists, perhaps libido. Either way, they are the forces of disintegration which destroy the old standards of civilization.⁸

To Alvarez, British poetry was guilty of turning away from the issues which he felt it should have confronted during the century and, like many critics before him, he urged poets to open their eyes to the realities around them.

British poetry in the twentieth century, Alvarez suggested, had been hampered by a series of "negative feedbacks" which were the result of the infighting of groups, cliques and aesthetic camps. His view of literary history, or at least the history of twentieth-century British poetry, was that of the "groups", the gang wars that were useful only to those critics who found the categories and the manifesto-making a convenient structure for discussion. Alvarez declared that, since 1930, British poetry had been in the hands of groups who had prevented good poetry from being published because such groups feared genuine freedom in verse. These groups had protected their own interests by decrying the broadening of aesthetic horizons and had placed theory ahead of practice in a ruse to cover their own lack of passionate expression. Such work, Alvarez asserted, created a "negative feedback", a

situation in British verse that demanded that poets settle for the easy options of aridity, verbose language, or vagueness. The "gangs", in this context, had been convenient camouflage for poets who had no business in demanding attention for second-rate work. Even those whose work rated some attention, poets such as Dylan Thomas and W.H. Auden, were hampered by imitators who, through theory, defended their own weak work by associating themselves with the real masters.

To make his point, Alvarez charted the various groups and counter-groups that had emerged in British poetry since the Thirties. His major point was that the poetry written in England had been damaged by an avoidance of inner emotion and a reliance on public platitude. To give his view emphasis, Alvarez took lines from eight different poets in New Lines and created a bland but stylistically correct poem. Rather than condemn The Movement poets for their precision, Alvarez suggested that stylistic control and direct language were good for poetry -- in essence, he argued for a synthesis of the Maverick and The Movement stances.

And the English scene is peculiarly amenable to literary history: it is savage with gang-warfare which, at a distance, can be dignified as disagreements between schools of verse.⁹

Alvarez rejected the importance of the groups: they had been the creation of strategies designed to promote poets

as personalities rather than poetry alone, media ploys that had been invented in the editorial rooms of London publications:

The London old-boy circuit may often be stupid, conceited, and parasitic but I don't believe that it is in a deliberate conspiracy against good work.¹⁰

The theories, and the groups, had little to do with poetry -- a sensible suggestion that was aimed at the artists rather than the commentators. Many of the poets, selected by Alvarez as poets whose work represented genuine achievement, had not belonged to either the Mavericks or The Movement. Such poets included R.S. Thomas, Norman MacCaig, Christopher Middleton, Charles Tomlinson, Arthur Boyars, David Holbrook, Iain Crichton Smith, Peter Porter, Ted Hughes, Peter Redgrove, Ted Walker, David Wevill, John Fuller and Ian Hamilton. In a gesture of diplomacy and sound literary judgement, Alvarez also selected work from poets whom he felt were the best writers in the Mavericks and The Movement -- an act which suggested that all the debate and the false attention had been for nought. The Movement poets were represented by D.J. Enright, Donald Davie, Philip Larkin, Kingsley Amis and John Wain, while only Jon Silkin survived the transition from the Mavericks to The New Poetry.

Some critics and poets, such as Dannie Abse, suggested that The New Poetry was not the success some

thought it was. Abse, for example, saw the anthology as yet another attempt to cram poets into the uncomfortable fit of a predetermined theory -- in this case the argument for a poetry "beyond the gentility principle." In Poet in the Family, Abse compared Alvarez' anthology to Mavericks and commented:

Yet The New Poetry also failed. Even in the 1960s, Alvarez could not find enough poems of quality "beyond the gentility principle". The anthology he put together was generally not in accord with his editorial.¹¹

The negative reaction to Alvarez' anthology can be viewed as the negativism which greets any anthology. Some poets always must be excluded in the selection process and any criterion, no matter how broad-ranging it may be, is by implication exclusive, and exclusivity of any kind is often misconstrued as categorization. On the other hand, anthologies such as G.S. Fraser's Poetry Now lacked a central theme or aesthetic core and suggested that the sole reason for including a poet was the fact that he or she was actively publishing. As an intelligent anthologist will suggest, the anthology genre is one of the trickiest and contentious forums for verse -- a forum that in the end serves neither the poet nor the anthologist, except possibly as a vehicle for publicity and immediate attention. Anthologies, in this sense, portray the limitations of the anthologist rather than the capabilities

of the poets that a collection includes.

Aside from the negative reaction to the anthology, The New Poetry served to promote the work of a new type of poetry which had emerged in Britain since the Maverick/Movement debate of 1956 and 1957. Among the youngest poets included in the 1964 edition were several new voices who had been contemporaries of Ted Hughes at Cambridge during the late Fifties. David Wevill and Peter Redgrove had been participants and regular contributors to a new Cambridge literary magazine, Delta. Redgrove's contributions to Delta had brought him to the notice of another student at the university, Philip Hobsbaum, who chaired a weekly gathering of poets where their own verse and work by contemporary poets was scrutinized, discussed, and criticized. Martin Booth in British Poetry 1964-1984 recounted the origins of the gathering that eventually became known as "The Group":

The Group began in Cambridge about 1955, originating in Philip Hobsbaum's student coterie. From his graduation until around 1959, Hobsbaum continued to operate as chairman of the friends' circle in London with Edward Lucie-Smith taking over from 1959 until 1965 as chairman, with meetings taking place in his flat in Chelsea.¹²

Booth is wrong in calling The Group a "coterie," for although many of the poets were friends and many friendships were formed because of The Group meetings, the

gatherings never projected or signalled the closed sense of the "coterie" which misinformed critics have since applied.

The weekly meetings which were held at Hobsbaum's home in Stockwell after both he and Redgrove had come down from Cambridge began to attract others who had been involved with Delta as well as numerous other young poets in the London area. Wevill, who had also come down from Cambridge and who was working in London, was invited to attend. Word of the informal gatherings spread and soon the meetings included George MacBeth, Alan Brownjohn, Peter Porter (a young Australian), Edward Lucie-Smith (from Jamaica), Christopher Hampton, Zulfikar Ghose, Adrian Mitchell and Martin Bell (who was the elder poet among the young group).¹³ The Group, in such terms, can be said to have been the first London-based poetry workshop that attempted to accommodate international viewpoints -- the Commonwealth, at least, was well represented. There were no strict guidelines for attendance at the meetings other than an open mind and honest reaction. Poets came to meetings when they wished, especially if the work under discussion was of interest to them. Many poets who were not among the core of the gathering were "ex officio" participants in the meetings. Among these 'ex officio' participants were Anthony Thwaite and Howard Sergeant.

Sergeant, by this time an elder statesman and a seasoned veteran of the London literary wars, brought to the gatherings a maturity and an acquired distaste for polemics. At the meetings, the atmosphere of individual taste and individual response to a poem, to say nothing of individual creativity, became the order of the day and Sergeant enjoyed both the company and the discussion. The meetings were not intended to foment a new aesthetic but were gatherings of a specifically practical nature: the discussion, criticism and creation of good poetry in a group atmosphere. Because they had no aesthetic criterion, no philosophy other than practical criticism, and because they were composed of such a divergent collection of tastes, opinions and interests, they styled themselves as "The Group", a generic name that they adopted for want of a better title.

In British Poetry Since 1960, Roger Garfitt commented on the nature and composition of The Group. Garfitt noted that "The Group" could "refer to at least three things: a critical procedure, a category of poets, and a group of friends." Garfitt stressed that The Group was a "critical procedure, but never a critical orthodoxy."¹⁴ Redgrove and Wevill, for instance, admired the work of Ted Hughes, a contemporary from Cambridge, and their writing from the period displays strong autobiographical tendencies coupled with attention to the

elemental tensions of the external world for which Hughes had already become famous. Ghose's work, often misinterpreted as "exotic," displayed a strong autobiographical element based on his childhood in India and Pakistan, and a command of imagery that added a unique lushness to his verse. Peter Porter's verse was wry, often ironic but, unlike Movement poetry, muscular and stylistically bold. Added to this variety, George MacBeth and Peter Redgrove's vocality and vivacity at the meetings gave The Group proceedings a dynamism and an energy that encouraged poets to write and to improve their work regardless of how negative a reaction they may receive from their peers. What made The Group meetings successful for those who attended was the chemistry between its members: they were friends and fellow poets who relied on each others' honesty. As both Porter and Wevill have noted, The Group meetings were the beginnings of many life-long friendships. The poets involved in The Group never let friendship stand in the way of their opinions of each other's work and the meetings were lively because of the honesty that was an essential part of the proceedings.¹⁵

Honesty was the keystone to the structure and function of The Group. The meetings were conducted on the premise that all poetry was open to discussion, scrutiny and debate. The members were expected to be honest with each other and the success or failure of the meetings

depended on the fact that no one's feelings were on the line. By implication, the practice of The Group separated the personality of the poet from the poem.

To The Group, a poem was seen as an objective matter, independent of biographical or theoretical explanation, a verbal structure that could be examined almost scientifically for its balance between content and form. Hobsbaum, the first Chairman of The Group, had been influenced by F.R. Leavis' ideas concerning the independence of the poem from the poet. A poem, therefore, had to survive on its own, and the acid test to determine that survival was close reading and open critical discussion. To ensure that the primacy of the text was at the centre of the discussion, the Chairman (first Hobsbaum and later Edward Lucie-Smith) sent copies of the poems that were to be discussed at the weekly Friday evening meetings to all the poets who said they would be in attendance. These copies ("song-sheets" as they came to be known), read in advance, were brought to the meetings and discussion had to be focussed on the text itself while the poet sat in attendance and answered questions pertaining only to the poem.¹⁶

Disunity of opinion was not a contentious issue for The Group. They had no theoretical programme or schedule and, as Lucie-Smith suggested later, "no discussion can take place if all people are in agreement." Hobsbaum felt

that the poem had to meet its audience -- the critical reaction to British poetry of the Forties and the Fifties had been negative because the verse often ignored the presence of an audience entirely. For The Group, poetry was a matter of communication. The poet could not establish the importance of his statements or ideas unless someone was willing to listen. The poem, therefore, had to be able to seize and hold a reader's attention and the poet had to respect that. Under the "workshop" conditions, a poem could be subjected to a tough audience of peers who would, in turn, offer their suggestions and responses to the work. Lucie-Smith supported the idea:

Writer and audience confront one another directly, each trying to learn from the other. The only principle to which we would all subscribe is that poetry is discussable, or, to put it another way, that the process by which words work in poetry is something open to rational examination.¹⁷

If the transcription of a "typical" Group meeting, which Lucie-Smith and Hobsbaum included as an afterword to The Group Anthology (1964), is any indicator of the level of "rational examination" to which a poem was subjected during the meetings, it is possible to conclude that the gatherings were intelligent, lively, and energetic. A poet whose work was under discussion was asked to read a poem and then the work was discussed openly by a member of the gathering. Debate often broke out among those present when

divergent views clashed. For the most part, however, the remarks were usually of a constructive nature and, if they were not, someone was quick to point them out. The poet could not defend his or her work by means of apologetics but could only clarify points of question. Lucie-Smith stated:

We have been encouraged to pay attention to the text itself, rather than to biography or background, and we have been discouraged from making assertions which could immediately be disproved. Sometimes we may go into too much detail, but this still seems a fault on the wrong side.¹⁸

The meetings were kept agreeable under the control of a chairman or moderator, and when the chairman's work came under discussion someone else would take his place. A glimpse of what happened at Group meetings was recorded by Sergeant in his diary on September 13, 1963:

At Teddy's [Edward Lucie-Smith] in the evening. A good crowd there to deal with a long poem by Philip Hobsbaum. I came out strongly in favour of the poem, with George MacBeth the main opposition. The poem dealt with Newman during his period of crisis and conflict just before he became a Catholic. I was astonished to find how ignorant on the whole subject were these men with university educations. Keith Harrison was there and I had a chat with him. Also talked to George, Peter Porter, Michael Mendolsohn [Nathaniel Tarn] and others. Pleasant evening made most enjoyable, I suppose, because I played a prominent part in the proceedings. If only I could write some poetry now -- I'd feel justified in my criticism and more confident of my status.¹⁹

Aside from Sergeant's feeling of inadequacy and regret at the fact that he felt he could no longer write, his presence at the meetings boosted the confidence of many of the young poets who were present and his knowledge of poetry in the discussion helped the poets considerably.

At the meetings the poets were able to test and improve their work through the frank and pointed remarks of their peers. Like Sergeant's small notes to contributors of Outposts, The Group workshop environment enabled the poets to get positive feedback on their work. The main concern of the gatherings, as Lucie-Smith asserted, was not to praise poets for past work but to assist them with future writing: "We have always been interested, not in what someone had written previously, but in what they might write later."²⁰

By 1963, when Hobsbaum and Lucie-Smith published The Group Anthology, a collection of work they had selected from the thousands of "song-sheets" that had been issued to members and interested observers on a weekly basis, many of the members had progressed admirably. Peter Redgrove, Peter Porter, David Wevill, Alan Brownjohn, and George MacBeth, among others, had published successful collections. British poetry, however, had not recovered from the suspicions and paranoia of the groups of the Forties and Fifties and many observers misconstrued The Group as yet another chapter in the continuing story of literary "gang-warfare".

Elizabeth Jennings felt that The Group was the first significant gathering of poets to emerge after The Movement and in "The Making of the Movement" she noted:

Here is the work of a collection of poets who have, quite self-consciously and deliberately, formed themselves into a group. They meet regularly, read their poems to each other, and criticise one another. One or two talents are indeed remarkable; for example, Peter Porter and David Wevill, but on the whole, A Group Anthology has nothing of the power or strength of a real literary manifesto.²¹

Jennings, in this case, may have been fighting a rearguard action against the accusations that The Movement was a solid "entity" composed of poets who met regularly and planned their domination of the literary scene. In apologising for The Movement, however, Jennings created the wrong impression of The Group. The Group did not lack a manifesto -- it refused to have one. The fact that the poets met together in Edward Lucie-Smith's home in Chelsea on a weekly basis, and that several of the meetings had been broadcast on the BBC after the gatherings received considerable recognition, left many misinformed observers with the impression that The Group was yet another gang of poets armed with a purpose and determined to win some glory for themselves.

Immediately rumours started to spread that The Group was a closed society. Nothing could have been farther from the truth. Some members felt that the openness

of The Group was subjecting the gatherings to abusive criticism because they were seen as lacking a coherent thematic philosophy. Taner Baybars, a Group member, wrote to Edward Lucie-Smith:

I do think that the Group readings ought to be private and not public because, alas, there are quite a few cranks around us and they hesitate not, to bring in the discussion certain prejudices.²²

Lucie-Smith, however, refused to limit The Group, partly out of the fear that such an action would be the cue for condemnation of the gatherings as "another movement", and partly because the idea of limitation was contrary to the essential philosophy of the Group's purpose. Ian Hamilton, editor of Review, and himself the recognized leader of a body of poets who came to be known as "The Review Group" (which included Hamilton, Peter Dale, and several others), began writing attacks on The Group and parodies of what he assumed to be "their" poetry in his magazine. M.L. Rosenthal in The New Poets, erroneously referred to The Group (in reference to George MacBeth's appearance in a reading at Albert Hall in a 1965 with Allen Ginsberg) as a "somewhat inhibited movement."²³ The supposition here (which suggests that Rosenthal has paid no attention to the purpose and function of The Group) is that the gatherings were planning sessions for yet another assault on the publicity organs of British literature. The Group, as

Rosenthal refused to admit, was a workshop and not an aesthetic school. If The Group presented an outward weakness to critics (it was an extremely useful arrangement for the poets who received invaluable feedback on their work -- most felt they became better poets for their participation), it was because they drew their members from a broad and varied base. Anyone who was interested in poetry could attend. In the introduction to A Group Anthology, Lucie-Smith went on record about the openness and purpose of the meetings:

We have welcomed anyone who might provide a useful viewpoint. There has never been any kind of subscription, nor have we ever had, nor asked for, support from any official body. In addition, we have tried to make it a rule that anyone who asked if he could come was welcome to do so. No one has ever been expelled or excluded -- though this is not to say there has been no turnover in membership.²⁴

One of the most damaging rumours that spread regarding The Group was that there was a specific type of "Group" poetry that they were all writing. When questioned if this was so, Peter Redgrove replied that many poets were writing about insects, reptiles and fish, or about situations of domestic realism, but that may have been because the open discussion after each meeting tended to cover such topics. Peter Porter, on the other hand, claimed that the discussion ranged over a great spectrum and that there was not really a specific type of poetry favoured in The Group, although

most of the poets were writing free verse. David Wevill recalled that music and film were common topics of discussion during the open sections of the evenings. Redgrove's interest in the minutiae of nature and Wevill's fascination with violence in nature (manifested in his poem "Birth of A Shark") left people with the impression that these were typical of the work done by The Group. "Birth of A Shark", however, was almost complete before Wevill attended the gatherings and Redgrove's interest in insects and science can be traced back to his pre-Cambridge days. There was no such thing as "a Group poem," an idea stressed repeatedly by Zulfikar Ghose and other members of The Group. The critics, true to their training in the age of manifestos, tried in vain to find connections between one poet and another who had frequented the meetings. Edward Lucie-Smith, in his "Foreword" to A Group Anthology, stated:

If the poems here have anything in common it is simply this: they are a reflection of the world in which they were made. The poets represented here all share a willingness to see that art is intimately, though sometimes uncomfortably and painfully, linked to the business of living.²⁵

Such a statement seems to answer the cries of the critics from the years preceding the rise of The Group, and echo the wishful thinking that Alvarez had uttered in his "Beyond the Gentility Principle" essay to The New Poetry.

The Group poets, in fact, may have been partially influenced by Alvarez' statements for their work displays a strong connection with the world in which they were living in the early Sixties.

The Group, for Howard Sergeant, was a welcome relief, a break from the polemicism, and a seedbed for promising poetry which he harvested for Outposts. As an established editor and an experienced veteran, his opinion at the meetings he attended was valued by many of the poets. The meetings put him in touch with young poets. The poets, in turn, welcomed the chance to know Sergeant who either had or might publish their work in Outposts. At many meetings during the early Sixties, Sergeant solicited poems that had appeared on the "song-sheets". Outposts Number Forty-Seven (Winter 1961), for instance, was a result of Sergeant attending a Group meeting. The issue contained poems from Martin Bell, Peter Redgrove, Zulfikar Ghose, Edwin Brock (another "ex officio" member of the Group), together with a review by Edward Lucie-Smith of Charles Tomlinson's Seeing Is Believing, for which Tomlinson never forgave Outposts. Hobsbaum had already become a frequent reviewer for the magazine and Peter Porter, Christopher Hampton and Alan Brownjohn had already published poems in Sergeant's magazine. The new poets injected a life into the magazine that had gone stagnant in the wake of the Mavericks/Movement debate, and they reinforced Sergeant's

claim that Outposts was a vehicle for new poets -- a claim that had been weakened by Sergeant's rather constant support of writers who had outworn their freshness during the late Fifties. Following issues included work from David Wevill, Shirley Toulson, Taner Baybars, George MacBeth, and Ghose's close friend, B.S. Johnson. Outposts, which had been the vehicle for the first published poems of poets such as Redgrove, became a useful forum for The Group poets. Sergeant encouraged The Group poets as individuals and they, in turn, repaid his belief in them with lively poetry and reviews. The presence of such an energetic collection of poets on the London scene, and on some nights in the same room, made Sergeant's job as an editor much easier for the time that The Group existed: all he had to do to find good poetry was to appear at a meeting and listen. When A Group Anthology appeared, Outposts supported the venture and Sergeant saw that a sympathetic reviewer was given the task of critiquing the book.

In his review of A Group Anthology in Outposts Number Fifty-Eight (Autumn 1963), B.S. Johnson praised The Group for its usefulness and for the sanity it had brought to the poetry scene in England. Johnson noted:

It should be said first of all that the existence of an association of poets like that represented in A Group Anthology is very much something to be pleased about, as part of the literary scene, even if only it were to serve to be reacted against by

those poets who, as Mr. Lucie-Smith says in his introduction, will not accept the principle that rational examination and discussion of poetry is possible and useful.²⁶

Johnson, much to the chagrin of Group members, suggested that there was such a thing as "a Group poem." Johnson suggested that "a Group poem" was "distinguishable by over-scrupulously exact observation, avoidance of rhetoric, and very little use of imagery...." To those who opposed The Group for reasons entirely their own, such suggestions provided ready ammunition in a revival of the literary "gang" wars of the Fifties.

London Magazine, edited by Alan Ross, was the most vocal opponent of The Group. In a series of reviews and articles, The Group and individual members, such as David Wevill and Edward Lucie-Smith, were attacked by Ross, Christopher Ricks and Ian Hamilton. After one such negative review, David Wevill wrote to Lucie-Smith on December 2, 1964:

I don't in any way regret the association with The Group; but I do, like you, resent the irrational bunk which is lately being written about it. You yourself seem to bear the heaviest attack -- but that is political and has nothing to do with you as an artist. As far as I'm concerned, nothing but good has come of my knowing you and our friendship. These reviewer mosquitoes are seasonal and die unless the climate demands.²⁷

When Lucie-Smith wrote to Ross demanding an equal hearing, Ross replied that he supported Hamilton. Lucie-Smith, in

protest, withdrew several of his poems that had been accepted by London Magazine. The pressure on The Group caused many of them to band together and offer defences of other members who had been attacked -- something which added more ammunition to the fire of their critics.

The meetings themselves had attracted more attention than any workshop or gathering of the past. After the meetings moved to Chelsea (Hobsbaum moved to Ireland where he established a newer chapter of The Group, although his workshop did not call itself by any specific name), word of the meetings had spread rapidly. Several meetings were broadcast on the BBC; a microphone was placed in the centre of the room and the gathering was transmitted live. Such events gave the impression of disorganization rather than forum. Time magazine in the United States mentioned The Group and soon the gatherings became a tourist attraction where the curious or the ambitious appeared, without "song-sheets" and abused the good graces of Lucie-Smith's hospitality and the patience of many members. The old members closed ranks. In a letter to Lucie-Smith Taner Baybars recounted an episode at one meeting:

I admired the way you and George [MacBeth] tackled the crank who went on and said nothing at all. I must tell you that when I emerged from the smelly loo I was confronted by him and others who eventually left me saying how much they had enjoyed the poems and the evening! I was asked to autograph their songsheets! Christ, then, what hypocrisy is this?28

In despair, Lucie-Smith sent a form letter to all the old members and close friends of The Group, which suggested that they should call it a day with the programme. He asked several questions in the hope that those who supported the gatherings might offer some solace and rationale for continuing with the meetings. Lucie-Smith asked:

1. In view of the fact that the Group has now become an extremely heated public issue, has its usefulness come to an end?
2. Even if its usefulness has not come to an end, do the disadvantages of continuing outweigh the advantages?²⁹

Lucie-Smith feared that any known association with The Group would damage a poet's chances of receiving a fair hearing, especially when the critical howls against such association were loud and clear. He felt that the term "Group poets" was meaningless and explained that he had not intended to create either a movement or the illusion of a movement by publishing A Group Anthology. The sad aspect of the dilemma lay in the fact that The Group had begun with the express purpose of not becoming a movement. The well-intentioned and useful poetry workshop, however, had been ruined by the smear tactics of those who twisted and misconstrued something which offered a relief from the very ills of which The Group stood accused.

One of those who was most sympathetic to the plight of The Group was Howard Sergeant. In a letter to Lucie-Smith on December 6, 1964, at the height of the crisis, Sergeant cast his support behind the gatherings and tried to point out their usefulness. Sergeant wrote:

I have, of course, been following the correspondence of "The Group and the Movement" and have been somewhat appalled to discover who the poets are calling Mavericks now. I would have entered the fray myself, on behalf of the Group, had it not been for the fact that you seemed perfectly capable of handling the situation without the slightest difficulty. What I would have pointed out, however, is that the old issue of Movement v. Maverick is not being repeated with the Group. The situation, as I see it, is entirely different. As a Maverick, if I may still use the term, I had no objections whatsoever to poets meeting as a group to discuss technique and examine their poems in a critical light; in fact I have always been in favour of it. But the Movement poets never met on this basis. The whole idea of the "Movement" (as Donald Davie has since admitted) was to gain publicity for their work as poets and to cash in on it to the full.³⁰

Sergeant pointed out that The Group had never sought publicity for itself or its members, although to some the broadcast of the meetings seemed like a profitable coup. He also stated that he regarded himself as a member of The Group -- something which Lucie-Smith and others did not refute. As a kind of "godfather" for The Group, Sergeant felt that his encouragement of them had both helped and damaged them, in that Outposts had been one of their chief

forums, yet had given them the notice which had caused the negative attention. Sergeant realized, however, that The Group may have run its course and he remarked that poets the calibre of MacBeth, Porter, and others, had little to gain from continuing their association with the gatherings. Wevill and Porter, by 1964, had already departed from The Group; Redgrove was teaching in Leeds, and Wevill, after working in London and teaching in Burma, had gone to live in Spain on a Gregory Fellowship which Sergeant had arranged for him.

Although the original Group was discontinued, some of the members continued to practice the workshop concept in their own ways. Martin Bell, at the time Lucie-Smith had sent his form letter to the members, had written in reply:

I am violently opposed to dissolving or drastically transforming the Group at the moment. Regard this as a vote of confidence, though I have my disagreements as you know. ...more could be done to seek out new talent (one is always willing to help).³¹

After The Group ceased in 1965, Bell continued to organize a workshop of his own -- the Poet's Workshop which survived through the Seventies and which had a profound influence on the work of many poets who emerged during the Eighties such as George Szirtes. Philip Hobsbaum, after moving to Belfast several years earlier, continued to organize a workshop on the principles that he had established at Cambridge. In the late summer of 1964 he wrote to Lucie-

Smith and reported on the progress of his new group. Three young student poets in particular seemed to be the best of the group: Michael Longley, Seamus Deane, and Seamus Heaney. Seamus Heaney, as Hobsbaum noted, already had a manuscript that was complete and publishable, and would be coming to London. Hobsbaum asked if Lucie-Smith could do anything to help the young Irish poet when he arrived in England.³² Lucie-Smith contacted Sergeant and in a matter of weeks, Heaney arrived on Sergeant's doorstep with a bundle of poems in his hand. From that bundle, Sergeant selected "The Play Way," for Outposts Number Sixty-two (Autumn 1964), which was Heaney's first published poem. With Lucie-Smith, Sergeant orchestrated a reading for Heaney where Charles Monteith, the poetry editor at Faber and Faber, would be present. Monteith was impressed by the young poet's work and in 1966 Death of a Naturalist was published to considerable acclaim. Writing in Outposts Number Seventy-two (Spring 1967), B.S. Johnson praised Heaney's first book:

You must have heard of Seamus Heaney by now: not only as his fine work appeared in many journals and magazines (including this one), but his first volume Death of a Naturalist has been generally praised in many reviews before this belated one. And is Heaney worth all the praise? At least the procrastinating reviewer has the advantage of being able to answer that one: in his best poems, he is. It is difficult to think of any other poet now under thirty who can match his achievement so far.³³

Heaney's work struck the long-desired balance between formal stylistic control and emotional realism. His appearance on the English scene, which Sergeant stage-managed unknown to Heaney, was not welcomed by all, however. As evidenced by letters between Martin Bell and Edward Lucie-Smith, Heaney's arrival and the efforts to promote him as a poet (which were founded on the excellence of his work more than anything else) must have met with considerable opposition in the back-rooms of the London poetry scene. Bell wrote:

Writers throughout the centuries have recommended and pushed the work of other writers of whom they have approved. I see nothing wrong with this (I'd be a fool!). I am delighted that you were able to get Seamus into the N.S. [New Statesman]... People are mistaken in thinking this "a group activity" -- it is the work of small ad hoc committees of individuals which form themselves spontaneously out of enthusiasm. People who think themselves smeared can always dissociate themselves.³⁴

Heaney survived the initial negative reaction to his presence because of the excellence of his work -- a fact that must have pleased Sergeant who asked the Irish poet to become a regular contributor and reviewer for Outposts.

The end of The Group in 1964 and early 1965 did not dissuade Sergeant from his own activities. The Group meetings had been useful to Sergeant, not only from an editorial point of view, but as a learning experience. He adapted the practices of the workshop procedure to his own

purposes and later in his life, after he had retired from Brooklands Academy, he owed a large part of his income to running poetry workshops in schools across the country. Several members of The Group became involved with Sergeant's activities, chiefly Zulfikar Ghose and B.S. Johnson. With Edwin Brock, Moyra Caldecott, Edward Upward, Alastair Aston, Raymond Wilson, Martin Bax, Michael Hamburger (the former Maverick), Alan Sillitoe the novelist, John Pudney, the siblings Ruth and Harry Fainlight, Ghose, and Johnson, Sergeant continued to organize a series of gatherings, discussions, workshops and readings at the Crown and Greyhound Pub in Dulwich Village.³⁵

The Crown and Greyhound readings were the last vestige of the old British Poetry Association which had dissipated during the Fifties. The readings, however, begun by Lionel Monteith, continued to attract attention, and Sergeant maintained them because they were useful to Outposts and to his own interests. The Dulwich Group, as they became known (as opposed to The Group which was, at that time called 'The Chelsea Group' because they met at Lucie-Smith's residence in Sydney Street, Chelsea) was chiefly a forum for readings and entertainment, although they also had open discussions of work. Dulwich, at that time, was a literary hub for the city of London. Not only was Sergeant editing Outposts from Dulwich, but new and

enterprising magazines such as Bax's Ambit had made the village their home. B.S. Johnson, in a magazine article which featured a photo of Sergeant with Brock and Ghose, titled "Bards in the Boozer," noted that Dulwich, not Chelsea or Hampstead, was the place in London to find lively literary activity. With memories of the pressures that had confronted and ultimately broken The Group, Johnson made sure that the Dulwich Group was not viewed as a polemical society but as an entertainment venue. Johnson noted:

The Dulwich Group is more than a committee which organizes readings at the Crown and Greyhound, however: it is an association of poets for reciprocal help and encouragement. Not that there is any attempt to to adopt a Group method of writing poetry, for there is not. The Group contains poets as widely differing in style and subject-matter as the policeman-turned-copywriter Edwin Brock and the brilliantly accomplished Pakistani Zulfikar Ghose; as Howard Sergeant and Moyra Caldecott...The Dulwich Group exists in order that no poet need feel isolated: it welcomes any poet who is interested enough to want to discuss his work with others engaged in solving writing problems similar to his own.³⁶

Such a statement was rooted in the fact that by the early Sixties a great deal of suspicion of groups and gatherings had become the norm on the London poetry scene. Poets who were not participants in a group or a gathering were afraid that such assemblies might be conspiracies. The Dulwich Group, as Johnson's comments suggested, was intended to be

an "open magazine", a social (if not a drinking) arrangement where poets could find sympathy, criticism and creative energy. Unlike The Group, the Dulwich Group maintained a less particular stance in its membership, and the participants were drawn, not from a university background as The Group had been, but from the area of London in which they lived. Whereas The Group had tried to present itself as a "community of poets" and had failed, the Dulwich Group was a collection of poets from a specific community and, therefore, did not face the attacks and the vicious criticism that had been levelled against its counterpart on the other side of the city. In a 1964 address to a gathering of The Dulwich Group Sergeant noted:

As I have already remarked, there would appear to be more poets living in Dulwich at the present time than at any time in its history. As a matter of fact, we could put on quite a good exhibition of work, for between us we could probably account for forty or fifty books, including books of poetry, anthologies, novels, translations, and short stories. Two members of the Dulwich Group edit well-known magazines, Ambit and Outposts.³⁷

The Dulwich Group, which reached its apex in 1965 shortly before Ghose left for America (where he still teaches at the University of Texas at Austin with David Wevill and Christopher Middleton), featured a stellar list of those who came and gave readings or led discussions. The list included Stephen Spender, Laurie Lee, John Lehmann, Roy

Fuller, Ted Hughes, Patricia Beer, Kingsley Amis, Peter Redgrove, Dannie Abse, Robert Conquest, Elizabeth Jennings, Stevie Smith, John Wain and David Wevill. The broad spectrum of poets who participated in the Dulwich Group suggests that by 1964 much of the animosity and suspicion of the Fifties had passed and that Sergeant's position had reached the point of the elder statesman, the neutral figure who stood apart from the battles and infighting of the literary scene.

Sergeant's reputation as a trusted man of letters in London had spread abroad, especially to the United States. In 1963, the American poet Theodore Roethke, hitherto little-known in England, wrote to Sergeant and asked if he could arrange any readings for him while he visited London. On the strength of Roethke's work and his reputation in America, Sergeant arranged and promoted several readings for the visiting poet in London, one of which was at the Crown and Greyhound in Dulwich.³⁸ Sergeant did so thorough a job promoting and publicizing Roethke that Charles Monteith at Faber and Faber agreed to do a British edition of the American's work. Sergeant's interest in American poetry was not limited to Roethke: he had maintained contact with the American representatives of the BPA such as Gustav Davidson and Wilbur Stevens even after the Association had disbanded. Sergeant felt that American poetry and Commonwealth verse had something to

offer to British poets. Among those he encouraged was Sylvia Plath who often came to the readings in Dulwich and who gave a reading there shortly before her death. Her suicide in 1963 came as a severe shock to Sergeant who mourned her death, along with John Kennedy's assassination, in his diary entry of January 1, 1964.³⁹

The Dulwich readings finally came to an end in 1966 when Sergeant moved his family and Outposts to a larger home in Walton-on-Thames. By that time, the poetry scene was beginning to change. Most of the original members of The Group had gone their separate ways, and the new work that was emerging on the London poetry scene was experimental and highly unusual. Events such as Michael Horowitz' "Festival of the New Moon" in Albert Hall in 1966, a reading that was organized on a week's notice and which drew over seven thousand people to hear Allen Ginsberg, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Robert Graves and others, overshadowed the small and intimate gatherings that had been the norm on the London poetry scene just two years before.⁴⁰ Such new events shifted the emphasis away from Sergeant's smaller forums. Poetry became an entertainment on a 'mass' level -- something which Sergeant had desired, but which he could not fathom when it actually came to pass. In an article, "British Poetry, 1952-1977," Sergeant attempted to explain the sudden rise of the new verse in terms of the previous poetry:

What brought about this change in public response? Obviously a variety of factors. ...It may be that the publicity given to the reading tours of Ginsberg, Ferlinghetti, Yevtushenko exercised an influence. By the early Sixties the success of such pop groups as the Beatles, and of such protest singers as Bob Dylan certainly encouraged the development of pop poetry readings in many of the larger towns.⁴¹

Whatever the cause, many of the 'established' poets, in fact, found themselves on the outside of such activity and simply waited until the frenzy of the experimentation and the "poetry parties" had passed. Issues of Outposts from this period reflect a strong conservative outlook as compared to the events that were taking place in British poetry. The covers of Outposts remained of the same design, and the magazine continued to be a letter-press production. The poems were by writers who had established themselves during the early Sixties -- the new writers seemed beyond Sergeant's comprehension. Although Sergeant published work by Horovitz and Anselm Hollo, the verse which featured in the 'underground' anthology Children of Albion (1969) was not the norm for Outposts during this period, and many observers assumed that Sergeant and his magazine had seen better days and had simply been left behind by the sudden and unexpected developments.

As Sergeant and Outposts entered the Seventies, they stood in the shadows of literary activity. Outposts was still an important forum for serious poets who felt

that the basics of poetry came before showmanship or excessive experimentation. Sergeant continued in his role as the elder statesman who encouraged and assisted younger poets. Many fine poets who emerged during the Seventies, poets such as Martin Booth, James Berry, David Grubb, Nicki Jackowska, Andrew Waterman, Medbh McGuckian and Penelope Shuttle, received either their first or one of their earliest publications in Sergeant's little magazine. Sergeant, however, despaired that his work and his life had not really amounted to a great deal, and 1968, probably the worst year of his life, offered nothing but gloom and depression to him.

Sergeant's fears and worries for his own work and for the state of British poetry were echoed by Alan Brownjohn in "A View of English Poetry in the Early Seventies."⁴² The source of the "experimentalism" had been the sudden interest in American poetry -- not the poetry of Plath, Sexton, Berryman and Lowell who were consummate craftsmen and adherents to the traditions of poetry -- but the enigmatic and theoretical baldness of the Black Mountain School headed by Charles Olson and Robert Creeley. The British suddenly acquired a severe inferiority complex about the value of their own work and, in a rush to keep up with the Americans, abandoned not only their traditional and healthy infighting, but their better instincts for the art of poetry. Brownjohn noted:

English poets at the moment are under increasing pressure to accept a state of demoralised inferiority by comparison with their American colleagues. A crisis of purpose has been devised for them, and if they do not willingly accept their prescribed role -- one of self doubt and apprehension for the future -- it is suggested that they may only feel, as an alternative, complacently provincial.⁴³

The feelings of inadequacy and provinciality were further complicated by Alvarez' statements in The New Poetry, which haunted many poets and critics like a warning of doom.

Brownjohn echoed Alvarez' sentiments:

We are by nature too respectable and polite; the language we speak, with its characteristic understatement, is too reticent and genteel. It is, therefore, the viability of a whole tradition, the serviceableness of the entire mode of language which is being brought into doubt. So it really is desirable at this moment not to accept without overwhelming reasons the inferiority we are being offered.⁴⁴

Sergeant, for one, did not accept the "inferiority."

Several years before he had supported the idea of giving attention to American poetry -- the poetry of Roethke and Lowell in particular -- but had not counted on American verse changing directions and pulling British verse with it. In his refusal to follow the trend of the times -- the first time Sergeant had failed to follow such a lead in his editorial career -- Outposts momentarily stood still.

In retrospect, Sergeant's failure to jump on the experimental band-wagon, to join in what he later called

"pop or public poetry" was one of the most courageous and important moves he made. Sergeant did not oppose the "pop" poets: he simply ignored them. British verse, once the excitement and initial interest had passed, resumed its steady course within tradition, and Sergeant had weathered yet another storm. The late Sixties and early Seventies may, in fact, have been one of his 'finest hours.' Sergeant realized that the developments in "pop" poetry were merely another round of over-publicized antics by poets who staked their claim to attention on their control of the media and not their command of the art. In the same essay he concluded:

There are some dangers in this recent development. If immediate audience reaction should become the criterion for judging the quality of the poetry there is a possibility that standards may fall, as some critics have acidly pointed out. There may be a tendency for poets to play to the gallery by concentrating on what seems to go down well at public performances....we must always be careful to distinguish between good poetry and good entertainment, whilst maintaining a capacity to enjoy both.⁴⁵

Perhaps the most important contribution of Outposts during this period was the fact that Sergeant was able to apply his experience on the poetry scene to determining the difference between "good poetry and good entertainment." He continued in his work despite grave personal doubts about the worth of his efforts, and he stood by a verse that had unexpectedly fallen out of grace. He remained faithful to

many young poets of the mainstream who were emerging during the late Sixties -- among them Jon Stallworthy, Seamus Heaney, D.M. Thomas, Michael Ivens and Maureen Duffy. By the late Seventies, many of these poets, especially Heaney, emerged as the new leaders of the poetry scene, a fact that eventually gave Sergeant considerable satisfaction.

In retrospect, the Seventies were an enigmatic period in British poetry. The established poets became more established, while only a handful of new poets who had unique and genuine ability emerged from the tension between tradition and experimentalism. Andrew Motion and Blake Morrison, in the controversial but useful The Penguin Book of Contemporary British Poetry (1982), suggested:

a shift of sensibility has taken place very recently in British poetry. It follows a stretch, occupying much of the 1960s and 70s, when very little -- in England at any rate -- seemed to be happening, when achievements in British poetry were overshadowed by those in drama and fiction, and when, despite the presence of strong individual writers, there was a lack of overall shape and direction.⁴⁶

Aside from the fact that Motion and Morrison used the old ploy of accusing their predecessors of a "lack of direction" in order to assert the claims of their own group of poets, their comments were an attempt to grab a large share of the publicity on the basis of their

contentiousness. Martin Booth commented that their selection of poets for the anthology was eccentric -- an accusation based on the fact that the most important poets in the collection were not British but Irish (poets such as Heaney, Michael Longley, Derek Mahon, Medbh McGuckian and Paul Muldoon). Heaney, in fact, was angered at being labelled a "British" poet and protested that his nationality was Irish and not British in his Field Day pamphlet An Open Letter. The inclusion of the Irish poets under the misapplied title "British" suggested that poetry in Britain was not, on its own, worth the trouble of an anthology. Booth noted:

The book was puffed as a collection of major poetry by reviewers in the establishment and of the poetry critic's club but it was seen for what it is by others....In truth, it does more harm than good for it gives to the mass audience a totally incorrect view of contemporary British poetry.⁴⁷

In short, the anthology and its introduction justified the work of a few new and promising poets at the expense of a critically intelligent evaluation of the scene. Motion and Morrison, who were defined as "narrative" poets, and their compatriot Craig Raine, who was labelled a "martian" because of a hyper-metaphorized poem on that subject, were accused of presenting themselves as the leaders of a generation of poets on the strength of their performance in the anthology. What validity such claims might have, if at

all, were based on the fact that each assumed an important position in the working structure of the British poetry scene quite early in his career. Raine became poetry editor at Faber and Faber (heir to Eliot and Charles Monteith in that capacity). Motion, after editing Poetry Review, became poetry editor at Chatto and Windus (a position formerly held by Day Lewis and Enright). Morrison became literary editor of the Times Literary Supplement and later moved to The Observer. Motion and Morrison, however, could have been forgiven their enthusiasms and their miscalculations on the grounds that they were simply writing another page in a literary history where self-promotion and self-serving anthologization were not considered unusual.

The prime reason for the negative response to the rise to prominence of Raine, Motion and Morrison lay in the fact that their view of poetry, especially in the Seventies, was limited by their tastes and by the precepts which were exercised in The Penguin Book of Contemporary British Poetry. There was written, according to critics such as Stewart Brown, significant poetry during the Seventies. The dismissal of such work, including work by such critics as Martin Booth, who came out against the anthology, created a whole new generation of "mavericks," poets whose work deserved the attention it did not receive because a group of poets with differing views had seized the focus of the media. Writing in the Fortieth

Anniversary issue of Outposts in 1983, Brown stated:

I don't dispute the changes in the characteristic styles and concerns of mainstream contemporary poetry that Morrison and Motion identify, but would argue that there are many talented young writers excluded from their elite crew who have been working a similar passage for a long time, and that there are other streams of contemporary verse equally interesting and, may be, as important.⁴⁸

Many of the poets in the anthology disagreed with the introductory essay which has since been labelled "The Tenderness Principle." Poets, such as Penelope Shuttle, felt that their work did not coincide with the ideas expressed by the editors. The introduction, itself, was more of an apology for "narrative" poets, such as Motion (who was the prime practitioner of that style), and the "martians," such as Raine and Christopher Reid. Poets who seemed more in keeping with the traditional mainstream of British poetry, such as David Constantine or Dick Davis, found themselves on the outside of the media attention. If their work receives the attention it deserves in the years ahead, it will be because of prudent critical work and not because they appeared in the anthology or its related publicity campaign.

Sergeant, in part, was to blame for the appearance of many poets in the spotlight: his actions on the Gregory Awards committee often put them there. Sergeant joined the Gregory Awards Committee in the late Fifties. The original

committee was comprised of Sir Herbert Read, T.S. Eliot, Henry Moore, and Sergeant (Philip Larkin replaced Eliot in 1962 and rarely, if ever, attended meetings where Sergeant was present). As the chairman of the group, and the individual responsible for sorting the annual submissions and establishing a short-list, Sergeant was in an ideal position to spot new talent, not only for the award, but for Outposts. He made a point of featuring the work of every winner in his magazine and, for many, the appearance in Outposts was their first publication. Among those who Sergeant "discovered" in the process of adjudicating the Gregory Awards, were Peter Redgrove, Geoffrey Hill, Douglas Dunn, David Wevill, and later poets such as Motion, Morrison and Raine. The Gregory Awards, given annually to the best new poets in Britain, are perceived as an invitation to join the ranks of those accorded attention by critics and the reading public. In this capacity, Sergeant became a "king-maker" on the British poetry scene, a figure who gave his assent to younger poets, a rite of passage for many, and an important first chance for those whom he felt merited the attention and the accolades.

Sergeant was not without his own share of accolades. During the early Seventies he despaired that his work had come to nothing and that his perseverance and his accomplishments would simply pass into oblivion with his magazine. He may have been made apprehensive at the thought

that his reputation might follow that of Treece or Nicholas Moore, who had become forgotten and shadowy figures in the tides and trends of British poetry. Such was not to be the case. On March 7, 1978, Sergeant was awarded the M.B.E. for his services to British poetry. At that time, he was the longest continuous editor of a single literary magazine in the English language. The honour accorded him by the Queen was followed, in 1982, by a reading and lecture tour of Canada, and in 1983 by the Fortieth Anniversary festivities for Outposts.

The highlights of the Fortieth Anniversary were a large edition of the magazine in which messages of good wishes and congratulations were featured from Heaney, Amis, Hughes, Norman Nicholson, Martin Booth, John Fuller, Peter Redgrove, Philip Hobsbaum, Zulfikar Ghose, Sir John Betjeman, D.M. Thomas, Alan Sillitoe, Roy Fuller, Penelope Shuttle, Anthony Thwaite, Lionel Monteith, Medbh McGuckian, and others. The issue featured work by Heaney, Edwin Brock, Dannie Abse, John Wain, D.J. Enright, Vernon Scannell, Judith Wright, Redgrove, Ghose, Thwaite, Booth, and Jean Sergeant. The issue was celebrated by a reading at the Poetry Society, and work by Paul Dehn, Amis, Jennings, Thwaite, Redgrove, Birney, D.M. Thomas, Heaney, Dunn, and others was read by Sergeant, Jean Sergeant, Elizabeth Bartlett, Michael Ivens and Bruce Meyer. The following week, Sergeant held a party at his home for many of his

friends and contributors, and many at the party left with the impression that Outposts and Sergeant would continue for another forty years. Such was not to be.

In the late winter of 1986, Sergeant, who had been deaf in his left ear since childhood, entered hospital on the advice that an operation would restore his hearing. The operation failed and he was left in poor health. In April, he suffered his first heart attack and by May, he relinquished the editorship of Outposts to Roland John, a friend and editor of the Hippopotamus Press. Sergeant's health declined rapidly. In his last days, Lionel Monteith came to visit Sergeant, and they sat and discussed the glory days of the Forties when the literary world appeared to be theirs for the taking. Howard Sergeant died on February 26, 1987, of an enlarged heart.

Though he never established himself as a leading poet, his chief ambition in the founding of Outposts, his work as an editor, promoter and survivor in the poetry world of post-war Britain was a landmark. He helped others to achieve the dream that he was never able to realize for himself. Writing in his diary on January 1, 1964, shortly after the death of Sylvia Plath, Sergeant said:

Had a curious mood. Had been dreaming that I was dead -- but apparently still around and under no inconvenience on a sort of Charles William basis. I wouldn't disappear from the earthly scene so long as I existed in the minds of others.⁴⁹

Outposts continues to be a forum for poets, a forum where both new and established poets can be heard, regardless of their aesthetic stance. Editorial and literary longevity, may, in fact, be a matter of personal receptivity, a question of an editor or a poet having an open mind and a broad perspective. In the world of poetry, few others lasted as long or as successfully as Howard Sergeant, and his career is the story, not simply of an editor, but of an era.

NOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

¹Howard Sergeant and Dannie Abse, eds. Mavericks: An Anthology (London: Editions Poetry and Poverty, 1957). 67-71.

²Evan B. Owen, rev. of Mavericks, eds. Howard Sergeant and Dannie Abse, New Lines, ed. Robert Conquest, and Poetry Now, ed. G.S. Fraser, in Outposts Thirty-Two, ed. Howard Sergeant. 15-16.

³Owen. 15-16.

⁴A. Alvarez, ed. and introd. The New Poetry (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1962).

⁵Dannie Abse, A Poet in the Family (London: Hutchison, 1974). 153.

⁶Elizabeth Jennings, "The Making of a Movement," The Spectator, 2 October 1964. 446-448.

⁷Jennings, "The Making of a Movement." 448.

⁸Alvarez, "The New Poetry or Beyond the Gentility Principle," The New Poetry. 26.

⁹Alvarez, "The New Poetry or Beyond the Gentility Principle," The New Poetry. 22.

¹⁰Alvarez, "The New Poetry or Beyond the Gentility Principle," The New Poetry. 21.

¹¹Abse, Poet in the Family. 154.

¹²Martin Booth, British Poetry 1964-1984: Driving Through the Barricades (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985). 87.

¹³From discussions with Zulfikar Ghose and David Wevill regarding the activities of The Group.

¹⁴Roger Garfitt, "The Group," British Poetry Since 1960, eds. Michael Schmidt and Grevel Lindop (South Hinsley: Carcanet Press, 1972). 13.

¹⁵From discussions with Ghose and Wevill.

¹⁶From discussions with Ghose and Wevill.

¹⁷Edward Lucie-Smith, "Foreword," A Group Anthology, ed. Edward Lucie-Smith and Philip Hobsbaum (London: Oxford University Press, 1963). vii.

¹⁸Lucie-Smith, "Foreword," A Group Anthology. vii.

¹⁹Howard Sergeant, Personal Diary 1963. Private Collection of the estate of Howard Sergeant, Walton-on-Thames.

²⁰Lucie-Smith, "Foreword," A Group Anthology. vi.

²¹Jennings, "The Making of a Movement." 448.

²²Taner Baybars, London, to Edward Lucie-Smith, London. Undated. Edward Lucie-Smith Collection, Austin: Harry Ransom Humanities Research Centre Reading Room Collection, University of Texas at Austin.

²³M.L. Rosenthal, The New Poets: American and British Poetry Since World War II (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967). 194.

²⁴Lucie-Smith, "Foreword," A Group Anthology. vi.

²⁵Lucie-Smith, "Foreword," A Group Anthology. ix.

²⁶B.S. Johnson, rev. of A Group Anthology, ed. Edward Lucie-Smith and Philip Hobsbaum, and Contemporary American Poetry, ed. Donald Hall, in Outposts Number Fifty-Eight (Autumn 1963). 22-23.

²⁷David Wevill, London, to Edward Lucie-Smith, London, 2 December 1964. Edward Lucie-Smith Collection, Austin: Harry Ransom Humanities Research Centre Reading Room Collection, University of Texas at Austin.

²⁸Baybars to Lucie-Smith.

²⁹Edward Lucie-Smith, London, to Members of The Group, London. Undated. TMs. Edward Lucie-Smith Collection, Austin: Harry Ransom Humanities Research Centre Reading Room Collection, University of Texas at Austin.

³⁰Howard Sergeant, London, to Edward Lucie-Smith, London, 6 December 1964. TMs. Edward Lucie-Smith Collection, Austin: Harry Ransom Humanities Research Centre Reading Room Collection, University of Texas at Austin.

³¹Martin Bell, London, to Edward Lucie-Smith, London, Undated. TMs. Edward Lucie-Smith Collection, Austin: Harry Ransom Humanities Research Centre Reading Room Collection, University of Texas at Austin.

³²Various letters contain this information and all date from the late summer of 1964. Edward Lucie-Smith Collection, Austin: Harry Ransom Humanities Research Centre Reading Room Collection, University of Texas at Austin.

³³B.S. Johnson, rev. of Seamus Heaney, Death of a Naturalist and Ruth Fainlight, Cages. Outposts Number Seventy-Two, (Spring 1967). 29-30.

³⁴Martin Bell, London, to Edward Lucie-Smith, London. Undated. TMs. Edward Lucie-Smith Collection, Austin: Harry Ransom Humanities Research Centre Reading Room Collection, University of Texas at Austin.

³⁵Howard Sergeant, "Poetry in Dulwich," (1964) TMs. Private Collection of the estate of Howard Sergeant, Walton-on-Thames.

³⁶B.S. Johnson, "Bards in the Boozer," [Source unavailable]. From xerox provided by Zulfikar Ghose.

³⁷Sergeant, "Poetry in Dulwich."

³⁸Bruce Meyer, "Interview with Howard Sergeant," 6 and 7 November 1983. Unpublished.

³⁹Howard Sergeant, Personal Diary 1964. Private Collection of the estate of Howard Sergeant, Walton-on-Thames.

⁴⁰Howard Sergeant, "British Poetry, 1952-1977," TMs. Private Collection of the estate of Howard Sergeant, Walton-on-Thames.

⁴¹Sergeant, "British Poetry, 1952-1977."

⁴²Alan Brownjohn, "A View of English Poetry in the Early Seventies," British Poetry Since 1960, eds. Michael Schmidt and Grevel Lindop (South Hinsley: Carcanet Press, 1972).

⁴³Brownjohn, "A View of English Poetry in the Early Seventies," British Poetry Since 1960. 240.

⁴⁴Brownjohn, "A View of English Poetry in the Early Seventies," British Poetry Since 1960. 240-241.

⁴⁵Sergeant, "British Poetry, 1952-1977."

⁴⁶Blake Morrison and Andrew Motion, eds. and introd. The Penguin Book of Contemporary British Poetry (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982). 11.

⁴⁷Booth, British Poetry 1964-1984. 250.

⁴⁸Stewart Brown, "Outposts of Imagination," Outposts Number One Hundred and Thirty-Eight: Fortieth Anniversary Issue (Autumn 1983), ed. Howard Sergeant. 76.

⁴⁹Sergeant, Personal Diary 1964.

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