

OUT IN THE DARK

Poetry of the First World War

in context and with basic notes

Edited by David Roberts



This war engendered an intensity of emotion and a poetic outpouring which included the finest war poetry ever written. The changing feelings - from early excitement and patriotism or doubt, through bewilderment, grief, compassion, anger and bitter regret - are all here in this compelling and informative collection.

Saxon Books

Maniac Earth! was originally the ninth stanza of Rosenberg's *Dead Man's Dump*. It was omitted from his final version of that poem, presumably because it broke up the flow of ideas.

THE IMMORTALS

I killed them, but they would not die.
Yea! All the day and all the night
For them I could not rest nor sleep,
Nor guard from them nor hide in flight.

Then in my agony I turned
And made my hands red in their gore.
In vain - for faster than I slew
They rose more cruel than before.

I killed and killed with slaughter mad;
I killed till all my strength was gone.
And still they rose to torture me,
For Devils only die in fun.

I used to think the Devil hid
In women's smiles and wine's carouse.¹
I called him Satan, Balzebub.²
But now I call him, dirty louse.

1917

¹ *wine's carouse* - drinking too much wine ² *Satan, Balzebub* - names of the Devil

RETURNING, WE HEAR THE LARKS

Sombre the night is.
And though we have our lives, we know
What sinister threat lurks there.

Dragging these anguished limbs, we only know
This poison-blasted track opens on our camp -
On a little safe sleep.

But hark! joy - joy - strange joy.
Lo! heights of night ringing with unseen larks.
Music showering our upturned list'ning faces.

Death could drop from the dark
As easily as song -
But song only dropped,

Like a blind man
By dangerous tid
Like a girl's dark
Or her kisses wh

1917

LOUSE H

Nudes - stark
Yelling in lun
And raging li
Whirl over th
For a shirt ve
Yon soldier t
Godhead mig
And soon the
Over the can

Then we all s
To hunt the y
Soon like a c
The place wa
See the silho
See the gibbe
Mixed with t
See gargantu

Pluck in sup
To smutch s
See the merr
Because som
Charmed fro
When our ea
By the dark
Blown from

1917

¹ *supreme flesh* - flesh of
littleness ³ dance ⁴ wild

COMMENTS ON

Isaac Rosenberg c

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