

Peter Whelan in The Accrington Pals and Frederick Manning in Her Privates We both present two very different sides to the relationships between the soldiers and civilians of WWI, and the sympathy or hostility directed at the soldiers. Settings also change greatly between the two stories. Where one is set largely within the formerly quiet town of Accrington, the other takes place in the war-torn land of France. In terms of cast, The Accrington Pals features those unable to fight living safe untouched by the physical effects of the war, though not safe from the mental. Her Privates We however, features an assorted cast of people who constantly live with the all too real dangers of the war. Therefore, it is to be expected that the answer to the question for these two would contrast.

The beginning to The Accrington Pals lets the readers know immediately how May and Tom feel about his recruitment, as well as where the general mood of the town seems to lie. Tom is very caught up in the moment as May describes with *'that's a world you love isn't it'* when Tom says manoeuvres. We also learn at the same time that there has been a celebration to see the men off, which points to where the town's feelings lie. May, though not opposed to the war outright, seems to have been unaffected by the euphoria of the war. Instead, she describes the send-off rather venomously with words such as *'stale beer and smutty songs'*. In this same scene, we are granted an insight into Tom's mind and his reasons for signing up; which would have likely been the reason for many young men, as Ralph seems to prove. He describes signing up as a way to escape from Accrington for something new *'free of here, of this place, of this town'*. This reflects upon the society of the time, where the lower classes had a narrow world and few opportunities to do much better.

Community spirit becomes far more apparent and is actually seen during scene three when there is a parade to see off pals, who are due for Caernarvon that day. Most of the civilians believe that the war will be over quickly and the new recruits have no idea of the reality of the trenches. This is due to censorship and propaganda, of which there is a clear example when Bertha mentions the Germans in the coffin. It is one of the cases of the increasing mistrust and disparity that develops between the soldiers and civilians, and the government officials.

Conversely, the civilians of Her Privates We seem to largely lack the enthusiasm and support shown by those of The Accrington Pals. The clash of nationalities and cultures instantly creates uneven relations, made tenser by the ongoing war. Manning presents a realistic, fictional account of the Somme and the attitudes between soldiers and civilians which appears very authentic. Carefully placed scenes, such as the bombs which drop on the parading soldiers when they are supposedly safe behind the lines shows that soldiers aren't completely safe until the war's end. However, the civilians can expect to live far more safely and even profit, which is a point of conflict that arises later within the book.

The relationship between the French civilians and the foreign soldiers on their land seems mostly one of tolerance at best. Bourne sometimes acts as a mediator between the two parties due to his language skills. However, through his eyes we also see the civilians who are sympathetic to the soldiers. That Bourne comes into these encounters through his language skills hints that language barriers create obstacles for the others. For example, a misunderstanding between Corporal Greenstreet and a Frenchwoman occurs due to him

using the wrong word, *'Ah, oui, compris, madame. Glad to be back, compris? Cushy avec mademoiselle. The expression on the face of the menagere passed very rapidly from astonishment to indignation.'* On the other hand, Bourne manages to find a good meal and conversation with an old man when the two are able to converse in the same language.

There is a sense of optimism within The Accrington Pals that is absent from Her Privates We. However, this optimism; which is prevalent throughout the beginning of the play, begins to wane as the play progresses, culminating in a disparity that begins to form between the soldiers and the civilians. This disparity exists from the start in Her Privates We and can be seen in events such as the suspicion of the French when the soldiers camp at their town. However, a gulf between the people in the trenches and those at home is also seen, as mentioned in the tale of the fight between Madely and the miner. He gives an insight into how the soldiers feel when he says *'They don't care a fuck what 'appens to 'us'ns, so long as they can keep a 'ole skin'*. This presents a bitterness at those who are all too willing to tell men to go to war, yet won't do so themselves. Similar viewpoints are often presented through literature and poems, such as 'Recruiting' by E.A Mackintosh. This sentiment is one that is absent from The Accrington Pals, mainly due to the fact that we see so little of the Pals once they depart. Instead Whelan shows a growing gap that emerges between the soldiers and civilians due to the misinformation from the government and the fact that they cannot relate to each others' experiences. In the end, the two sides are so far apart that May can only find Tom in the dark realms of death. This sense of them being torn apart adds to the tragedy of the play.

The women of The Accrington Pals face a rapid change of lifestyle as they are shown doors to opportunities they had not received before. May Hassal even dreams of opening a store. *'I shall have to tell you. I've found the shop. The shop I've been looking for. Did you think I'd given up the idea.'* Sadly, had Tom stayed in Accrington and the war had never happened, she would have indeed given up the idea due to lack of opportunity. This goes back to the chance of profiteering from the war. The zeal of men to sign up for war meant that some essential jobs received very generous pay to 'persuade' them to stay. The soldiers, who began to grow disenchanted with the war, would view this with anger. Another example of the change on society is the march the women perform on town hall to discover the state of the pals. Pre-war, such actions were attributed to supporters of suffrage for women. It is an example of the frustration to the fabrications of journalists and the government that developed as the war dragged on despite promises it would end soon. It not only increased the tension between soldiers and civilians, but began to create division at home too.

In conclusion, what the state of soldier-civilians relations becomes portrayed as both stories is unequal and tense. A lack of communication between the two sides means that the soldiers can never express how their reality is. Meanwhile, censorship and propaganda by the government like that seen in The Accrington Pals doesn't civilians a chance to understand and empathise. Seeing this apparently uncaring attitude and behaviour such as the miner's causes soldiers to take an extremely bitter and pessimistic look at civilian life. This and the reality of the war binds then together in a sense of

comradeship that can also be noticed within their counterparts in The Accrington Pals. For instant, there is the relationship between Bourne and Martlow. Martlow is young; called 'boy' by Bourne, who seems to take a passive 'older brother' role with him. Rivers' speech at the end highlights this camaraderie, a feeling that Manning captures perfectly through Bourne's wonderings.

*'In fact, the relation in which he stood to this unknown man was in some ways closer and more direct than that in which he stood to the girl beside him. She knew nothing of their subterranean, furtive, twilight life, the limbo through which, with all their obliterated humanity, they moved as so many unhouseled ghosts, or the aching hunger in those hands that reached, groping tentatively out of their emptiness, to seek some hope or stay.'*