

# Seeking Freedom and Finding War: A Case Study of Two Pacifists, Vera Brittain and Dora Russell

*Michaela Schwarz S.G. Henriques*

Estoril Higher Institute for Tourism and Hotel Studies,  
Centre for English Studies, School of Arts and Humanities, University of Lisbon



## Seeking Freedom and Finding War: A Case Study of Two Pacifists, Vera Brittain and Dora Russell

Dear Vera Brittain,

I wanted really to ask you if I could come and see you to talk over the campaign about nuclear tests and nuclear war. I was with the women who marched on Sunday and was so glad to see you there and hear your fine speech. (...) I feel that something more than protests linked with political parties is needed. And I think it has to come from women (...) a different kind of approach.

Could you spare the time for me to come and see you and discuss the possibility? (Russell to Brittain, 14 May 1957)

**T**he year is 1957, the context a protest march of women in black sashes (12 May 1957), organised by the National Council for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons Tests (NCANWT), that would rapidly escalate into regular Easter marches from the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment Aldermaston to London,<sup>1</sup> sponsored by NCANWT's successor, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND).<sup>2</sup> Mrs Russell's participation in these early beginnings of post-World War II protests against renewed threats to peace and the survival of humankind was the continuation of campaigns for peace and women's rights that she had conducted for as long as her contemporary Vera Brittain. Yet, of the

---

<sup>1</sup> The first such march began on 4 April 1958 and was the only one moving from London to Aldermaston (Duff 132 ff).

<sup>2</sup> For details see Liddington (ch. 9).

two Brittain is better-known, since her first autobiographical volume *Testament of Youth* (1933) has not only entered the canon of British WWI-literature, it has also been re-issued several times (e.g. 1978, 1980, 2004) and adapted to TV and film.<sup>3</sup> Dora Russell, on the other hand, is often only referred to as the second wife of the philosopher and peace activist Bertrand Russell, an unjustified shadowy existence as she continued campaigning for her causes throughout her long life.

The two peace-minded women shared not only the same age—Mrs Brittain was born on 29 December 1893 and Mrs Russell (née Black) on 3 April 1894. Both had also grown up in Edwardian middle-class environments and both achieved the rare privilege of gaining access to university, albeit to different institutions: Vera at Somerville College, Oxford, and Dora at Girton College, Cambridge. In either case life at university meant a decisive step towards freedom and self-realisation—soon to be overcast or even interrupted by war. More importantly, both claimed in their autobiographical narratives<sup>4</sup> that key experiences in the

---

<sup>3</sup> Mark Bostridge claims that Vera Brittain's autobiographical record of WWI is the only canonical text written by a woman, next to male contemporaries such as E. Blunden's *Undertones of War* (1928), S. Sassoon's *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man* (1928), and R. Graves's *Good-bye to All That* (1929) (loc. 121). In 1979, the BBC adapted *Testament of Youth* to a TV-drama in five episodes. In 1980, inspired by both the TV-drama and the book, the ballet choreographer Kenneth MacMillan created a one-act ballet called *Gloria*, dedicated to the generation lost in WWI. In 1998, Bostridge adapted Brittain's wartime letters to 15 quarter-hour BBC Radio Four episodes. In 2008, there was a BBC drama documentary by the title *Vera Brittain: A Woman in Love and War*, and in 2014, *Testament of Youth* was made into a feature film, released in 2015, that dramatises the love story between young Vera and Roland Leighton. For details see Bostridge (ch. 5).

<sup>4</sup> Each wrote about her life in three volumes: Dora Russell, *The Tamarisk Tree: My Quest for Liberty and Love* (1975); *The Tamarisk Tree: My School and the Years of War* (1980); *The Tamarisk Tree: Challenge to the Cold War* (1985); Vera Brittain, *Testament of Youth: An Autobiographical Study of the Years 1900-1925* (1933); *Testament of Friendship: The Story of Winifred Holtby* (1940); *Testament of Experience: An Autobiographical Story of the Years 1925-1950* (1957). As references to some volumes are frequent, these will appear abbreviated as follows: volume 1 of *The Tamarisk Tree* (TT1); *Testament of Youth* (TY) and *Testament of Experience* (TE).

Great War had a fundamental influence on their postwar development into campaigners for both women's rights and peace.

By studying main aspects of these histories, I will endeavour to outline the ways in which differences in personality, social environment, and education affected their individual reading of the signs of their time and consequent engagement with causes subsumed under the umbrella terms of feminism and pacifism. It may explain why these feminist and peace campaigners knew of each other but never came close, worked towards similar ends sometimes in the same organisations, yet hardly ever together. Their cases exemplify the difficulty inherent in organizing educated individuals for global causes such as women's equal rights and peace. By their differences, their personal stories are still of interest today, especially as both women understood themselves as historically situated beings whose lives could serve as a lesson to others, to quote Vera: "I belong to the few who believe in all sincerity that their own lives provide the answers to some of the many problems which puzzle humanity" (*Chronicle* 13), while Dora offers the record of her long life on the understanding that "[t]o study the pattern of human lives (...), and what we may learn from them is, I suppose, the reason for our interest in biography" (*TT1* 10).

### **Growing up before the War**

Dora's and Vera's autobiographical descriptions of their respective childhoods clearly reveal two distinct personalities and more differences than similarities in their social milieu and the way they experienced it. Both acknowledged a sheltered upbringing. Yet, while Dora remembered her carefree youth positively: "our lives were very much directed by our parents and, by the school, regimented (...) I lived and worked, enjoyed and sorrowed from day to day, on the whole in harmony with my surroundings and my parents" (*TT1* 33), Vera's recollection sounds mentally claustrophobic:

I suppose it was the very completeness with which all doors and windows to the more adventurous and colourful world, the world of literature, of scholarship, of art, of politics, of travel, were closed to me that kept my childhood so relatively contented a time. (*TY* 30-31)

Indeed, Mrs Russell recalled a childhood in a civil servant's household in Thornton Heath, Surrey (on the southern outskirts of London), that was full of fun, outdoor activities, reading, dancing, amateur theatricals, etc., supervised by doting parents and a wide circle of indulgent family members (*TT1* 13 ff). This "fairytale world" of her childhood became associated in her memory with a unique tree in her parents' garden—a tamarisk tree. She later chose to include this tree in her autobiographical titles as a symbol of both her happy childhood and "the dreams and ideals for which we were striving" (*TT1* 10).

In contrast to Dora's active and gregarious upbringing in London's suburbia, Vera's and her younger brother Edward's childhood was "serene and uneventful", lacking in "external stimulus" besides (*TY* 21, 27). They grew up in provincial surroundings near Leek, Staffordshire,<sup>5</sup> as their father worked as co-director of a paper mill in the area. Supervised by a governess, they spent most of their youth in each other's company, a harmonious affair since their personalities ideally complemented each other: Vera was volatile, intense, rather more confrontational and ambitious, prone to introspection (and fears never conquered), and communicative; Edward was easy-going, conciliatory and musically inclined (*TY* 24; Berry and Bostridge loc. 454 ff). As reading material was eclectic and sparse in their parents' materialistically-oriented household, imaginative Vera began inventing stories and found in her brother an enthusiastic audience. Thus was born her dream to become a writer, which would turn into her life's ambition (*TY* 27, 40).

The second of four children, Dora was an extrovert, self-confident, tomboyishly plucky and compassionate child, always ready for a challenge by her equals or superiors, while holding a protective hand over the "underdog" (*TT1* 70, 13). Her father Frederick Black (later Sir) had worked his way up in the Civil Service through further education and therefore attached great value to his own children's schooling, regardless of sex. Consequently, Dora was sent to a kindergarten at four (the only girl among boys) and from there to a private co-educational primary school

---

<sup>5</sup> They moved several times: from Newcastle-under-Lyme (where Vera was born) to Macclesfield (where Vera's brother Edward was born less than two years later) and, in 1905, to Buxton in Derbyshire for the children's schooling.

(*TT1* 13-14). Her excellent performance there won her a scholarship to Sutton High School.<sup>6</sup> In 1911, intent upon furthering his daughter's chances of a university education, Mr Black sent Dora to a private "finishing school for young ladies" in Germany and, upon return, tutored her personally in Latin and Greek. In 1912, Dora took the Little-Go at Cambridge, a preliminary entrance examination, and to her surprise not only got a First, but was also awarded a scholarship in Modern Languages at Girton College.<sup>7</sup> Dora greeted the news of her success, however, with tears of sorrow (*TT1* 32). For the first time in her life she realised how much her destiny had been shaped by others who seemed to know better what was good for her, treating as a temporary whim her own often-voiced ambition "to train for the theatre" (*TT1* 34). Her childhood had literally been carefree because her relatives had assumed the care for her safety and future in the "smug" Edwardian middle-class context of suburban London, where, besides, already a number of privileges for someone gifted like her had eased her way. "Accepting what appeared to be the decision of fate" (*TT1* 34), Miss Black went to Girton College in 1912.

Typical of the conventionality of Staffordshire's provincial milieu, Vera's father Thomas Arthur Brittain saw the need for his daughter's education only in so far as it gave her the means to land an advantageous marriage (upward mobility was important) and become an "ornamental young lady", wife and mother (*TY* 32). So Vera was sent to Buxton's day school "for the daughters of gentlemen", followed, in 1907, by an expedient

---

<sup>6</sup> Sutton High School, which already offered an unusually rich and varied syllabus for girls' schools at the time (see *TT1* 22-23), was one of several schools belonging to the Girls' Public Day School Trust (or Company, as the organisation was called before changing to "Trust" in 1906). Founded in 1872, the Company opened its first schools in 1873, "offering a cheap and thorough day-school education on the model of the North London Collegiate School" (Woodham-Smith 44-45). The latter had been established in 1850 by Miss Frances Mary Buss, who was later to become involved in the kindergarten movement in England. By 1900, the organisation had opened 38 schools (see Spencer 76; Stewart 47-48).

<sup>7</sup> For details about Cambridge examinations and the early history of Girton College, the first of its kind in England to offer university-level education for women, see for example McMurrin and Tattersall; Gorham (64 ff).

move to St Monica's School,<sup>8</sup> in Kingswood, Surrey, as Vera's maternal aunt Florence was the partner of its founder and headmistress, Luise Heath Jones (*TY* 27 ff; see Gorham 18-19). During these few years of contact with the outer world, Vera became aware of the existence of women's colleges. At last, there was hope for her long-cherished ambition to leave the much resented "stuffiness of complacent bourgeoisdom" of her upbringing, assume a life of independence and achieve greatness as a writer (*TY* 31-32). To this end she would work hard.

### Feminist Awareness

Gorham claims that Vera's early and continuous revolt against the traditional treatment of women as second-rate citizens, and the centrality "feminism" assumed in her life go to show that she "was born feminist" (174). Her ambition to escape from her provincial upbringing and seek an independent existence certainly reflects this revolt. What encouraged her belief in the possibility of a self-sufficient life as a professional woman writer was her introduction, under the guidance of Miss Heath Jones, to the suffrage movement and to feminist thought, most notably to Olive Schreiner's *Woman and Labour* (1911). Schreiner's feminist classic, with its argument about the central role women's labour had played in the evolution of mankind, and the call to women to seek through education a fit outlet for her abilities in whatever profession modern society had to offer and thus to continue, through their personal development, to help humankind evolve,<sup>9</sup> resonated well with Vera's plans for her own future (Berry and Bostridge loc.786 ff). It is said to have fully converted her to feminism

---

<sup>8</sup> St. Monica's was "a finishing school for wealthy girls" whose ambivalent curriculum reflected its headmistress's progressive attitude towards education, on the one hand, and "Victorian ideal of femininity" on the other. It was insufficient, as Vera would soon realise, to prepare its students for higher education (Gorham 19-20; *TY* 32-33).

<sup>9</sup> Schreiner's historical perspective on woman's labour is, in fact, a description of the progressive loss, from the past to the present, of her traditional (manual) tasks in the service of humankind, in part because man took over from her, but also because of the invention of labour-saving devices that reduced the need for manual work. While in modern society men would have a great variety of more intellectual or highly skilled



(*TY* 41-42; Berry and Bostridge loc. 771), or rather, the kind of feminism, as Gorham adds, that consisted in “a desire to enter the world of men” (73). Against all odds,<sup>10</sup> she managed to win a “Somerville Exhibition” (a minor scholarship) in English Literature in March 1914 and passed the Oxford Senior Local in July. The “gate to liberty”, as she put it (*TY* 77), was open—the very moment the War broke out, which she then perceived as “an infuriating personal interruption” (*TY*, 93).

Contrary to Vera’s early revolt against sex discrimination, Dora had not felt the need to rebel, since under her parents’ democratic educational policies she had grown up self-confidently, hardly touched by the differential treatments of boys and girls.<sup>11</sup> She became critical of society and actively assumed control of her life as a woman in her own right in the intellectual

---

professions at their disposal, women ran the risk, because of their successive exclusion from education and public functions, to see their labour contribution reduced to their sexual function in the form of sexual reproduction or prostitution. In Schreiner’s words, this was the equivalent of sinking “into the condition of complete and helpless sex-parasitism” (117), which would eventually atrophy “all the other elements of human nature in her” and ultimately arrest “the evolution of the whole race (...) in her person” (157). As Vera had never felt much attracted to sex, always giving priority to her literary ambition (*TY* 26, 48-9; Gordon 194 ff), Schreiner’s call to women to make all modern labour their own as their intellect was equal to men’s, and in so doing contribute to the evolution of humankind and escape sex-parasitism, must indeed have been to Vera a timely confirmation of the rightness of her course (see also Berry and Bostridge loc. 796).

<sup>10</sup> Contrary to Dora Russell, who began her studies at Girton in 1912, Vera had to return home to the life of a debutante after her school years as her father was against investing in her further education. Under the influence of an old family lawyer and John Marriott, an Oxford Extension lecturer, her father came round to accepting her desire to higher education by 1913, and she began the arduous preparations for both the Somerville scholarship examination and the Oxford entrance exam (*TY* 59 ff; see Berry and Bostridge loc. 989).

<sup>11</sup> She was, however, aware of ongoing discriminations. Although her parents were a devoted couple, her father was clearly “the boss” to whom her mother Sarah (née Davisson) had to present the weekly tradesmen’s bills for payment (*TT*1 19). Dora also recalled that when young she and her girlfriends disliked their “swelling breasts”, unconsciously aware of the limitations that would soon come with womanhood; or that she and her sister “Bindy” (baptised Edith) used to call each other “boys” because of the “male power and prestige” that came with it, as she explained years later (*TT*1 40).

world of Cambridge, where she joined, among others, the freethinking “Heretics Society”.<sup>12</sup> Under its influence she rapidly discarded any religious belief and set as her goals in life to find out what she personally “felt and believed about the purpose of the universe (...) [and] the riddle of the destiny of all mankind in this world” (*TTI* 36).

When World War I broke out, Dora Russell and Vera Brittain had begun or would begin a new stage in their lives that offered the kind of freedom that each needed to forge a life of her own. Yet, contrary to the gregarious, competitive and easy-going Dora, privileged by a liberal family background and upbringing near London and confident of her abilities, the more serious, introspective yet ambitious Vera, used to being alone and self-consciously aware of the patronising treatment of her sex in the provincial world of her family, had to fight hard for her eventual self-realisation. In many other ways, as Deborah Gorham and others have pointed out, Vera remained rather conventional, reflected, for example, in her acceptance of the public-school code of “manliness”, her patriotic response to war (80-83), and her lifelong care for her looks (Berry and Bostridge loc. 2983; Gorham 186). Politics were viewed by both from a distance, as they still were, to use Vera’s words, “abysmally ignorant”, “romantically idealistic” and “utterly unsophisticated” by later standards (*TY* 43).

## The Impact of the War

Brittain’s involvement in the War as a VAD (Voluntary Aid Detachment)<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> The Heretics Society had been co-founded in 1909 by the writer and polymath C. K. Ogden (1889-1957). Its members had to swear to reject “all appeal to Authority in the discussion of religious questions” and to accept a conviction only when based on reasonable argument (Florence, “The Cambridge Heretics” 228; *TTI* 42).

<sup>13</sup> For a background to the VAD programme, a discussion of the ambivalent situation and status of VADs created by competing discourses, and how individual participants responded to those, Vera Brittain included, see Ouditt (ch. 1). Ouditt also explains that not all women volunteers would be accepted to become a VAD. Recruitment focused on upper-middle class women like Vera because of their breeding (20 ff).

nurse from 1915 to 1919, her romantic motives, her personal losses<sup>14</sup> and sufferings are vividly conveyed, based on letters and diary entries, in her bestselling memoirs *Testament of Youth*. In it she also mentions the two months in 1917 during which she nursed German soldiers, an experience which she later declared to have been the roots of her pacifist convictions, as she then realised “that the qualities common to all human beings, of whatever race or country, far exceed the national and political differences which sometimes divide them”—a “discovery” of spiritual quality, she claimed, that “made me resolve to devote my life to examining the causes of war and doing what I could to prevent another” (*TY* 373-80; *Humiliation with Honor* 11, 28). As a written record for posterity of what the War had done to her generation, *Testament* also stands as her lasting appeal to peace.

The publication of *Testament of Youth* in 1933 meant to Vera not only “the final instrument of a return to life from the abyss of emotional death” (*TE* 76), as she dramatically described the effect.<sup>15</sup> The book also turned out, at long last,<sup>16</sup> to be her break-through to much-coveted fame as a writer. “Paradoxically”, as Mark Bostridge concluded, “the war that devastated Britain’s youth also helped to create her as a writer” (loc. 126).

---

<sup>14</sup> Roland Leighton, her unofficial fiancé, died of shot wounds on 23 December 1915; their close friends Geoffrey Thurlow and Victor Richardson died in 1917—Geoffrey was shot in action in April, Victor died of wounds in June; her brother Edward was shot in June 1918.

<sup>15</sup> This is an obvious overstatement, as her emotional healing process and hence her return to literary creativity had begun when in 1920 Winifred Holtby, a colleague at university with similar writing ambitions, became her close friend, working partner, eventual room-mate and companion until her untimely death in 1935. She filled the void left after the death of Edward, Vera’s former confidante, providing the emotional support, understanding, encouragement and reliable help Britain needed in order to go on writing and campaigning (see Bostridge loc. 203 ff; Berry and Bostridge loc. 3086 ff).

<sup>16</sup> Beginning with Roland’s death, and throughout the 1920s, Britain had tried to put her war experiences into some literary form, most of which never reached the publisher (see Bostridge ch. 4). The novels that did get published, *Dark Tide* (1923) and *Not Without Honour* (1924) deal with feminist issues centring on her experience as a “provincial young lady” (see Mellown, “Reflections” 215 ff).

Yet, in this apparent contradiction lies the key to understanding the authoress and her approach to life.

Why—I wondered when reading Brittain’s account of her gradual involvement in the war effort—did young Vera so readily abandon her Modern Languages course at Oxford, for which she had fought so hard in order to escape from her provincial prison and gain independence? Dora, who had higher education thrust upon her, did not interrupt it as we shall see. Why exchange a life of her own for the subservient female role of men’s little helper? Was it—as Vera claimed—only because she wanted to share the hardships which her newly found lover Roland Leighton, Edward’s friend at school, had to face at the Front, “and not being a man and able to go to the front, I wanted to do the next best thing” (*TY* 213-14)?

Her change of heart may have had more reasons—though less conscious to her—than that of love alone. As Bostridge has pointed out (loc. 1712), Vera understated the support she received from her parents in her struggle to enter university, while exaggerating the single-handedness of her own efforts—that is, in reality it had not been as difficult as she made it out to be. Furthermore, as Deborah Gorham has explained, public pressure on women to also volunteer for war work exerted a strong pull (99-100). Besides, Brittain’s academic year 1914-15 at Oxford had consisted mostly in studying elementary Greek and Latin for her end-of-term exams (Pass Moderations), while the strict regulations imposed on women and their behaviour at Oxford curtailed the freedom Miss Vera had apparently expected (73 ff). In view of these unbargained-for limitations, active participation in the war effort promised a better escape from convention and provinciality. It meant, as she mused in 1915, that her “days (...) of sheltered physical comfort and unruffled peace of mind” were over (*TY* 138)—which was exactly what the future writer needed: suffering became a form of feeling intensely alive, as her diary narrative makes clear time and again. “I would rather suffer aeons of pain than be nothing” she once confessed to Roland (*TY* 196). What began as suffering for her lover—nursing wounded soldiers meant to her nursing Roland “by proxy” (*Chronicle* 166), the “aches” and “pains” of her daily drudgery were not minded as they represented “satisfactory tributes to my love of Roland” (*TY* 164)—gradually became very personal and her own when the men closest to her successively died in the War. Lessons of loss were counter-

balanced by freedom from former constraints and a gain in knowledge about living: “After twenty years of sheltered gentility I certainly did feel that whatever the disadvantages of my present occupation, I was at least seeing life” (*TY* 213). As Ouditt succinctly put the experience Vera shared with many war nurses that escaped former confines: “Paradoxically, to be at the site of death was seen to be equivalent to being at the heart of life. It was, effectively, an entry into history” (31).

By witnessing and documenting the loss of part of her youth in the course of a historic event—Edward, she dramatically declared, represented “all my past” and Roland “all my future” (*TY* 190)—Vera Brittain had acquired the necessary human insights and material that qualified her for the kind of “labour” in public (on Oliver Schreiner’s equal-rights terms, see fn. 9) which was not only best suited for her skills—the profession of a writer—but which could be exercised on equal terms with her male colleagues.<sup>17</sup> At the same time, the success of her book secured her the kind of fame and financial resources that stabilised her public position and independence. As far as her place in public was concerned, Vera had by the 1930s fully achieved her feminist ambition in Schreiner’s sense. Her apprenticeship years in the War, on the other hand, made her in the eyes of the public an authority on questions of peace and war, life and death (*Chronicle* 15; *Fell* 15). It legitimised her postwar peace campaigns in writing and speech, which she then pursued mostly on behalf of the League of Nations Union, the English internationalist organisation that aligned with the League of Nations in their efforts to further international cooperation, “collective security”. By 1933 she had also found the literary

---

<sup>17</sup> In fact, autobiographies were generally only published if they came from men of some public standing, as only these were expected to have something important to say. Brittain saw this confirmed when she mentioned her autobiographical project to an aspiring literary “arbiter”, who promptly exclaimed, “I shouldn’t have thought that anything in *your* life was worth recording!” (*TE* 79, italics of the original). Whether autobiographical or not, as Fell pointed out, “published literature and public debate about the war in the interwar years” was a “male world” (15). This was, in fact, what gave Brittain the energy to persevere with her long-time project: before fully embarking on *Testament of Youth*, she had carefully read the recent literature on the War by her male colleagues. They confirmed her in the urgent need to add to these her view of the War (*TE* 76-77).

formula—the voice of historically situated subject(s) (mostly her authorial “I”) speaking for the many, or, as she put it: “to put the life of an ordinary individual into its niche in the contemporary history, and thus illustrate the influence of world-wide events and movements upon the personal destinies of men and women” (*TY* 12)—that promised success in the meaningful application of her literary skills.<sup>18</sup>

As her choice of literary form makes clear, innocent young Vera rebelling against her provincial surroundings had, through the lesson of the War, matured into a political being who saw her life as part of and subject to historical processes (see *TY* 472). Her change, upon returning to Somerville after the War, from reading English to reading History (from 1919 to 1921)<sup>19</sup>—“trying to understand how the whole calamity had happened” (*TY* 471)—was a logical consequence. Her literary recipe also points to a personal need: for the volatile and sensitive Vera, often alone in her struggles and anxieties, writing herself into her literary creations was her way—had probably been her way from the start—of coming to terms with life’s adversities and finding the courage to move on (see Berry and Bostridge loc. 454).<sup>20</sup>

\*\*\*\*\*

---

<sup>18</sup> Apparently, Brittain had perceived the power of this literary device already in her sixth form when editing St. Monica’s school magazine (*TE* 77-78).

<sup>19</sup> Upon completing her History degree in 1921, Vera became part of the early female Oxfordians officially accorded the degree. Under mounting pressure—and Brittain had with her pen contributed to the campaign for women’s right to be admitted to a university degree—Oxford University passed the statute to that effect on 11 May 1920 (Berry and Bostridge loc. 3173 ff). Cambridge University—Dora Russell’s *Alma Mater*—lagged behind in this respect for another 28 years (see Chambers). See also Vera Brittain’s *The Women at Oxford: A Fragment of History* (The Macmillan Company, 1960).

<sup>20</sup> As far as Brittain’s wartime writing is concerned, similar conclusions have been drawn by a number of critics who have analysed her work “as an act of mourning, voicing the ongoing trauma of bereavement” (see Fell 15). For an analysis of Brittain’s subjective writing method in relation to its influence on the novel in the early twentieth century, see Andrea Peterson.

While Brittain depended on the medium of writing to make sense of her life's experiences within an informed context so that it would be representative for others, Miss Black perceived the lessons of life intuitively, absorbing them with both mind and body, before her understanding of them was committed to paper. A bluestocking, like Vera, she cherished the human intellect that made understanding possible. To her, however, the thoughts of our reasoning faculty did not represent "pure reason in the academic sense", but rather "the creative impulse that springs from a combination of the reasoning faculty, intuitions, imagination, instincts [*sic*] of the organism that is man" (*TT*1 43). Hence, the development of her thoughts on peace based on her home-front war experience was less straightforward. As her younger brother Frederick was still too young for military service in August 1914, she felt "no immediate personal anxieties" (*TT*1 45) then. A brief spell as a volunteer, helping to receive and distribute refugees arriving from Belgium, brought her face to face with the human suffering of dislocation and loss and her "fairytale world of the tamarisk tree began to fade into the past" (*TT*1 45). Back at Cambridge for her final year, she perceived the void opening up in her generation with the rapid disappearance of male colleagues from university, made permanent by their deaths, among these Rupert Brooke, a Fellow of King's College, in April 1915. She became aware of the growing resistance to military service by conscientious objectors at Cambridge—most notably Bertrand Russell, whom she would briefly meet in 1916 (*TT*1 50)—and knew of her friend C. K. Ogden's vehement opposition to the War, which transpired in his editorship of the *Cambridge Magazine*<sup>21</sup> (*TT*1 45-46). For lack of

---

<sup>21</sup> The *Cambridge Magazine* was first published as an open university magazine on January 12 1912. Under the continuous editorship of C. K. Ogden, it became a mouthpiece for controversial (and often little-known) topics such as birth control. During World War I it was one of the few magazines that offered the reader a summary of the Foreign Press, and regularly featured translated anti-war articles coming from the Continent, including Germany (Florence, "Cambridge" 12-42). For details about the magazine's important role in providing balanced information about international politics and events during World War I, see Kolinsky. Dora temporarily helped Ogden edit the magazine (*TT*1 64).

meaningful alternatives (she no longer wanted to support the war effort) she continued postgraduate studies of the eighteenth-century French hedonists at London University College after finishing her course in Modern Languages with First Class Honours in June 1915.

The cruelty of the impersonal war machine came home to her when in 1917 she accompanied her father, then Director General of Munitions Supply, on a war mission to the United States. In vain, her father appealed to American oil magnates to share their resources with England, as petroleum was almost impossible to come by in war-torn Europe. With indignation Dora observed “that it was a matter of complete indifference to these oil men if all our tankers went to the bottom; the greater our loss, the greater in the end would be their gain”. The US had not entered the war to help “their beleaguered cousins”, as Europeans deludingly thought; they had entered at that late date only “because they saw advantage to themselves in doing so” (*TT1* 57).

This realisation was the final straw that made her turn against war—not only on account of the deplorable motives and ends involved by war profiteers, but—even more so—on account of the long-term negative effects modern technological warfare had particularly on her own generation. She viewed the losses it had suffered as a serious break in the sequence of generations, necessary to guarantee, through the modifying influence of the young, an adequately adaptive change in the next. As the predominant survivors of her generation were women, there was hardly any continuity since these were denied political power. What persisted in society was the traditional structure “with its national rivalries, its outmoded diplomacies, its faith in wars, its patriarchal authority” (*TT1* 58). Patriarchal social and political structures had to be changed, and if women (now in surplus numbers) were to do it, they had to become full citizens.

Her quest for “liberty and love” began with a search for alternative lifestyles and turned into lifelong active campaigns for what she believed necessary and possible at given moments in history to redress the destructive imbalance male dominance had engendered and, in so doing, create the basis for lasting peace. Upon returning to her postgraduate research in London Miss Black joined the bohemia in dress and lifestyle, began moving in the intellectual circles of Bloomsbury and



Club 17,<sup>22</sup> went on a Girton Fellowship to Paris for her research and there immersed herself in the city's intellectual and artistic life, and, in 1920, ventured all by herself into post-revolutionary Russia on an audacious tour via the North Cape.<sup>23</sup> The vision Dora perceived when looking at the people (of the Communist Party politics she remained critical) was of a utopia come true: a new society created by the people for the people (see *TT1* ch. 6). She realised that the course of History could be altered by ideas if people's belief in them were strong enough—that is, History was human-made, shaped by human consciousness (*TT1* 10), not—as was the prevalent assumption—an impersonal process determined by economic or material conditions. The latter could be changed if the beliefs and attitudes that had created them could be altered, that is “we need the past to set us free” (*The Religion* 247):

On personal conduct, on our standards of personal relationship, man to woman, parents to children, are built the customs and laws of States and ultimately their national and international policy. It is here, then, with man and woman that we must begin. (*Hypatia* 78)

Modern patriarchal society then bore the hallmarks of male consciousness. The implications become clear in the light of the radical bio-psychological approach Dora developed in her writings from the 1920s onward,<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> Club 17 or 1917 Club (in no. 4 Gerard Street, Soho) was founded by and for the “politically inclined” intellectuals in commemoration of the Russian October Revolution. Dora humorously described it as a place “to which—it is said—the aspiring unknown repaired to meet the ‘arrived’ and famous, while the latter stayed away to avoid such encounters” (*TT1* 66). Evelyn Waugh's elder brother Alec described it as “the rallying point of left-wing opinion”, a place of conviviality that attracted a very heterogeneous crowd interested in debating unconventional issues concerning not only politics, but also the arts, literature and modern ideas (183).

<sup>23</sup> There Miss Black met and talked with people that became legendary, such as the American journalist John Reed, the anarchist Emma Goldman and the Communist revolutionary Alexandra Kollontai, who showed her what was being done for the emancipation of women.

<sup>24</sup> Throughout her life, Dora would contribute numerous articles reflecting her views to journals, magazines and newspapers; and from 1926 to 1931/2 on a regular basis

of which the following is a very rough outline.

Human beings are primarily biological organisms (animals), whose minds are body-bound. When consciousness and hence a search for meaning and purpose set in, the female of the species experienced her existence and self-propagation as meaningful partaking in Nature's creation of life, while the male, aware of his dependence on the female because of his physical needs (yet unaware or uncertain of his propagation), tried to escape from his biological bondage into his mental world and there find ways to control Nature—and by extension woman—(through myths, philosophy, religion, politics, science and technology), and to expand his self in space and time. The world he created with his mind became the mirror image of his split and hence unbalanced inner nature: mind over body, male over female, reason over emotions, mechanical over natural, etc. Of the many conflicts and tensions resulting thereof, war was just an extreme manifestation. By denying the importance of nature's forces on the grounds of a belief in the superior value of the mind and spirit (a dualism to which Descartes had subscribed philosophically) and by excessively harnessing them (of late through machines), the male of the species "turned his back on the creative life and inspiration that lay within himself and his partnership with woman" (*The Religion* 236). Reform and work for peace had to begin here, with man and woman. Feminist and pacifist objectives neatly coincide at this point as such a cooperative enterprise required that women be accepted as equal partners into a relationship that through its complementarity would be the beginning of social change—an acceptance that was all the more justified when based on our shared human nature:

If we are to make peace between man and woman, and by their unity and partnership change the ideas that govern our politics and our outlook on the world, it is essential that men should make a more determined attempt to understand what

---

to the Spanish paper *El Sol*. Books include *Hypatia, or Woman and Knowledge* (1925); *The Right to Be Happy* (1927); *In Defence of Children* (1932); *The Religion of the Machine Age* (1983). The latter is the sum total of her thought on our modern machine age and how it came about.

feminists are seeking (...). First and foremost, man or woman, we are human beings. (*HYP* 79)

### Ideals versus Reality

Shared humanity, as may be recalled, became Britain's leading argument against war. As has been shown, both her feminism and pacifism were rooted in her personal life history. They remained connected in the way she realised her feminist ambition of a career as a woman writer (in a male world), and used her pen to campaign for peace and women's rights. In the 1920s, she would write and lecture on women's equal rights issues such as birth control, education, employment, marriage and motherhood, while she vested her hopes for lasting peace, as already mentioned, in the promise of "collective security" offered by the League of Nations Union (see Mellown, "Reflections"; Gorham 176 ff). The question of peace to her at this point was a political affair best controlled by international organisations.

When she married the political scientist and Labour activist George Catlin in 1925, Britain not only kept her maiden name (then unusual), but also managed to safeguard her feminist priorities by insisting on an unconventional arrangement in an outwardly conventional marriage: during the academic year, Catlin would fulfil his obligation with Cornell University in Ithaca, NY, while she remained in London, pursuing her career in the company of her close friend Winifred Holtby (see fn. 15). This "semi-detached" marriage, as she called it, suited her well in more than one sense: in Holtby she had all the support she needed to succeed in writing, while her friend's help enabled Britain to prove her feminist claim that marriage and career were not incompatible (Gorham ch. 9).<sup>25</sup>

\*\*\*\*\*

In 1921, Dora had—quite against her will and feminist convictions, and only because she was in love—also agreed to contract a conventional marriage with the philosopher Bertrand Russell—an aristocrat and 20 years

---

<sup>25</sup> For a study of Britain's "semi-detached" marriage arrangement, see Katie Roiphe.

her senior—because she was pregnant with his first child, for whom he wanted to secure the right to the family’s title.<sup>26</sup> Their one-year stay in pre-industrial China had, however, convinced her that their emotional bond was solid enough to warrant the kind of modern partnership she envisioned as the foundation for social reform: an enterprise for raising children, in which both would cooperate equally, while each was free to pursue personal inclinations on the understanding that monogamy was a patriarchal institution. Its many legal and moral constraints had proven detrimental to the kind of freedom that love in its various forms needed in order to be the positive force that overcame difference, and opened the way to mutual understanding and happiness:

For love is *knowledge* of a person; a being on the side of a person; a concern for that person’s uniqueness; a refusal to subjugate him (or her), unless by his own willing consent in love, to anyone else’s needs but his own.  
(...) it can only be liberated by checks to power. (*In Defence* 32, 125)<sup>27</sup>

This was the understanding on which Dora accepted the conventional marriage mould. What is certain is that her life with Bertrand afforded the kind of comfort and amenities that enabled her to have a family *and* engage

---

<sup>26</sup> Bertrand Russell had begun courting bright young Dora in 1919 when realising that she was willing to have children (contrary to his other lover at the time) (*TT1* 68 ff, 78; *Monk* 557 ff). Dora knew of his desire for children and did nothing to prevent pregnancy (*TT1* 78). Feeling protective towards him and soon in love, she willingly gave up her postgraduate studies in order to accompany him on a one-year lectureship stay in Peking, where she became pregnant. In her view, however, as she had once explained to Russell, “[c]hildren were entirely the concern of the mother” (*TT1* 68), a point which the late Victorian liberal did obviously not share. Russell’s insistence on patriarchal rights, whatever his other “modern” views, was a clear warning, which Dora—much to her lifelong cost—did not heed.

<sup>27</sup> What sounds utterly romantic and surrealistic to us must here be understood as part of a quest for a happier life than traditional institutions had so far afforded. Dora (and Bertrand) were not the only ones to try out alternatives in the early decades of the twentieth century (see Roiphe). Some had been inspired by examples from Bloomsbury intellectuals, set earlier in the century, although these had initially been guided by a more aesthetic ideal (see Johnstone ch. 2).

in the campaigns she considered conducive to social reform: birth control for working-class women,<sup>28</sup> sexual reform,<sup>29</sup> and education. The latter comprised the pioneer project of a progressive school, *Beacon Hill*, which Dora and Bertrand Russell opened in 1927 in order to offer their own (John—born 1921, and Kate—born 1923) and other children the kind of democratic co-education that would create self-sufficient, whole human beings capable of contributing to social reform.<sup>30</sup> Regardless of hardships—and there were many after Bertrand Russell had left—Dora Russell continued to fight for a balanced society whenever the occasion arose, an activist and campaigner to the last.

As is well known, Vera Brittain joined Dick Sheppard's Peace Pledge Union in 1936 (founded in 1934), after having become disillusioned with the League of Nations Union and its changing policies (Bennett 193).

---

<sup>28</sup> In 1923 she joined a group of intellectuals who aimed at making birth control respectable by making it legal. Initial success led, in 1924, to the founding of the Workers' Birth Control Group, which continued campaigning into the 1930s, when birth-control information became increasingly available (*TT1* 171 ff).

<sup>29</sup> In 1929, Dora was co-organiser of the widely publicised *World League of Sexual Reform (on a Scientific Basis)* Congress in London (8 to 14 September). Its main organiser was the Harley Street gynaecologist Norman Haire. Incidentally, it was one of the few occasions where Vera and Dora crossed paths. As the recent author of *Halcyon, or the Future of Monogamy* (Kegan Paul, 1929), Vera had been invited as a minor speaker, presenting a paper on "The Failure of Monogamy". Although in favour of law reform and sex education to enlighten women in particular so that they could assume control of their lives, she was wary of pronouncements on fidelity/infidelity in marriage, contrasting with Dora's outline of the need for love freed from conventional shackles in a marriage understood as partnership in "Marriage and Freedom" (see Bostridge loc. 4773-4794).

<sup>30</sup> Although initially run by both Russells, the school was Dora's project, as became evident when Bertrand left both the school and his second wife in 1932, unable to cope with the emotional strain that accompanied their "infidelities", which in Dora's case involved two children by another lover. The divorce was an ugly one in which Bertrand made use of all the male and aristocratic privileges he could command to make Dora's life miserable (*TT1* 243 ff; Monk 78-136). These hardships notwithstanding, she carried on with her project until war strictures forced her to close it down in 1943. For details about the school, see among others the second volume of Dora Russell's autobiography.

With this move her pacifism became unconditional, she renounced any form of war and her campaigns against war became associated with Christian values. It must have been one of the hardest periods in her writing career as she was quite alone in England (her two children had been shipped to the US), Winifred Holtby had died and her total opposition to a war that even former pacifists found necessary because of Hitler and his regime left her ostracized (see Gorham 250 ff). Writing was once more resorted to—this time using the literary device of explanatory letters to her son—as a means of coming to terms with her feelings of “humiliation”, persecution and “loss of respectability”, and “suffering”, interpreted as a spiritual experience and way to deeper understanding (*Humiliation with Honor*). She kept up her campaign against the war, was founding member of the Bombing Restriction Committee (in opposition to the saturation bombing of German cities) and actively participated in PPU’s Food Relief Campaign.

### **A life written and a life lived**

As the case study of these two women goes to show, there is no simple way to peace. Even if, on the surface, aspects such as social class, age, gender, education, and historical context coincide in two cases, suggesting similar outlooks, personal factors are more decisive. Vera took suffering personally—her self-conscious awareness of sex discrimination in her parental home, her experience as a VAD nurse during the Great War—and derived her causes from there when the right words could be found (e.g. Olive Schreiner’s appeal): campaigning for women’s right to “labour” in the public (male) sphere, and opposition to the senseless destruction of human beings who had more in common than what kept them apart. To provide others with possible answers to questions in life based on her personal witness accounts became her mission and ambition—and her fulfilment when it led to fame and recognition. To this end she would readjust customary arrangements such as her marriage, while remaining in the conventional mould of respectability. Her stance during the Second World War was the only time when she conscientiously risked her safe haven for ulterior ends—and it was hard. No sooner had the war ended, than she asked herself: “How (...) could I use my one gift of interpretation through

writing and speaking to assist so many in such painful need?” (*TE* 380). Writing was her life, to be able to do so meant freedom, and the War had taught her how to use it so that it could serve as a personal testament for posterity.

Dora had grown up absorbing life through living before she made sense of it, and her approach to thinking and knowing makes this clear. In a letter to her husband Vera once poignantly observed, while working her way painfully through theory in preparation for her book on marriage: “I don’t believe some of the writers—e.g. Mrs Russell—read anything much, but are simply acute observers” (qtd. in Gorham 212). Learning to understand life as a whole by living it was in many ways more important to Dora than trying to make sense of experiences through writing or reading books—to her books functioned as a source of inspiration and complementary knowledge. What she learnt during her quest for alternatives to western society, which she held responsible for the recent wars, took a long while to be written—in fact, she was 89 when *The Religion of the Machine Age* came out. But the conclusions drawn from her early experiences—her humanist philosophy<sup>31</sup>—guided her in her multiple campaigns for the kind of social reforms, beginning with man and woman, that in her view would eventually lead to lasting peace. In the course of her all-comprehensive, idealistic pursuit she paid the price of marginalisation, especially when Bertrand Russell left her stranded, but she never gave up. Action bore the promise of change toward her ideals of “liberty and love”—freedom from patriarchal constraints, which would make love in its various forms the unifying force—that she identified with her Tamarisk Tree, unto the last.

---

<sup>31</sup> Beverly Earles included Dora Russell as a humanist woman in her PhD dissertation “The Faith Dimension of Humanism”, and published her analyses in two subsequent articles: “The Faith Dimension of Humanism” and “Outstanding Humanist Women—Dora Russell in Particular”. Dora Russell’s approach to human nature and history based on human consciousness was years ahead of her time. When in the 1990s the study of the human brain in action—and by extension of human consciousness—became possible with the help of advanced computer technology, important aspects of her philosophy found support in a number studies in the neurosciences. For details see M. Henriques.

In view of these differences between the two pacifists—Vera and Dora—it does not come as a surprise that Brittain’s answer to Mrs Russell’s request for an audience to explain her next project of a women’s campaign for peace reads:

I am so sorry to have to disappoint you but I have absolutely no time this summer for campaigns (...). I need every moment (...) for literary work. Not only is Gollancz publishing, next month, my book of TESTAMENT OF EXPERIENCE—the sequel to TESTAMENT OF YOUTH—but I have been commissioned to write (...) a short history of Women at Oxford (...).

Incidentally, TESTAMENT OF EXPERIENCE contains (in the account of the original attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki) a strong protest against nuclear warfare which might be useful for quotation. (Brittain to Russell, 15 May 1957)

## Works Cited

- Bennett, Yvonne A. “Vera Brittain and the Peace Pledge Union: Women and Peace.” *Women and War: Theoretical, Historical and Practical Perspectives*, edited by Ruth R. Pierson, Croom Helm, 1987, pp. 192-213.
- Berry, Paul and Mark Bostridge. *Vera Brittain: A Life*. Kindle ed. Virago, 1995.
- Bostridge, Mark. *Vera Brittain and the First World War: The Story of Testament of Youth*. Kindle ed. Bloomsbury, 2015.
- Brittain, Vera. *Chronicle of Youth: The War Diary 1913-1917*. Edited by Alan Bishop. William Morrow and Company, 1982. *Internet Archive*, archive.org/stream/chronicleofyouth00brit.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Humiliation with Honor*. Fellowship Publication, 1943. *Internet Archive*, archive.org/details/B-001-002-042.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Letter to Dora Russell, 15 May 1957. *Dora Winifred Russell Papers*, International Institute of Social History, ARCH01225.277, hdl.handle.net/10622/ARCH01225.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Testament of Experience: An Autobiographical Story of the Years 1925-1950*. Victor Gollancz, 1957. Virago, 1979. *The Internet Archive*, archive.org/stream/testamentofexper00brit\_0.



- \_\_\_\_\_. *Testament of Youth: An Autobiographical Study of the Years 1900-1925*. Victor Gollancz, 1933. *The Internet Archive*, archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.34310.
- Chambers, Suzanna. "At Last, a Degree of Honour for 900 Cambridge Women." *The Independent*, Independent Digital News and Media, 23 Oct. 2011, www.independent.co.uk/news/at-last-a-degree-of-honour-for-900-cambridge-women-1157056.html. Accessed 20 June 2018.
- Duff, Peggy. *Left, Left, Left: A Personal Account of Six Protest Campaigns 1945-1965*. Allison & Busby, 1971.
- Earles, Beverly. "The Faith Dimension of Humanism." PhD dissertation. Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, 1989.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Faith Dimension of Humanism." *Religious Humanism*, vol. 25, no. 2, 1991, pp. 55-65.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Outstanding Humanist Women—Dora Russell in Particular." *Religious Humanism*, vol. 4, 1991, pp. 167-171.
- Fell, Alison. "Myth, Countermyth and the Politics of Memory: Vera Brittain and Madeleine Clemenceau Jacquemaire's Interwar Nurse Memoirs." *Syngeries*, Royaume Uni et Irlande, no. 4, 2011, pp. 11-22.
- Florence, P. Sargant. "Cambridge 1909-1919 and Its Aftermath." *C. K. Ogden: A Collective Memoir*, edited by Philip Sargant Florence and John R. L. Anderson, Elek / Pemberton, 1977, pp. 12-55.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Cambridge Heretics (1909-1932)." *The Humanist Outlook*, edited by A. J. Ayer, Pemberton / Barrie & Rockliff, 1968, pp. 225-239.
- Gorham, Deborah. *Vera Brittain: A Feminist Life*. Blackwell, 1996.
- Henriques, Michaela Schwarz S. G. *Minding His-Story: Dora Russell's Voice on the Side of Life against the Backdrop of Her Peace Mission in the 1950s*. PhD dissertation. School of Arts and Humanities, University of Lisbon, 2015, hdl.handle.net/10451/22239.
- Johnstone, J. K. *The Bloomsbury Group: A Study of E. M. Forster, Lytton Strachey, Virginia Woolf, and Their Circle*. Secker and Warburg, 1954.
- Kolinsky, Martin and Eva. "A Voice of Reason in the First War." *C. K. Ogden: A Collective Memoir*, edited by Philip Sargant Florence and John R. L. Anderson, Elek / Pemberton, 1977, pp. 56-81.
- Liddington, Jill. *The Road to Greenham Common: Feminism and Anti-Militarism in Britain since 1820*. Syracuse UP, 1989.

- McMurrin, Shawnee L. and James J. Tattersall. "Fostering Academic and Mathematical Excellence at Girton College 1870-1940." *Women in Mathematics: Celebrating the Centennial of the Mathematical Association in America*, edited by Janet L. Berry et al. Association for Women in Mathematics Series, Springer, 2017, pp. 3-36. doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-66694-5.
- Mellown, Muriel. "One Woman's Way to Peace: The Development of Vera Brittain's Pacifism." *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, vol. 8, no. 2, 1985, pp. 1-6. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/3346044.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Reflections on Feminism and Pacifism in the Novels of Vera Brittain." *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, vol. 2, no. 2, 1983, pp. 215-228. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/463721.
- Monk, Ray. *Bertrand Russell: The Spirit of Solitude 1872-1921*. The Free Press, 1996.
- Ouditt, Sharon. *Fighting Forces, Writing Women: Identity and Ideology in the First World War*. Routledge, 1994, questia.com.
- Peterson, Andrea. *Self-Portraits: Subjectivity in the Works of Vera Brittain*. Peter Lang, 2006.
- Roiphe, Katie. "Vera and George Britain, Winifred Holtby." *Uncommon Arrangements: Seven Portraits of Married Life in London Literary Circles, 1910-1939*, pp. 253-296. The Dial P, 2007. *The Internet Archive*, archive.org/details/uncommonarrangem00roip.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Uncommon Arrangements: Seven Portraits of Married Life in London Literary Circles, 1910-1939*, The Dial P, 2007. *The Internet Archive*, archive.org/details/uncommonarrangem00roip.
- Russell, Dora. *Hypatia, or Woman and Knowledge*. To-day and To-morrow. Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1925.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *In Defence of Children*. Hamish Hamilton, 1932.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Letter to Vera Brittain, 14 May 1957." *Dora Winifred Russell Papers*, International Institute of Social History, ARCH01225.277, hdl.handle.net/10622/ARCH01225.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Marriage and Freedom." *Proceedings of the Third Congress of the World League of Sexual Reform: London 8.-14.IX 1929*, edited by Norman Haire, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1930, pp. 25-29.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Religion of the Machine Age*. Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983.

- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Right to Be Happy*. Harper & Brothers, 1927.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Tamarisk Tree: My Quest for Liberty and Love*. Vol. 1. Virago, 1977.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Tamarisk Tree: My School and the Years of War*. Vol. 2. Virago, 1980.
- Schreiner, Olive. *Woman and Labour*. Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1911.  
*Internet Archive*, [archive.org/details/womanlaborOOschr/page/n0](http://archive.org/details/womanlaborOOschr/page/n0).
- Spencer, Stephanie. "Advice and Ambition in a Girls' Public Day School: the Case of Sutton High School, 1884-1924." *Women's History Review*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2000, pp. 75-94.
- Stewart, W. A. C. *The Educational Innovators: Progressive Schools 1881-1967*. Vol. 2. St. Martin's, 1968.
- Waugh, Alec. *The Early Years of Alec Waugh*. Farrar Straus, 1963.
- Woodham-Smith, P. "History of the Froebel Movement in England." *Friedrich Froebel and English Education*. 1952, edited by Evelyn Lawrence, Routledge & Paul, 1969, pp. 34-94.

**ABSTRACT**

In 1957, following an impressive protest march by women against nuclear bomb testing, the feminist and educator Dora Russell wrote to Vera Brittain congratulating her on her speech held on this occasion. Would she consider joining forces with other well-known women to organise women for peace nationally? Brittain had a different agenda—she joined forces, instead, with the CND-movement, which had been inspired by the women’s protest march. And Mrs Russell went her own way.

This was one of the few instances of direct contact between two unusual women, born less than half a year apart, who shared an Edwardian middle-class upbringing, which they tried to leave behind when acting on their feminist convictions. Both successfully completed a university education—and in both cases, their fight for peace in later years was the outcome of what they had lived during the Great War. By looking at how each tried, in their various (auto-biographical) narratives, to make sense of that experience and live accordingly, this essay intends to show how varied and personal the way to peace can be, and hence how hard it may always be for peace-minded people to achieve collectively what most people desired in 1918: No More War.

**KEYWORDS**

Dora Russell; Vera Brittain; feminism; pacifism

**RESUMO**

Em 1957, após uma notável marcha de protesto organizada por mulheres contra os testes de bombas nucleares, a feminista e educadora Dora Russell escreveu a Vera Brittain para a felicitar pelo discurso então feito. Aceitaria ela unir as suas forças às de outras mulheres reconhecidas para, a nível nacional, organizarem as mulheres para a paz? Brittain tinha outros objectivos—preferiu associar-se ao CND, ele próprio inspirado pela marcha de protesto das mulheres. E Mrs Russell seguiu o seu caminho.

Foi uma das poucas ocasiões de contacto directo entre duas mulheres fora do comum, nascidas com menos de meio-ano de diferença, partilhando uma educação de classe média Eduardiana, que tentaram deixar para trás ao praticarem as suas convicções feministas. Ambas tinham concluído a educação universitária com sucesso—e, em ambos os casos, a sua luta pela paz em anos posteriores resultara daquilo que tinham vivido durante a Grande Guerra. Observando como cada uma delas procurou, nas suas diversas narrativas (autobiográficas), encontrar um sentido para tais experiências e viver de acordo com os seus princípios, este ensaio pretende mostrar como o caminho para a paz pode ser variado e pessoal, logo como pode sempre ser difícil, para quem procura a paz, alcançar colectivamente o que a maioria desejava em 1918: Guerra Nunca Mais.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Dora Russell; Vera Brittain; feminismo; pacifismo

---