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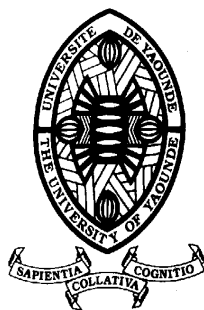
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Paix-Travail-Patrie

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FACULTE DES ARTS, LETTRES ET  
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CENTRE DE RECHERCHE ET  
FORMATION DOCTORALE EN  
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# THE POLEMICS OF WAR IN THE POETRY OF WILFRED OWEN AND SIEGFRIED SASSOON

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement for the  
Award of a Master's Degree in English

Specialization: British Literature

By

BISMARCK KIYO KIMBI

B.A., English

University of Yaoundé 1

SUPERVISOR

ERNEST LUKONG VEYU

PROFESSOR

Department of English

University of Yaoundé 1



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## **DEDICATION**

**To my Beloved mother, Roseline Nlinwe**

**and**

**dear uncle, Humphrey Gwashi**

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## ABSTRACT

This work entitled, “The Polemics of War in the Poetry of Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon”, examined the poetry of Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon in an effort to analyse their arguments against war. This work was premised on the hypothesis that the poetry of Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon depicts that the home fronts’ pro-war beliefs are antithetical to the sordid realities of war experienced at the war front and that their poetry projected the repercussions of war to be pathetic and traumatic. The work is divided into an introduction, four chapters and a conclusion. Through the tenets of Psychoanalysis and New Historicism, the analyses and interpretations of the poetry of Owen and Sassoon justified the hypothetical contention that the beliefs the home fronts have about war as dignifying, honourable, and heroic, are dissonant with the pitiful, horrific, and traumatic experiences that soldiers live at the war front. The work also examined the realities and consequences of war and established that Owen's and Sassoon's attitudes towards war are those of condemnation. This was opposed to the home fronts’ support of war either because they were ignorant of war casualties or because they had succumbed to the manipulations of jingoistic politicians and journalists. In addition, this work delineated that war has excruciating repercussions that turned Owen and Sassoon from patriotic soldiers to anti-war poets. As a way forward, it was suggested that politicians should rather embrace negotiations as the best way to resolve conflicts since the casualties of war are detrimental to humanity.

## RESUME

Le présent travail, intitulé « The Polemics of War in the Poetry of Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon », examine la poésie de Wilfred Owen et de Siegfried Sassoon dans le but d'analyser leurs arguments contre la guerre. Ce travail repose sur l'hypothèse que la poésie de Wilfred Owen et de Siegfried Sassoon montre que les convictions pro-guerre du front intérieur sont contraires aux réalités sordides de la guerre vécues sur le front, et que leur poésie projette les répercussions de la guerre comme pathétiques et traumatiques. Le présent travail est divisé en une introduction, quatre chapitres et une conclusion. Grâce aux principes de la psychanalyse et du nouvel historicisme, les analyses et les interprétations de la poésie d'Owen et de Sassoon ont justifié l'affirmation hypothétique selon laquelle les croyances des fronts intérieurs concernant la guerre comme digne, honorable et héroïque, sont dissonantes avec les expériences pitoyables, horribles et traumatisantes que les soldats vivent sur le front de guerre. Ce travail examine également les réalités et les conséquences de la guerre et établit que les attitudes d'Owen et de Sassoon à l'égard de la guerre sont celles d'une condamnation. Cela s'opposait au soutien du front intérieur à la guerre, soit parce qu'ils ignoraient les victimes de la guerre, soit parce qu'ils avaient succombé aux manipulations de politiciens et des journalistes chauvins. En outre, ce travail a souligné que la guerre a des répercussions atroces et que c'est en raison de ces effets morbides de la guerre qu'Owen et Sassoon sont passés de soldats patriotes à poètes anti-guerre. Pour aller de l'avant, il a été suggéré que les politiciens devraient plutôt privilégier les négociations comme meilleur moyen de résoudre les conflits, car les victimes de la guerre sont préjudiciables à l'humanité.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>DEDICATION</b> .....	i
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b> .....	ii
<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	iii
<b>RESUME</b> .....	iv
<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	1
Research Problem .....	3
Research Questions .....	3
Hypothesis.....	4
Aim of the Study.....	4
Significance of Study.....	4
Motivation.....	4
Definition of Key Terms.....	5
Brief Biographies of Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon .....	7
Structure of Work .....	10
<b>CHAPTER ONE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE</b> .....	<b>12</b>
Theoretical Framework.....	12
Literature Review.....	27
<b>CHAPTER TWO: WAR: FANTASY VERSUS REALITY</b> .....	<b>39</b>
Glory, Honour and Heroism of War .....	39
Men’s Pride and Quest for Revenge .....	51
The Realities of the War Front.....	58
<b>CHAPTER THREE: THE REPERCUSSIONS OF WAR</b> .....	<b>70</b>
Physical Consequences .....	70
Psychological Stress.....	83

<b>CHAPTER FOUR: FROM PATRIOTISM AND HONOUR TO REALISATION AND DIPLOMACY .....</b>	<b>96</b>
Exuberance and Patriotism .....	97
The Pity and Horror of War .....	103
Reactions against Warmongers.....	117
<b>CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>130</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>136</b>

## INTRODUCTION

War is not a new word, concept or reality to mankind because wars are as old as the human race. Many nations, ethnic groups, and religious groups have fought wars for one reason or another and there are still many wars going on in the world today. War is a method of conflict resolution that due to its violent nature usually creates more problems than the conflict it sets out to resolve. War creates varied emotions; there are those who encourage it as well as those who condemn it, and there are those who are indifferent with its presence. Whatever the attitudes are, one thing which is obvious is that the repercussions of war directly and indirectly affect humanity. Jon Stallworthy in *The New Oxford Book of War Poetry* postulates that William Wordsworth defined poetry as “‘the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings’, and there can be no area of human experience that has generated a wider range of powerful feelings than war...” (32). War instigates sentiments notably patriotism, hatred, empathy, exasperation, exuberance, hopelessness and fear. There are a plethora of wars around the world today because there is lack of sufficient knowledge concerning the realities of war and the repercussions of war have been presented partially.

The outbreak of the First World War in the early phase of the twentieth century changed the status quo of Europe in particular and the world at large. Propaganda and jingoism created patriotic sentiments in exuberant youth who soon opted to be enlisted in the army. With the rapid industrialization that preceded the war, there was massive production of sophisticated weapons like artilleries, machine guns, aircrafts, mortars, mines, riffles, tanker, grenades and gas shells. These weapons contributed to the bloody nature of the war. Majority of the young men who were exhilarated about fighting in the war soon became indignant and disillusioned about the war since they had not anticipated its casualties. It is this exasperation, disillusionments and unbearable atrocities of war that caused Owen and Sassoon to develop a condemnatory attitude towards war. The cataclysmic nature of the war put in anachronism the early patriotic or pro-war poems like “The Soldier” of Robert Brooke, “War is Kind” by Stephen Crane, “Into Battle” by Julian Grenfell and “Who’s for the Game” by Jessie Pope. Britain declared war on Germany on 4<sup>th</sup> August 1914; that is, the summer of that year and they had anticipated erroneously that the war would be over by winter that same year, but the



war lasted four years with untold hazards and Sassoon, for example, held that the war was prolonged unduly.

There are still many wars going on nowadays. Some of these wars are; the Afghanistan war, the Syrian war, Yemen war, Russo-Ukrainian war, Boko Haram war, the crisis in the English-speaking (Anglophones) Regions of Cameroon. These wars have caused havoc and they continue to do so. This is to say that war is a subject that preoccupies and has affected the world incessantly and from time immemorial. It is one century gone as Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon wrote war poetry to decry the horrors and misery that war brings and these casualties are still witnessed in the different wars currently going on around the world today. The modern period was shaped by World War 1 and these soldier-poets, who had first-hand experience of war, wrote to discourage war because war in all its ramifications is bad due to human and material losses. Owen says that his poem is "in the pity of war", so he wrote to discourage war because of the pity it brings.

War is not a good option for conflict resolution since war begets wars. The First World War was fought from 1914 to 1918. The little conflict between Serbia and Austria-hungry did not just end between these two countries or within Europe, but became a world war. There were several causes that gave birth to this war, which has been termed the "Great War". This war could be avoided if negotiation was given a chance, but countries were so excited about war that peace was not given a chance. This war, just like any other war had adverse consequences that caused Owen and Sassoon to write about the horrors of war, especially on soldiers as seen in their poetry. As Jack Levy in "The First World War: Causes, Consequences, and Controversies" argues that the First World War was one of the most destructive wars in history and claimed more than ten million men and brought economic crisis, with starvation as one of its repercussions. Many soldiers were fatally wounded. The war also brought about political upheavals. It also led to the collapse of Britain as a world power and contributed to the Russian Revolution, the Second World War, and the Cold War that followed. The adverse repercussions of the Great War were political, economic and social. Though it recorded some positive benefits, the negative effects of the war outweighed the positive effects like the creation of the League of Nation, an international organisation that was created after the war to maintain world peace (1). It has been proven objectively that wars cause more harm than good, more pain than gain. War jeopardizes economic activities that affect the world at large.

War poetry gained its prominence in the early twentieth century with the outbreak of the First World War. However, in tracing war poetry, Jon Stallworthy in *The New Oxford Book War Poetry* traces war poetry from the biblical book of Exodus, to the early twenty-first century. This shows that war has always been a subject matter in literary works in general and poetry in particular. But the genre, “war poetry” came into existence in the twentieth century. Early war poetry was jingoistic in nature and supported war for heroism and honour. Even in the Bible, for God to show his greatness in some cases, He always made the Israelites to be victorious in war so that other tribes would see His might and glorify Him. Drawing inspiration from the Bible, poets like Homer, Chaucer and the Georgian poets wrote in support of war. When the Great War started, most poetry produced by poets like Robert Brooke, Jessie Pope and Julian Grenfell were jingoistic, while those who fought the war right to its climax like Edmund Blunden, Wilfred Owen, Robert Grave and Siegfried Sassoon became anti-war poets.

### **Research Problem**

This research observes that the home fronts have their own perceptions of war, which is not consonant with the realities at the war front. We also observe that the writings of Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon are ambivalent in nature because in their early writings, they were pro-war, but their experiences at the war front transformed them into anti-war poets. Fed up the blind support of war by the home fronts, Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon project the repercussions of war in their poetry and beyond, thereby taking an anti-war stance in condemning war. This is the reason for which their poetry paints the precarious situation of war. These authors, besides being poets, were soldier, so they experienced war and wrote to discourage war because their experiences showed that war is senseless and it brings more destruction than it benefits only few warmongers.

### **Research Questions**

The work attracts the following questions, which we shall attempt to answer.

How is the home Fronts’ fanciful perception of war different from the realities of war at the battlefield?

What are the repercussions of war on soldiers as painted in the poetry of Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon?

What prompted Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon to change from patriotic soldiers to anti-war poets?

## **Hypothesis**

This work is premised on the hypothesis that the poetry of Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon depicts that without experience, war is seen as patriotic and honourable, but such opinions in the soldiers are challenged with their experience in war. The home fronts' pro-war beliefs are antithetical to the sordid realities of war at the war front. The desire for war is always noble and heroic, but inevitably turns sour, even for the victor. Dialogue rather than the violence of war is the ultimate appropriate option to conflict resolution. They wrote about the horrors so that peaceful resolution should always be sought to solve conflict because war, even as a last resort still has enormous casualties.

## **Aim of the Study**

This research uses the war poetry of Owen and Sassoon to expose the inhumane and senselessness of war. It seeks to show that negotiation is the best strategy to use in solving conflicts. The work uses Psychoanalysis and New Historicism to analyse the traumatic realities of war. The work draws attention to excruciating repercussions of war and suggests that war is not a good method of conflict resolution. If we take into consideration the carnage of war, one will neither support war nor feel excited with it.

## **Significance of Study**

In relation to the war poetry of Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon, this work explains the seemingly contradictory attitudes to war, which abound in their poetry. The work establishes that the excitements of war, and the honour often attributed to enlisting for the war, are inevitably eroded by the realities of the war front. Though war is as old as the human race, it is still a topical issue today. There are many nations today that are involved in wars. World leaders know that war is not a better option as compared to negotiation, but some leaders still prefer to use war to settle conflict rather than using peaceful means. Therefore, this work seeks to expose the horrors of wars and invites leaders to always seek peaceful means to settle conflicts. The research is also important in that it shows that wars make soldiers to become inhumane. Moreover, the work is important to politicians and world leaders because it shows that war is destructive and as such, not a good medium for resolving conflicts.

## **Motivation**

The researcher's motivation is particularly intrigued by the fact that modern man is aware, from experience and history, that war is bad and destructive to human life and property. This knowledge, however, has not deterred individuals, tribes and nations from easily adopting it

as a ready answer to threatened interest. The researcher is also of the view that if world leaders become humbler and more pacific, most wars that cause human and material losses with disastrous environmental effects could be avoided. We chose the poets under study because their poetry does not just portray the sordid nature of the war and its repercussions, but also condemns it.

### **Scope of the Study**

This research focuses on analysing the war poems of Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon. Nevertheless, other literary texts and critical works deemed necessary will be consulted so as to buttress the arguments in the work.

### **Definition of Key Terms**

From the beginning till now, we have been using terms and expressions such as "war", "poetry" "war poetry" and "polemics of war", which we deem it is necessary we define them. *The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* defines war as "a situation in which two or more countries or groups of people fight against each other over a period of time." According to the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, "war is a state or period of fighting between countries or groups." From these definitions we see that war is not just a country or state issue but can also be fought among groups.

According to Carl Van Clausewitz in *On War*, war is "an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will" (13). Johan Van der Denne, in "On War: Concepts, Definition Research Data – A Literature Review and Biography", quotes the definition of war according to International Law, as involving only sovereign political entities, that is, states. This means that what is called war, Socio-politically, should only be considered when it takes place between independent states or countries. Alvin Johnson still quoted by Van der Denne, defines war as "armed conflict between population groups conceived as organic unites, such as races or tribes, states or lesser geographic unit, religious or political parties, economic classes." While Bertrand Russell defines it as "conflict between two groups, each of which attempts to kill and maim as many as possible of the other group in order to achieve some object which it desires." (Qtd, Van der Denne, 5).

A close look at the various definitions of war by different dictionaries and different war critics show that war deals with violence, which can either involve countries, states, races and/or tribes. Though some scholars say that the term "war" is only applied to states that are politically equal, others hold that war can still be between entities of various political

statuses. However, the different definitions have something in common in that they all define war as involving conflicts, violence or hostilities. We can say that war is an act of giving importance to the argument of force over the force of argument in which the contending forces or groups strive to violently force their will on their opponent

Chris Baldick in *The Oxford Concise Dictionary of Literary Terms* defines poetry as “language sung, chanted, spoken, or written according to some pattern of recurrence that emphasizes the relationships between words on the basis of sound as well as sense: this pattern is almost always a rhythm or metre, which may be supplemented by rhyme oral literature or both.” This definition delineates that poetry can be spoken or written and it appeals to the senses as it makes use of rhythm and rhyme. Thomas R. Arp and Greg Johnson in *Perrine’s Sound and Sense: An Introduction to Poetry* opine that poetry is “as universal as language and almost as ancient” (2). This means that poetry is as old as language and has been written and read by people of all walks of life.

War poetry refers to poetry that has war as its subject matter. That is, poems whose thematic concerns focus on war. This type of poetry is divided into; pro-war poetry, which celebrates soldiers because of honours they win in war and anti-war poetry, which condemns war due to the human and material losses incurred during war. War poetry gained recognition in the early twentieth century because of the First World War, a war that transformed many soldiers into poets. War poetry is written by both combatants and non-combatants. Andrew Motion in “There Is More to War Poetry than Mud, Wire and Slaughter” opines that war poetry is beyond the “description of mud, wire and slaughter on a horrific scale. It includes accusation that the top brass prolonged hostilities for no good reason and people at home supported the cause in ignorance. It involves fierce protest as well as intense sympathy. It issues a warning” (3). We can say that this is a comprehensive definition of war poetry because it covers all that war poems have as subject matter.

*The Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* defines polemics as “a speech or a piece of writing that argues very strongly for or against somebody or something.” *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines it as “an aggressive attack on or refutation of the opinions or principles of another.” These two definitions show that polemics exist because there is a premise that calls for argument and once there is argument, there is a controversy.

The polemics of war in the context of this study refers to the dissonance and or the controversies on war that exist in the poetry of Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon. We see such polemics in their attitudes towards war in which they argue strongly against. The controversy here is that these soldier-poets joined the British army out of their own volition at the beginning of the Great War, because they saw the necessity to fight in defence of their country. However, while in war, the realities of war quelled their exuberance. From their experiences of the sordid consequences of war, these poets became anti-war poets. The repercussions of war altered their perception of war. Furthermore, another polemic is seen as the home fronts support war because of the so-called honour and glory won in war or because of the desire to carry out revenge. Whatever, the reasons for which the home fronts support war, the happenings of the battlefield have challenged the beliefs held by these jingoistic home fronts. Hence, war which is thought brings dignity and veneration to the victorious country ends up showing how insensitive, barbaric and uncivilised humans have become due to wars. Examining these controversies or arguments will help us to analyse the poetry of these poets and also to comprehend the subject of war.

### **Brief Biographies of Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon**

The two authors we are studying here are Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon. These two great poets were also soldiers of the Great War. New Historicism holds writers' immediate society and their experiences influence what they write. Looking at this tenet of New Historicism, we have sought, therefore, to discuss the lives of Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon so that we can better understand from what angle they wrote. In this light, we shall start with the biography of Owen, then follow suit with that of Sassoon.

According to the website, Poetry Foundation, in "Wilfred Owen," Wilfred Edward Salter Owen was born on 18<sup>th</sup> March 1893 in Owestry on the Welsh border of Shropshire. Owen's father, Thomas Owen, was a seaman in India and his mother, Susan Shaw, had intellectual, musical and economic freedom but felt that marriage limited these dreams. Owen's family was not well-to-do especially as his father returned from India and worked at a railway, station holding a low-paid position.

According to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Owen was educated at the Birkenhead institute and was matriculated at the University of London. He did not obtain a university degree since he could not continue his studies because of poverty. Due to this lack of finances to continue his education, Owen moved to France in 1913. While in France, Owen taught English

Language in Bordeaux and there he began writing some of his poems that were never published. This shows that Owen had a passion for writing before being enlisted in the British army. If Owen had completed his university studies, maybe he would not have joined the army. We can then observe that poverty could be the possible reason for which Owen joined the army. Grace Wordsworth in “Wilfred Owen” notes that Owen was enlisted with the Artists’ Rifle in 1915 and was commissioned by the Manchester Regiment. Between January 1917 to April 1917, Owen suffered from shell-shock, what is known today as post-traumatic disorder. This is possibly what he expostulates in his poem “Mental Cases.” It was during Owen’s treatment in the hospital that he met with Siegfried Sassoon. This meeting actually changed Owen’s writing career as Sassoon introduced him to other great writers. At this point, Sassoon was already a poet with his first volume of poetry.

John Simkin in “Wilfred Owen”, Owen was killed by machine-gun fire while leading his men across the Sambre-Oise Canal on 4<sup>th</sup> November 1918. This happened just one week before and the Armistice was signed. Simkin also notes that only five of Owen’s poems were published when he was alive and after his death, his friend, Sassoon, arranged and published Owen’s poems in 1920. The English society lost a great poet often considered as one of the greatest British war poets. Owen’s death was a great loss as Jon Stallworthy has posited:

Dying at twenty-five, he came to represent a generation of innocent young men sacrificed – as it seemed to a generation in unprecedented rebellion against its fathers – by guilty old men: generals, politicians, and war profiteers. Owen has now taken his place in literary history as perhaps the first, certainly the quintessential, war poet. (Qtd, John Simkin)

Jon Stallworthy’s opinion above culled from Simkin, shows that war is an avenue where young soldiers like Owen are sacrificed. He also notes that Owen’s generation is a generation that has rebelled against their fathers as never witnessed before. Fathers here mean politicians and military generals and other warmongers who benefit from war to the detriment of young men’s lives. It is important to say that this generation did not rebel to fight in defence of their country; they rather rebelled by writing against war. These war-poets were, therefore, against war because of its devastating effects. However, it is as a result of what Owen went through in the front that made him to write war poems that can be considered unprecedented. This is why Stallworthy asserts that Owen is the greatest or the ultimate war poet in the history of literature. This means that it is thanks to experience at the front that he made a name in literary history as an outstanding war poet. It will also be logical to affirm that war made Owen a great war-poet who was against war.

Just like Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon was a British war poet who fought with the British forces during World War One between 1914 and 1918. A patriotic and a brave soldier who became an anti-war poet based on his experiences on the war front. His war poems portray his discontentment about war and warmongers who encouraged wars that they did not fight, but sacrificed young men in it. His poetry paints the horrors of war in general and trench war in particular.

According to Jean Moorcraft Wilson who has written extensively on Sassoon in his book entitled *Siegfried Sassoon: Soldier, Poet, Lover, Friend*. Siegfried Sassoon was born in a Jewish family and was the second of three sons of Alfred Ezra Sassoon and Theresa. Sassoon was born on the 8<sup>th</sup> September 1886 in Weirleigh, England, in the county of Kent. He was christened at St Stephen High Anglican Church in Tunbridge Wells. Sassoon lived an early life in harmony with his siblings Michael and Hamo. His mother did not like conventional education for them at an early age because she considered them too delicate for formal education. For this reason, Sassoon was tutored at home by his caretaker, Mrs. Mitchell, until he was eight and a half years old. (Wilson, 32)

Rosemary Canfield Reisman, in *War Poets* posits that Sassoon did not have a formal education as a child until 1902 when he attended Marlborough and in 1905, he went to Clare College, Cambridge, where he studied law and later on switched to history, but he did not succeed in obtaining a degree. He returned to Kent where he had inherited an annual income of five hundred pounds. Since he was wealthy, he did not care to work. He devoted his energies to foxhunting, racing and writing poetry. (Reisman, 185)

According to Tina Gianoulis in “Sassoon Siegfried”, Sassoon began writing while he was still a student at Cambridge. Between 1906 and 1912; that is, six years, Sassoon privately published nine volumes of poems. (1) Jean Moorcraft Wilson holds that when Sassoon started writing poetry, it was initially for his mother because he sympathized with his mother after his father abandoned her in 1891 and died 1895. His early poetry was not successful until 1913 that marked the publication of *The Daffodil Murderer in Mercy*. However, Sassoon’s reputation as a poet is mainly for his war poems or his poems written during the First World War. John Stuart Roberts in *Siegfried Sassoon*, opines that Sassoon is not so great a war poet, but he is significant because he influenced other great war-poets. He also notes that Sassoon’s six volumes of his autobiographical prose are far more successful than his poetry.



Rosemary Canfield Reisman in *War Poets* says that Sassoon was enlisted in the army on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of August 1914 while England entered the war on the 4<sup>th</sup> of that same month. He joined the army at the age of twenty-eight, but it seems that he was unprepared about the plight on the front. He was sent to France in 1915 where he was a transport officer for the First Battalion of the Royal Welch Fusiliers. Though he became a pacifist and took an anti-war stance, he distinguished himself as a brave soldier and was awarded the military Cross for his bravery. This shows that Sassoon's contempt for war was not an act of cowardice, but because of the horrors of war.

Sassoon was ill of gastric fever and was sent to England, he returned to France in February 1917. In April 1917, he was wounded in the Battle of Arras and was sent home again. That same year, he became very angry with the British politicians and wrote a protest against war. His colleague and friend, Robert Graves, saw the danger that protest represented so he protected Sassoon by reporting that Sassoon was suffering from mental illness. The case was closed and Sassoon was sent to Craiglockhart hospital in Edinburgh where he met Wilfred Owen and influenced him on his views about war.

After the war, Sassoon lived a normal life. He joined the Labour Party and became editor of the literary pages of the *Daily Herald* (Reinsman, 187). Sassoon remained unmarried until he was in his late forties when he got married to Hester Gatty in 1933. They had a son, George. Sassoon treated Hester as poorly as he was treated by his male lovers. They divorced in 1947. Sassoon kept his personal relationship private. However, Roberts says that Sassoon had a number of homosexual relationship affairs. (Roberts, 10)

According to Tina Gianouli, Sassoon died on 1<sup>st</sup> September 1967 at Heytesbury House in Wiltshire, England. He was converted to Catholicism. This is why he was buried at St. Andrew's Church in Mells, Somerset, England (Gianouli, 3). As earlier stated, Sassoon is not only known for his poetry. He is more popular for his prose than his poetry. This war-poet became a veteran-novelist who wrote widely read autobiographies and memoirs. He was a diarist and his diaries are kept at the Cambridge University. Though his works did not earn him any prize or award, he was awarded the Military Cross for his bravery during the war.

### **Structure of Work**

This dissertation is made up of an Introduction, four chapters and a Conclusion. The Introduction gives a brief overview of war in general and the First World War in particular. In addition, it presents a research problem and questions, a hypothesis, research objective and

the significance of study, followed by a note of motivation, and the scope of the study. Furthermore, it handles the definition of key terms and provides brief biographies of the two authors under study and the structure of work.

Chapter One is titled, "Theoretical Framework and Review of Literature." This work makes use of Psychoanalysis and New Historicism. Psychoanalysis is used in the study to examine the traumatic experiences soldiers confront in war and their anger towards war. New Historicism is used to discuss how the realities of the Great War are presented in the poetry of Owen and Sassoon especially as these soldier-poets wrote about their experiences in war. The chapter examines academic or scholarly works from different scholars to show the point of convergence and divergence in relations to this work.

Chapter Two is entitled, "War: Fantasy Versus Reality" This chapter shows how the home fronts' perception of war is opposed to the realities on the battlefield. They believe that war brings honour and glory to the country and heroism to soldiers. However, the presentation of the horrors of the war front has put these values to questions.

Chapter Three, captioned; "The Repercussions of War" examines the consequences of war especially on the soldiers. The chapter will establish that there are physical consequences as well as the psychological consequences of war.

Chapter Four is labelled, "From Patriotism and Honour to Realisation and Diplomacy." It demonstrates that Owen and Sassoon did not denounce war at the beginning and condemned it only after their experience in it. They wrote against war as a warning to their contemporary politicians and those who will come after them.

# CHAPTER ONE

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The basis of this chapter is to lay down theoretical parameters for the interpretation of Wilfred Owen's and Siegfried Sassoon's war poetry and to review related literature. The chapter is divided into two sections; theoretical framework and the review of literature. The first section handles theoretical frames and the review of literature is examined in the second section. This work makes use of two theories; Psychoanalysis and New Historicism. The theoretical frame section helps to define and discuss approaches that will fascinate the interpretation of Owen's and Sassoon's poetry, meanwhile the literature review section will show the relationship that exists between what has already been examined as far as Owen's and Sassoon's poetry is concerned, and what will be done in this study.

### **Theoretical Framework**

A theory guides the researcher to analyse and interpret a text. Theories explain how meaning is made and what they produce. Mary Klages in *Literary Theory: A Guide for the Perplexed*, notes that theories are very important because they help to explain how everyday world works. This makes her to opine that the name literary theory can best be termed "world theory" because they explain the happening of the world. Mary Klages says:

These are the kinds of questions that 'Literary Theory' helps us answer. We will still – probably always – be concerned with close reading and asking of a text 'What does this mean?' but we will also be concerned with 'How does it mean, what does it produce, and what effect does that have on us and on our world?' That's what 'Literary Theory' ultimately is about. (8)

Klages in the above quote opines that theories perform the following functions. Firstly, it helps to offer a closing reading of a text. The "text" she refers to falls under any genre of literature. Also, theories help critics to ask pertinent questions while they carry analysis and interpretation of a text by asking questions as to what the meaning of the text is, and the effects the meaning has to the world at large. This explains why Klages posits that theories should be termed "world theory" because they convey universal meaning of literary texts.

There are many theories used in analysing literature. In this research, we are going to make use of two theories; Psychoanalysis and New Historicism. Both theories are relevant to this study because war poetry is about soldiers who are psychologically disturbed and both our authors besides being poets were soldiers so their experiences are portrayed in their works. This supports the New Historicist posture that an author's life and experiences influence their writing. We are going to start with Psychoanalysis and follow suit with New Historicism

Psychoanalysis emerged in 1899 with the publication of *The Dream Interpretation*. As a literary theory, psychoanalysis came to the limelight in the twentieth century as literary critics used this theory especially after the two World Wars to analyse war trauma. According to *APA Dictionary of Psychology*, Psychoanalysis is "an approach to the mind, personality, psychological disorders, and psychological treatment originally developed by Sigmund Freud at the beginning of the twentieth century. According to the *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, psychoanalysis is "The theory of the human personality, which attempts to examine a person's unconscious mind to discover the hidden causes of their mental problems." The ideas raised in both definitions are firstly, that psychoanalysis is a theory; which is an idea or set of ideas that is intended to explain facts or events. Psychoanalysis is aimed at examining the psyche and mental problems that occur as a result of repressed desires. This theory was first propounded by the Austrian doctor and philosopher Sigmund Freud. This explains why the theory is also known as the Freudian Approach or Freudianism. This theory was delivered in the form of lecture. Freud showed that the mental behaviours of humans functions vis-à-vis their realities. As a medical doctor in the field of psychology, he studied humans' psyche on their social realities. In 1899 when *The Interpretation of Dreams* was published, psychoanalysis gained grounds.

In *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*, Sigmund Freud says that "Psychoanalysis is a method of treating patients medically" (7). Freud asserts that his method is a treatment for mental patients. This means that Psychotherapy is needed to treat patient with mental disorder also known as neurosis. This method does not only need medical expertise as anybody can cure a neurotic patient as well. This is why Freud says "Words are originally magic, and the word retains much of its old magical power even today. With words one man can make another blessed or drive him to despair" (8). Since the method used in psychoanalysis is a conversation between the psychotherapist and patient, it shows that even those who are not psychoanalyst can treat a neurotic patient by engaging into therapeutic conversations with the neurotic patients.

The human psyche is divided into two; the conscious and the unconscious. Freud says in his book entitled *The Ego and the Id*; "The division of the psychical into what is conscious and what is unconscious is the fundamental premise of psychoanalysis..." (3). It means that the basis of psychoanalysis is to discuss what is conscious and what is unconscious and how they function. Freud says that the unconscious is dominated by desires and he calls this unconscious the id. What is unconscious cannot become conscious. The unconscious exist in two kinds; "the one which is latent, but capable of becoming conscious, and the one which is repressed and which is not, in itself and without more ado, capable of becoming conscious" (5). The unconscious which is real or latent as Freud called it is capable of becoming conscious and Freud calls this "Preconscious". So, what is unconscious is strictly referring to the repressive desires which cannot become conscious.

While the unconscious is the id, the conscious is the ego and Freud defines the ego as "coherent organization of mental processes." By organization, Freud means that the ego regulates or controls the excessive desires of the id such as sexual urge, anger, fear and a host of others. It is the ego that represses and checks the excesses of the unconscious. The ego represents what maybe called reason and common sense, in contrast to the id which contains the passions. When these desires cannot manifest themselves in the conscious, they are expressed through dreams (8). The speakers in Owen's and Sassoon's poems for example, express anger among other desires. The anger Owen and Sassoon portray in their works, are repressed emotions that they would wish to pour them on the authorities like politicians and their commanders, but the law prohibit them. According to Freud's psychoanalysis, the human mind has tripartite function and it is divided into the id, the ego and the super ego. According to David Statt in *The Concise Dictionary of Psychology*, the id is:

From the Latin word for 'it'; according to Freud the id houses the deepest unconscious drives which are most in touch with the biological nature of the body and is one of the three main aspects of the personality. The id is dominated by the Pleasure Principle and causes problems for the ego when its drives are blocked. (68)

From the above quotation, the id is harboured in the unconscious section of the human psyche and the id is dominated by instinctual drives such as fear, anger, and other desires. The id is guided by the Pleasure Principal and comes into conflict with the ego, when it tries to regulate the instinctual drives. When the id has control over human psyche, human desires become uncontrollable and therefore, the human being develops animalistic instinct. The id is the only part of the human psyche that is present from infancy. The child has instinct at birth

such as hunger and thirst. These pleasures continue to adult stage where the ego comes with some realities which the id can no longer attend. These desires that are unsatisfied are repressed in the unconscious mind. Daniel K. Lapsley and Paul C. Stey in "Id, Ego and Superego" support the notion of the id as being a major concept that best defines the notion of unconsciousness. They also say the id is the portion of the mind that houses instinctual drives. The id functions unconsciously and is dominated by instincts (5). All that the id wants is pleasurable whether good or bad and whether it is attainable or not. This explains while untamed human instincts will come into conflict with the ego if the id cannot achieved what it desires and these unattained desires are repressed and stored in the unconscious mind.

In view of psychoanalysis, therefore, any instinctive drive is a characteristic of the id. These instincts such as fear, anger and sadness are very present in the war poems of Owen and Sassoon whose speakers express anger and fear because of the horrors of war. For instance, the poem "Arms and the Boy" by Owen portrays a speaker who is hungry (not for food), but for spilling blood as he is "famishing for flesh". Here, since there is apparently no food on the front, the speaker diverts his hunger for food towards the blood and flesh of his "enemies". The use of alliteration in the last line of stanza one shows the constancy of hunger urge of soldiers at the front. This speaker is not only hungry, but also sad for the death of his comrades. This sadness is what Freud calls melancholia; that is, sadness and severe depression as defined by Statt (84). Lapsley and Stey say that the ego controls the id but does not have much control over the id like the superego. This means that ego cannot completely control the desires of the id. They say:

The ego takes on a a number functions. It commands voluntary movement. It has the task of self-preservation, and must therefore master both internal (id) and external stimuli. The ego masters external stimuli by becoming "aware," by storing up memories, by avoidance through flight, and by active adaptation. Regarding internal drive stimuli, it attempts to control the demands of the instincts by judiciously deciding the mode of satisfaction, or if satisfaction is to be had at all. Indeed, the ego attempts to harness instinctual libidinal drives so that they submit to the reality principle. If the id is a cauldron of passions, the ego is the agent of reason, commonsense, and defense. Yet the ego is never sharply differentiated from the id. Freud argues that the "lower portion" of the ego extends throughout the id, and it is by means of the id that repressed material communicates with (presses "up" against the resistances of) the ego. (7)

The above quote culled from Lapsley and Stey posits that the ego performs multiple functions. It has as function to preserve itself and controls the id since it masters the id. The

ego is conscious of the influence of psychological activities. It controls the instinctual desires and decides whether the id should have satisfaction of them or not. The ego does not completely regulate the id, it only attempts at harnessing the libidinal drives by bringing the id to the reality of things. This means the ego is governed by reasoning and common sense. However, the ego is closely related with the id, the more reason the repressed emotions come into contact with the ego.

The ego interplays between the id and the superego. The ego does not want to have problem with neither the instinctual id nor the rigorous superego. This is because as we have said, the id is guided by the Pleasure principle while the superego is ruled by the Ideal Principle, but the ego wants to remain realistic; that is, it does not harbour the excesses of the id or the strictness of the superego. The ego is guided by the Reality Principle. The soldiers and the speakers in Owen and Sassoon poems face the realities of war as being sordid and this threatened the excitement they had in joining the war. These authors paint the reality of trench warfare, they talk about death, sleepwalk, horrors and pity of war, which are their realities or the experiences at the front. Sassoon portrays this reality in the first stanza of the poem, "Counter-attack", as seen below:

We'd gained our first objective hours before  
 While dawn broke like a face with blinking eyes,  
 Pallid, unshaved and thirsty, blind with smoke.  
 Things seemed all right at first. We held their line,  
 With bombers posted, Lewis guns well placed,  
 And clink of shovels deepening the shallow trench.  
 The place was rotten with dead; green clumsy legs  
 High-booted, sprawled and grovelled along the saps;  
 And trunks, face downward, in the sucking mud,  
 Wallowed like trodden sand-bags loosely filled;  
 And naked sodden buttocks, mats of hair,  
 Bulged, clotted heads slept in the plastering slime.  
 And then the rain began,—the jolly old rain! (61)

The above poem from collection of *Counter-attack*, Sassoon writes in the first-person point of view to paint the reality of war. The speaker tells us they are given instructions before sunrise. They are weak, and in dire need of water and that smoke from explosion almost blinds them. At the beginning they are comfortable as everything goes on normally. Lewis, his comrade, is ready and they move in the trenches where there are rotten and scattered dead bodies. They walk in mud and some are even naked and they also fight in the rain. This vivid description and imagery evoke in the first stanza of this poem paints the reality of trench

warfare and the plight of soldiers at the front. Here, Soldiers don't complain because they know this is their profession so they have to face the reality.

Owen gives the same picture in "Dulce Et Decorum Est" in which he describes soldiers as "beggars", "knock-kneed", "coughing like hags", and "men marched asleep". These visual images show how soldiers are left at the mercy of the horrors of war. They face the reality of warfare not the deception they received that it is an honourable thing for one to die for their fatherland. In this poem, the speaker comes into contact with reality as he now knows that the old adage is a lie. This shows that the ego is very much present in the war poem of Owen and Sassoon.

The third part of the human mind according to Freud is the superego. According to *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, the superego is "the part of the mind that makes you aware of right and wrong and makes you feel guilty if you do wrong." This means that the superego is the judgmental part of the mind that creates awareness of what is wrong and what is right. The superego is the law guarantor; that is, the superego ensures that the norms of the society, be it cultural, religious or political should be respected. The superego dispels the drives of the id. William Siegfried in "The Formation and Structure of the human Psyche: Id, Ego and Super-ego – The Dynamic (Libidinal) and Static Unconsciousness, Sublimation, and the Social Dimension of Identity Formation", opines that:

The Super-ego reflects the internalization of the cultural rules, mainly taught by parents applying their guidance and influence. For Freud the Super-ego can be described as a successful instance of identification with the parental agency. The Super-ego aims for perfection. It is made up of the organized part of the personality structure, which includes the individual's Ego ideals, spiritual goals, and one's conscience. It is a psyche agency that criticizes and prohibits one's drives, fantasies, feelings, and action. The Super-ego works in contradiction to the Id because it strives to act in a manner that is socially appropriate. As a consequence of the Super-ego conflicting with the demands of the Id, the Ego often has to mediate between the two. (2)

From the quotation above, the superego ensures that humans should have a morally acceptable behaviour that is inculcated in humans from childhood by parental and societal norms, which prescribe certain rules and standards by which humans should respect and comply with. These laws are put in place by parents, legislators, religious and traditional authorities. The superego rebukes the ego when it adheres to the instinctive drives of the id. Due to the strictness of the superego, the ego tries to limit the rules of the superego.



We see the manifestation of the superego in the war poems of Owen and Sassoon. Though their speakers are terrified and annoyed about the horrors of war, the superego compels them to ensure that they respect their commanders and their profession as soldiers to defend their fatherland. From Owen's biography, we learn that when he suffered from post-traumatic disorder, Sassoon had encouraged him not to go back to the front, but he honoured his commander and went back to the front where he was killed. It is the superego that reminded Owen of the military oath he took to defend his fatherland. In Sassoon's poem entitled "A Letter Home" dedicated to his friend and colleague, Robert Graves the first stanza goes thus:

Here I'm sitting in the gloom  
Of my quiet attic room.  
France goes rolling all around,  
Fledged with forest May has crowned.  
And I puff my pipe, calm-hearted,  
Thinking how the fighting started,  
Wondering when we'll ever end it,  
Back to Hell with Kaiser send it,  
Gag the noise, pack up and go,  
Clockwork soldiers in a row.  
I've got better things to do  
Than to waste my time on you.

In the above poem, the persona, who is Sassoon, by the use of the first person point of view, informs his friend that he sits in a dark dilapidated room while the war continues in France where he is. The speaker ponders when the war they are currently fighting will cease. He describes the battlefield as "Hell", but because of the soldiery vows he has sworn, he has to "pack up and go" back to the front possibly because the superego will rebuke him if he does not return to the front, through metaphor he makes us to understand that the soldiers do not have a resting moment since they work like clocks. His conscience which harbours the Ideal Principal reminds him that he does not need to waste time writing to his friend because his duty awaits him at the front. This shows that the superego rebukes whenever the human mind because instinctual.

Psychoanalysis is also concern with the interpretation of dreams. According to David Statt in *The Concise Dictionary of Psychology*, dream is an imagery that occurs during sleep, usually with certain coherence, but sometimes with bizarre, usually confusing aspects as well. (42) Freud regards dreams as "royal road to the unconscious". This means that dreams take place in the unconscious part of the psyche and exist in two forms; firstly, the "latent content," which is the repressed meaning of dreams (Statt, 79). The other form is the

"manifest content", which is the conscious expression of the Latent Content. The latent content of dreams is repressed and its meaning is not deciphered while the manifest content can be easily remembered and most often manifest reality.

There are different sources for dreams. According to Freud, sources of dreams include stimuli from the external world, subjective experience, organic stimuli within the body and mental activities during sleep. (Qtd in Zhang and Guo, 1) The Freudian view shows that external occurrences both physiological and psychological cause dreams to occur. There are also personal experiences that bring forth dreams and lastly, dreams are not just somatic as early researched proved, but also psychical. This means that both bodily and mental stimuli cause dreams. Sigmund Freud demonstrates that dreams are wish fulfilment. This demonstration is portrayed in *The Interpretation of Dreams*. To Freud, dreams helps to fulfil wishes that are not attain in reality. This means that when someone wishes to have or achieve something and does not achieve it, the achievement is attained in a dream. In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud says:

It is easy to prove that dreams often reveal themselves without any disguise as fulfillments of wishes; so that it may seem surprising that the language of dreams was not understood long ago. For instance, there is a dream that I can produce in myself as often as I like—experimentally, as it were. If I eat anchovies or olives or any other highly salted food in the evening, I develop thirst during the night which wakes me up. But my waking is preceded by a dream; and this always has the same content, namely, that I am drinking. I dream I am swallowing down water in great gulps, and it has the delicious taste that nothing can equal but a cool drink when one is parched with thirst. Then I wake up and have to have a real drink. This simple dream is occasioned by the thirst which I become aware of when I wake. The thirst gives rise to a wish to drink, and the dream shows me that wish fulfilled. (148)

The quotation above culled from Freud, shows that Freud feels thirsty when he is about to sleep, but he does not satisfy this thirst before going to bed. When he finally sleeps, he dreams that he is thirsty. He gets up and drinks water. It happens that this dream comes occasionally and he finally finds himself "swallowing down water." The water he drinks in the dream is the fulfilment of his wish to drink water in real life. This means that dreams fulfil what he failed to fulfil in a real life situation. This, therefore, shows that dreams are the manifestation of unfulfilled wishes. From this psychoanalytic theory of dream interpretation, it can be used to analyse war poems of Owen and Sassoon. The speakers in the poems of

these authors attain some of their wishes in dreams; that is, wishes that are not fulfilled in real life. In the poem "Soldier's Dream" Owen writes:

I dreamed kind Jesus fouled the big-gun gears;  
 And caused a permanent stoppage in all bolts;  
 And buckled with a smile Mausers and Colts;  
 And rusted every bayonet with His tears.

And there were no more bombs, of ours or Theirs,  
 Not even an old flint-lock, nor even a pikel.  
 But God was vexed, and gave all power to Michael;  
 And when I woke he'd seen to our repairs.

From the poem, the speaker who is a soldier enduring the horrors of war dreams that Jesus, the greatest Prophet and Messiah in Christianity believed to be the son of God, comes to rescue them. Jesus is seen as the saviour in this poem. The speaker dreams that "He" comes and stops the war between the "Mauser" and "Colts", which literary represents the Central and Allied Powers of the First World War. The speaker says Jesus uses his tears to destroy war weapons. The second stanza confirms that the weapons have been destroyed because there are no bombs on either camp fighting the war. The poem ends that God becomes wrathful and sends "His" archangel, Michael to come and repair the damage caused by the war. Following the Freudian dream interpretation, the persona of this poem fulfils his wish in the dream that the war should come to end. This happens so because the wish to end the war in reality has failed to come early enough. Hence, since the wish is not fulfilled in reality, it is attained in a dream.

Psychoanalysis also takes time to discuss the origin of war neuroses. According to *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, neurosis is "a mental and emotional disorder that affects only part of the personality, it is accompanied by a less distorted psychosis, does not result in disturbance of the use of language, and is accompanied by various physical, psychological and mental disturbances such as visceral symptoms, anxieties or phobias." From this definition, it shows that neurosis is a psychological disturbance that is caused by both mental and sensual experiences. A person suffering from neurosis does not have difficulty using language fluently. Neurosis is caused by instincts such as fear and anxiety and is less severe compared to psychosis, which is a psychological disorder that is very serious and can disrupt a person's life. It has organic causes like brain damage, but it can also result from severe neurosis (Statt, 110). In *Psychoanalysis and the War Neuroses*, Freud remarks that war neuroses are different from

neuroses of peace time that become severe during war. He also says that war neuroses are to look upon as traumatic neuroses, which is caused by an ego-conflict. Freud says the ego-conflict is:

The war neuroses, in so far as they differ from the ordinary neuroses of peace time through particular peculiarities, are to be regarded as traumatic neuroses, whose existence has been rendered possible or promoted through an egoconflict. In Abraham's contribution there are plain indications of this egoconflict; the English and American authors whom Jones quotes have also recognised it. The conflict takes place between the old ego of peace time and the new war-ego of the soldier, and it becomes acute as soon as the peace-ego is faced with the danger of being killed through the risky undertakings of his newly formed parasitical double. Or one might put it, the old ego protects itself from the danger to life by flight into the traumatic neurosis in defending itself against the new ego which it recognises as threatening its life. (7)

From the quotation above, ego-conflict is seen as a conflict that occurs between two things. Soldiers face ego-conflict because they face the ego of peace time and war time ego. The realities of these two different times and conflicts influence soldiers differently. When a soldier is faced with the danger of being killed; he or she develops a new defensive mechanism by seeking refuge into traumatic neurosis as a means to escape the new threat to life. By this analysis, Freud could simply imply that many soldiers suffered from neurosis as a pretext of having to go to the front. After all, fear is one factor that causes neurosis. From fear of pain, injury and death, most soldiers suffer from neurosis. This claim is supported by Morchen Bonhoeffer who says prisoners of war do not suffer from traumatic neuroses because they feel secure being free from the danger at war front. This justifies the claims that fear of danger of war cause traumatic neuroses. (Qtd in Ferenczi et al.)

To Ferenczi, traumatic neurosis is dominated by symptoms of psychological trauma such as depression, terror and anxiety, which most often give rise to anger. Doctor Karl Abraham supports Ferenczi's claims that terror and anxiety cause war neurosis, but also add that insufficient pension can cause neurosis. (Ferenczi et al.) It is important to note that soldiers like Owen joined the war because of their poor background. So, they did not fight the war solely for the love for fatherland, but it was a means to secure livelihood. This means that if their wage (pension) was insufficient, it would be normal for them to feel nervous and indignant, which resulted to neurosis.

Instinctual drives like sex also bring neurosis. Soldiers with high sexual drives have the tendency to become irritable when the urge comes but cannot be satisfied. Some soldiers

while at front have the fear that their wives are cheating on them. This view is supported by Karl Abraham in *Psycho-Analysis and the War Neuroses* when he says:

For instance, I observed a man who on return from furlough at home had a convulsive attack and was brought into the hospital showing signs of anxiety and depression. The man had always been noted for his effeminate disposition, and in his married life was weakly potent and always inclined to jealousy. When he was home on leave he failed absolutely in the attempt to have sexual relations with his wife. His fears that his wife would be unfaithful to him reached a crisis, and soon after his departure from home he had his convulsive attack. (29)

Abraham quoted above shows a soldier who is given a furlough (military leave) because of agitation. This soldier suffers from depression and anxiety. He is said to have feminine behaviour in their marriage since he is weak sexually. He has fears that his wife is cheating on him and because of this, he feels unable to have sex with his wife probably because he feels his wife will see him as weak. Immediately as he leaves home, he suffers another agitation. Abraham remarks that men like this soldier end up embracing homosexuality to satisfy their libido. This justifies why the rate of homosexuality increase during and after First World War.

Furthermore, when soldiers feel they are powerless before their opponents, they may suffer from traumatic neurosis. Constant thought of death brings trauma. (Ferenczi et al.15). War Neuroses as presented by psychoanalyst have a connection with neuroses of peace time. This means the desires that cause traumatic neuroses such as traumatic hysteria, hypochondria, paranoia and phobia do not begin at the war fronts, but are rather characteristic feature of soldiers who had them even in peace time. These desires only get aggravated during the war when they are faced with them. It is said that Oedipus Complex is seen among soldiers and their superior; that is, soldiers see their superior to have dominance over them just as their fathers dominated them back at home. This means that the aggressive attitudes these soldiers had towards their father as being their rivals over their mother are transferred to the military commanders who have the same domineering attitudes over these soldiers' father.

The literary theory, New Historicism is intrinsically connected to history. There is no historicism, therefore, without history. According to the *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, history is defined as "the study of or record of past events of a particular period, country or subject." This means that history holds an important position in life, which is why it is studied. According to *New World Encyclopaedia*, historicism can be defined as "a position that holds that all knowledge and cognition are historically conditioned. This means

that acquiring knowledge and understanding, both through reasoning and experience are tied to history. Put it differently, history shapes the way human reason and feel. According to *Collins English Dictionary*, historicism is defined as "the doctrine that each period of history has its own beliefs and values inapplicable to any other, so that nothing can be understood independently of its historic context." This implies that there are values and beliefs that can only be understood within a given geographical space, a political context, or a given era. This implies that subjects of a particular period cannot be interpreted in another period because of differences in historical contexts as these features are seen in music, painting and literature.

Historicism is a literary movement, which holds that literary texts should be analysed and interpreted within the context of a given space and time. Paul Hamilton in *Historicism* says that historicism takes its rise from convergence of literary interpretation and historical explanation demanded by particular modes of expression of different nations at different times. (37) This illustrates that geography and history, which are particularised, help in interpreting literary works. The socio-economic and political occurrences of a given space and time give rise to the literary works produced in such a situation. The past, therefore, becomes intrinsically linked to human existence and helps in interpreting literary texts. Historicism is, therefore, needed to interpret the past so as to ameliorate the present, to copy the good examples and correct the failures of the past.

Historicism is divided into two; Old Historicism and New Historicism. The fundamental thing that distinguishes Old Historicism from New Historicism is that while the former focuses on the author alone to interpret a literary text, the latter looks at the societal influences on an author. The shortcoming of Old Historicism is that it limits analysis and interpretation around an individual; that is, the author, while New Historicism goes beyond the author.

New Historicism gained prominence in the 1980s. The term New Historicism was coined by the American literary theorist, Stephen Greenblatt, with the publication of *Renaissance Self-Fashion*. (Parvini, 238). New Historicists emphasised that history and geography hold vital places in the interpretation of literature. Neema Parvini in "New Historicism and Cultural Materialism" notes that:

At its core, new historicism insists—contra formalism—that literature must be understood in its historical context. This is because it views literary texts as cultural products that are rooted in their time and place, not works of individual genius that transcend them. New historicist essays are thus often notable for

making seemingly unlikely linkages between various different cultural products and literary texts. (239)

Parvini quoted above notes that new historicism is a theory that works contrary to formalism, which is a literary theory that emphasises that literary work is self-sufficient for interpretation; this means that neither the author nor history should be used in analysing a literary work. He stressed that literature cannot be study and understood without taking into consideration history. To him, literature is the product of history and geography. This denotes that setting (time and place) is very essential in interpreting literary works.

David G. Myers in *The New Historicism in Literary Studies* opines that there are four presumptions that make up new historicism. The first is that "literature is historical", that is, a literary text has intricate connection with the past. The second presumption is that literature should be assimilated and interpreted within the context of a particular history. Also, a literary work is a social construct. This means that a literary text is a product of the social happenings within the context under which the work is written. Lastly, critics should interpret literature based on social formation and ideology of the time it was written (Myers, 29). There are critics who argue against new historicism on the grounds that it gives more importance to history than literary work. This claim is supported by Peter Barry when he purports that:

A simple definition of the new historicism is that it is a method based on the paralld reading of literary and non-literary texts, usually of the same historical period. That is to say, new historicism refuses (at least ostensibly) to 'privilege' the literary text: instead of a literary 'foreground' and historical 'background' it envisages and practises a mode of study in which literary and non-literary are given equal weight and constantly inform or interrogate each other (Qtd in Leke, 32)

According to Barry, it is not possible that literary texts be given more importance than non-literary texts. To him, both literary and non-literary texts of the same epoch are essential in interpreting and questioning what goes on in the society. This means that both literary and non-literary text occupy the same position in understanding the happening of a particular era. New historicism also purports that cultural and societal happenings necessitate the creation of literature. This means that interpreting a literary work will need to take into consideration the culture of the society under which the work is written. This claim is supported by Evrim Dogan in "New Historicism and Renaissance Culture" where he says that:

Literature, for new historicism, is a social and cultural creation constructed by more than one consciousness, and it cannot be diminished to a product of a single mind. Therefore, the best way of analysis is achieved through the lens of the culture that produced it. Literature is a specific vision of history and not a distinct category of human activity. Man himself is a social construct; there is no such thing as a universal human nature that surpasses history: history is a series of "ruptures" between ages and man. As a consequence, the critic is trapped in his own historicity. No one can rise above their own cultural formations, their own ideological upbringing in order to understand the past in its own terms. Therefore, it is impossible for a modern reader to appreciate a literary work as its contemporaries experienced it. As a result, the best approach to literary criticism is to try to reconstruct the "ideology" of its culture by taking the text as its basis and by exploring diverse areas of cultural factor. (81)

Mogan quoted above notes that literature is the creation of social and cultural constructs. He also says that literary works should not be limited to the author, form and structure only. He argues that because man is a social construct, so is literature and that there is nothing like universal literary work because history and culture, which necessitate the creation of literary texts, are not universal. Literary texts should therefore, be analysed within history and culture and not out of them. However, he notes that history is not superior to literature; rather, they have dialectical relationship as "the literary text is interpreted as product and producer" (82). This means that literature is a product of history and at the same time literature produces or rewrites history. New historicism is a theory that cuts across different field such as sociology, anthropology, history, politics and economics. This claim is supported by Veesar H. Aram in "New Historicism" as she posits that New Historicism:

...Has given scholars new opportunity to cross the boundaries of history, anthropology, arts, politics, literature and economics. It has struck down the doctrine of non-interference that forbade humanists to intrude on questions of politics, power, indeed on all matters that deeply affect people's practical lives – matters best left, prevailing wisdom went to experts who could be trusted to preserve order and stability on our global and intellectual domain. (Qtd in Leke, 33)

New historicists are also concerned about the realities of the time the literary work is produced. This is so because any work that is produce at any given era must incorporate the realities of the time and space. This idea is purported by Stephen Greenblatt and Catherine Gallagher in *Practicing New Historicism* as they intimate that:



We wanted to cover in our literary criticism a confident conviction of reality, without giving up the power of literature to sidestep or evade the quotidian and without giving up a minimally sophisticated understanding that any text depends upon the absence of the bodies and voices that it represents. We wanted the touch of the real in the way that in an earlier period people wanted the touch of the transcendental. (31)

Greenblatt and Gallagher quoted above show that there is no literature without taking into consideration the real. New historicism is concerned about the real in fiction (literature and history). This means that literature reflects the era during which it is produced. The socio-historical happening therefore, gives birth to literature. Culture is an important part of human existence because it is the way of life of a people. Literary works cannot, therefore, be separated from reality and culture. This view is supported by an interview granted John Nkengasong to Asong Guillian Leke on 5th August, 2015, when Nkengasong says:

What would any writer stand for if he/she does not write in culture, about culture and/or for culture? What would any literature become if it is not an evocation of the cultural spirit of the time and place? I am a Nweh man and my critic should understand that the writer has a sense of origin of time and place. Culture is the product of our own existence, the way humanity fashions out life to suit its predilection. Thus, a work of literature should recreate such experiences if it has the intension of crafting value. (36)

Nkengasong opines that if any author does not write about and for culture, it will be absurd because every writer writes in time and space, which reflect the age. He adds that as a native of Nweh, he reproduces the realities of his time and space. He also portrays that humans cannot do without culture because human existence is embedded in culture. Any author that wants to create value will definitely write for and about their culture.

One of the main precursors of New Historicism is Michel Foucault, who influenced this theory with his notion of power and knowledge. To Foucault, power is not something that is rested in the hands of one person; this means that an author should not be seen as a semi-god who knows everything. Humans do not have knowledge and power of the future, but they control the past. According to Geoffrey Galt Harpham in "Foucault and the New Historicism" humans are indifferent and void of feelings for the future contrary to past that irritate, insult and provoke them to either destroy or reconstruct. The knowledge of the past gives humans power to escape or face life since knowledge of the past "could be tied to renovatory or emancipatory aspiration" (360). His argument posits that knowledge of the past can cause

changes and liberations to world so it is vital to know the history behind every literary work since existence in somehow is conditioned by the past.

Given that literature exposes social ills, new historicists argue that if literature is superior to history which is subjective; literature, therefore, plays a vital role because it mirrors the society. Literary writers see art as the viable means through which they can ridicule the ills of society. This means literary work also rewrite history. The experience and reality of war influenced Owen and Sassoon to write about war. Owen before the war did not write poetry so as far writing poetry is concerned, war created Owen's poetry. New Historicism is therefore, a relevant theory to use to interpret Owen's poem because the reality of his space and time necessitated the creation his poetry. On the other hand, though Sassoon wrote poetry before the war, it is his war poetry that brought him to the limelight as an established war-poet. Hence, interpreting Owen and Sassoon's poetry requires the use of New Historicism as well. After discussing the two theories that we are going to use in the work, we are going to review literature related to this work.

### **Literature Review**

The review of related literature is of utmost relevance in an academic work because it helps to ensure that there is no repetition, but an addition to the research that has already been conducted. The review of related literature also aids to show areas of convergence and divergence in relation to a current research work. To be on guard against repetition, therefore, adequate literature on the area of research is often conducted. Given the pre-eminence of literature review, David N. Boote and Renny Belle in "Scholars before Researchers: On the Centrality of the Dissertation Literature Review in Research Preparation," opines that:

A substantive, thorough, sophisticated literature review is a precondition for doing substantive, thorough, sophisticated research. "Good" research is good because it advances our collective understanding. To advance our collective understanding, a researcher or scholar needs to understand what has been done before, the strengths and weakness of existing studies and what they might mean. A researcher cannot perform significant research without first understanding the literature in the field. Not understanding the prior research clearly puts a researcher at a disadvantage ... To be useful and meaningful, education research must be cumulative; it must build on and learn from prior research that scholarship on the topic. (3)

Boote and Belle quoted above note that a good research is backed by the researcher's prior knowledge of the existing literature. This is because the literature helps the researcher to know what has been said and what is lacking. They also postulate that a researcher cannot

conduct a good research without first of all having an understanding of the existing literature. They posit that scholarly research “must be cumulative”, which means that the researcher needs to incorporate previous and current data. In an academic writing, researchers are required to review literature that is related to their research topic. In this research work, therefore, we are going to review academic works related to the war poetry of Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon. The works reviewed are those connected to this research. We are first of all, going to start by reviewing works that are related to Owen's war poetry and later on works that are related to Sassoon's war poetry.

Roland Bartel in his article entitled “Teaching Wilfred Owen's War Poems and the Bible,” postulates that Owen is an anti-war poet whose war poems alludes to the Bible. In the poem, “The parable of the Old Man and the Young” she illustrates how Owen succeeds to portray that how old war-mongers sacrifice the young soldiers for their selfish desires. Unlike Abraham in the Christian region who does not sacrifice his son Isaac because God comes to his rescue, the young soldiers at the war fronts are not rescued by God so the old warmongers take delight in sacrificing them. Bartel argues that Owen uses the Bible to “exalt the suffering of the soldiers” and also to satirise and shock his readers about the hypocrisy and self-centeredness of warmongers who endorse war without thinking about the plight of the young soldiers. Bartel, therefore, says that Owen's war poems allude to Bible as a parody in which Owen makes castigation or ridicules warmongers. Bartel's work converges with this work because it portrays Owen as an anti-war poet. However, Bartel work is limited because it only examines few of Owen's poems that makes reference to the Bible, whereas this work go beyond that and examines that the repercussions of war force Owen and Sassoon to write in condemnation of war.

In addition, James D. Brophy in “The War Poetry of Wilfred Owen and Osbert Sitwell: An Instructive Contrast” postulates that though he is an anti-war poet, Owen's war poems instruct and educate. He argues that, Owen is the “most powerful anti-war poet”, whose poetry celebrates the heroism of soldiers contrary to what Owen holds that his poetry is not “about heroes” because “English Poetry is not yet fit to speak of them.” Brophy argues that ironically, Owen's poetry contrastively celebrates soldiers. For instance, one of Owen's poems is entitled “Anthem for Doomed Youth.” “Anthem” is a praise song for martyrs. This, therefore, means that if Owen writes an anthem for a doomed soldier, it means he venerates the soldier as a hero. Brophy concludes that it is Owen's idealism, romance and reality that bring out the contrast in his poetry. Brophy's work runs apart from this work in that he looked

at the contrast that is found in Owen poetry thereby showing that his poetry does not only talk about the pity of war, but portrays soldiers as heroes not just victims. However, the title of this poem is not only ironic but also satiric as Owen mocks the home fronts who sing praise, anthem, to young men are doomed to death due war.

Ali Gunes in “Wilfred Owen Re-visited: A psychoanalytic Reading of War, Memory, and Crisis of Identity in Wilfred Owen's “Mental Cases” examines the effects of war on soldiers. The paper handles "disturbing experience and feeling of a tragic event..." He revisited some of the cruelties of war such as rape, torture and murder and how they affect war veterans, who though on retirement, still suffer from traumatic experiences that occur to them through nightmares, anger and anxiety. Gunes opines that shell shocks are "like shadow constantly haunt and disturb the psyche of particular veteran soldiers throughout their lives in particular and the public in general." This means that war does not end at the front with ceasefire as may be thought. War veterans suffer from post-traumatic disorder, which affect them as individual and has health effect on the public in general given that health is a merit good. Gunes says:

This paper focuses upon the psychoanalytic reading of Owen’s poem *Mental Cases* (1918). In so doing, first, the paper examines how the disturbing experiences and feelings of a tragic event such as a war, torture, rape or murder, which individuals store in the realm of their unconscious in the Freudian sense, start annoying their feelings after a while. That is, they continuously come later on in life under the troubling influence of recurring flashback of the traumatic events, nightmares, irritability, anxiety, and social withdrawal. Eventually these undesirable traumatic past experiences and memories repressed in the unconscious obviously causes individuals to have a kind of psychological disorder and crisis which powerfully affects their daily life, behaviour, and identity. (169)

The above quote culled from Ali Gunes, opines that war brings and or gives depression since tragic events like rape, torture and murder are repressed and stored in the unconscious mind as Freud explained. He also says that war veterans are haunted by these tragic events that revisit them through retrospection in the form of nightmares, anger and anxiety. These traumatic experiences indubitably cause post-traumatic disorder. These horrible effects affect the daily livelihood of war veterans. From Gunes' perspective therefore, it is not faulty to argue that war does not cease at the front because the after effects of war affects veterans’ social inclusion into the society as they are incessantly haunted by traumatic experiences, the cruelty they suffered from adversaries or they themselves perpetuated on others.

Ali Gunes' paper converges with study on several fronts. Firstly, just like his work, this work handles the horror and psychological effects of war. Also, Gunes makes use of Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis to analyse "mental cases" just as we have used psychoanalysis to analyse and interpret Owen's poems. However, in terms of scope, Gunes' paper examines only one of Owen's poems. This work also diverges from Gunes' work in that we also handle the realities of war.

Sanja R. Koricanac in "A Psychoanalytic Profile of Wilfred Owen as Reflected in *Dulce Et Decorum Est* and *Strange Meetings*," posits that war experience alone is not responsible for Owen's anti-war sentiments. Using Freud's psychoanalysis, he postulates that societal and family conflicts harbour in Owen's unconscious mind also resulted to Owen's trauma. These repressed instincts also contributed to Owen's hatred for war. Koricanac assumes that since Owen was very much attached to his mother as his father, Thomas, was not frequently at home, it means he was not brought up to face bitter reality (651-52). Owen had homosexual instinct which was regarded as taboo during his time. This made him to repress the feeling for fear of authority. The fear that Owen had during peace time, manifested itself as Owen became petrified and terrified with war horror. Koricanac says "It is perhaps slightly harsh to claim that Owen was a victim of a selfish mother not willing to let him go anywhere to grow." From this claim, it shows Owen was brought up to be dependent. This frustrated him at the front where there is self-reliance. It is due to this dependency that every slightest opportunity Owen had at the front, he wrote a letter to his mother.

Using psychoanalysis to analyze "*Dulce et Decorum Est*" and "*Strange Meeting*", Koricanac also demonstrates that anger, fear and trauma necessitate Owen's anti-war sentiment. He says the repressed anger that Owen had for the church for supporting the war traumatised him so his initial anger against the church was redirected towards war. He concludes by saying "Owen depicted the horror of war in general and its consequences for the human soul..." (771). In as much as Owen displayed neurotic, narcissistic and borderline personality, it is still war experience that had greater influence on his personality and ideological. Sanja Koricanac's stance agrees with this work at the level of the theory used. Just like this work, Koricanac uses Freud's psychoanalysis to interpret Owen's life and work. However, Koricanac's works is limited in scope as he has only used two of Owen's poem to show his claim. Insofar as Owen's work can be interpreted using psychoanalysis, we have equally used New Historicism to discuss the realities of war as portrayed in Owen's poems.

George Ewane Ngide in the article, “‘A war poet’ or ‘A poet At War’: Wilfred Owen and the Pity of War,” postulates that Wilfred Owen is not just a war poet but a poet against war, who “wars against war”. To him, Owen by writing against war means that Owen fights war with war and not with his fellow humans (171). He also used Owen's philosophy, “The pity of war, the pity that war distilled” to show the gruesome realities of war. He says:

Wilfred Owen’s poetry is a scathing revelation of the horrors of war with the harrowing experiences of soldiers in the warfront. This is what in the poem “Strange Meeting” he calls “The pity of war, the pity war distilled” (line 25), which pity is the direct consequence of “the truth untold” (line 24) namely that in a war situation, “foreheads of men have bled where no wounds were” (line 39) referring to the physical and mental torture and traumas of soldiers in combat. A number of his poems reveal the horror and dehumanisation caused by war. (171)

In the quotes above, Ngide posits that Owen's poems reveals the cruelties of war on soldiers. He also says in the poem "Strange Meeting", Owen brings to limelight the physical and psychological pain that soldiers endure at the war front. Owen's poems also expose the dehumanising effects of war. Ngide in his article also argues that Owen is pacifist because he does not just expose the excruciating effects of war, but also proposes negotiation and peaceful conflict resolution. Owen thinks that "better men" will fight "greater war", this means that negotiation will become a cherished option because war evokes pity. This article converges with this dissertation in that both works agree to the fact that Owen is anti-war poet. However, this article does not use any particular theory to analyse Owen's poems as the author rely solely on Owen's philosophy of "the pity of war."

Daniel Hipp in his article entitled “‘By Degrees Regain Cool Peaceful Air in Wonder’: Wilfred Owen's War Poetry as Psychological Therapy” is out to show that writing against war was a therapy for Owen. He argues that:

This study will show that two central poems of Owen's oeuvre, "Dulce et Decorum Est," an early war poem, and "Spring Offensive," his last completed poem about the war—for all their graphic horrors, for all their political and public rhetoric of protest—emerged as stages in a sustained attempt by Owen to heal himself from the trauma endured in the trenches. Although the war threatened to reduce Owen to psychological ruin after his four months of combat duty, it was the writing of poetry about the war which functioned as his most effective therapy and which enabled Owen to reconstruct a coherent voice that allowed for his return to the front, where he met his death in November 1918 (25)

Hipp in the above quote opines that two of Owen's poem; "Dulce et Decorum Est" and "Spring Offensive" does not only expose the horror of wars, but also is an attempt for Owen to heal himself from the trauma of war. He is therefore of the opinion that writing against war was a mental healing power or treatment. Hipp surmises that Owen's doctor, "Aurthur Brock, a proponent of ergotherapy, healing by means of work and activity" proposed to Owen to write poetry as a therapy to his trauma (30). Hipp's work diverge from this dissertation as he set to portray that Owen wrote war poem to treat himself from war trauma. If Owen's poetry was merely a therapy for psychological trauma, one will argue that Owen would not go back to war front after being cured from that trauma. Interpreting Owen's poems from Hipp's stance will mean that his poetry is self-centred, but Owen's poetry goes beyond healing the self to liberating the home fronts from ignorance vis-à-vis war and heroism. Projecting the consequences of war was a warning from Owen to the jingoistic leaders.

Paul Norgate in "Wilfred Owen and the Soldier Poets" set out to compare Owen with a group of poets known as "Soldier Poets". He proves that Owen was a controversialist. This is because soldier poets wrote basically to exalt the heroism and grandeur of soldiers. Showing soldiers as those who have nationalistic love, patriotic men who have sacrificed their youthfulness and their lives for "Home, Friends and Native Souls". Owen on the other hand, instead sees soldiers as sacrificial lambs that warmongers sacrifice for their greed. He therefore, argues that Owen's poetry is different from his contemporaries except for Owen's mentor, Sassoon, whom he shares the same thematic concerns. He emphasised that Owen is the one who "break out from the close circle of the meaning guarded by the Soldier Poet..." Paul Norgate's work diverges from this dissertation as he sets out to convey how Owen's poetry does not conform to his contemporaries, Soldier Poets.

William Kevin Penny in "Tragic Harp: Ritual, Irony and Myth in the War Poetry of Wilfred Owen," set out to investigate how biblical and classical use of language, myth and other rhetorical devices are used ironically in Owen's poetry. He argues that Owen is a liberal poet who uses sources from church, military and classical literature, and who also deviated from the traditional style of writing because of the modern subject he was concerned with. His style of writing was aimed at showing a clear dichotomy between "hero worship and condemnation of war" (152). He opined that some of Owen's poem-titles are ironic; for instance, "Anthem for Doomed Youth", which serves to bring out the discrepancies or incongruities between appearance and reality of warfare. Penny also supports other critics like Stallworthy who notes that Owen used "antiquated theme, metaphors, and imagery from

differing literary tradition..." Owen used specific language with regards to the message he had at hand. In his poem, "The Parable of the Old Man and the Young", Owen uses the "King James Version" of the Bible to depict the irony that he brings out in heightened weight. Penny argues that:

Owen exploits the ironic possibilities inherent in such unconventional uses of dialogue structure and illocutionary force to question not only Abram's actions but also God's and, by implication, those of the military leaders on the battlefield. The poet's reliance on biblical imagery and on notions of transcendence involving the tragically ironic show adherence to the idea of war as sacrificial, but also as mythopoeic in nature. The subsequent return to ritualistic and mythic language and imagery as a form of closure was the inevitable result of portraying his subject matter in heroic terms. (166)

Penny in the above quote posits that the manner in which Owen uses irony does not conform to the use of dialogue as the case seen in "The Parable of the Old Man and the Young". This is due to the fact that Owen uses utterances that oppose to the meaning of the word used. Owen uses biblical account to assert or affirm that war is an avenue where soldiers are sacrificed just like the biblical myth in which Abraham was about to sacrifice his son. Penny opines that this biblical ritual or myth arguably presents Owen's subject matter as a matter of concern and grandeur. Penny's paper diverges from this study in that while this work sets out to investigate the polemics of the war in Owen's poetry. Penny set out to investigate how ritual and myth are used ironically in Owen's poetry.

Patrick Campbell in *Siegfried Sassoon: A Study of War Poetry*, intimates that Sassoon joined the war which he saw as "infantry picnic" after four years of war experience he came to understand that the war was a "loathsome tragedy". Sassoon at the beginning of the war was exuberant to fight to liberate his country. Campbell posits that in his first war poem, "Absolution", Sassoon believed that they were fighting for freedom (13). But by the time the war was fought for about a year, Sassoon's conviction about it changed. He realised that they were no longer fighting for freedom because he came to believe that the war was no longer a war of liberation, but a war of aggression. It was this experience he had about war that his writing about it became anti-jingoistic. By the time Sassoon came to the realisation of this injustice meted on the soldiers, he decided to make a public denunciation of war that was thought to be for "defence and liberation", which had turned to be that of "aggression and conquest" (14). It is this denunciation that made him to adopt anti-war sentiments and composed poetry that exposes the hostilities of war.



Campbell opines that Sassoon became a "pacifist poet", who only went back to the front because of pity and guilt of abandoning his fellow comrade who were suffering in "hell". Campbell also posits that by writing about victimisation and destruction of war, Sassoon abandoned the Romantic and Georgian style of writing poetry, which he imitated in "Absolution" and "To Victory". Sassoon had the conviction that "flexible and direct language" will make politicians, religious leaders and parents to have mental imagery about the hostility of the war they all encouraged and sacrificed the young soldiers in. To achieved this, Campbell argues that Sassoon developed two different poetic modes; "evocative documentation and pithy epigrammatic verse" to showcase his stance against war. Campbell notes that though many critics condemn Sassoon's negativity in his poetry, he is an influential war-poet, "though a minor versifier". However, it is important to state clearly that Sassoon's war-poems made him an established poet who wrote against war. Campbell's critical work ties with this study in that he opines that Sassoon is a pacifist poet, an argument that this work shares.

Emrah Atasoy in his paper entitled, "Transformation of Siegfried Sassoon's War Poetry: Discourse Shapes Perspectives", set out to showcases that Sassoon's poetry before the war was nationalistic and his poetry during and after the war was anti-nationalistic. Atasoy posits that before war Sassoon was not anti-war because he considered soldiers like heroes and saw war as "fun" and "adventure". He stressed that before war; Sassoon did not ridicule or lampoon war. However, there is a "drastic change in Sassoon's poetry during and after the war." After having firsthand experience of war, Sassoon became anti-nationalistic and unpatriotic and his poetry became outright satire on war. Atasoy quotes Sassoon saying:

I am making this statement as an act of wilful defiance of military authority, because I believe that the war is being deliberately prolonged by those who have the power to end it. I am a soldier, convinced that I am acting on behalf of soldiers. I believe that this war, upon which I entered as a war of defense and liberation, has now become a war of aggression and conquest. I believe that the purposes for which I and my fellow-soldiers entered upon this war should have been so clearly stated as to have made it impossible to change them, and that, had this been done, the objects which actuated us would now be attainable by negotiation. I have seen and endured the sufferings of the troops, and I can no longer be a party to prolong these sufferings for ends which I believe to be evil and unjust. (4)

From the above quotation, it is evident that Sassoon's anger against war is not only expressed in his poetry. He opted to disobey his superiors because he noticed that they advertently prolonged the war. Before being enlisted or conscripted he thought it was a war of defence and liberation, instead, he noticed they were perpetuating aggression. The horrors that he witnessed in the war were such that he could not continue to support this war because of the evil and injustice it brought. This shows Sassoon's obstinacy towards his superiors as he grew to abhor war. Atasoy notes that Sassoon was not punished for this act of insubordination because Robert Graves saved him. War experience therefore, shaped Sassoon and he became anti-war poet.

Yusuf Ziyaettin Turan in "Siegfried Sassoon and War Poetry" postulates that Sassoon's war poems such as "The Rear Guard", "The General", and "Glory to women" delineate the realities of trench warfare and brutalities of war. Turan also posits that Sassoon's poetry portrays the gruesome reality and the horrors of war. Sassoon in his war poetry ridicules incompetent military authorities, religious leaders and politicians responsible for the war and finds them guilty since they prolonged the war. The morbid realities of war changed Sassoon's notion of and admiration for war. Youthful exuberance caused Sassoon and "Schoolboys" to enlist in the military but the reality of war changed Sassoon who became embittered with war horrors and angry with authorities for prolonging the war. Turan quotes that in disgust with war, he threw the ribbon of his Military Cross into the sea. This does not only demonstrate Sassoon's anger, it also shows that Sassoon threw that ribbon to make the authorities know that young soldiers could no longer be deceived with a mere Military Cross.

Lucas argues Sassoon "loathed all the things it was proper to loathe: the callous incompetence of generals, the warmongering hysteria of those who did not have to fight, the hypocritical patriotism of the home front" (qtd in Turan, 133). This shows that Sassoon's poetry does not only depict morbidity of war, but also shows his hatred towards incompetent generals and inhumane warmongers. Looking at Turan's paper, it converges with this work partially because his work portrays the morbid realities of war. However, his paper is limited in scope because he has analysed only three of Sassoon's poems.

Clémence Talec in an article entitled, "Loathsome Thoughts to Sell: Violence and Vehemence in Siegfried Sassoon's War Poetry," postulates that Sassoon was a full-throated or emphatic satirist. He argues that Sassoon's bitterness and satire are directed toward politicians and civilians who do not know the cruelty of war, but who are jingoistic. Sassoon

in his poetry also castigates pressmen who presented the false reality of war as "all was not going well in the trenches." Talec also posits that by painting the violence of war, Sassoon elicits a sense of meaninglessness and the dehumanization only war and death combined can create. This of course justified the indignant tone that is found in his poetry. Talec holds the stance that Sassoon's poetry predominantly presents violence and satire because the poet portrays "intense feelings of shock, anger, distress and outrage." This satiric and violent tone in Sassoon's poetry is aimed at painting gruesome and traumatising war experiences. Clémence Talec's paper only examines the violence and satire found in Sassoon's poetry, but this work goes further to examine the repercussions of war, and justifies that Sassoon's poetry also portray him as an anti-war poet, though it also agrees with Talec's paper that there is a lot bitterness in Sassoon's tone.

Douglas Higbee in "Siegfried Sassoon: Poetry, Socialism, and the British Veteran's Movement," opines that Sassoon is an exemplary war-poet who traumatised with war experiences, presents this trauma in a "perfected satire and epigrammatic style" to paint the turgid realities of trench warfare. He also noted that Sassoon's "post-war poetry lacked the force of his earlier work..." This means that the reality and experience of warfare was a great booster behind Sassoon's bitterness in his war-time poems. However, after the war, Sassoon still expressed his war experiences in his prose. Higbee posits that in Sassoon's anti-war stance and his bitterness towards war, made him to write openly against war because of the horrors it brings to the suffering troops. He also thinks that soldiers are manipulated or better still, deceived by those who do not have any experience about the callousness of war since the real horrors of war have not been presented to them. In his open protest letter against war, he was about to court martial, but his friends and fellow colleague, Robert Graves saved him by declaring that he was suffering from mental disorder. Higbee, therefore, demonstrates that Sassoon was an anti-war poet and as a veteran, he became a politician who joined the anti-war movements. This, of course demonstrates that it was not just the fear of the battlefield that nursed forth Sassoon's anti-war sentiments, but a conviction that he had about war altogether. Higbee's paper ties partly with this work because both works agree to the fact that Sassoon is an anti-war poet. However, this work goes further to portray the repercussions of war on the soldiers.

Loren Samons in "Pity and Indignation: The Processing of Trauma in the War Poetry of Wilfred and Siegfried", postulates that Owen and Sassoon produced the most appealing war poems of the First World War. Samons argues that the tone and diction in Owen's poetry is

sympathetic while those in Sassoon's poetry are indignant. He stressed that the differences in tone in their poetry portray their dichotomous "psychological progressions in confronting and processing war trauma" (2). Owen is sentimental in his poetry and depicts the realities of war that appeal to the readers' feelings of empathy towards the soldiers. This means that mood in Owen's poetry is that of pity towards the suffering soldiers. While Owen thinks that those at home share the soldiers' afflictions but concern themselves more with honours war is thought to bring than soldiers' predicaments, Sassoon generally looks at those at home as not being affected by the pain those at the front encounter. Due to the anger found in Sassoon's poetry, Samons noted that some critics say that Sassoon's "verses are not poetry". Samons concludes that Owen knew how to bridge his mental and sentimental reactions from his experiences unlike Sassoon who did not tame his feelings, but rather poured out his experiences of war to the readers. This work shares the argument that Owen's poetry appeals to the readers' sense of empathy while Sassoon's poetry nurses certain hatred towards war and propagandists.

The war poetry of Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon has received a lot critical attentions. Critics have analysed and interpreted their poems looking at the various subjects that are envisaged in their poetry. Looking at many of Owen poetry, many critics have interpreted his work from psychological perspectives; Martin (2007), Gunes (2017), Koricanac (2019) and Koseoglu (2019). Others have analysed his poetry by making reference to the Bible; Bartel (1972). Others have interpreted his poetry looking at his philosophy of war; Ngide (2014). Many others have interpreted his poetry looking at the subject matter and style of specific poems. Furthermore, Sassoon's poetry has also received a lot critical attentions. Though many critics have analysed his poetry from the direction of his anger and anti-war stance; few have looked at the characteristics of his poetry; Turan (2013). Others have examine irony and thematic concerns in his poetry; Murray (1920), Cohen (1952), Thorpe (1972) Campbell (1999) and Fontes (2012). It will be honest to say that we have not exhausted all the critical materials that the war poetry of Owen and Sassoon has received; partly due to the scope of this work and also because some materials are not easily accessible though a good number of literature were consulted and only the ones related to this work have been reviewed.

Despite that fact Owen and Sassoon's poetry has received a lot of critical attentions, there are still gaps to fill and also, some issues have been addressed, but this research will add as a matter of emphasis. Firstly, the consequences of war have not adequately been addressed. Also, the home fronts' belief about war, which is very eminent in Owen and Sassoon's poetry, has not been addressed. Though many critics have opined or argue that Owen and

Sassoon are anti-war poets, very few have actually used their poems to show what makes them anti-war poets or why they developed anti-war sentiments despite the fact that they were not forcefully conscripted. This work, therefore, is going to add to the existing literature the consequences of war on the soldiers because the plight of the soldiers has not been adequately presented. This work will also discuss Owen and Sassoon as anti-war poets and it further handles the polemics of war, which shows that the home fronts support because they are ignorant of the realities of war.

This chapter entitled, "Theoretical Framework and Review of Literature" handled Psychoanalysis and New Historicism as theories used in this study. The chapter also handled review of literature. In discussing Psychoanalysis we have examined some of its concepts like dreams interpretation, trauma and the tripartite nature of the human psyche; the id, ego and superego. We have also examined some key tenets of New Historicism like history and geography, as well as the authors' realities. The war poetry of Owen and Sassoon has received a lot of critical attention from reviewers, biographers, journalists and researchers; however, it will be unscholarly to say that they have exhausted all that can be examined as far as Owen's and Sassoon's poetry are concerned. Using Psychoanalysis and New Historicism therefore, we will examine the polemics of war in the poetry of these two authors.

## CHAPTER TWO

### WAR: FANTASY VERSUS REALITY

This chapter examines the beliefs and the perceptions that the home fronts have about war and how the realities of war at the battlefield differ from these beliefs. From time immemorial, civilians have always encouraged war for diverse reasons. These civilians who encourage war or who are jingoistic are those strictly referred to as the home fronts in this work; that is, civilians who persuade soldiers to fight for their whims and caprices. The home fronts, therefore, are parents, religious leaders, politicians and press men and women. They have their beliefs about war, which most often neglect the realities of the battlefield. The historicity of the First World War reveals that there was high rate jingoism in Europe on the eve of the war as Julie Kimber in “World War 1: How Jingoistic Bluster Encourage Our Boys to Enlist” argues that it was jingoism that was a great factor that pushed the young men in Europe to enlist in the army. Majority of the European population at that time were dominated by the id, meaning they put emotions ahead of reason to encourage war. The rate of jingoism was very high before and during the First World War and pro-war campaigns, whether on the side of the Allied Powers or the Central Powers, was carried out more by the home fronts; journalists’ reports on wars and politicians’ speeches were propagandist in nature. We shall start by discussing the home fronts’ perception of war and later on the realities of war at the front, which will show that the home fronts’ perception of war was based on imagination and did not match the reality of war as lived at the battlefield.

#### **Glory, Honour and Heroism of War**

The belief that sacrificing one’s life for country brings glory, honour and heroism has been presented in literature as an act of heroism by many writers across different literary epochs. From the Anglo-Saxon via Medieval to Renaissance era war was held in high esteem. Katie Silvester in “The Wound in War Literature: An Image of Heroism” posits that; “From Homer and *Beowulf* to Shakespeare, the manifestation of the hero in literature corresponds with a celebration of the core values of the author’s society” (214). Having the conviction that heroism was important did not, however, end in the Renaissance period as the belief was held until the outbreak of the First World War though the realities and repercussions of war challenged the belief in sacrificing human lives for glory or heroism. Oleg Smirnov et al in

“Ancestral War and the Evolutionary Origins of ‘Heroism’” opine that soldiers are largely commoners who altruistically sacrifice their lives for their tribes, states or country to gain heroism (1). However, the notion of heroism in war is more of a manipulation from the home fronts who encourage young men to fight for their country as they would gain glory, honour and heroism. This explains why Katherine Andrews in *The Necessity to Conform: British Jingoism in the First World War* says, "The majority of opinion was fiercely pro-war." To describe the attitude of the home front, Bertrand Russell in *Autobiography* wrote:

A month ago Europe was a peaceful comity of nations; if an Englishman killed a German, he was hanged. Now, if an Englishman kills a German, or if a German kills an Englishman, he is a patriot, who has deserved well of his country. We scan the newspapers with greedy eyes for news of slaughter, and rejoice when we read of innocent young men, blindly obedient to the word of command, mown down in thousands by the machine guns of Liege. Those who saw the London crowds, during the nights leading up to the Declaration of War saw a whole population, hitherto peaceable and humane, precipitated in a few days down the steep slope to primitive barbarism, letting loose, in a moment, the instincts of hatred and blood lust against which the whole fabric of society has been raised. (41)

The above quote culled from Russell depicts the humanity, rationality and peaceful co-existence that existed among European nations before the outbreak of the First World War. However, the European population acclaimed the killing of the other nationals as an act of patriotism. Even journalists published articles that promoted pro-war sentiments and readers rejoiced when they read in newspapers that young men answered the call of conscription where many of them were slaughtered "by the machine guns of liege" (ibid). The whole London inhabitants on 4th August 1914 acclaimed the British government's declaration of war on Germany. Jingoism nursed hatred and bloodthirsty among the Europeans and this put an end to nationality and empathy giving rise to "primitive barbarism" and "dim abstractions of unimaginable wickedness" as Russell describes it showing that the wickedness and barbarism that took place in the war showed how uncivilised and irrational humans became due to the Great War.

The home fronts venerated war forgetting that other nationals whom they saw as enemies were also men who had homes, wives, relatives and loved ones who wanted them alive, but parents who were maniacal about honour, heroism and patriotism decided to sacrifice their children by sending them to war fronts. The home fronts from time immemorial have always thought that war brings honour to soldiers and the soldiers' families and nations even if the

soldiers die in action. The belief that war brings honour was not born during the Great War; it is rather an old belief, which became very popular in the early twentieth century. Shakespeare in *Coriolanus* presents Volumnia's perspective about war.

Volumnia, Caius Martius' mother, calls on her daughter-in-law to be jocund and comfortable because her husband has gone to fight war in which he will win honour. She could not allow Caius Martius stay away from her when he was still young, but she is presently happy that her son has grown into a "man" who seeks danger to win fame. She asserts that she had sent him to a dangerous war, but he feared and came back while she was troubled that her son would be "man-child", but now, he has proved himself a "man". Virgilia, daughter-in-law to Volumnia is concerned about her husband's safety as she needs him alive. However, Volumnia values honour and patriotism more than life as she says she would prefer to have eleven sons killed in war than one cowardly son who runs away from war that brings honour (31-32).

The mishap here is that Volumnia just like many women who sent their children to the front talks peacefully and valiantly about war whose realities they do not know. Patriotism and honour are words that young men are blinded with to be enlisted. Paradoxically, the home fronts preached patriotism and honour without caring about the callousness of war since the reality of war at the battlefield is antithetical to the beliefs held about war at home. To disprove the home fronts that there is nothing like patriotism and honours gained in war, Owen in "Dulce Et Decorum Est" says that it is an "old lie" that war brings honour. Due to the so-called patriotism, war casualties hardly appear on the front pages of newspapers. Jingoism during the First World War was very popular among press men and women. In fact, historicity of the time reveals that in Germany, lecturers taught about the importance of and the necessity for war. In "Smile, Smile, Smile", written less than two months to his death, on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1918, Owen shows how journalists give partial reports about war as he writes:

Head to limp head, the sunk-eyed wounded scanned  
 Yesterday's *Mail*; the casualties (typed small)  
 And (large) Vast Booty from our Latest Haul.  
 Also, they read of Cheap Homes, not yet planned  
 "For," said the paper, "when this war is done  
 The men's first instinct will be making homes.  
 Meanwhile their foremost need is aerodromes,  
 It being certain war has but begun.  
 Peace would do wrong to our undying dead,—



The sons we offered might regret they died  
 If we got nothing lasting in their stead.  
 We must be solidly indemnified.  
 Though all be worthy Victory which all bought,  
 We rulers sitting in this ancient spot  
 Would wrong our very selves if we forgot  
 The greatest glory will be theirs who fought,  
 Who kept this *nation in integrity*.”  
 Nation?—The half-limbed readers did not chafe  
 But smiled at one another curiously  
 Like secret men who know their secret safe.  
 (This is the thing they know and never speak,  
 That England one by one had fled to France,  
 Not many elsewhere now, save under France.)  
 Pictures of these broad smiles appear each week,  
 And people in whose voice real feeling rings  
 Say: How they smile! They're happy now, poor things.

The above poem is written in one stanza of twenty-six lines. The poem has a regular rhyme scheme and varying metre though dominantly in iambic pentameter. The poem carries an overt satire on the senile politicians, the manipulative journalists and the gullible population. The persona presents an unknown reader who peruses the "Mail", a newspaper, and is stunned that war casualties are written or typed in lowercase letters, but the goods that the soldiers have looted from the enemy in their last affront is typed in larger characters. This shows that the benefit the home fronts obtain from the war is far more important to them compared to the young men who have lost their lives. Though unplanned, the newspapers present "Cheap Homes" that will be constructed because when the war ends, soldiers will have the "instincts" to come back home. Instead of the leaders seeing to it that the war should cease, arm race is rather their preoccupation as they want to purchase "ships", "tanks" and "aerodromes" because they know that attack and counterattack will start again soon.

Elise Dalli in "Smile, Smile, Smile by Wilfred Owen" postulates the Owen derived the title of this poem from the popular song, "Tipperary", which was sung during the Great War to boost the morale of young men to join the army. Taking a title from this propagandist song and lambasting war, Owen uses parody as he ridicules those who encourage war. This proves the new historicist tenet that the social happenings about an author influence their writing. The attitude of the British politician and press men and women who delighted in reporting with little significance war casualties, but emphasised on reporting gains obtained inspired Owen to write against these behest attitude of jingoists towards the suffering troops. Dalli opines that Britain during the war wanted her position as well power by gaining more lands,

power and money. Regrettably, this materialistic quest is done with no regards on human losses.

The poem also shows that the war continues because of the vindictive nature of the politicians as the persona says; "Peace would do wrong to our undying dead." The oxymoronic expression, "undying dead" means that the soldiers who have lost their lives will not rest if they are not avenged. The home front's unquenchable thirst for revenge prompted them to prolong the war as they wanted a lasting benefit to compensate their loss. They, however, forgot that the more they prolonged the war because of revenge, the more they incurred losses. The rulers believed that by forging with the war, they were doing justice to the departed soldiers and that their revenge would bring glory to those who fought to preserve the integrity of their nation. The fragmented rhetorical question, "Nation?" castigates and satirises the home fronts who think that the nation's integrity is worth more than the soldiers' lives.

The derision in this poem does not only go to the journalists and politicians as parts of the home front, but also to the gullible masses that yield to the manipulation of politicians and press men. The masses smile comfortably while there is rampage war going on simply because they have been deceived to believe that the "vast booty" gotten from the war outweighs casualties. The real information that these journalists are supposed to write about, they do not. One of these hidden truth is; "that England one by one have fled to France." The use of metonymy by referring to the English soldiers and population as England shows that the battlefield in England is disastrous compared to that in France. Another interpretation is that since England and France were members of the Allied Forces, many English soldiers have gone to France to assist her from onslaught. But, the expression "not many elsewhere now save under France" shows that there is security threat everywhere but in France. The last line of the poem is satiric; the home fronts are mocked for smiling over false belief about war meanwhile soldiers are "poor" things that suffer at the front. The poem shows how jingoistic newspaper publication about war was in the First World War and how they make the gullible population to believe falsely in the glory and honour of war. One of the popular newspapers in Britain that encouraged war, called on young men to join the military and pushed the government to encourage conscription is the *Mail*. In Owen's letters as Stallworthy notes, he [Owen] read the *Mail* a lot from 1913-1914 when he was in France. Adrain Bingham in "The Paper that Foretold the War': The Daily Mail and the First World War" quotes the *Mail* as follows:

Our duty is to go forward into this valley of the shadow of death with courage and faith — with courage to suffer, and faith in God and our country ... We must stand together at this hour ... On us of this generation has come the sharpest trial that has ever befallen our race. We have to uphold the honour of England by demeanour and deed ... We are standing for justice, for law against arbitrary violence. (Qtd in Bingham)

The above quote culled from the *Mail* shows the jingoistic stance of the newspaper. The paper calls on the English population to face war head strong because they have the responsibility to protect their country. The paper, instead of being rational in presenting war news; it plays on English people's emotion by using the Bible to encourage the English men to enlist in the army. By making allusion to the biblical book, Psalm 23:4, the *Mail* urges the soldiers to fight the war fiercely since England as a "Christian country", has the assurance that God will protect them so long as they have faith. The war is a test to England, as such; the English soldiers have the herculean task to preserve the honour of their country by seeking justice and putting an end to the German aggression. Most newspapers in Europe at the time of the war were jingoistic and talking of peace was seen as act of cowardice as Bingham opines that; "...the 'official rhetoric' of the war: the language of honour, glory and heroism and sacrifice that expressed traditional martial and patriotic values" (1), was what people desired to hear or read at that time. This clearly shows that the language used was pro-war and people that thought it was patriotic to talk of war as something which brought honour and glory to a country rather than talk of peace, which many believed did not have "patriotic values". It was this war rhetoric coupled with the massive conscription of men ages nineteen to forty that made many English men to join the war and among these men were Sassoon who joined the war in 1914 and Owen in 1915. Hence, the home fronts believed in honour and glory gained in war and these encouraged young men to enlist in the army.

Owen is not so vocal and vivid in portraying the home front as Sassoon does. British women as well as their German counterparts are presented as pro-war propagandists. The women encourage and lured their sons or husbands to go to the war front. This view is corroborated by Katherine Andrews in "The Necessity to Conform British Jingoism in the First World War", when she asserts that "women were among the first ardent jingoists giving white feathers to men who did not fight. The Order of the White Feathers was founded in 1914 and men who were in good state, but who did not join the war were given white feathers especially by women signifying that they [the non-combatants] were cowards. One can imagine the stigma that pacific men faced in that society because of the denial of violence

and atrocity. The belief in glory and heroism either killed rationalism in women or rendered them blind to the reality of war. To portray the belief and attitude of women, Sassoon in "Glory of Women" writes:

You love us when we're heroes, home on leave,  
 Or wounded in a mentionable place.  
 You worship decorations; you believe  
 That chivalry redeems the war's disgrace.  
 You make us shells. You listen with delight,  
 By tales of dirt and danger fondly thrilled.  
 You crown our distant ardours while we fight,  
 And mourn our laurelled memories when we're killed.

You can't believe that British troops "retire"  
 When hell's last horror breaks them, and they run,  
 Trampling the terrible corpses—blind with blood.  
 O German mother dreaming by the fire,  
 While you are knitting socks to send your son  
 His face is trodden deeper in the mud.

"Glory of Women" is written in two stanzas of an octave and a sestet respectively which shows that the poem could in fact be a sonnet if it was written in one stanza. The poem is written in iambic pentameter with a regular rhyme scheme of ABABCDCD EFGFEG. The first stanza presents the attitudes of women towards soldiers who are heroes. In the first line the persona, who is also a soldier says that women only love them when they are heroes. When these women see wounded soldiers decorated apparently with the Military Cross, they will worship the soldiers' decoration because they believe that this soldier's bravery outweighs the disgrace that war brings. The persona accuses and blames women who lure soldiers to the front to be shelled while they stay comfortably at home listening to filthy stories and excitingly praising soldiers who are at the battlefield only to mourn them when they die. To these jingoistic women, it shows that a brave soldier to them is a dead one. Patrick Campbell in *Siegfried Sassoon: A Study of War Poetry* opines that:

...mothers were, in Sassoon's estimation, more culpable because they allowed their maternal love for their sons to become confused with absurdly romantic notions of heroism. In "Supreme Sacrifice" they make the world a "silly sort of place / When people think it's pleasant to be dead." Even a "war widow" (in the unpublished poem of that name), prepared to denounce the conflict as senseless, is trivialized as an "empty head," apparently more preoccupied with her bejeweled appearance than the fate of others. The poet cannot accept that women, even from the upper classes, are anything more than repositories of unbridled "lust" and exaggerated emotionalism. Clearly Sassoon felt that

women not only fell victim to the heroic fallacy, but that their emotionalism did have a sexual dimension. Writing in his note- book just after his protest, three weeks after composing "A War Widow," the poet made no bones about it, demanding that returning soldiers should "ask their women why it thrills them to know that they, the dauntless warriors, have shed the blood of Germans. Do not the women gloat secretly over the wounds of their lovers? Is there anything inwardly noble in savage sex instincts?" (32-33)

Campbell in the quote above argues that mothers were blameworthy for sacrificing their sons in the name of heroism. Those women who saw the futility of war and went on to chastise it were treated with scorn. Propagandist women are described weak in Sassoon's "Their Frailty" as they offer their "glorious boys" to war because of the sense of hubris. The untamed lust that women had for heroism is the reason for which Sassoon demonstrated a misogynistic attitude towards them. The attitude of the home fronts with regards to war inspired him to write in condemning war and their false imagination and fancy for heroism which was of a primal significance to these women more than their sons' lives. This shows how the societal circumstances of Sassoon's immediate society and his experience of war inspired his writing backing new historicism that every writer is inspired by what happens around them.

The second stanza presents the women's blind belief in heroism when they do not actually know the reality of the front. This means that the women are ignorant of, or blind to the realities of war, which is that the British soldiers are not altogether heroes as they believe because some of them have withdrawn or run away from the front in the last battle which the persona described as "hell's last horror". The massacre at the war front is another reality that the women do not know about. Soldiers running away from casualties are said to be "trampling the terrible corpses - blind with blood." While these soldiers are living hell at the front, German mothers are dreaming by warm fire that their sons will come back as heroes and the British mothers are knitting socks to send to their sons who are struggling in the murky trenches. The British mothers are presented as propagandists as they encouraged and support the war with materials needed to fight it. The glory of women is to sacrifice men in war in the name of heroism and Sassoon in his radicalism writes about the glory of women and not glory to women because these women cannot be praised since they do not bother about the plight of their "heroes". To show Women's weakness, Sassoon in the last stanza of "Their Frailty" writes:

Husbands and sons and lovers; everywhere

They die; War bleeds us white.  
 Mothers and wives and sweethearts,—they don't care  
 So long as He's all right. (lines 1-4)

The quoted stanza is a quatrain. The rhyme scheme is ABAB and the first and the third lines are written in iambic pentameter while the second and the fourth lines are written in iambic trimeter. "Their" in the title of the poem refers to women and these women's weakness is that "they do not care". To secure their safety, women send their husband, sons and lovers to the front where they die. The sarcastic expression "they don't care so long as he is all right" shows that as long as men are there fighting to protect their "mothers wives and sweethearts" they are peaceful because they know that war will not meet them at home. Women played an important role as far as conscription was consent in the First World War Katherine Andrews quotes Robert Grave as he wrote:

To the man who pathetically calls himself a 'common soldier', may I say that we women, who demand to be heard, will tolerate no such cry as 'Peace! Peace!' where there is no peace. The corn that will wave over land watered by the blood of our brave lads shall testify to the future that their blood was not spilt in vain. We need no marble monument to remind us. We only need that force of character behind all motives to see this monstrous world tragedy brought to a victorious ending. The blood of the deed and the dying, the blood of the 'common soldier' from his 'slight wound' will not cry to us vain. They have done their share, and we, us women, will do ours without murmuring and without complaint. Send the pacifists to us and we shall very soon show them, and show the world, that in our homes at least there shall be no 'sitting at home warm and cosy in the winter, cool and "comfy" in the summer'. There is only one temperature for the woman of the British race, and that is white heat. With those who disgrace their sacred trust of motherhood we have nothing in common. (Qtd in Andrews)

Robert Grave shows how women encourage and push men to be conscripted. The idea of peaceful resolution of conflict was like a taboo, which the women did not want to hear. They preferred heroes who offered themselves for their blood to be spilt because the future generation will recognize them as patriots. War was acknowledged as a monstrous tragedy but victory was believed to be more important than the lives that were lost. In their blind belief for heroism, these women irrationally developed enormous hatred towards pacifists and these men who were not at the war front faced stigmatization and mockery from their mothers, wives and female relatives. Pacifists were considered cowards and they faced serious contempt from women. The women did not end at hating them, but proceeded to

persuade them to be enlisted as Andrews refers some of these women like Baroness Orczy for the Scarlet Pimpernel who organised the Women of England's Active Service League, saying:

Women were among the most ardent jingoist, giving white feathers to men who did not fight. In 1915, before the conscription, Baroness Orczy, of Scarlet Pimpernel fame, organized the Women of England's Active League with 20,000 members. Members had to sign a form that read "At this hour of England's peril, I do hereby pledge myself most solemnly in the name of my King and Country to persuade every man I know to offer his service to his country. I also pledge myself never to be seen in public with any man who, being in every way fit and free for service, has refused to respond to his country's call". (238)

British women believed that war was necessary and due to the fierce nature of the war, no make Briton of the conscription was supposed to be at home while his mates were "winning honours" and pouring out their blood for their King and their country. Due to women's stern believe in honour and heroism as well as patriotism they would prefer to hear that their son died like a hero rather than having a son who refused to join the war. An example on this claim is seen in Sassoon's "The Hero" as he writes:

"Jack fell as he'd have wished," the Mother said,  
And folded up the letter that she'd read.  
"The Colonel writes so nicely." Something broke  
In the tired voice that quavered to a choke.  
She half looked up. "We mothers are so proud  
"Of our dead soldiers." Then her face was bowed.

Quietly the Brother Officer went out.  
He'd told the poor old dear some gallant lies  
That she would nourish all her days, no doubt.  
For while he coughed and mumbled, her weak eyes  
Had shone with gentle triumph, brimmed with joy,  
Because he'd been so brave, her glorious boy.

He thought how "Jack," cold-footed, useless swine,  
Had panicked down the trench that night the mine  
Went up at Wicked Corner; how he'd tried  
To get sent home; and how, at last, he died,  
Blown to small bits. And no one seemed to care  
Except that lonely woman with white hair.

The poem is written in three sestets with regular rhyme scheme and metre. While the first and third stanzas are written in rhyming couplet the second stanza is written in alternate rhyme. The persona presents a mother who receives a letter from a colonel who informs her of her

son, Jack, who "fell as he he'd wished." Since Jack dies as a hero and patriot, his mother is proud of him like all mothers at the time were, that is why she soothes herself with "we mothers are so proud of our dead soldiers." She does not mourn or grieve as it would have been the case under normal circumstances, instead she only bows her face in a moment of silence with a content heart that her son has died like a hero. The home front's (symbolised by the mother) reaction towards war was largely due to ignorance and false reports that came from the officials and press men and women.

In the second stanza the persona through an oxymoron in the expression "gallant lies", shows that the reports given to this mother about her son's death are false. The woman will be happy all her life that her son was brave and that war made him a "glorious boy", but the "gallant lies" or the "ungallant truth" is that Jack was "cold footed", "useless swine" and was "blown to small bits", which is the use of grim humour. The images in the poem show that Jack was a rearguard without shoes. The metaphorical expression "useless swine" show how he was deserted in the trenches and the mud on him does not make him any less than a pig. Unable to bear the misery, he had begged to be sent home but the permission was not granted and he ended up dying in an explosion. Jenny Ruenes in "An Honourable Satire: Siegfried Sassoon's 'The Hero'" postulates that:

But European did not readily accept the disillusionment the war created. Siegfried Sassoon's "The Hero" dramatizes society's attempt to maintain an ideal about war and honor inapplicable to modern warfare. In the poem, an officer delivers news to a soldier's mother about her son's death using romantic old-war rhetoric. Sassoon delays the reader's realization that the soldier exhibited cowardice, not honor, by continually abridging the reader's hope. Sassoon's poem embodies the irony of World War I on small and large scale. Various instances of irony demonstrate the mother's and society's inability to reconcile old, romantic beliefs of war with new and horrifying realities. (1)

Ruenes in the above quote posits that the Europeans were unwilling to free themselves from the false beliefs that war brings honour as they still held the antique beliefs of war forgetting that the realities of modern warfare had its unique features. "The Hero" demonstrates that the home front believed in patriotism and heroism because they were either ignorant about the reality at the war front or it was that they were too obsessed with the idea of heroism and honour won as a soldier. It shows that to prolong the war for whatever selfish reasons the politicians had, they had to deceive the parents of deceased soldiers about the kind of death their children faced at the war front as the reports about war had everything to do with patriotism, heroism and honour that soldiers won. However, the realities about the cruelties of



war were hardly ever reported. So majority of the women who ardently supported the war did so out of ignorance and also because of their blind believe in heroism and patriotism. The woman is dominated by pride as well. Campbell in *Siegfried Sassoon: A Study of War Poetry* posits that mother in "The Hero" has "hubristic sentiment" as the narrator says "we mothers are so proud/Of our dead soldiers" (32). This mother has proven that mothers' love towards their children was by pride.

In addition, war poetry during the First World War was largely jingoistic. In their poetry unlike the popular noncombat war poets who generally presented the repercussions of war, war poetesses wrote of war as propagandists and they praised soldiers as a way of encouraging many young men to be enlisted in the army. Some popular names of British female war poetesses are Muriel Stuart, Katherine Tyran and Jessie Pope. Pope was an ardent jingoist in one of her poems entitled "Who's for the Game", encourages men to join the war that for her is a game or a picnic and which is better than the game of football because in football they were getting shame, but at the war front they will gain fame. As a jingoist poetess, Jessie Pope in her poem, "Bobs" writes the first two stanzas as follows:

The call came in the stormy night,  
Beneath a stranger's sky.  
The soldier of a life-long fight,  
Still fighting, went to die.

His country's honour was his goal;  
Patient, unswerving, brave,  
His mind, his heart, his work, his soul  
His very all, he gave. ( Pope P4)

The quoted poem culled from the collection *Jessie Pope Poems*, is written in four quatrains with an alternate rhyme scheme with the first stanza having ABAB. In each stanza the first and the third lines are written in iambic tetrameter while the second and the fourth lines have iambic trimeter. The poem is set at night, a time where soldiers are called to join a war, which is a lifetime venture and these soldiers continuously battle knowing that they will die, but they do not bother since they are fighting to preserve their country's honour. In the poem, "Bobs", Jessie Pope portrays herself as a war propagandist. As a home front war-poet, she writes in favour of war. In the poem, she encourages war by praising soldiers' bravery in fighting war to protect the image of their fatherland. In reporting about the soldier's death she uses euphemism to show that the life lost is mild or negligible compared to the preservation of the country's honour. She forbids people from mourning the dead soldier as she also asked

them not to take his death with seriousness. This is done in fear that if people mourn soldiers who died at the front, it might discourage further enlistment or conscription. From this we can, therefore, infer that as far as the home front is concerned, female war poets also encourage war just like mothers and wives sent their sons and husbands to the war front. Sassoon attacked the home fronts while rejecting their belief in the glory of war. One of his unpublished poems to his friend, Ottoline Morrell, titled “Testament” Sassoon writes:

For the last time I say – War is not glory  
 Though lads march out, superb and fall victorious, -  
 Scrapping like demons, suffering like slaves,  
 And crowned by peace, the sunlight on their graves.

You swear we crush the Beast; I say we fight  
 Because men lost their landmarks in the night  
 And met in glooms to grapple, stab and kill  
 Yelling their fetish names of Good and Ill  
 O my heart,  
 Be still: you have cried your cry, you have played your part. (Qtd in Campbell, 51)

The above poem is written in two stanzas of a quatrain and a sestet with rhyming couplet, the persona is categorical that the belief that war brings glory is false. Ironically, the persona says young men march and die triumphantly, which he actually means that soldiers die disgracefully as war has rendered them into slaves and demons that die prematurely. The home fronts believe that their soldiers crush their enemies, “beast”, which means the home fronts see their troops as being brave and victorious. However, the persona disappointedly informs them that they do not crush their enemies, rather they fight with sadness in which they kill are being killed. War has brought disgrace to the belligerents as history will ever have it that they were uncivilised. Haven performed his duty of informing the home fronts of their disillusioned attitude towards war, persona asks his heart to be calm since he has already cried enough while painting the inglorious realities of war. This poem ridicules the home fronts for their belief that war is glorious. Patrick Campbell corroborates that “Testament” falls among the many poems that Sassoon wrote while a convalescent at Craiglockhart hospital in which he satirised the home fronts’ behaviour vis-à-vis war.

### **Men’s Pride and Quest for Revenge**

While women were ardent about honour and heroism to the point that they sacrificed their sons to war, men on the other hand sacrificed their children because of pride, anger, revenge and religion. The war was an avenue to prove which nation was stronger. This shows why

arms race was dominant in Europe from the 1880s to the early 1900s. When the war broke out and became fatal within no time there was exasperation and the desire to revenge the losses each nation incurred. Christianity was threatened and so many Christians supported the war as there was a popular opinion in Britain that the Germans were barbaric pagans. To show how men or fathers preferred to sacrifice their sons because of pride, Owen in "The Parable of the Old Man and the Young" writes that fathers were instructed to "Offer the Ram of Pride instead of him/But the old man would not do so but slew his son/And half the seed of Europe, one by one." In this poem, the old man who is Abraham symbolizes the old men who sent their children to the front to die simply because they were unable to humble themselves to prevent the war. The last line states how the war has claimed the lives of young men of Europe just because men prided themselves in anger and revenge. Many fathers sacrificed their children in the trenches while enjoying the comfort of their homes.

To show how men in their pride and belief in victory will sacrifice young men rather than to seek a peaceful resolution, Owen in "At a Calvary Near Ancre", compare soldiers to Christ whom the priest crucified at Golgotha because of their belief and pride. In the first stanza, the persona talks of how Christ loses his leg in the war and his disciples abandoned him while the soldiers take him away. Christ in this poem symbolises the soldiers while the disciples here stand for the comrades and relatives who have desert him to be taken away by the enemy soldiers. Showcasing men's pride, Owen in stanza two and three writes:

Near Golgotha strolls many a priest,  
And in their faces there is pride  
That they were flesh-marked by the Beast  
By whom the gentle Christ's denied.

The scribes on all the people shove  
And brawl allegiance to the state,  
But they who love the greater love  
Lay down their life; they do not hate.

The poem, "At a Calvary Near Ancre" is written in three quatrains of iambic tetrameter with regular rhyme scheme. The two quoted stanzas above have ABABCDCD as its rhyme scheme. In the poem, the war front is referred to as Golgotha which is a famous place where Christ was crucified. The priest in the poem refers to military commanders and politicians who in their pride prefer to sacrifice young men whose lamentations of agony in the trench they have refused to listen to. The next stanza is about jingoistic writers symbolised by

"scribes" in the poem. These scribes pay "allegiance to the state" and write falsely about war pushing especially the young men to go to the war front to brawl. There is the use of biblical allusion as Owen makes reference to the Book of John 15:13, which is about "greater love" being the love that someone lays down his life for friends. The effectiveness of the use of biblical allusion can be considered from two perspectives; on the one hand, the soldiers are those who have greater love because they sacrifice their lives for the nation, but Owen does not believe in sacrificing lives for flags. On the other hand, the priest and scribe whom in this case represent leaders and press men and women are seen as people without greater love, but rather people dominated by pride. They cannot keep their pride aside and lay down their lives for peace; instead their hubris and revenge have pushed them to sacrifice young men at the war front. Just as the in Bible the old priest and scribes killed Jesus to protect their positions and their old beliefs so too were the world leaders who at the time of the war killed many young men during the Great War because of their pride and believe in retaliation.

Furthermore, talking about how men in their pride encourage war, Sassoon wrote a number of poems in this light. In the poem, "They", Sassoon shows how religious men or Christian leaders encouraged the war because they feared the Germans were a threat to their belief. Political leaders, economic leaders, and religious leaders supported the war because they wanted to preserve their ideologies, commerce and religion. In the poem, "They", Sassoon writes:

The Bishop tells us: "When the boys come back  
 "They will not be the same; for they'll have fought"  
 In a just cause: they lead the last attack  
 "On Anti-Christ; their comrade's blood has bought  
 "New right to breed an honourable race."  
 They have challenged Death and dared him face to face."

"We're none of us the same!" the boys reply.  
 "For George lost both his legs; and Bill's stone blind;  
 "Poor Jim's shot through the lungs and like to die;  
 "And Bert's gone syphilitic: you'll not find  
 "A chap who's served that hasn't found *some* change."  
 And the Bishop said: "The ways of God are strange!"

The poem above is written in two sestets with alternating rhyme scheme. It has iambic pentameter as its rhythm. In the poem, the persona presents a Bishop, a religious leader, who is pro-war. This bishop encourages the war since he sees that the war is a "just cause"

because the enemy camp is a menace to his Christian faith. He believes that the blood of the dead soldiers will give birth to "an honourable race", which one can, therefore, infer that the blood Christ shed on the cross was not enough to cleanse humanity whereas Christianity holds that the sacrifice Christ took on the cross marks the end of any form of blood sacrifice for cleansing. The Bishop, therefore, contradicts the same religion he is propagating by not strictly following the scriptures. In his jingoistic stance, the Bishop sees the war as just and considers the Germans as anti-Christ who should be killed, which also means that the commandment "thou shall not kill" excludes anti-Christ according to this Bishop. The Bishop only sees the bravery of the soldiers whom they, the leaders, have sacrificed because of their beliefs.

In the second stanza, the persona presents some handicaps, disabilities and diseases they have brought from war. Some of them like George have come back lame, others like Bill blind, and Jim is at the mercy of death while Bert is infected. All the soldiers who served in the war sustained some injuries which are more fatal and debunking than the very much talk about heroism. The Bishop, in order to justify his support for the war consoles the deformed soldiers when he says that "the ways of God are strange." He shifts his guilt onto God as if it is God who declared the war and send these young men to the front. This, therefore, is an illustration that the home fronts played an active role in promoting the war because of their diverse reasons and beliefs. There was serious propaganda before and during the war. This propaganda was not only carried out by newspaper, but also through films and posters and it was targeted at men, challenging them to be "manly men". History teaches that films which venerated and encouraged war were projected in Britain. Posters were widely used to lure men to enlist in the army. This view is shared by Evan M. Caris in *British Masculinity and Propaganda during the First World War* who argues that the British government used large numbers posters and films to entice the British youths to join the army (9). This confirms that there was high rate of propaganda before and during the war.

During the war, fathers considered it some sort of pride having their children fighting in the war. This was partly due to pride on the one hand and also lack of knowledge of the realities of war on the other hand. As a result of stigmatization faced by able men who were not at the front, fathers would prefer to send their children into the army than being ridiculed for having weak sons. These men took pride when talking about their children at the front. This means that hubris was an ulterior motive for the home front as they were maniacal about the honour that was brought to their household for having their children fighting at the front. The

reaction of fathers towards war is demonstrated in Sassoon's poem entitled "The Fathers", quoted below:

Snug at the club two fathers sat,  
Gross, goggle-eyed, and full of chat.  
One of them said: "My eldest lad  
Writes cheery letters from Bagdad.  
But Arthur's getting all the fun  
At Arras with his nine-inch gun."

"Yes," wheezed the other, "that's the luck!  
My boy's quite broken-hearted, stuck  
In England training all this year.  
Still, if there's truth in what we hear,  
The Huns intend to ask for more  
Before they bolt across the Rhine."  
I watched them toddle through the door—  
These impotent old friends of mine.

The poem is a sonnet since it has fourteen lines, two stanzas of a sestet and an octave respectively. The reverse structure in this poem only serves to show how fathers have become irrational and obsessed with pride that they are elated to send their children to the war front only to boast of them. Fathers who are supposed to protect their children, but in this case they are those who exposed their children to death. Instead of their children burying them, they pride themselves burying their children in the name of honour, heroism and patriotism. The dominant style used in the first stanza is vivid description. The fathers are described as being "snug", they are "gross", they are "goggle-eyed", and they are "full of chats". These fathers enjoy themselves in a club and are satisfied that their children are soldiers fighting at the war front. One of them boasts of having two sons, one fighting in the capital city of Iraq, Baghdad, and another in the northern French City of Arras. The regular rhyme scheme used in the poem reflects how parents whose sons are combatants incessantly pride themselves to other parents whose children are not soldiers. Both fathers in the poem are jingoistic as they talk of war gloriously and present their children valiantly. In using personification in the expression "My eldest lad writes cheery letters from Bagdad" is being sarcastic towards these men described as "gross". Killing to these men is fun, which means that war is seen as a form of game their children are playing. The poet's attitude is satirical. He satirises these men who see war as fun whereas it claims lives. This shows how insensible war has transformed these men who do not see their own barbarism but only that of the Germans whom they called "Huns" meaning barbarians.

Furthermore, having a child fighting the war was considered luck since he would be seen as a hero or a patriot. The second father tells the first one that his children are lucky to be at the battlefield, but his own son is still in a training school in England. While conscription increased in England they only see that of the Germans as the second father says, "The Huns intend to ask for more/Before they bolt across the Rhine". This shows the massive recruitment in both camps and like in Britain, the German fathers also content themselves to send their children to the war front because of pride. To show how masculinity messages were used as major propaganda to boost conscription that was launched in 1915, Evan Caris in *British Masculinity and Propaganda during the First World War* posits that:

At the outbreak of the First World War, Britain had the smallest standing army of all the major belligerent nations. Committee to a volunteer force, the British in August of 1914 faced the pressing task raising a large enough army. In an effort to swell the military's rank, H.H. Asquith's liberal government erected several state apparatuses to produce propaganda. The most important office was the Parliamentary Recruitment Committee (or PRC). The PRC created staggering amount of propaganda during its 16-months existence. They issue 54 million posters, 5.8 million leaflets and pamphlets, organised 12 thousand meetings, and arranged 20,000 thousand speeches. Posters, which comprised the bulk of propaganda, bombarded the public with various images and messages compelling men to enlist. The purposed of the British propaganda poster during World War 1 was to instil the interest of the state within the subject, such as convincing men to enlist for the army. (10)

In the above quote culled from Caris, he demonstrates the various methods the British government used to raise conscription so as to meet up with the other major belligerent in the war. Millions of posters were printed, millions of leaflets, pamphlets and thousand of meeting organised only to call on the British men to join the army. This went a long way to force young men to enlist because they were made to understand that it was their duty to "protect their home, their nation and their fragile women and children left behind". This was a challenge to men as their manliness was put to test. It was followed by stigmatisation since men who did not join the army were regarded as weaklings.

To achieve realism, Sassoon writes about real names of people and places. This shows that what he writes about war is not fictional, but the reality both from the home front and the war front. The war was a world war and was fought in Iraq as well so mentioning places like Baghdad, Arras and Rhine and real names like Arthur backs the New Historicist tenet that literature is not created out of nothing. The history and geography at the time Sassoon wrote necessitated and gave room for his writings. War is, therefore, real but it is the perception of

this war that differentiated the home front from the war front. The comfort of the club in the poem, "The Father", contrasts the restlessness in the trenches at the war home. Ironically, fathers sent their children to the front due to pride, but in effect they lost pride and honour which they were seeking desperately since they proved themselves to be irrational, uncivilized, jingoistic and inhumane, which has nothing to do with honour as it rather dishonoured them. To show how fathers became uncivilized, Bertrand Russell in *The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell 1914-1944* posits:

And all this madness, all this rage, all this flaming death of our civilization and our hopes, has been brought about because a set of official gentlemen, living luxurious lives, mostly stupid, and all without imagination or heart, have chosen that it should occur rather than that any one of them should suffer some infinitesimal rebuff to his country's pride. No literary tragedy can approach the futile horror of the White Paper. The diplomatists, seeing from the first the inevitable end, mostly wishing to avoid it, yet drifted from hour to hour of the swift crisis, restrained by punctilio from making or accepting the small concessions that might have saved the world, hurried on at last by blind fear to loose the armies for the work of mutual butchery.(42)

Russell in the above quotes postulates that the blind support of the war was a kind of being insane because the "official gentlemen" encouraged the war while they let their lives of luxury, killed civilizations and hope. These so-called gentlemen were not intelligent nor did they have any compassionate heart. Pride made a conflict that could have been resolved differently to be poorly managed by people who were "mostly stupid and all without imagination of heart." Diplomats could have reached a consensus, but they allowed the war from the outset and only came in a hurry concession when they perceived the "inevitable end" of the war. This is evident in that the First World War was avoidable, but the belief in blind heroism, vain glory and sham patriotism from the home front made the war inevitable. It is rather pathetic that leaders both political and military would content to send reports of how valiant soldiers fought a war that needed a ceasefire. In "Devotion to Duty" by Sassoon, the King in the poem proudly says:

I was near the King that day. I saw him snatch  
And briskly scan the G.H.Q. dispatch.  
Thick-voiced, he read it out. (His face was grave.)  
"This officer advanced with the first wave,  
"And when our first objective had been gained,  
"(Though wounded twice), reorganized the line:  
"The spirit of the troops was by his fine  
"Example most effectively sustained."



He gripped his beard; then closed his eyes and said,  
 "Bathsheba must be warned that he is dead.  
 "Send for her. I will be the first to tell  
 "This wife how her heroic husband fell."

The poem quoted above is in the form of a sestet and quatrain written in iambic pentameter and rhyming couplet. This poem presents a king who praises a departed soldier in a valiant manner. The fallen soldier's wife is called Bathsheba. The use of a biblical allusion as reference is made to Bathsheba, Uriah's wife whom King David committed adultery with and when she became pregnant, King David ordered that her husband be sent to the forefront of the battlefield where he would be killed and he [King David] later on took Bathsheba as wife. (2 King 11) The King in the poem says; "I will be the first to tell/This wife how her heroic husband fell." Heroism was held by the home fronts in high esteem as one of the reasons for which they encouraged the war. The effectiveness of the biblical allusion lies in the fact that it shows that the old politician had ulterior motives to send young men to the front knowing that they would die while they, the old, would enjoy the comfort of life. The inference drawn from this is that the perception of war by the home front as portrayed by Owen and Sassoon is jingoistic since they believe that war brings glory, honour and pride and war crowns soldiers as patriots and heroes. However, the realities of war from the war front contrast the perception of war by the home front. Owen and Sassoon in their poetry present the realities of war via their experiences in the trenches as seen in the subsequent analyses.

### **The Realities of the War Front**

The reality of war was not consonant with the home fronts' beliefs of war. War front realities show that there is no honour, heroism and pride but pity, misery and destruction. In order to show the home fronts that their jingoistic stance and campaign was because they did not know the realities of the war front, Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon paint the images of the war in their poetry in the hope that those who did not fight the war, but propagated it will know what the battlefield looks like and what soldiers go through. In fact, the realities at the war front show that honour, heroism and patriotism are minimal glories that war brings, which has very little to offer to soldiers since men can still achieve these things without having to go to war. The First World War was unprecedented; the use of highly sophisticated weapons was never witnessed before in any war as weapons like shell and the military tactics of trench warfare increase the mystery of the soldiers and gave the war a different image

completely. Owen and Sassoon present these realities as a way of questioning the home fronts if the miseries of war are what they considered honourable, heroic or patriotic. Therefore, presenting the realities of trench warfare was a way of showing that war had nothing to do with honour and glory and this view will be examined in the subsequent paragraphs.

To begin with, at the war front many, soldiers were subjected to dangerous weapons that exposed them to miseries. The First World War came after the industrial revolution which gave way to the manufacturing of sophisticated weapons. Before the war, there was massive militarism in Europe, countries like Britain, France, Germany and Russia were embarked in arms race, manufactured big battleships such as dreadnoughts and there was equally massive conscription. Stephane Audoin-Rouzeau in "Weapons" posits that:

Massive bombing became the main tactical answer to the stalemate. Various forms of firing pursued various tactical objectives: reprisal fire, demonstration fire, trial fire, concentration fire, destruction or annihilation fire, adjustment fire, barrage or box barrage fire, harassing fire, and so on – not to mention the firing of shrapnel which exploded high up with devastating consequences, and the firing of toxic grenades which became ever more important as the conflict wore on. All in all, the new role of artillery made for a massive increase in guns and in shots. During the week-long allied bombing that preceded the Somme attack of 1 July 1916, 1.5 million shells were fired by British gunners (who expended enormous physical effort in doing so), which translates into an average of thirty shots for every square kilometre. In 1918, the allied offensives on the Western and Italian fronts were sustained by, on average, 5,000 to 8,000 artillery pieces; in this manner, the French army alone expended 2,200,000 shells between 10 March and 20 March 1918. (Weapons 2)

In the above quote, Audoin-Rouzeau opines that there was enormous bombing during the First World War and the belligerents used fires of various forms to achieve their desired annihilation target. There were even poisonous ammunition used and this brought untold destruction. Shell was the most dominant ammunition used by the Allied Forces. The poisonous gas that shell contained did not just destroy the human body but also the soil. Audoin-Rouzeau here paints the picture of the reality of war and the war front. Looking at these horrible realities Owen and Sassoon energetically exposed them through poetry so that the home front could have a correct picture of reality and not the partial jingoistic reports presented by journalists in complicity with politicians. The false reports gave the home fronts incorrect picture about the realities of war. Owen in "Strange Meeting" writes; "And of my

weeping something had been left/Which must die now. I mean the truth untold/The pity of war the pity was distilled." The home front had been deceived with lies concerning the war that it brings honour and glory to the fatherland and because of this "truth untold", many parents craving for glory and honour, blindly supported the war by pushing their children to the war front. As a result, committed writers took a mission to dismantle the lies and bring the reality of war to the home front. This reality is that war does not bring pride, honour or glory brather the only thing that war brings which the home fronts are ignorant about a pity. To show what the reality of war at the front is when it comes to weaponry, Owen in "Apologia Pro Promate Meo", writes:

By Joy, whose ribbon slips,—  
But wound with war's hard wire whose stakes are strong;  
Bound with the bandage of the arm that drips;  
Knit in the webbing of the rifle-thong.

I have perceived much beauty  
In the hoarse oaths that kept our courage straight;  
Heard music in the silentness of duty;  
Found peace where shell-storms spouted reddest spate.

The two stanzas above are culled from "Apologia Pro Promate Meo". The poem is written in nine quatrains with irregular metre and an alternate rhyme scheme. The title of the poem can be literally translated as "in defence of my poetry". And Owen's poetry is all about the pity of war which is actually what he is defending in his poetry. The above quoted stanza presents war as a risky venture in which soldiers sustain injury and are ensnared with "rifle-thong" and suffer from "shell-storm". Mentioned is made of "war's hard wire", "rifle-thong" and "shell-storm", which are ammunition that bring destruction as seen in the wounds sustained; arms that are bandaged because blood oozes from them and the profuse bleeding caused by gas shell. Here, it can be seen that the persona regrets the military vows that he took, which he now refers to as hoarse oaths meaning empty, dry and hash promises that boosted their courage only for their blood to be spilled. The use of hyperbole in the last line of the last stanza, "spouted reddest spate" refers to soldiers' blood that flows like flood showing that enormous lives have been lost in the war. Soldiers cannot be trapped with weapons like heavy rifles with which they suffer and war is said to bring honour. The home front is, therefore, challenged in their belief about heroism as war is rather shown as being pitiful and dishonourable.

The First World War can also be called "trench warfare". The war was different from the preceding wars because of the strategies that were used. Since literature is not based on the principle of *creatio ex nihilo*, new historicism holds that the happenings at the time a literary work is written necessitate the creations of that literary work. Owen and Sassoon as soldier-poets portray the realities of trench warfare in the poetry. This means that the realities of war gave birth to their poetry. The trench warfare developed out of fox holes and was widely used by both the Allied and the Central Powers. War experiences gave rise to war poetry, which via it, the realities of war was brought to the home front. Delphi Classics in *Wilfred Owen: Complete Works* posits that:

Regarded by many critics as the greatest of the War poets, Wilfred Owen created a brief body of poetry that would change the public's perception of war. Previously poets depicted war as a patriotic and grand affair, full of noble deeds and great adventures. But it was the work of Owen and other poets like Siegfried Sassoon that brought home the true nature of war, including the horrors of trench and gas warfare, as well as the sensitive portrayal of the soldiers' experiences of war.(Page 11)

From the above quote, Wilfred Owen is said to be one of the greatest war poets who presents to the public the reality of war as being horrific as compared to previous poets who presented war as being patriotic and glorious. Owen does not see any noble deeds in war neither does he consider it a great adventure. Owen and his mentor Sassoon used the opportunity in their poetry to show the verisimilitude of the horror of trench and gas warfare as their experiences of war showed them. If he did not fight the war, the vivid realities he painted in his poems would not have existed apparently. In his poetry as well as in his numerous letters to his mother, Owen portrays the plights of the soldiers in the trenches. In a letter written to his mother dated 16 January 1917 Owen writes:

I then had to go forth and find another dug-out for a still more advanced post where I left 18 bombers. I was responsible for other posts on the left but there was a junior officer in charge. My dug-out held 25 men tight packed. Water filled it to a depth of 1 or 2 feet, leaving say 4 feet of air. One entrance had been blown in & blocked. So far, the other remained. The Germans knew we were staying there and decided we shouldn't. Those fifty hours were the agony of my happy life... (Delphi Classics, 597)

The quoted letter shows how the trench is flooded and how the roots in which they work is mapped out by the bombardment of shell. The description of the environment is not friendly; places are dark, muddy or characterised by water-filled craters in which some soldiers have

drowned in them. Some cannot even move as they are stuck in mud while some only succeed to move when they let go of their artillery and clothes. He vividly describes this to his mother so that she can have a clear view of what the war front looks like. Wars have been presented as an honourable thing by warmongers, but Owen as one who lived the reality of war decides to purge his mind of the horrible experiences of war in his poetry and letters. The helpless soldiers take guard in dark trenches that are not just muddy but also flooded. The trenches were rat-infested, disease-infected and insect-infected. The rats found in the trenches feed on dead soldiers. Owen laments that people at home talk gloriously about war because they do not know what the soldiers go through in the trenches. In one of his poems, "The Dead-Beat", the persona laments:

He dropped, more sullenly than wearily,  
 Became a lump of stench, a clot of meat,  
 And none of us could kick him to his feet.  
 He blinked at my revolver, blearily.

He didn't seem to know a war was on,  
 Or see or smell the bloody trench at all...  
 Perhaps he saw the crowd at Caxton Hall,  
 And that is why the fellow's pluck's all gone—

Not that the Kaiser frowns imperially.  
 He sees his wife, how cosily she chats;  
 Not his blue pal there, feeding fifty rats.  
 Hotels he sees, improved materially;

Where ministers smile ministerially.  
 Sees Punch still grinning at the Belcher bloke;  
 Bairnsfather, enlarging on his little joke,  
 While Belloc prophecies of last year, serially.

We sent him down at last, he seemed so bad,  
 Although a strongish chap and quite unhurt.  
 Next day I heard the Doc's fat laugh: "That dirt  
 You sent me down last night's just died. So glad!"

The above stanzas are written in quatrains of iambic pentameter. It has a regular rhyme scheme of ABAB. The persona presents to us a soldier who is fatally wounded and seems to lose consciousness about what is going on in the front. He does not know that the war is still going on as he seems to have lost the senses of sight and smell of "the bloody trenches". The

persona says this soldier does not have courage again maybe because he has seen a crowd at Caxton Hall. This hall is a famous building in England, which is said to have held many suffrages and parliamentary meetings. The next stanza holds that the German monarch though he does not smile in grand style, his wife comfortably chats as "his blue pal" are feeding fifty rats in the trenches while there is improvement in infrastructure at home.

The poem "The Dead-Beard" presents to us the reality of war. By mentioning real places like Caxton Hall makes the readers to understand that war miseries are real. While this soldier is suffering in the trenches, the Kaiser, his wife and other people at home are comfortably increasing their material wealth. The regularity in the rhyme scheme of the poem shows the reality of war. In the last lines of the poem, the doctor announces the death of this soldier in a jovial tone. Looking at this morbid reality, the persona thinks that the fauna and flora have easy life compared to soldiers at the front. In "A Terre", Owen writes:

O Life, Life, let me breathe,—a dug-out rat!  
 Not worse than ours the existences rats lead—  
 Nosing along at night down some safe rut,  
 They find a shell-proof home before they rot.  
 Dead men may envy living mites in cheese,  
 Or good germs even. Microbes have their joys,  
 And subdivide, and never come to death.  
 Certainly flowers have the easiest time on earth.  
 "I shall be one with nature, herb, and stone",  
 Shelley would tell me. Shelley would be stunned:  
 The dullest Tommy hugs that fancy now.  
 "Pushing up daisies" is their creed, you know.  
 To grain, then, go my fat, to buds my sap,  
 For all the usefulness there is in soap.  
 D'you think the Boche will ever stew man-soup?  
 Some day, no doubt, if ...

The quoted stanza above culled from "A Terre", is written in sixteen lines dominantly in the iambic pentameter. This stanza equally has plants and animal images. The persona depicts the lives of soldiers in the trenches which he holds that rats are better to these troops since they are safe in their furrows compared to the vulnerable soldiers who in bondage and misery envy the free life of mice, gems and microbes. The persona does not only envy the insects but also envies flowers that he thinks have the easiest time on earth. The romantic poet, Shelly, valorises death as uniting him to nature, but this poem mocks some dull soldiers [Tommy] that have embraced Shelly's idea of glorious death for the fatherland. The persona groans at the thought that the Germans will use his corpse to make soap with it. It was a common belief

among the British troops that the Germans transformed corpses into soap. This view is also opined by Sassoon in the poem, "The Tombstone-Maker", when he says "I told him, with asymptomatic grin/That Germans boil dead soldiers down for fat." This is one of the realities of the war front that the home front was ignorant of.

Due to the horrible realities of trench warfare, some soldiers committed suicide. So much literature show that suicide instead declined during the war, but trench warfare was not without suicide records. In the poem "The Sentry", a sentry; that is, guard soldier who takes watch in the trenches, is presented as going through hell. The soldiers in the poem take watch in the rain and viscous mud and the stink of "whizz bangs". Unable to bear this despicable reality of war, the soldiers commit suicide as Owen writes; "Those other wretches, how they bled and spewed/And one who would have drowned himself for good." In this verse, soldiers are described as wretches due to their precarious conditions. While some of these soldiers bleed profusely, others because of the stench mentioned in stanza one, some throw up. One of the soldiers commits suicide by drowning "himself for good". This is one of the realities of war that pro-war poets have not presented in their poetry. In war, soldiers do not only commit suicide because of the pain they suffer but also because of the ones they perpetrate. This view is shown by Sarah Kane in *Blasted* when she presents a soldier who kills himself after committing a lot of atrocities. The soldier in Sarah Kane's *Blasted* says:

**Soldier:** Three of us.

**Ian:** Don't tell me.

**Soldier:** Went to a house just outside town. All gone. Apart from a small boy hiding in the corner. One of others took him outside. Lay him on the ground and shot him through the legs. Heard crying in the basement. Went down. Three men and four women. Called the others. They held the men while I fucked the women. Youngest was twelve. Didn't cry, just lay there. Turned her over and –

Then she cried. Made her lick me clean. Closed my eyes and shot her father in the mouth. Brothers shouted. Hung them from the ceiling by the testicles.

The dialogue above is culled from Kane's *Blasted* and presents a war-torn society. The fragmentation used in the sentence structure shows how fragmented the society is as a result of war. The two characters in the dialogue are in a hotel room while war is going on outside. The soldier wants to tell Ian what he and his fellow colleagues did the previous day, but Ian with the typical example of the home fronts' attitude, does not want to know the reality of war. This soldier apparently joined the war not out of patriotism but to carry out revenge as

he wishes to inflict the same pain that his girlfriend, Col, suffered in the hands of soldiers. This dialogue projects war crimes like rape and murder. This soldier recounts how he rapes four women, kill a twelve-year-old girl's father by shooting him in the mouth and hangs her brothers "from the ceiling by their testicles." As a bisexual, he later rapes Ian and sucks out his eyes since he can't find food to eat. Kane, therefore, presents a vivid image of what happened in war zones by holding the audience by the scruff of the neck while presenting the realities of the evil of war. After perpetrating these vicious, malicious and atrocious acts, the soldier commits suicide as one of the stage direction reports, "The soldier lies close to Ian the revolver in his hand. He has blown his own brain out." This soldier shoots himself after being traumatised with of the atrocities he has endured and committed. This shows that the realities of exposed soldiers to traumatic disorder

There are two causes for which soldiers commit suicide; on the one hand, they feel ashamed of the evil they have committed and being unable to face the society they have contributed to ruin, they decide to take their lives. On the other hand, soldiers also committed suicide because they cannot bear the hardships at the war front. While Sarah Kane projects the former Owen and Sassoon present the latter. The soldier in *Blasted* just like the soldier in Sassoon's "Suicide in the Trenches" blows out his brain while that in Owen's "The Sentry" drowns himself. Whether soldiers commit suicide because of what they have perpetrated on others or what they have suffered from others, the baseline argument is that if there is no war these suicide cases recorded with soldiers will not occur. The cause of suicide among soldiers is primarily caused by the presence of war.

Furthermore, the poetry of Sassoon also presents suicide as a horrified reality of war. To him, the battlefield is hell and to escape this hell some soldiers who cannot bear the hardship any longer kill themselves. He presents this subject of suicide in his poem, "Suicide in the Trenches" which goes thus:

In winter trenches, cowed and glum,  
With crumps and lice and lack of rum,  
He put a bullet through his brain.  
No one spoke of him again.

In the stanza above, the time setting of the poem is winter. The winter season is a symbol of death as winter is cold. The soldier in "winter trenches" is daunted as shown by his sour



countenance. The one piece of cloth that this soldier has is lice-infected and he lacks rum which he can drink to keep himself warm. The winter trenches used in the first line of stanza two, symbolizes and foreshadows death that comes in the third line. Unable to endure the cold trenches, lice and lack of rum, this soldier kills himself as the persona says; "he put a bullet through his brain." After he kills himself, nobody remembers him for the pain he has gone through to defend his fatherland. This means that the soldier is only remembered though neglected when he is alive. Soldiers are sent to the front without the necessary paraphernalia they need such as blankets. By mentioning that the soldier lacks rum, the readers are made to understand that there is insufficient food and drink at the war front.

In the last stanza, the poet's attitude is evidently that of bitterness as discerned when the third stanza begins with insult and condemnation of the whimsical crowd cheering soldiers going to the war front. The people are described as having "snug-faced" and "kindling-eye" showing they have warm comfortable countenances and passionate looks. The satire here is that the crowd has not perceived what the war is like neither do they know the misery that soldiers encounter at the war front. It is because of the hardships soldiers go through that some of them choose to kill themselves. Psychoanalytic theory has had considerable concerns with suicide; that is, what the underlining causes are, the manifestation of suicidal behaviours and repercussion as well as how suicidal instincts can be curbed. According to Elsa Ronningstam et al in "Psychoanalytic Theory of Suicide: Historical Overview and Empirical Evidence", posits that:

Suicide stems from combination of three wishes, he believed: the wish to kill, the wish to be killed, and the wish to die. **1** *The wish to kill* includes desires to attack, destroy or retaliate against another. These desires are not neutralized by positive feelings toward the other. **2** *The wish to be killed* is associated with masochistic tendencies, related to the desire to experience pain and suffering as well as submission to a destructive attack by the other. This wish is also associated with a desire to expiate guilt through suffering and self-inflicted punishment. **3** *The wish to die* includes the longing to die, which gives rise to preoccupations about the essence of death and dying.(150)

The above quote opines that they are three things that cause suicide. When someone is dominated by the desire to kill or revenge on someone or something, that will seem to be what defines the meaning of life to them even if it means killing themselves in case they cannot find someone to kill. People who are melancholic or sadistic are suicidal and people who Envy death over a life either because they are guilty for their actions or because they cannot face the hurdles of life, death becomes an option to them. This justifies why some

soldiers committed suicide; that is, those who were guilty of the pain they caused others or were unable to bear the pains others inflicted on them. The primary cause of suicide among soldiers is, therefore, indubitably caused by the morbidity of war. Sigmund Freud in "Mourning and Melancholia" opines that:

The distinguishing mental features of melancholia are a profoundly painful dejection, cessation of interest in the outside world, loss of the capacity to love, inhibition of all activity, and a lowering of self-regarding feelings to a degree that find utterance in self-reproaches and self-reviling, and culminate in the delusional expectation of punishment. This picture becomes a little more intelligible when we consider that, with one exception; the same traits are met with mourning. The disturbance of self-regard is absent in mourning; but otherwise the features are the same. Profound mourning, the reaction to the loss of someone who is loved, contains the same painful frame of mind, the same loss of interest in the outside world – in so far as it does not recall him – the same loss of capacity to adopt any new object of love (which would mean replacing him) and the same turning away from any activity that is not connected with thoughts of him. It is easy to see that this inhibition and circumscription of the ego is the expression of an exclusive devotion to mourning which leaves nothing over for other purposes or other interests. It is really only because we know so well how to explain it that this does not seem to us pathological. (244)

Freud in the above quote postulates that when someone is sadistic they become dejected and lukewarm about the things that happen around them. Also, people who are melancholic become dispassionate and this develops the feeling of fear and embarrassment about their behaviour giving rise to rejection, low self-esteem, self-hate, and self-reproach; that is, they blame themselves for their mishap of misdemeanour and the end result of this sadistic behaviour is the refusal or the disbelief of actual realities of life. Having the feelings that one does not belong to the whole either because of guilt or they are being unable to manage the difficulties of life, Freud says that this self-reproach "culminates in delusional expectation of punishment." This is where suicide finds its place because when the expected punishment does not come from the society for example, those expecting the punishments who are dominated by their narcissistic instinct will tend to carry out the punishment on themselves by committing suicide. Soldiers, therefore, commit suicide at the war front because of their sadistic behaviour. This is one of the realities of war that jingoistic home fronts were ignorant of or refused to accept it.

In his embittered tone, Sassoon is blunter and rawer when he paints what the war front realities look like in his epigrammatic writing style. War is presented as depriving soldiers of joy and freedom. Jon Stallworthy in the anthology, *The New Poetry Oxford Book of War Poetry* documents one of Sassoon's poem entitled "Christ and the Soldier", which presents a persona-soldier lamenting and pleading with Christ, the Christian Messiah, to end war because their condition at the battlefield is unbearable. In the first stanza, the persona describes a "struggled soldier" who knells and begs the guarded Christ to help him and Christ asks him [the soldier] to "behold" his hands and feet. This shows that Christ is right there at there at the battlefield seeing what soldiers go through, but He has not ceased the war. Sassoon in his sarcastic manner mocks warmongers who have the power to cease the war, but who instead guard themselves while troops suffer at the war front. In the second stanza, Christ is unhappy as he grieves about the situation, but does nothing about it. The third and fourth stanzas go thus:

The soldier chucked his rifle in the dust,  
And slipped his pack, and wiped his neck, and said—  
“O Christ Almighty, stop this bleeding fight!”  
Above that hill the sky was stained like rust  
With smoke. In sullen daybreak flaring red  
The guns were thundering bombardment’s blight.

The soldier cried, “I was born full of lust,  
With hunger, thirst, and wishfulness to wed.  
Who cares today if I done wrong or right?”  
Christ asked all pitying, “Can you put no trust  
In my known word that shrives each faithful head?  
In my known word that shrives each faithful head?  
Am I not resurrection, life and light?”(Qtd Stallworthy 285)

The quoted stanza above is written in sestets of iambic pentameter with an alternate rhyme scheme of ABCABC. These stanzas present a persona as he is tired of war; the presence of the pack symbolizes heavy loads of misery that soldiers go through at the battlefield. Not able to withstand war hurdles any longer, the soldier prays to "Christ Almighty" to "halt this bleeding fight". The use of personification in the expression "stop this bleeding fight" shows that many soldiers have bled and are still bleeding because of the war. Due to bombardment, there is heavy destruction. Through a simile, the persona compares the stained atmosphere to rust showing that the air at the war front is not good for health. In the second stanza, there is the manifestation of the psychoanalytical id, which propounds the display of primary drives that affect the psyche and the functions of the human personality exemplified in the use of the

first person point of view, which we can look at it from an autobiographical perspective to say that the persona could be Sassoon himself who confesses some instinctual drives such as hunger, thirst and the willingness to wed. This of course shows that there is lack of food and drink at the front and the soldier can certainly not get married at the front though he wishes to enjoy the fruits of marriage - sex. Despite his hardship and instinctive desires, nobody cares for him, but Christ take pity on him and assures him that if he is faithful, He [Christ] is the "resurrection, life and light", which means that Christ is assuring the soldier that he will bring life and light so long as he remains faithful to Him who is the resurrection. Sassoon makes use of biblical allusion as he culled from the Book of John 11:25 quoting Jesus saying: "I am the resurrection and the life whoever believes in me though he die yet shall he live." (English Standard Version) On the one hand, Sassoon assures Christian soldiers who have died that they have eternal life since they are believers in Christ. On the other hand, he uses the biblical allusion sarcastically to ridicule warmongers who send young men to die at the war front in the name of patriotism.

Summarily, this chapter has examined the perceptions that the home fronts have about war and has shown how the realities of war at the front contravene these perceptions. The chapter has demonstrated that the home fronts were largely jingoistic and supported war on the grounds that it brought heroism, honour and glory to soldiers, their families and their various nations. Pride and revenge was equally a reason for which the home fronts supported war. However, the realities of war as projected by Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon in their poems as well as critical and creative works examined reveal that the soldiers achieved little of the glory propagated by the home fronts. The chapter also reveals that Owen and Sassoon together with other soldier-poets took the engagement upon themselves to project the realities of war because journalists and politicians gave false reports on what was happening at the battlefield. It was because of the undiluted realities of war brought to the home fronts through the writings of the likes of Owen and Sassoon that the home fronts changed the perceptions on war.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE REPERCUSSIONS OF WAR

This chapter examines the consequences of war as exposed in the poetry of Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon. The chapter is segmented into two sections; firstly, we are going to examine the physical consequences, and then psychological repercussion of war on the soldiers. The First World War was the first of its kind that the world at large witnessed. The devastating effects of this War still have vestiges in the world today. Historians have presented the repercussions of the Great War, but these consequences as portrayed in the poetry of Owen and Sassoon are more appealing because of their first-hand experience with war. While Owen wrote to showcase the pity of war as in his words; "My subject is War and the pity of War. The poetry is in the pity," which shows that war evokes pity. Sassoon's poetry, on its part, depicts his anger toward the horrors that war brought on soldiers. We begin with the physical consequences and will follow simultaneously with the psychological consequences.

#### **Physical Consequences**

The piteous poetry of Owen opens the eyes of readers and critics as to what misery and death war brings to soldiers. While historians usually examine the consequences of war from a holistic perspective paying very little attention on the plight of the soldiers at the battlefield, as Adrian Bingham in "The Paper that Foretold the War": The Daily Mail and the First World War" posits that most soldiers were fed up with partial report of the war (4). The poetry of Owen shows that the effects of war on soldiers are not inconsequential. Owen's poetry, therefore, showcases the misery that war brings, which most often is accompanied by death of young soldiers. In delineating the physical casualties of war, Michael Walzer in *Just and Unjust War* writes:

Why is it wrong to begin a war? We know the answer all too well. People get killed, and often in large numbers. War is hell. But is it necessary to say more than that, for our ideas about war in general and about the conduct of soldiers depend very much on how people get killed and on who those people are. Then, perhaps, the best way to describe the crime of war is simply to say that there are no limits at either of these points: people are killed with every conceivable brutality, and all sorts of people, without distinction of age or sex or moral condition, are killed.... (22)

Walzer in the quote above postulates that due to the repercussion of war like massacre and indiscriminate killing, it is wrong to wage a war no matter the severity of a conflict. The logic of war, which is irrefutable, is that the consequences of war make it hell especially as the cruelty of war undeniable. War in all its ramifications brings untold suffering to soldiers as well as the civilians. Before the First World War, war was seen as heroic venture because combatants used weapons like swords and daggers and the casualties, somehow, were limited to the battlefield, but with modern warfare, with sophisticated weapons like artilleries and machine gun cause casualties that go beyond the war front as civilians are killed in their numbers. It is these physical consequences that Owen and Sassoon paint in the poetry as a way to call leaders attention to these consequences as they also refer to war as hell. Sassoon in "Remorse" says; "...O hell/He thought - there's things in war one dare not tell." The battlefield is Hades and the repercussions of war are beyond expression of mouth.

The poem "Exposure" by Owen is made up of eight cinquains with regular rhyme scheme. The first four lines of each stanza have the rhyming pattern of ABAB. The persona laments the temporal and emotional pains they go through at the war front. He says their "brains ache" as they have been in the snow for long and cold bites them. They are exhausted and traumatised throughout the night. The persona uses personification and metaphor in the first line of the first stanza when he says: "Our brains ache, in the merciless iced east winds that knives us..." By referring to ice, which is inanimate as merciless, the persona wants the reader to capture their helplessness as they seem not to have another option, but to stand in the snow. The wind bites them and they feel it as if they are being stabbed by knives; this metaphor depicts the misery of the soldiers. The regularity in rhyme scheme emphasises the unchanging nature of daily life in the trenches. The last line of stanza five is a rhetorical question; "Is it that we are dying?" This question stresses the misery only make the soldiers to think of death and also the effect of emphasising the apparent pointlessness of the war going on. However, the persona opens stanza six with; "Slowly our ghosts drag home..." "Home" can mean hometown or to heaven where they will be free from misery. The persona of "Exposure" actually paints the misery of soldiers in stanza three when he says:

The poignant misery of dawn begins to grow ...  
 We only know war lasts, rain soaks, and clouds sag stormy.  
 Dawn massing in the east her melancholy army  
 Attacks once more in ranks on shivering ranks of gray,  
 But nothing happens. (44)

The stanza above shows that the coming of dawn only brings more misery because it reminds them that the war continues and they can do nothing to stop it. Dawn is personified as it brings together soldiers that are not happy about their plight. The soldiers attack their enemy camps under thick grass while they tremble due to the gloom that may befall them. Their greatest fear is death, but the speaker says; "But nothing happens." The thing that does not happen is that none of them has died so far, nothing happens also means that there is no development of any kind as the war continues and their misery is prolonged. Sarah Burk in "Exposure" analyse the monotony and meaningless of the following words:

Owen's "Exposure" is a poem about war, yet it focuses very little on actual fighting. Instead, its speaker zooms in on the physical and psychological suffering of soldiers huddled in freezing, muddy trenches (like those used during WWI, in which Owen himself served). In this way, the poem exposes both the trauma and sheer monotony of warfare. What's more, the poem presents these struggles as ultimately meaningless; as days and night merge into each other, the speaker repeatedly insists that "nothing happens"—implicitly criticizing war for its futility and unnecessary suffering. The speaker presents the day-to-day reality of war as at once boring, stressful, and deeply draining; there is no glory or heroism to be found in these trenches. The soldiers must remain vigilant throughout the night, so much so that their "brains ache" from watching for any potential dangers. They are "wearied" and "confuse[d]" but have no way to alleviate their struggles. (Burk, LitChart)

Burk in the above quote posits that "Exposure" handles physical pain that soldiers experiences at the war front. The freezing and murky trenches make life unbearable to the troops. By constantly using the refrain, "but nothing happens", it shows the futile nature of war. Burk also notes that the monotony and meaninglessness of war shows there is nothing glorious or heroic about war. The consequence of war as portrayed in this poem is that war exposes soldiers to physical and psychological misery, which we shall handle later in the next section of this chapter and many of them end up dying in the merciless iced wind.

The persona in Owen's "Disabled" uses the omniscient voice to narrate the predicament of a soldier who has lost both legs in war. The speaker says the soldier "Shivered in his ghastly suit of Greg." The word "ghastly" shows that the soldier is not only dismayed, but looks horrifying like a ghost. This of course shows that he is not well catered for. The persona reminisces when the soldier was young and exuberant before the war and how in the town girls looked at him with admiration, but now that he has sacrificed his life to defend his country, he cannot feel these girls' waist or their warm hands any longer. The cruelty of war

makes the speaker and the suffering soldier to seek asylum in the past when there was not just peace, but comfort too. These girls look and touch the legless soldier with contempt and without showing him concern. Furthermore, the persona says when this soldier is taken home, people do not welcome him with the enthusiasms that they cheer a goal of football. Despite the miseries the soldier goes through at the war front, his fellow countrymen venerate a game more than him who has sacrificed his sanctified life to give them freedom which they now enjoy in recreation. In the last stanza the speaker says:

Now, he will spend a few sick years in Institutes,  
 And do what things the rules consider wise,  
 And take whatever pity they may dole.  
 To-night he noticed how the women's eyes  
 Passed from him to the strong men that were whole.  
 How cold and late it is! Why don't they come  
 And put him into bed? Why don't they come? (68)

The persona in the quoted stanza above makes us to understand that the sick soldier will be admitted in a military hospital where he will be subjected to rules of this institution whether favourable or not. While at the hospital, the nurses (who are women) neglect him and instead attend to strong men who are complete. These women are insensitive towards the legless soldier since they know he serves no purpose to them as the legless soldier is vulnerable. It is late and places are cold, but nobody cares to carry this soldier to bed. The rhetorical question in the last line stresses the fact that this soldier is neglected despite his predicament. This is the pity Owen's poetry portrays. The hospital here is a miniature of the society. The point here is that soldiers are cheered to the front, but when they come back as handicaps they are ridiculed. Hence, the soldiers face the horrors of war at the battlefield and face cruelty from those whom they have sacrificed their lives to save when they return as "half-humans". If nurses who are trained to be compassionate towards patients treat them without care, it means the society as a whole see handicapped soldiers as pariahs. The regularity in rhyme scheme shows the constant misery soldiers endure both at the front and at home. The repercussion of war as portrayed in this poem is rejection of handicapped war veterans. These soldiers will not face this rejection if not because of the war, which has transformed them to this disabled state

Furthermore, the thematic concerns handled by Owen depicts the miseries faced at the battlefield, but consequences war of do not end at the war front. In Chinua Achebe's poetry collection entitled *Christmas in Biafra and Other Poems*, he presents how civilians especially



women and children are vulnerable and miserable in war as some of these women are rendered childless while the children become motherless. One of Achebe's war poems that captures the misery and cruelty of war is "Refugee Mother and Child". As from the title of the poem, a woman who is a refugee has run away from war and because of the love she has for her child; she carries the child along with her while they seek refuge.

In poem "Refugee Mother and Child" is malnutrition possibly due to famine that comes as a result of the war. What justifies this claim is that the children are said to have "washed-out ribs" and "dried-up bottoms", which means that they are not properly fed. If the narrator can see the children's tiny ribs, it means they do not have enough flesh to conceal their ribs. The children are starving; the persona says "steps behind blown empty bellies." The use of alliteration in this quoted line means that children continuously go with empty stomachs, and they only struggle to move around probably in search of what they can eat. If there is food, their mothers will probably feed them, but there is none either because the war has destroyed crops or because they have run away from their natal homes leaving everything behind. In addition, other mothers in the poem are contrasted to the refugee mother. While the refugee mother shows love and care for her child, other mothers neglect their children. The question begging for an answer is; why do these mothers neglect their children? It can be that they see no need nurturing children who war will soon claim their lives. The refugee mother is described as "ghost" to show that she has lost her human features or war will soon claim her life as it is just a matter of time. The persona uses innuendo when he refers to the child's head as a skull, which of course demonstrates that the child does not look healthy. While those at the battlefield have their own gruesome repercussions, those at home are not left unaffected.

To further explain the horrors of war, "Anthem for Doomed Youth" a sonnet by Owen in which the persona presents to us a misfortune youth. Looking at the title of the poem, there are three lexical terms that call for interpretation; the word "anthem" means a praise song usually sung for heroic deed. Owen in a preface to his poetry says that his poetry is not about heroes, but here, he sings praises to a doomed youth. However, the title is sarcastic seen in the analyses of the poem. Rehana Kousa et al. in "Expressionist Analysis of Wilfred Owen's Poems: Anthem for Doomed Youth, Dulce Et Decorum Est, A Terre and Strange Meeting" note that the title of a poem brings contrast because anthem is songs of praise while "doomed youth" suggest that the soldier is suffering and is by war doomed to die. They conclude that the title mocks at the patriotic perception of war (70). They stress that Wilfred Owen, in

“Anthem for Doomed Youth” has used simile to narrate the soldiers’ death in the battle. It also portrays the Western Front as an abattoir. By its usage, Owen shatters all the previous beliefs of glory, honour and self-worth. He castigates all the patriotic perception of warfare. The cattle image dehumanizes the feelings of human beings who are treated as cattle. Kousa et al. posits that "Anthem for Doomed Youth" contrast church bells with horrible experience of war where soldiers die like cattle. The next term is "doomed" which functions as adjective means "certain to suffer" and this misfortune befalls a "youth" or a young soldier. This soldier represent majority of the fallen soldiers who are youths. The poem goes thus:

What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?  
 Only the monstrous anger of the guns.  
 Only the stuttering rifles’ rapid rattle  
 Can patter out their hasty orisons.  
 No mockeries now for them; no prayers nor bells,  
 Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs,—  
 The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells;  
 And bugles calling for them from sad shires.

What candles may be held to speed them all?  
 Not in the hands of boys, but in their eyes  
 Shall shine the holy glimmers of good-byes.  
 The pallor of girls’ brows shall be their pall;  
 Their flowers the tenderness of patient minds,  
 And each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds.

The first stanza begins with a rhetorical question in which the persona compares fallen soldiers to cattle. This means that human life has been reduced to an equal scale to that of animals. The persona makes us to understand that only sound of the gun can soften the communion of these soldiers. Nothing can bring back the fallen soldiers be it prayers, bells or choirs that sing like mournful sound of missiles. The line "Only the stuttering rifle's rapid rattle" contains alliteration and assonance. These sound devices are used to capture cacophonous gun sounds that accompany the fallen soldiers.

In the second stanza, the speaker asks another question as to whether the candles can bring the fallen soldiers back. These candles that blaze in boys’ hands and people shine in beautiful dresses while singing anthem for the doomed youth. The girls are pale and are clad in funeral cloth. They accompany the death soldier with tender flowers. Owen is being sarcastic as young men are being sacrificed in the name of war only for them to die and guns fired to accompany them to their graves and people sing praise song to show that he was hero. One

can ponder whether heroes meant for graves. How many of those spreading flowers or firing gun care about the doom youth? Owen ridicules warmongers who sacrifice young men for political greed. The consequent of war as seen in this poem is that soldiers are butchered like cattle. This, therefore, means that the poem paints a bad image of war and not something that calls for praise as the title suggests. The title of the poem is therefore ironic where "anthem" can be replaced with "dirge" to mean mourning the dead young soldier.

Moreover, the misery of war is also depicted in another of Owen's poem; "Dulce Et Decorum Est". The persona of the poem who is also a soldier presents the first stanza thus:

Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,  
 Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge,  
 Till on the haunting flares we turned our backs  
 And towards our distant rest began to trudge.  
 Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots  
 But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame; all blind;  
 Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots  
 Of tired, outstripped Five-Nines that dropped behind.

The above stanza paints a vivid misery that soldiers endure at the war front. The soldiers do not look like human beings; they are presented as being beggars. They are tired, walk "knock-kneed" and the cold weather has inflicted them with cough and they are compared to coughing like old women or witches. They have walked a long distance with "sacks" and they have not had time to sleep reason for which some of them sleep walk while others have lost their boots and are barefoot. These ones are even lucky because others are lame, some blind and are exhausted. Some of the soldiers who cannot walk because of tiredness (about fourteen of them) are abandoned and nobody knows what their fate will be. This stanza shows that the war causes physical pain as a result of tiredness and sleeplessness.

The hardship continuous in the second stanza as the enemy camp throw gas shells and one of them who does not succeed to run or wear his gas mask in time inhales the gas and that is how death embraces him. The persona says he sees this soldier "guttering", "chocking" and "drowning", but he too is helpless to rescue his comrade. The persona says the fallen comrades are thrown like an object in a wagon. This soldier has "white eyes" and a "hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin." This presents the miserable condition of helplessness and hopelessness of this soldier. If the reader and the leaders perceive these horrors of war and the incurable pain that war breeds; people will not take courage to deceive "children" about the vain glories or heroism that many think war brings. The persona uses the word "children

ardent for desperate glory" to first of all mean that those who are lured and conscripted are youths. Secondly, he also uses "children" to mean that those who are encouraged to join the war do so naively just like children since they have no experience about war or life yet. What is therefore, "the old lie" according to Owen, the Latin expression; "dulce et decorum est pro patria mori" is one of Horace's best known lines, which Thomas R. Arp and Greg Johnson in *Perrine's Sound and Sense: an Introduction to Poetry* say it means "it is sweet and becoming to die for one's country" (7). This is what Owen considers an old lie because the young should not be deceived to die for warmongers who push them to the front yet enjoy the comfort of their homes. Ali Gunes in "Wilfred Owen Re-Visited: A Psychoanalytic Reading of War, Memory, and Crisis of Identity in Wilfred Owen's Poem *Mental Cases*" writes:

In his poems such *Futility*, *Dulce et Decorum est*, *Disabled*, *Exposure*, *Strange Meeting*, and *Anthem for Youth*, he not only represents his first-hand keen experience and observation of the horror of the war on the front, as well as his rigorous anger concerning the irrationality and uselessness of the war which, he believes, obviously results in the death of innocent people and destruction of human civilization, but he also deals with how experience and memory, along with its traumatic outcome stored in the unconscious during the war, incessantly revisits the psyche of the veteran soldiers, shatters and eventually leads them to a sense of crisis in their identities. (169)

Gunes stresses that Owen's experiences of war horrors resulted in him having an exasperated attitude war, which he wrote to decry its futility of war that has claimed innocent people and destroy civilisation. Trench warfare was famous during the First World War. The setting of the poem is at the war fronts and vivid description of soldiers and the environment in which they are found captures realism. New historicism holds that realistic setting of literary works are proofs that geography is factor that influence writers. A non-combatant poet will not be very vivid in description like Owen and Sassoon, which show that their experiences at the war front is factor that influenced their writings. Backing the tenet of new historicism that the social happen around an author influence what they write. So, if Owen could paint physical effects of war such as death it was due to the fact that he experienced it.

"Dulce Et Decorum Est" is written in five unequal stanzas. The first stanza is an octave, the second is sestet, the third is a couplet, and the fourth has twelve lines. The first stanza has a regular rhyme scheme of ABABCDCD. This regular rhyme scheme portrays the incessant pain and misery that war brings. The poem also has a regular rhythm of iambic pentameter.

This is corroborated by Sanja Koricanac in “A Psychoanalytic Profile of Wilfred Owen as Reflected in Dulce Et Decorum Est and Strange Meeting” who says:

A closer look at the poem’s pentameter shows it doesn’t follow the smooth rules of iambic patterning and that the unfinished title line does not receive a new refreshing solution, it is as if Owen sadistically condemns the reader to wobble in an old Lie until the abrupt ending. No matter how surprisingly appalling the images may appear, the first stanza rhyme scheme ABABCD CD transmits the steadiness of tough military life. The rhyme pattern remains almost unchanged in the second stanza: the pattern EFEFGE emphasises perceived similarities of the words giving the innuendo of imbalance and dissipation: *fumbling* (line 9), *time* (line 10), *stumbling* (line 11), *lime* (line 12) and *drowning* (line 14), while *light* (line 13), the symbol of life and hope, is the only intruding word not belonging to the dreary bunch. (172)

The above quote asserts that the poem’s rhythm is dominantly written iambic pentameter. It also asserts that the title of the poem is a satire to readers and leaders who believe the "old lies". Koricanac posits that the regular metre portrays the harsh realities of war. The word "drowning" in the last lines of stanza two and three show the incessant hardship of war. Owen therefore parodies Horace to mock him because to him (Owen) there is nothing honourable in young men losing their lives for their country; he calls it an old lie because it is a manipulation that young people are subjected to by those who do not have experience about war. Tactfully, the persona of the poem is a soldier, whom we can consider to be Owen himself who has experience about war and knows the physical realities of war to be gruesome and not heroic or honourable.

Siegfried Sassoon's poetry though dominated by indignation, also handles the physical repercussion of war. Just like his friend and mentee, Owen, Sassoon's poetry depicts how miserable soldiers are at the front. Sassoon openly protested against war because of the compassion he shared with his fellow comrades and he did so hoping that the protest could influence the leaders to call the war to a ceasefire. The morbid condition of soldiers at the front made him to clamour for a redeemer, someone or a divine being like Christ to help them out of the morbidity. In his poem "The Redeemer", the persona delineates the grisly situation of war. The first stanza goes this:

Darkness: the rain sluiced down; the mire was deep;  
It was past twelve on a mid-winter night,  
When peaceful folk in beds lay snug asleep:  
There, with much work to do before the light,

We lugged our clay-sucked boots as best we might  
 Along the trench; sometimes a bullet sang,  
 And droning shells burst with a hollow bang;  
 We were soaked, chilled and wretched, every one.  
 Darkness: the distant wink of a huge gun.

The above stanza presents soldiers who are copiously drenched by rain as they carry out their duties in thick mud at midnight. It is this horrifying condition presented in stanza one, which is written in iambic pentameter with a regular rhyme scheme of ABABBCCDD, that makes the soldiers to be in desperate need of a redeemer. The regular rhyme scheme of the poem delineates the constant misery that combatants encounter at the front. In this stanza, Sassoon brings in the notion of "them-versus-us", which is very eminent in his poetry. He presents how civilians, "folks" enjoy peaceful sleep in cosy beds while soldiers are miserably dragging their "Clay-sucked boots" in the mire. While they are struggling in the rain, bullets fly in the air showing that they are not safe as they can meet death at anytime. Bombs are thrown and this makes them to be terrified. The speaker who is also a soldier says the rain soaks them and they feel miserable

In the third stanza, the persona says it is not Christ because the unknown person does not have a "thorny crown", but a "woollen cap". "Thorny crown" here is a metaphor for Christ because Christ is believed by Christians to have been crucified with a thorny crown. The persona informs us that the soldier is English and he is a brave man who before the war, cherished sport and music, whereas at the front he takes guard all day long. The soldier must bear "horror and pain not discontent to die." Litotes is used here to mean that the soldier is happy to die. This of course, means that the pain is too much to endure and death comes as liberation to the miserable soldier. The soldier's movement shows that he is tired as he throws the planks he is carrying. As the persona and other soldiers continue their struggle in the ditch, one of them calls on Christ to help him as he is stuck in the mire. The stanza ends with; "Mumbling: O Christ Almighty, now I'm stuck!" By "mumbling", it means that the soldier cannot speak audibly due to tiredness. The poem ends in suspense for we don't know whether Christ rescues the soldier or if the soldier dies there. In the end of it all, this soldier meets redemption because if Christ has not rescued him, death will rescue him since to most soldiers death is liberation from hell – battlefield. One thing that is certain, which Sassoon portrays in this poem, is the miserable condition of the soldiers seeking for redemption..

In addition to the misery, death is a physical consequence of war eminent in Sassoon's poetry. "Enemies" presents a speaker who wanders lonely in a strange place where there is no sun.

The speaker calls this "sunless place", 'Armageddon' and Blooms in *Poets of World War 1: Rupert Brook and Siegfried Sassoon* says Armageddon means, the "after-world." (46) The speaker says though this unnamed soldier does not look troubled, he still desires to be on the earth; the life-support planet. This man is suddenly engulfed by bulky Germans whom the speaker killed because they had killed the lonely wandering man. The speaker says when they had killed his comrade; he could not control his outburst so he killed them. The man in the after-world stares at the Germans who have surrounded him imagining why. The German soldiers inform the man that the persona killed them for his own sake. These German soldiers are said to be "patient", "stupid" and "sullen ghost". The wandering soldier does not know what to tell the German soldiers, but he only smiles and everything goes well with his enemies-turn-friends because his smile liberates them from hell, which is war front.

The poem, "Enemies" presents the battle field and the earth at large as hell, a place where there is enmity. The reconciliation in the after world helps to portray this world as being inharmonious. Sassoon in this poem shows that at the war front soldiers are compelled to be enemies, but there is one thing that binds them or that they have in common; suffering and death. Upon death, these soldiers kill the enmity that existed among them because they have left hell (the earth) for heaven, a place where enmity does not exist. Sassoon's "Enemies" share the same thematic concern with Owen "Strange Meeting" in which enemy soldiers reconcile in the world beyond. This claim is vouched by Harold Bloom in *Poets of World War 1: Rupert Brook and Siegfried Sassoon* when he posits that:

"Enemies" is one of Siegfried Sassoon's earlier poems, dated January 6, 1917. He wrote it after a day's hunting while he was on leave. Like Owen's "Strange Meeting," "Enemies" confronts the question of the responsibility of killing in war. In the poem, a dead soldier finds himself in Armageddon, the after-world, where he is confronted by his recently slain enemies. In "Strange Meeting" the narrator faces an enemy whom he himself has killed, but in "Enemies" the "hulking Germans" are killed by another man, as revenge for the death of the soldier. Some critics have seen the poem as a visionary homage to Sassoon's remembered love for David Thomas, who was killed by a stray bullet on March 18, 1916, or for his brother Hamo, who was killed at Gallipoli on November 1, 1915. (46)

The quote above culled from Bloom avers that Sassoon's "Enemies" shares a similar thematic concern with Owen's "Strange Meeting" because both handle the accountability of killing in war. While in Owen's "Strange Meeting" it is the persona who encounters an enemy he killed. In Sassoon's "Enemies", the dead soldiers are not killed by the persona, but his comrade who

wants to avenge the persona's death. These two poems demonstrate that there is murder and counter-murder at the war front. However, despite their enmity at the front, these soldiers become friends in the after world because they are free from hell according to Sassoon's stance in "Enemies". As evident in the poem, vengeance is very common at the battlefield as Bloom also opines that when Sassoon's friend and brother were killed, he vowed revenge.

In Sassoon "Attack", the persona presents soldiers who are in desperate need of relief. In this one stanza poem of thirteen lines with rhyme scheme of AABACBDCDEFFE, we are presented a brownish grey, "dun"; soldiers who walk along ridges and the scorching sun burns them. These soldiers are suffocating from smoke. Even the physical environment does not favour them as the persona says they are threatened by the frightened slope. These soldiers carry water containers that increase their loads and they cannot walk fast. There is an artificial obstruction such as dam that roars beside these soldiers who due to tiredness stop awkwardly. They have "bombs", "guns", "shovels" and "battle-gear" and they struggle hard to climb the slope to meet a blazing fire. The soldiers are pale and they are terrified as they have left their trenches and climb the slope possible to attack the adversaries. Though tired, they are helpless as they cannot retreat and they put a surreptitious or stealthy took while their fists are firm. They struggle in mud and the persona wishes that this misery should stop because they cannot endure it any longer.

The poem "Attack" portrays the physical misery of war. This shows how soldiers suffer under the sun, walk in the mud and are terrified and petrified, carry heavy loads, and walk through ridges with pale faces. This hardship makes them to lament and pray that the war should cease. John Johnston is quoted in Harold Bloom's *Poets of World War I Rupert Brooke and Siegfried Sassoon* as he interprets the last five lines of the poem in the following words:

The fellowship of suffering completes Sassoon's identification with the men he must lead "To the foul beast of war that bludgeons life." Unlike Owen, he describes the demoralizing psychological effects of battle more often than wounds or physical anguish, and for the first time poetry reveals what modern scientific violence can do to men's minds. Sassoon's soldiers are numb with fear or horror, or they break down completely under the prolonged emotional strain of trench fighting... (Qtd in Bloom, 69-70)

Johnston in the above quote purports that Sassoon's poem describes the "demoralizing psychological effects" of war more than he describes the physical wounds as Owen does. Sassoon poetry as seen in "Attack" shows how modern violence affects human minds. While



fighting in the trenches, Sassoon's soldiers are traumatised with fear and horror that sometime render them insensible. This claim of course shows that war has unbearable consequences on the soldiers as presented by Sassoon. The environment too is a great obstacle to soldiers as even nature does not have mercy on them. Harold Bloom in *Poets of World War I Rupert Brooke and Siegfried Sassoon* opines that:

The poem's central focus is that most desperate of all battle procedures: "going over the top," that moment when "time ticks bland and busy on their wrists." In "Attack," the landscape itself seems to be conspiring against the men. The dawn, which should bring the hopeful promise of a new day, here merely brings the men that much closer to possible death, with the sun "smouldering" through smoke that hides the "menacing scarred slope." The movement of the men themselves is awkward and almost clownish; the tanks "creep and topple forward" and the men are "clumsily bowed." (65)

Bloom posits that the soldiers' gloom, despondence and helplessness augmented by nature that seems to conspires against. Daybreak reminds of the soldiers of their predicament and the eventuality of their demise and there are also threatened by smokes from explosions. The theme of misery and death are very much present in Owen and Sassoon's poetry. However, their poetry shows that only soldiers suffer from these effects of war, which is not altogether true. These soldiers who are killed have parents, some have wives and children and all have relations who are not left willy-nilly to the consequences of war as Owen and Sassoon present them. As soldier-poets, they obviously present first-hand impacts of war on soldiers. A critical look at war poetry shows that while soldier-poets mostly present consequences of war on the soldiers, civilian war poets like Thomas Hardy and Chinua Achebe look more about the consequences war have on the society at large. This view can be seen in Hardy's poem entitled "Channel Firing". The poem "Channel Firing" published in Thomas Hardy's 1914 collection, *Satires of Circumstance* is war a poem written before the First World War while militarism and arms race increased in Europe.

The last stanza of the poem begins with the word "again" which is meant to show that war, symbolised by the presence of "guns" has been a problem affecting the world at large and not only soldiers. This stanza mentions the real geographic location in the United Kingdom to show that war is real and the consequences are felt in these places. The poem "Channel Firing" is a war poem that is also full of ironic religious undertones. The poem presents that humans are helpless and hopeless not only in the presence of war, but before a vengeful God who promises hell to both the living and the dead in the poem. Just like in many of his poems, Hardy presents God as a sadist who cannot save his creations from the cruelty of war

though He is omnipotent. There are literary devices like the alliteration in the first line of stanza one "great guns". The constant repetition of /g/ shows the constant havoc that war brings. The expression; "great guns" also shows that humans have invented sophisticated weapons, yet they are not aware of the destruction these weapons can bring. The poem also asserts that war does not cause pain only to human, but animals like dog, mouse, cow and worm are also appalled and affrighted. This means that every individual and nations are helpless before war. Hardy like Owen and Sassoon laughs sarcastically at the leaders whom He considers insane. Unlike Owen and Sassoon, Hardy in "Channel Firing" demonstrates that war affects everyone and not just soldiers. Physical consequences such as miseries and death are very present in the poetry of Owen and Sassoon. We shall now focus on the psychological consequences of war.

### **Psychological Stress**

War traumatises most of Owen's personae. Psychoanalysis holds that the unconscious mind reserves thoughts, feelings and experiences that are unpleasant or that have enormous psychological impact on anybody who has these experiences. Some of thoughts soldiers repressed is anger and feeling like fear and resentment directed towards politician military commanders that have exposed them to danger. These repressed thoughts affect them mentally. This view is opined by Cherry when he asserts that:

The unconscious mind is a reservoir of feelings, thoughts, urges, and memories that outside of our conscious awareness. Most of the contents of the unconscious are unacceptable or unpleasant, such as feelings of pain, anxiety, or conflict. According to Freud, the unconscious continues to influence our behaviour and experience, even though we are unaware of these underlying influences. (Cherry qtd in Gunes, 170)

In the above quote, Cherry opines that the unconscious mind reserves emotions and thoughts that are not known by the conscious mind. What is found in the unconscious is repressed because it is considered to be a taboo or disgusting. However, Freud posits that the repressed desires found in the unconscious mind continuously influence humans' daily behaviour unconsciously. Many of the personae in Owen's and Sassoon's respective poems like "Dulce Et Decorum Est" and "Repression of War Experience" show how soldiers are psychotic. The psychotic disorder of fear and mistrust subjected many soldiers to trauma. The fear of death, conspiracy and mistrust of comrades bred gloom, which caused many combatants to be melancholic and also preoccupied about their fate. Fear and sadness brought hysteria; that is, uncontrollable mental disorder that in some grievous cases drove some soldiers maniac.

Some troops stop experiencing this hysteria when they are given furlough. Depression and fear of death or sustaining a wound give rise to trauma. This claim is corroborated by Karl Abraham in *Psychoanalysis and the War Neuroses* when he notes:

The complete instability of many war neurotics, their disconcerting depression, their propensity to thoughts of death, find further explanation in a particular effect of the trauma. Many of the neurotically disposed persons, up to the moment where the trauma upsets them, have supported themselves only through an illusion connected with their narcissism, namely, though the belief in their immortality and invulnerability. The effect of an explosion, a wound, or things of a like nature suddenly destroys this belief. The narcissistic security gives way to a feeling of powerlessness and the neurosis sets in. (30)

In the above quote, Abraham posits those frequent thoughts of death cause trauma and this traumatic disorder upsets soldiers. He notes that this happens because these soldiers have had the false belief that they are immortal and invulnerable, but when they witness an explosion or sustained an injury, the belief of immortality and invulnerability is shattered. At the battlefield where the soldiers realise that they are impotent, they become disillusioned when the narcissistic security they had believed is myth. Realising that they are after all not unconquerable gives rise to neurosis. From this observation, therefore, we can argue that the young soldiers did not receive adequate psychological training before being sent to the front. Many soldiers went to the front with very little experience believing that they were invincible, but the slightest paranoia drove many of them neurotic. To support this argument, Ernest Simmel in *Psychoanalysis and the War Neuroses* notes; "It is now explicable why the war neurosis of the officer does not generally exhibit such gross symptoms as that of the ordinary soldier" (36). He further relates those officers raised themselves above the crowd and they had possibility of managing particular injuries. These traumatic disorders have enormous consequences on the soldiers as seen in the poetry of Owen and Sassoon.

Owen's "Mental Cases" presents soldiers who are demented due to war. The speaker begins with rhetorical questions. He addresses soldiers that he describes as "purgatorial shadows". This means that these soldiers are in the purgatory, believed by the Roman Catholics to be a place where "minor sinner" stay and work for their sins before they are accepted in heaven. Ali Gunes in "Wilfred Owen Re-Visited: A Psychoanalytic Reading of War, Memory and Crisis of Identity in Wilfred Owen's Poem Mental Cases." purports these soldiers are miserable and they are neither dead nor alive. Being in purgatory, it means that they want to atone themselves of sins committed in the past, which now troubles their mind (171). The description given to these soldiers in the first stanza shows that they are not only miserable

physically, but also mentally deranged. They have "dropping tongue", "fretted sockets" (agitating eyes), "misery sweaters" and they are "hellish". Alin Gunes writes:

...Many of them suffered from psychological problems during and after the war due to shell shock and/or the horrible scenes of mutilated bodies and human parts scattered on the battlefield. War poetry captures the physical and emotional lineaments of modern war: the pain, weariness, madness, and degradation of human beings under intolerable strain. It attempts to crystallize the moment as it offers images of young soldiers in action. Some poems of this era highlight the case in which a soldier survives war physically but remains obsessed with its bitter horrifying memories which drive him crazy (168)

Gunes in the above quote posits that soldiers suffered from physical, emotional and psychological problems during and after the war and that horrifying holocaust they witnessed at the front haunted many of them after while some became demented as results of the trauma. Their memories traumatise them because of the holocaust they witnessed while they were still on earth. Though the massacre happened in the past, the unpleasant situation is hidden somewhere in their unconscious mind and they are mentally affected by these horrible images of "multitudinous" murders they once witnessed. These men have walked on flesh and blood and now they are helpless because they still see the flesh and blood not physically, but in their mind's eyes. Also, the sound of guns haunts their memories still, due to the chaotic situation they witnessed at the front. The bloodbath these purgatorial shadows perceived is too strange that their minds cannot be disengaged or untangled from the horrible images of slaughter. The trauma that these soldiers undergo is supported by Freud's psychoanalysis where he opines that repressed thoughts found in the unconscious mind, affects life unconsciously.

"Mental Cases" depicts how soldiers are haunted by post war trauma. It is important to note that the men in the poem are veterans as they are not in active service presently, but their past experiences of war carnage continuously haunt them making them to be melancholic. The last stanza of the poem goes thus:

Therefore still their eyeballs shrink tormented  
 Back into their brains, because on their sense  
 Sunlight seems a blood-smear; night comes blood-black;  
 Dawn breaks open like a wound that bleeds afresh.  
 —Thus their heads wear this hilarious, hideous,  
 Awful falseness of set-smiling corpses.  
 —Thus their hands are plucking at each other;  
 Picking at the rope-knouts of their scourging;

Snatching after us who smote them, brother,  
Pawing us who dealt them war and madness.

From the stanza above, the persona makes us to understand that the physical appearance of the veteran soldiers shows evidence of torture not physical, but mental. This poem captures the trauma of war as it shows that war trauma does not only occur during war or at the war front, but also after war and even in death. It means soldiers are compelled to kill, but in the after-world, they will individually be answerable for their slaughter. The poem shows how troops who are in purgatory are miserable; they have "dropping tongues", "misery sweaters", "fretted sockets" and "eyeballs shrink tormented." These soldiers are tormented at night and during the day; the speaker says "Dawn breaks open like a wound that bleeds afresh." This line contains simile as "dawn" is compared to "wound" to mean that daybreak brings pains just like a wound. Also, the line contains alliteration; the repetition of the /b/ sound shows the pains is constant and unending. The regular metre of the poem shows the frequent traumatic experience soldiers undergo and endure every day.

The effects of war to Sassoon just like to Owen, are not only physical, but manifest hysteria, hopelessness and madness. The horror of war that soldiers experience in the trenches as Sassoon describes in "Trench Duty", haunts them even after their duty. To talk how war has psychological impacts on soldiers, the poem "Repression of War Experience" stands out in Sassoon's poetry as "Mental Cases" is in Owen's poetry. From the title of the poem; it shows that the soldiers have repulsive experiences of war that are repressed. Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis purports that repressed desires are harboured in the unconscious mind. The first stanza of "Depression of War Experience" is as follows:

Now light the candles; one; two; there's a moth;  
What silly beggars they are to blunder in  
And scorch their wings with glory, liquid flame—  
No, no, not that,—it's bad to think of war,  
When thoughts you've gagged all day come back to scare you;  
And it's been proved that soldiers don't go mad  
Unless they lose control of ugly thoughts  
That drive them out to jabber among the trees. (93)

The first line of the stanza makes us to understand that the setting is at night with the presence of "candles" and "moth", a nocturnal insect. Someone gives instruction that candles should be lit. There are soldiers in the poem described as "silly beggars". The persona has repressed hysteria and he is paranoid when he thinks of war. We are made to understand that

soldiers' daily experiences haunt them at night though they have received training or instructions. Ironically, the persona says it has been proven that soldiers do not suffer from mental disorder. However, the last but one line of this stanza says that if soldiers think about horrible events of war; the thoughts will drive them mad and they will go wandering and talking amongst the trees.

The stanza has an irregular rhyme scheme. The stanza depicts a soldier who is traumatised because the horrible experiences of war bring back the repressed emotion to haunt them and they cannot sleep peacefully. This means they are helpless during the day and at night as well. Since the soldier cannot sleep, he speaks to himself to light a cigarette which he thinks can liberate him from neurotic feeling. This poem is an interior monologue because the communication takes place in the persona's psyche.

The third stanza which contains seventeen lines portrays the persona thinking it is better to read books which are well packed in shelves and these books have different colours, than to be thinking about the horror of war, he should read books because they have wisdom. He blames himself for chewing his finger and smoking rather than reading books. The house is quiet; even the moth mentioned in stanza one is nowhere to be found. He thinks about the dead bodies dumped in the forests. But these are not soldiers because soldiers are in France. These dead people are old men who died peacefully in the comfort of their beds. The persona suddenly becomes embittered towards these old men who died naturally while the young soldiers die untimely. In fact, the persona insults these old men as having "ugly souls" because they become old with bodies though they are sinners. This stanza shows that the persona, who is the microcosm of the macrocosm of the troops, is not only psychologically injured, but also irritated by the brutality of war. This irritation is poured in the last stanza as follow:

You're quiet and peaceful, summering safe at home;  
 You'd never think there was a bloody war on! . . .  
 O yes, you would . . . why, you can hear the guns.  
 Hark! Thud, thud, thud,—quite soft . . . they never cease—  
 Those whispering guns—O Christ, I want to go out  
 And screech at them to stop—I'm going crazy;  
 I'm going stark, staring mad because of the guns (94)

The above stanza handles anger and hysteria of a neurotic soldier. The persona-soldier pours his exasperation on the politicians, and other civilians who support war though they enjoy the comfort of their homes. These civilians have no compassion for the fallen soldiers who suffer

at the front. The expression "bloody war" shows that the events at battlefield are shocking and horrifying. The First World War has been described as the bloodiest war in human history. It is important to note that gun sounds take place in the soldier's mind. The use of the words "thud, thud, thud" is onomatopoeic, which serves as a reminder that the war is still going on. The persona calls on Jesus Christ, the Christian Messiah, to help him. This is because the persona thinks he is going mad, as he declares, "I'm going stark, staring and because of the guns." All these happening in the speaker's mind, traumatise him. This is a scathing revelation as it serves to show that war does not end at the war front as after effects are seen in veterans. The aftermath of war is traumatising and soldiers often go mad because of these horrible experiences.

They even struggle to repress these experiences to no avail. The view that Sassoon has succeeded to paint the mental consequences of war is corroborated by Rosemary Canfield Reisman in *Critical Survey of Poetry: War Poets*, when she opines that:

The horror of this description is without parallel, but where Sassoon really excels is in his realistic portrayal of the psychological effects of the war. Perhaps his best poem in this vein is "Repression of War Experience," from *Counter-Attack, and Other Poems*. The poem, in the form of an interior monologue, explores a mind verging on hysteria, trying to distract itself and maintain control while even the simplest, most serene events—a moth fluttering too close to a candle flame—bring nightmarish thoughts of violence into the persona's mind. In the garden, he hears ghosts, and as he sits in the silence, he can hear only the guns. In the end, his control breaks down; he wants to rush out "and screech at them to stop—I'm going crazy;/ I'm going stark, staring mad because of the guns."(189)

Reisman in the above quote argues that Sassoon has realistically depicted war as having psychological effects. She also asserts that "Repression of War Experience" is written as an internal monologue, which handles uncontrollable emotions of panic and anger. The poem portrays "nightmarish" thoughts of violence into the persona's mind. In his mind's eyes, the persona sees ghosts. He also hears gun sounds and he thinks that he is going mad, so he calls on Christ, the Messiah, to come rescue him from these neurotic feelings, which war has subjected him to. Apart from fear and gloom, terror, anxiety and insufficient pension also cause war neurosis that many soldiers suffered the effects. This view is corroborated by Karl Abraham who opines that:

Terror, anxiety lest dangerous situation be repeated, seeking for a pension, and some vague idea of disposition are supposed to be adequate explanations of

the illness; in the mass of the neuroses which have broken out during the war the unimportance of the sexual aetiology is thought to be clearly shown. (Forenczi et al., 26)

The above quote posits that horrors, anxieties and inadequate wages resulted to neuroses during the Great War. He also notes that sexual instincts caused neuroses as already been proven. Many soldiers left their wives at home while at the front fighting. Soldiers whose libidinal urge was uncontrollable constantly suffered from neurosis especially when they thought of their wives back home were cheating on them. As a consequence of this, many of them develop homosexual instinct, but it aggravated their situation as homosexuality was still considered as a taboo back then; many of them repressed their homosexual desires and the repercussion was traumatic disorder.

Owen and Sassoon as soldier-poets wrote about war trauma on soldiers as they witnessed it. However, traumatic disorders were not exclusive to soldiers since civilians also suffered from war trauma. The psychological disorders that civilians underwent were not any less than what the soldiers went through given the fact that these soldiers come from families. Edgar Jones in “Treating Trauma of the Great War: Soldiers, Civilians and Psychiatry in France, 1914-1940 (review)” notes that:

The French Army lost 1.3 million servicemen during World War One, the largest proportion of any combatant nation, while much of the fighting was on French soil causing the destruction of settlements and communications. The impact on the civilian population was significant, though, as Thomas concludes, the post-war period saw no outbreak of mass psychological disorder as families grieved for the loss of their sons, brothers and fathers. Whether people possessed an inherent resilience and adjusted to their losses or whether they suffered from long-term disorders but kept them concealed can probably never be answered. (1363)

From the above quote, Jones argues that France lost the highest number of troops in the Great War. There was destruction of “settlements and communications”. The effect of this destruction on civilians was psychological disorder. These civilians suffer because the servicemen who died at the front were “their sons, brothers and fathers”. Even after the war, many civilians suffered from trauma though majority of them conceal it. All wars no matter which type have severe consequences on the civilians. Frantz Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* shows how the Algerian women suffered the war of decolonization. He presents how women suffered from various traumas that were caused by “agitation, rage and deep depression”. The consequences of these traumatic disorders were “attempted suicides, or sometimes finally anxiety states with tears, lamentation and appeal for mercy.” This makes



one to infer, therefore, that war trauma does not affect soldiers solely neither are the repercussions on soldiers alone since civilians also suffer enormously.

War makes humans to change comportment and demeanour that distinguish them from beasts. Owens and Sassoon's poetry depicts how soldiers lack compassion and empathy towards their fellow humans whom war has compelled them enemies. This is because war makes them to use the argument of force, which kills rationality and empathy. Soldiers at war lack self-control and need for self-defence force them to brutalise their adversaries. Cruelty is also eminent in the politicians who are insensitive and uncompassionate towards the young men they send to war. Trench warfare shows the dead of civilization and the iniquitous behaviour of humans who have become wolves to their fellow human beings. Inhumanity as seen in war confirms Thomas Hobbes's assertion in *De Cive* that; "to speak impartially both sayings are very true that Man to Man is a kind of God and that Man to Man is arrant Wolfe." This statement shows that nations go to war against other nations so that the vanquished one will worship the victorious one, so in the course of the strife, humans become beasts that prey on other humans and this is the inhumanity that war breeds, which the poems of Owen and Sassoon expose. Besides inhumanity is dehumanisation and the two go in tandem. War makes soldiers lose their human qualities such as honour and dignity, which are invaluable to every human being. These soldiers labour as rearguards watching all night without relief and sometime languish in insect-infected trenches, drenched from rain and unable to move in muddy dug-outs. With the use of modern weapons, soldiers themselves function like ammunition.

The poetry of Owen and Sassoon exposed the inhumanity, dehumanisation and trauma of war. War transforms soldiers from sane human beings to something worst than beasts. Due to the helplessness and hopelessness at the battlefield, soldiers become senseless and insensitive. The principle of sanctity of human life becomes abated due to war. George Ngide in "A 'War Poet' or A 'Poet at War': Wilfred and the Pity of War" asserts that war is wicked, horrific and inhuman (171). Inhumanity of war and war trauma as repercussions of war are very much present in their poems. Paranoia and melancholia were some of the causes of trauma perceived in troops at the front.

Looking at the poem "Arms and the Boy", a three-quatrain poem with a dominance of iambic pentameter, the subject of inhumanity is very present. Firstly, we are told the young soldier has an urge to kill and he hungers for flesh. The expressions "hunger of blood" and

"famishing for flesh" are metaphorical as they mean that war has rendered the boy senseless to the point that he is insensitive and irrational. The noun "boy" in the title suggests that this soldier is not mature and probably lacks experience about war. This can mean that he has not received adequate training. If "famishing for flesh" is considered literally, it means that there is no food for the boy so he feeds on flesh, which of course means that war kills human feelings. Since the state has armed the boy with weapons; "bayonet-blade", "cold steel", "blind, blunt bullet-leads" and "cartridge", it means that she has granted him the go-head to hunger for blood. The gun he holds is described as "cold steel" because it kills as "cold" is euphemistic for death. Also, bullets are said to be "blind" to mean that they kill indiscriminately and the use of alliteration in "blind, blunt bullet-leads" effectively relates how these bullets incessantly kill many young people as seen in the expression "which long to nuzzle in the hearts of lads." Lads are young boys who are cruelly murdered in war. Child psychology as postulated by Freud in psychoanalysis shows that children are dominated by instincts. Referring to the soldier in the poem as boys demonstrated that he is dominated by instinctual drives like hunger and cannot reason since he is but a child.

In the last stanza, the persona portrays the boy as harmless as he says the boy does not have "claw" "talons" or "antlers" which are parts of dangerous wild animals. This metaphorical comparison illustrate that the boy and humans at large are born humane, war and sophisticated weapons take humans' humanity away from them and they become inhumane. This means humans are inherently good and humane but war transforms them them inhuman. Inhumanity is not only seen at the war front nor only among troops. Those who send the youths to die at the battlefield are also more inhuman. In Owen's poem, "The parable of the Old Man and the Young", the persona presents the poem thus:

*The Parable of the Old Man and the Young*  
 So Abram rose, and clave the wood, and went,  
 And took the fire with him, and a knife.  
 And as they sojourned both of them together,  
 Isaac the first-born spake and said, My Father,  
 Behold the preparations, fire and iron.  
 But where the lamb for this burnt-offering?  
 Then Abram bound the youth with belts and straps,  
 And builded parapets and trenches there,  
 And stretched forth the knife to slay his son.  
 When lo! an angel called him out of heaven,  
 Saying, Lay not thy hand upon the lad,  
 Neither do anything to him. Behold,  
 A ram, caught in a thicket by its horns;  
 Offer the Ram of Pride instead of him.

But the old man would not so, but slew his son,  
And half the seed of Europe, one by one.

The poem retells the story of Abraham formerly called Abram and his son, Isaac. The speaker says Abram ties a bundle of wood and he takes fire and a knife. As they set out for the sacrifice, Isaac asks the whereabouts of the lamb they will offer as sacrifice. Unlike in the Bible where Abraham answers; "The Lord will provide..." (Genesis 22:8). Abram ties up his son with "belts and straps". He builds wall in ditches and stretches his dagger to slaughter Isaac when an angel calls him from above and orders him not to kill the child. He is ordered to catch a ram "caught in a thicket by its horns" and offer it as sacrifice to God. Instead, Abram murders his son and not the "Ram of Pride." The persona ends the poem by saying that is how youths of Europe are killed simultaneously.

The poem presents the height of inhumanity where humans especially the old political and military commanders prefer to kill or sacrifice their fellow humans instead of killing their pride. The poem shows that in the modern society, the youths are not given the opportunity to speak. When Isaac asks his father the whereabouts of the lamb they will offer as burnt offering; his father immediately binds him up with belts and straps. "Belts" and "straps" are written as plural nouns to show that the "modern father" ensnares his children to the point that they cannot escape. This shows that the young child does not have an opinion not even on his life. This unarguably shows the inhumanity of the old towards the young.

Alterations in the poem serves as the message that Owen uses wants to pass across. Owen brings into this poem that makes him deviate from original version of the Bible. Firstly, he goes back to Abraham's original name whereas by the time Abraham was about to sacrifice his son, Isaac, God had already changed his name as seen in; "No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nation." (Genesis 17:5). While "Abram" means "father", and "Abraham" means "father of nation", this demonstrates that modern men have lost their fatherhood because instead of protecting their children, they slay them. In addition, Owen employs two words; "parapets" and "trenches", which are not found in the Bible to demonstrate the misery of soldiers at the front. Another deviation in the poem is seen as the angel asks Abram not to slay the boy, but Abram is too proud to appear as a coward, and then he goes ahead and kills the child. By "pride"; the persona means that there are other alternatives that politicians and military commanders can use to bring ceasefire, but they would not keep their pride aside rather, they prefer to sacrifice the youths in the war. In the last line of the poem, "seed" is metaphor for

"youth", who holds the future, yet they have been sacrificed by warmongers showing that the future is bleak. Furthermore, even though Owen has added few things from the original biblical version, there are some expressions that he has quoted verbatim. The few is corroborated by Roland Bartel who says:

Understandably Owen changed those details that might remind the reader of Abraham's saintly qualities. He makes no reference to the fact that Abraham acts in obedience to God's commands. He quotes Isaac's question about the lamb almost verbatim, but he omits Abraham's reply, "My son, God will provide himself a lamb for the burnt offering." Instead of answering his son's question Abraham responds by binding him with belts and straps. The next major change concerns an addition rather than omission. In Genesis the angel that told Abraham to spare his son said nothing about the ram, but in the poem the angel commands Abraham to slay the Ram of Pride. Abraham disobeys and precipitates a world war. (38-39)

The above quote culled from Bartel stipulates that Owen changes some biblical details because these details will portray Abraham as a holy being. He opines that Owen quotes Isaac's question verbatim, but Abraham responds by tying the child up with belts and straps. Also, the angel asks Abraham not to kill the boy, but Abraham disobeys and that sparks a world war in which many youths are killed. He argues that by changing back Abraham's name to Abram; Owen wants to present a man who is "less wise". By going back to Abram, Owen takes away some superhuman qualities of Abraham from the modern father who is more a warmonger than a saintly and faithful being like Abraham.

"The Parable of the Old Man and the Young", therefore, presents the height of inhumanity in which the old warmongers are inhumane and wicked enough to slay their young children. Instead of these old warmonger to kill their pride, they prefer to slay their children in a very cruel manner. Worst still, before killing them, they tie bundles of load and give them to carry and these are the very loads that kill many of these youngsters who have been fooled that it is honourable for them to die for their fatherland. Therefore, war has value to warmongers more than the lives of their fellow youth whom they inhumanly sacrifice. Inhumanity in war becomes a major repercussion of war.

The tone in Sassoon's poetry is dominantly that of anger as he vividly describes the consequences of war; it also paints inhumanity and war trauma. The poem "The Tombstone-Maker", the second stanza presents a bereaved man who stares at a grave yard while the persona informs him that there are about twenty bodies of their colleagues that are carelessly

buried, which signifies that they are not given a decent burial worthy of those who have sacrificed their lives for the nation. This poem captures inhumanity in the last stanza quoted as follows:

I told him, with a sympathetic grin,  
That Germans boil dead soldiers down for fat;  
And he was horrified. "What shameful sin!  
"O sir, that Christian men should come to that!"

In the above stanza, the persona informing his colleague that soldiers who are poorly buried are even lucky because when the Germans pick dead soldiers, they boil them to get fat. Hearing this, the bereaved soldier feels disgusted and exclaims that it is a disgrace that the Germans who are Christians will do that. Even in dead, humans deserve some respect, but if corpses are boiled as asserted in the poem; it does not only show that those committing such acts are inhuman, they also dehumanise the deceased. The revelation of boiling human dead bodies paints a scathing reality that most jingoistic war poets cannot portray in their poetry. Based on Sassoon's experience about war and the shocking events he witnessed, he was able to bring out these realities in poetry even though some critics condemn him for being so anatomical or revealing. One of these erudite critics who condemns Sassoon's realistic picture of the effects of war in his poetry is John Middleton Murray who wrote in *The Evolution of an Intellectual*; that "Sassoon's verses they are not poetry". This assertion is based on the fact that Sassoon's poetry paints the inhuman reality of war. He argues that:

For these verses express nothing, save in so far as a cry expresses pain. Their effect is exhausted when the immediate impression dies away. Some of them are, by intention, realistic pictures of battle experience, and indeed one does not doubt their truth. The language is over-wrought, dense and turgid, as a man's mind must be under the stress and obsession of a chaos beyond all comprehension. (Qtd in Bloom, 54)

Murray in the above quote assumes that Sassoon's poetry does not have any content except that it expresses pain. He claims that after reading Sassoon's poetry, the effects it has on readers is ephemeral. He however, asserts that Sassoon's poetry shows realistic war experience and the poetry is truthful. This means that he accepts the facts that the Germans "boil dead bodies for fat" as Sassoon depicts in "The Tombstone-maker

Michael Thorpe argues that when it comes to "showing the dreadfulness of war", Sassoon is unprecedented because not even Owen has shown the cruelty of war like Sassoon. Sassoon's

satires on war are far more revealing than that of other war poets since he portrays the cruelty with realistic expressions. He also says that when it comes to "constructiveness" Sassoon does not match with Byron just as Byron does not match with Sassoon when it comes to severe or violent censure (qtd in Bloom, 55). While Murray and Thorpe have controversial claims about Sassoon poetry, one thing which is clear is that Sassoon's poetry vividly handles the horror of war and for his readers to know the consequences of war; his poetry is written in turgid and realistic language that captures the readers' attention and play on their psychology.

In recapitulation, the analyses in this chapter have shown that Owen and Sassoon depict the consequences of war as their poetry portrays the excruciating pain that soldiers undergo at the front, which call for empathy towards these troops. The repercussions of war are exposed through their poetry that paints the horror of war. The chapter also looked at psychological stress as a consequence of war since war makes soldiers inhumane or insensitive towards their fellow human beings and renders some of them irrational. Thus, they tend to devalue the human being. The chapter also went ahead to examine the psychological effects of war in the poetry of these two poets. Having portrayed the morbid experience of war; Owen and Sassoon observed that war brings physical and mental pain as a result, they became anti-jingoistic. Therefore, they wrote against war. Owen and Sassoon as anti-war poets will be the focus of the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **FROM PATRIOTISM AND HONOUR TO REALISATION AND DIPLOMACY**

The First World War gave rise to another genre of poetry known as "War Poetry". This, however, does not mean that poetry about war began only centennial. Jon Stallworthy in *The New Oxford Book of War Poetry* traces the origin of war poetry starting from the Bible and in 900BC when Homer wrote *The Iliad*. Before the First World War, many poems about war existed. Bernard Bergonzi in "The Problem of War Poetry" argues that "Byron was one of the first English poet to write about war in a recognisable modern accent", but Palaima Thomas in "Robert Grave's War Poem" says Robert Graves argued in 1941 that "War poetry" and "war poet" were terms first used in the First World War. Whatever the controversy concerning the existence of war poetry, we can synthetically say that though the genre war poetry appeared in the early twentieth century, poets before this epoch had already explored the subject of war. There are soldier war-poets and civilian war-poets. Also, war poets stand on two divided line; some of these war-poets are jingoistic; that is, they encourage and support war. Others are anti-war poets as Stallworthy in *The New Oxford Book of War Poetry* opines that "war poetry has been implicitly, if not explicitly anti-war". The notion of anti-war poetry indubitably has its birth during the Great War.

Anti-war poems were produced during this period mainly by combatants who had first-hand experiences of the horrors of war as Jinan F. Al-Hajaj in "The War Versus Peace Language: A Study of Anti-war Language and Imagery in the Selected Poems on the Iraqi War" posits that anti-war poetry are written as backlash against bellicose politicians and expose the morbidity of war zones. This chapter focuses on Owen and Sassoon as anti-war poets. Their poems, letters and reactions at the front show that though Owen and Sassoon were brave soldiers who were both decorated with the Military Cross, they were against war and used their energy in poetry to write against war. These soldier-poets were excited about defending the honour and integrity of their country, but the horrors of war at the war front changed them from being patriotic to become radical towards war and its supporters. The focus of this chapter is to critically discuss Owen and Sassoon as anti-war poets and how their poetry condemns war.

### **Exuberance and Patriotism**

On the 4<sup>th</sup> August 1914 that Britain declared war on Germany, many British young men showed interest and excitement to defend their country. This demonstration of patriotism and nationalism was re-enforced by the fact that public opinions held that the war was a war of liberation. Siegfried Sassoon joined the war in 1914 while Owen was in Bordeaux, France when the war started and there, he was serving as an English language tutor. Due to his nationalist sentiments, patriotism and the exuberance to serve his country, he decided to return to England where he would enlist in the Artists' Rifles of the British army in September 1915. (Bingham, 2) Owen at the start of the war was very patriotic; at this time, Owen had not started writing war poems so his devotion to his country is expressed in his numerous letters to his family members especially to his mother whom he gave the nitty-gritty of everything that happened his in stay in Bordeaux and later on his life at the battlefield. In a letter to his brother, Colin Owen, dated 10<sup>th</sup> august 1914, Owen writes:

I suppose you are studying the War, with all your Patrol. Are the Scouts doing anything really useful at this time? I feel shamefully 'out of it' up here, passing my time reading the Newspapers in an armchair in a shady garden. Numbers of Bordeaux ladies are going to the Armies as Nurses. The only thing I could do, so Madame Léger says, would be to serve as stretcher-bearer, on the battlefield. After all my years of playing soldiers, and then of reading History, I have almost a mania to be in the East, to see fighting, and to serve. For I like to think this is the last War of the World! I have only a faint idea of what is going on, and what is felt, in England, as perhaps you have only a faint notion of the family affliction, the public enthusiasm, the standstill of business there is here.(Qtd inDelphi 442)

The letter above was written barely six days after Britain declared war on Germany. In the letter, Owen writes to his brother who is already at the war front. He says it is disgraceful that he [Owen] sits comfortably reading newspapers while women are serving in the war as caretakers. Owen had the burning desire to be at the war front to serve his afflicted country whose businesses were blocked. This shows Owen's patriotic sentiments and he could not remain in France reasons for which he came back home and joined the army since he believed by then it was his duty to serve his nation. Owen could have joined the French army, but because of his sense of nationalism which was very strong in Europe at the time, he decided to return home and join his nation's army. He ends the letter with, "down with the Germans!" which shows his hatred for the Germans.



In another letter written to his mother dated 6<sup>th</sup> February 1915, Owen informed his mother, “I have not abandoned all idea of enlisting, but it need be discussed before I get home.” Before leaving France for England, Owen had made up his mind to enlist in the army and he wanted his family to consider his decision before he return home. Owen finally came back home and feeling enthusiastic about his recruitment, he wrote to his mother in the following words:

In the middle of this letter I was called to lunch; and then went to ‘swear in’. This time it is done: I am the British Army! Three of us had to read the Oath together; the others were horribly nervous! and read the wrong Paragraph until the Captain stopped them! ‘Kiss the Book!’ says Captain. One gives it a tender little kiss; the other a loud smacking one!! (Delphi 523)

The above quote from Owen’s letter written on the 21<sup>st</sup> October 1915 to his mother demonstrates his excitement that he has been accepted to join the British army. The use of exclamation in the expression; “I am the British Army!” reveals his exuberance and burning nationalistic sentiment to serve his nation in the war. Out of the three of them who have been recruited, the other two are nervous, but he does not shiver because of that excitement to belong among those who will bring salvation to Britain; in fact, he informs his mother that he is “physically happy”. Owen’s exuberance and patriotism is soon transformed into enormous military bravery to the point that he we was decorated with the Military Cross in September 1918. Surve Vasanta Datta and V. J. Reddy in “The Theme of Nationalism in the Selected Poetry of Wilfred Owen” argue that:

...Owen’s initial reaction to the war as a conventional romantic patriotic poet. Later, he received the Military Cross for gallantry. He has displayed explicit love for the motherland. His deadly war experiences made him a contemplator of the war and its consequence. He was a more promising poet who condemned the war out of national concern. Due to the unprecedented loss of human beings in modern warfare, his earlier views were drastically changed. He could no longer continue the tradition of high valour or romantic death. (154)

The quote above opines that before writing to expose war casualties, Owen demonstrated total love for his country because it was due to this patriotism that he fought the war valiantly, which earned him a distinguished decoration. The love Owen had for his country shattered the ardent belief that the war was worth the lives sacrificed. Instead, Owen believed that war could be stopped by the powers that be if they so desired. When Owen praises the dead soldier in “Anthem for Doomed Youth”, he does not do so for the soldier’s death for the fatherland, he ironical presents the tragic death of a young man who has died prematurely. The consequences of the war compelled Owen to demonstrate his love for his nation by

sending warning against war through his poetry from the trenches. In the poem, “Greater Love” Owen writes:

Red lips are not so red  
 As the stained stones kissed by the English dead  
 Kindness of wooed and wooer  
 Seems shame to their love pure  
 O love, your eyes lose lure  
 When I behold eyes blinded in my stead!

The above stanza is culled from the poem, “Greater Love” by Owen. The stanza is written in five lines and dominantly in iambic trimeter. It opens with a juxtaposed synecdoche, the “red lips” used in the poem are parts representing the soldiers who now have “un-red lips” because of cold or death or both. There is massacre indicated by the presence of stones that are stained with blood of soldiers. This holocaust is caused by the belligerents in the war referred to as the “wooed and wooer”. The persona says humanity has become disgraceful as they have lost the beauty of love and their jingoistic nature has made them not to perceive the casualties of war. “Greater Love” as the title of the poem is a biblical allusion as Owen makes reference to the Bible in John 15:13, which says, “Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.” (English Standard Version) As a patriotic citizen, Owen offered his services to his country in duality; firstly, he joined the army to defend his motherland. Secondly, when he experienced the carnage of war he devoted himself to present the realities of the war front so that those who had power to call for cessation could do so, which also served as a warning against the repercussions of future war.

Just like Owen, Sassoon was exuberant and enthusiastic to join the war. His early poems show veneration for soldiers and war. Sassoon at the start of war believed that the war would bring liberation to England. At this time, many soldiers saw the need to defend his fatherland because they were made to believe that it was war liberation as Sassoon opines in his protest letter. This subject is expressed in "Absolution" where Sassoon writes:

The anguish of the earth absolves our eyes  
 Till beauty shines in all that we can see.  
 War is our scourge; yet war has made us wise,  
 And, fighting for our freedom, we are free.

Horror of wounds and anger at the foe,  
 And loss of things desired; all these must pass.

We are the happy legion, for we know  
Time's but a golden wind that shakes the grass.

There was an hour when we were loth to part  
From life we longed to share no less than others.  
Now, having claimed this heritage of heart,  
What need we more, my comrades and my brothers?

The above poem is written in three quatrains of iambic pentameter with alternate rhyme scheme as seen in stanza one where the rhyme scheme is ABAB. The speaker affirms that war brings destruction but the exasperation of the earth has made them to comprehend that it is a beautiful thing to fight for their land. Though the war will scourge the soldiers; they are also made wise from their experiences in the trenches and are now free from bondage. The pains of their wounds increase their anger towards their enemies and bring determination to the soldiers who have sacrificed pleasures to defend their land as they know that the war and its horror "must pass." The soldiers are elated because they know that it is just a matter of time and the horrors will be shaken up. The soldiers are reluctant to die or be separate from their families, but it is their call to free their country and they do it in hope to gain glory.

The three quatrains of the poem are written in alternate rhyme scheme of iambic pentameter showing the soldiers determination to defend their country. The use of alliteration in the poem follows the tone of the poem, which is that of encouragement. This poem like "To Victory", celebrates the bravery of soldiers and their courage to defend their land. He valorises war in the poem as it brings liberation and wisdom as he says, "...war has made us wise". He also posits that it is the duty of soldiers, what he calls "heritage of heart", to free their country. Sassoon also calls on soldiers to be happy while fighting as noted in the poem, "To Victory", he says; "I am not sad" and in "Absolution", he writes "we are the happy legion". From this, one can say Sassoon at the beginning of war was jingoistic because in his early poems he writes about honour and patriotism in war.

The invitation to join the British army, Sassoon made a patriotic invitation to British young men to fight for their nation. He fought valiantly in the war and was decorated with the Military Cross. Robert Nichols who wrote the introduction of *Siegfried Sassoon: War Poems* notes that "behind his name are the letters M.C. since he has won the Military Cross for an act of valour which went near to securing him a higher honour." This shows that Sassoon's patriotism did not end with writing poems of encouragement for the defence of the fatherland as his bravery in the war also portrayed him a patriotic citizen. In the second stanza of the poem "Brothers", Sassoon writes:

Your lot is with the ghost of soldiers,  
 And I am in the field where men must fight,  
 But in the gloom I see your laurell'd head  
 And through your victory I shall win the light.

In the poem, the persona invites the British men to fight defending their country and avenging their brothers who are ghosts due to the war. By using the modal verb of obligation, as seen in “must fight” implies that it is the duty of every British man to fight the war in which though they will be melancholic, they will be crowned or honoured if they die. Also the victory that these British soldiers shall win will illuminate their country since the war has brought darkness through German aggression. The poet’s attitude is that of encouragement as he encourages the British troops to fight fearlessly. The use of the first person point of view proves that Sassoon wrote about his own conviction and he wrote the poem from the war front as the second line of the aforementioned stanza says; “And I am in the field where men must fight” reveals that he practised what he preached. To further encourage the English men to fight in defence of their country, he makes them to know that they have joy and luck to be those that will liberate their country. He postulates this in the second stanza of the poem, “France” where he writes:

And they are fortunate, who fight  
 For gleaning landscape swept and drafted  
 And crowned by cloud pavilion white;  
 Hearing such harmonies as might  
 Only from Heaven be downward wafted  
 Voices of victory and delight.

The above sestet is written in varying metre and the rhyme scheme is ABAABA. The persona in the poem invites troops that they should combat because they will be counted among the fortunate ones that will bring joy and victory to their desolate homeland. When the war started, history teaches that many youths were exuberant about joining the conscription because of the lofty promises the government made to them. They were assured that they will be well-to-do, they will be heroes of the nation and they were equally made to understand that the war, which started in summer 1914, would end by the winter of the same year; so many young men were excited they would gain fame and wealth within a short period of time. Sassoon joined the war at the age of twenty-seven and he was equally exuberant, nationalistic and patriotic at the dawn of the war as Lawrence W. Reed in “Siegfried Sassoon: Conscience On and Off the Battlefield” posits that:

Sassoon was not a likely candidate for future hero status: he was a 27-year-old carefree novelist and avid cricket player as the world stumbled into war in the summer of 1914. He didn't wait to be drafted, however. In a gesture of patriotism, he joined the British Army. He was already in service with the Sussex Imperial Yeomanry on August 4 when the United Kingdom declared war on Germany. He was commissioned with the Royal Welsh Fusiliers as a second lieutenant in May 1915. November of that year would be pivotal for Sassoon: his brother was killed in the Gallipoli disaster, and, days later, Siegfried himself was sent to the front lines in France. Almost immediately, he inspired the deepest confidence of the men serving under him. On bombing patrols and night raids, he demonstrated stunning efficiency as a company commander. He singlehandedly stormed an enemy trench and scattered 60 German soldiers. Nicknamed Mad Jack by his men for his near-suicidal courage, he was awarded the Military Cross... (Reed, Online)

Reed in the above quote argues that prior to the war; Sassoon had shown no signs of a future hero. When the war started, Sassoon demonstrated his nationalism and patriotism by enlisting in the British army. His Patriotism occasioned his bravery at the front and he fought the war with strong enthusiasm and it takes someone of unyielding and total love for fatherland to fight to the point of death, daring and entering the enemy camp to liberate his compatriots held captive. Sassoon loved his country, but he loved his comrades more. The reason his poetry changes from patriotic to sardonic is because of the agonising experienced he shared with his fellow soldiers in the trenches. After his letter against the military officials for the unnecessarily prolongation of the war, he was sent to the hospital under the guise that he was mentally deranged, he decided to return to the trenches to share his comrades' pain. This, indeed, is a great show of patriotism because to love one's country is to love one's fellow compatriots.

Owen and Sassoon joined the war because of patriotism and nationalism, but later became pacifists. Owen and Sassoon's patriotism compelled them to enlist in the army to fight in defence of their country against the bellicose nature of the Central Powers. However, their patriotism is not parallel to being jingoistic. They did not support the war because they did not declare it either. They only saw the necessity to defend their country, but when it turned out that the politicians who had the powers to call the war to a ceasefire, prolonged the war unnecessarily, they decided to write against war by producing poetry that painted the gruesome realities of the war. Owen and Sassoon also joined the war because of their sense of nationhood. Nationalism was a wave across Europe before and during the war. Most British nationals wanted to preserve the status of their fatherland as the World Power of that time, but the irony of situation as a result of the war is that Britain lost her position as the

World Power to America. Nationalism was one of the remote causes of the First World War. Daniele Conversi in “War and Nationalism” posits:

Rapid industrial development meant that for the first time peasants could move in larger number to the cities leaving behind millennial traditions. A powerful and influential class of new riches emerged, which often embraced war, nationalism, and modernity with similar enthusiasm and greed. In many consolidated nation-states, like Italy, Germany, and France, modernists and ultranationalists became the most prominent advocates of war, including poets like d’Annunzio and Apollinaire, and art entrepreneurs like Marinett (365)

Conversi in the above quote postulate that growth in industrialization and nationalism, which was influenced by rural-urban migration, were some of the causes of the Great War. New Historicism holds that a body of literary work should be interpreted vis-à-vis the author experiences, history and geography. Their nationalist sentiments influence their entry into the war; however, their experiences did change them from being patriotic soldiers as they continued to fight the war to its end, but their perceptions of war were altered altogether. They devoted themselves to write against war for several reasons among which are war miseries, massive deaths of young men and disillusionment, which will be discussed in the subsequent analyses.

### **The Pity and Horror of War**

The anti-war stance of Owen and Sassoon, two soldier-poets, who willingly enlist themselves in the British army emanates from empathetic experiences at the war front. These soldier-poets like many other young men joined the war based on youthful exuberance; their id played on them as they were prompted with the excitement of returning from the war as heroes and patriots who would bring honour and glory to their country. These instinctive drives of the id, sooner than later came into conflict with the ego when they were faced with pitiful and horrific realities of war. Psychoanalysis holds that when the id comes into conflict with the ego, desires are repressed; so their anger towards war, which are expressed in their poems are orchestrated because of the discrepancy between appearance and reality. Sandor Ferenczi et al in *Psycho-analysis and War Neuroses* show how the ego of war time comes into conflict with the ego of peace time and Sigmund Freud in an introduction to this work postulates that:

The war neuroses, in so far as they differ from the ordinary neuroses of peace time through particular peculiarities, are to be regarded as traumatic neuroses, whose existence has been rendered possible or promoted through an ego-conflict. In Abraham’s contribution there are plain indications of this ego-

conflict; the English and American authors whom Jones quotes have also recognised it. The conflict takes place between the old ego of peace time and the new war-ego of the soldier, and it becomes acute as soon as the peace-ego is faced with the danger of being killed through the risky undertakings of his newly formed parasitical double. Or one might put it, the old ego protects itself from the danger to life by flight into the traumatic neurosis in defending itself against the new ego which it recognises as threatening its life. The National Army was therefore the condition, and fruitful soil, for the appearance of war neuroses; they could not occur in professional soldiers, or mercenaries. (7)

The above quote reveals that the experiences at the war front are not the same as that at home. When soldiers are faced with the danger of being killed, they develop trauma because their new reality is different from the pacific one they knew at home. It is also due to this ego-conflict that Owen and Sassoon developed anti-war sentiments. The style of writing used in their poetry is fragmentation, which shows how war has left the society in disillusionment. William Kevin Penny in "A Tragic Harp: Ritual, Irony and Myth in the War Poetry of Wilfred Owen," argues that Owen used fragmentation and rejected traditional conventions of writing poetry as way of rejecting the belief that war create heroes. Owen and Sassoon projects how war create pathetic and morbid circumstances and this influenced them writing to condemn war. Loran Samons in "Pity and Indignation: The Process of Trauma in the War poetry of Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon," opines that Owen and Sassoon produced the "best examples of the empathetic connectivity and therapeutic abilities of literature" (237). By projecting the reality of war miseries, Owen and Sassoon's stance as anti-war poets are conspicuous. In the preface to his poetry, Owen writes:

This book is not about heroes. English Poetry is not yet fit to speak of them. Nor is it about deeds or lands, nor anything about glory, honour, dominion or power, except War. Above all, this book is not concerned with Poetry. The subject of it is War, and the pity of War. The Poetry is in the pity. Yet these elegies are not to this generation, This is in no sense consolatory. They may be to the next. All the poet can do to-day is to warn. That is why the true Poets must be truthful. If I thought the letter of this book would last, I might have used proper names; but if the spirit of it survives Prussia, — my ambition and those names will be content; for they will have achieved themselves fresher fields than Flanders. (27)

Owen in the preface above opines that he does not write poetry to talk about heroes (possibly war heroes) neither does he write to valorise or celebrate any dignitary or great thing achieved in war. His poetry is not even to talk about the grandeur of soldiers, but to handle the pitiful situation of soldiers. Owen, therefore, writes about war not to show how it bestows

nobility, or elevates honour; but to paint the pain, misery and cruelty of war. He goes further to stress that his poetry holds the truth about war. This is because what were published by journalists were false reports that were aimed at propagating the war. He invites poets to be truthful in their projection of war. If Owen, therefore, wrote about the horrors of war; it means that his main goal is to discourage war because it does not bring anything honourable, glorious or mighty except pity, which is inglorious. From this view point, one can assert that Owen wrote to condemn war as seen in his tone that is highly satiric on war.

Some critics argue that if Owen as well as Sassoon was an anti-war poet, why did he go back to the front after he suffered from Shell-shock, what is now called post-traumatic disorder. One of these critics quoted by Santanu Das and Kate McLoughlin in "War Poetry Review" is Jeremy Paxman who asks why after writing his anti-war poetry, Owen went back to fight war. (7) However, Adrian Barlow in "The War against the War Poets" holds that if Paxman has read Owen's letters extensively; he would have definitely known Owen's answer. Owen in a letter to his mother dated 4<sup>th</sup> October 1918 wrote:

My nerves are in perfect order. I came out in order to help these boys — directly by leading them as well as an officer can; indirectly, by watching their sufferings that I may speak of them as well as a pleader can. I have done the first. (Qtd in Delphi Classic, 798)

In the above quote, Owen informs his mother that he is in good shape. He does not go back to fight because of patriotism or honour nor because it is his duty, but to help his fellow comrades who are suffering in the trenches. He equally wants to lead his troop while sharing their misery. Owen's superego convicts him that it will be cruelty on his part to abandon those under his command to suffer. So, Owen went back to the front for the sake of other soldiers enduring hardship at the front not that he was fighting because war is an honourable thing. Though fighting, Owen still held and believed with conviction that war is horrible not honourable.

Throughout his war poetry, Owen delineates himself as an anti-war poet who writes against war. There are several reasons for which Owen condemns war though he willingly enlisted himself as a soldier in 1915. Owen was against war because it causes carnage. This is evident in his poem "Insensibility" where in the first stanza; the persona envies soldiers who are dead as they are free from the horrors of war. The soldiers are presented as being ridiculed as not one cares for the pain they endure in trenches. Owen says "But they are troops who fade, not flowers". This verse uses euphemism as the word "fade" means "die". There is equally



alliteration with the constant repetition of the /f/ sound. The effectiveness of these literary devices is to portray that not only do soldiers die in numbers, they are also dehumanised as flowers seems to be valued more than the "troops who fade". The poet's attitude as depicted in this instance is that of lamentation and condemnation. The poet laments the miseries that war brings and consequently, he condemns war as he writes; "Losses, who might have fought/longer; but no one bother". The "no one" that does not bother here refers to politician, commanders, relatives and even religious personalities who all encourage wars which they do not fight.

Owen became an anti-war poet due to the fact that war breeds insensibility in soldiers and warmongers. Soldiers are helpless and senseless during war; they do not even have feelings for themselves since that is what war has made them to be. Some soldiers who have lost memory are envied by others because they are not haunted by war trauma anymore. Those who have not witnessed gruesome holocausts of war even doubt the misery that soldiers go through. These warmongers are contented to count their money more than the loss of lives, when the persona says "Comes simpler than the reckoning of their shilling./They keep no check on armies' decimation". The "they" here refers to warmongers who encourage the war because of greed. Some of them encourage the war because it is of economic gain to them; this is why they are counting "shilling", but they are not bothered to check the mass killing the war brings. Looking at the insensitivity on the side of leaders, Owen could not be indifferent about war, so he devoted himself to write against war. Also, Owen wrote to open the truth to the readers about warmongers who lack moral rectitude. The persona in "Insensibility" says:

We wise, who with a thought besmirch  
 Blood over all our soul,  
 How should we see our task  
 But through his blunt and lashless eyes?  
 Alive, he is not vital overmuch;  
 Dying, not mortal overmuch;  
 Nor sad, nor proud,  
 Nor curious at all.  
 He cannot tell  
 Old men's placidity from his.

The above ten-line is written in the form of a free verse without any regular rhyme or rhythm and the stanza presents the speaker lamenting that their thinking is tarnished. Ironically, the persona says they, the soldiers, are wise which actually mean that they were fooled to join a war that now traumatises them due to the blood they have spilled, which the persona thinks

has stained their souls. The rhetorical question posed serves to show that war which is personified as "his" has condemned them; their souls are tainted and their eyes are without lashes. The persona also moans that the soldiers are not valued whether alive or in dead, yet the old warmongers are peaceful. The first line of the stanza contains alliteration with the constant repetition of the /w/ sound which shows how traumatised the soldiers are at the front. They have sleepless night in the murky trenches and are haunted mentally and emotionally because of the lives they have butchered. In the last stanza of the poem, the persona calls those who encourage the war fools. He notes; "But cursed are dullards whom no cannon stubs/That they should be as stones; Wrenched are they, and mean". These people whom the persona curses have not been incapacitated by Cannon; they do not have human feelings, reasons, they are described as stones. The simile used means that these warmongers are morally decayed as they are malignant. They are free from danger while the "hapless stars", which is a metaphor for the unlucky youths sacrificed in a war they have not caused neither have they declared it. Looking at these insensibilities from the warmongers, Owen developed anti-war sentiments.

By sharing and participating in massacres and seeing lives lost without foreseeing cessation, Owen wrote against war because it is futile. The uselessness of war to humanity is captured in the poem, "Futility". The poem talks about a soldier who has lost his life in war. The persona invites other soldiers to take the dead soldier "into the sun" with the hope that the sun will bring the soldier back to life. This hope is because the sun once gave man life so that he can cultivate the earth, but "At home, whispering of fields unsown" (line 3) shows the men who are supposed to cultivate the field are dead at the front. There is hope that the sun "might rouse him" (line 5) for the sun is "kind", the use of personification by qualifying the inanimate as being kind shows the hope and reliance on the sun to bring about desired change, but this hope is shattered as the sun "wakes the seeds" (line 8), but cannot wake the dead soldier. This shows that as far as war is concerned, hope is unattainable. There is a rhetorical question that depicts the futility of war and life when the persona asks; "Was it for this the clay grew tall?" (line 13). This question ridicules the belief that man is created to die for patriotism and if this is the case what then is the essence of creation? How useful is the sun, which is described as being obnoxious if it cannot wake life? This poem shows that war is futile to humankind. This view is corroborated with the argument of George Ngide in "A 'War Poet' or A 'Poet At War': Wilfred Owen and the Pity of War" who opines that:

The poem "Futility", as its title clearly indicates, brings out both the notion of the futility of war and questions the *raison d'être* of creation. Arthur E. Lane (1972) asserts that in the poem, there is "a poetic transformation of death... into death as the absurd and ultimate denial of the value of life" (59). The poem describes the death of the soldier while "asleep", the actual fact of his dying, as well as the fact of his death. According to Owen, war violates nature and the natural processes of birth. The soldier in the poem cannot be awoken by the sun, the giver of life, which once awoke him up to go and cultivate unsown fields. The sun "wakes the seeds" as well as "a cold star" yet it cannot wake the soldier in question though he is "full-nerved" that is, robust and muscular. (171)

Ngide in the above quote posits that the poem "Futility" depicts the uselessness of existence as it presents a dead soldier who "cannot be awoken by the sun, the giver of life". The sun is the giver of life because it once gave life to the soldier to cultivate the earth and this sun rouses the "seeds" and "cold star", but does not awake the dead soldier. Owen means that the sun has refused to awake the soldier because he drifted away from the original assignment the sun assigned him; to cultivate the fields. Now that the soldier has abandoned his assignment and embrace war, the sun has deserted him. This, of course means that war is responsible for the futility of the soldier's life. If not, why will the sun wakes the seeds and the "cold star", but does not wake the dead soldiers? Man's stubbornness and callousness, which necessitate wars has caused the sun to abandon him. By this, Owen means that war destroys everything and fixes nothing since it does not spare something as precious as life. This made him write against war, which is considered futile. The sun that Owen alludes to in this poem is God, because after the fall of man in the Garden of Eden, the assigned punished to man besides the fact that he will die, is to till the soil, but as man further moves away from this assignment and chooses his apart in war, God has forsaken humankind.

Equally, war is piteous because it separates one from their loved ones. The soldiers who are fighting at the front have parents, children, wives and other relatives. War renders children fatherless, parents childless and wives widows. This subject of war separating families is evoked in the poem "The Letters". The poem is written in a single stanza of twenty-two lines with regular rhyme scheme. The language used in the poem is colloquial; the non-standard use of language, which reflects the speaker's low level of education. The poem has a varying tone; at the beginning, the tone is that of excitement as the speaker is blissful to write to his wife although he ends up not writing since the pencil cannot write. The tone then becomes friendly as we see some camaraderie among the soldiers. The tone again becomes emotional when the speaker says; "kiss Nell and Bert". Finally, the tone is that of lamentation as in the

end when the soldier is shot and convinced that he will die, the soldier asks his comrade to write to his wife.

Furthermore, "The Letter" presents a soldier who is excited to inform his wife that he will soon be home. The exhilaration seen in the soldier is due to the fact that they will be free from the horror of the trenches as he happily informs his fellow colleague "I think the war will end this year". His conviction that the war will end is because they "don't see much of them square headed Huns", the "square headed Huns" refers to their adversaries. The soldier longs to eat his wife's bread, but he is more elated that he will be home soon so he asks his wife not to complain especially now that they are safe. He also informs his mother that he will keep her money, "soy" and ask her to "kiss Nell and Bert", possibly his children. The soldier assures those at home that they are safe whereas the war rages on. The enemy camp attacks them and before he can get hold of his ammunition; he is shot. It is this miserable situation in which young men's lives are wasted and children are rendered fatherless that made Owen to say his poetry is "in the pity of war". It is this piteous situation that emanates from war, which made Owen to assume an anti-war stance. The style used in the poem is fragmentation; there are thirty full stops, sixteen commas, six exclamation marks, and four question marks. Most of words in the poem are shorten or contracted showing how war cuts short human lives. The fragmented nature of the poem shows how war has crippled the world.

The poetry of Owen and Sassoon demonstrate that many a youth joined the without being prepared psychologically. Many of them joined the war with enthusiasm, but soon became disillusioned with it. This view is corroborated in the last part of "Strange Meeting". Lines thirty to forty-two go as follow:

Courage was mine, and I had mystery,  
 Wisdom was mine, and I had mastery:  
 To miss the march of this retreating world  
 Into vain citadels that are not walled.  
 Then, when much blood had clogged their chariot-wheels,  
 I would go up and wash them from sweet wells,  
 Even with truths that lie too deep for taint.  
 I would have poured my spirit without stint  
 But not through wounds; not on the cess of war.  
 Foreheads of men have bled where no wounds were.  
 I am the enemy you killed, my friend.  
 I knew you in this dark: for so you frowned  
 Yesterday through me as you jabbed and killed.

I parried; but my hands were loath and cold.  
Let us sleep now....”

In the above lines, the persona says he was bold to join the war and beside that, he had secrets or unexplainable reasons for joining it. He believed he was wise and had mastery of war. He also thinks that by escaping the battle to the safe tunnel, he is being courageous and wise though some jingoists and commanders will consider it an act of cowardice and foolishness. He sees war as vanity so he decides to withdraw to this tunnel which is lesser hell compared to the battlefield. Ironically, he calls the odious smelling wells of the trenches "sweet wells". By using this irony, Owen mocks those who see war as something commendable and have contaminated truths with lies and who deceive young people to die. To show contempt for war, the persona says he can sacrifice his life for anything, but not through war. This is because war does not only bring physical pain, but trauma as well. The persona says: "Foreheads of men have bled where no wounds were". This shows inner pain and trauma soldiers go through. Seeing this affliction, the persona decides to give up war for his dear life, which is sanctified.

Moreover, "Strange Meeting" portrays the poet's attitude as being against war altogether. In this poem, it is evident that there is no need for war as the tone demonstrates that war will definitely end if all soldiers escape from the battlefield. The persona dislikes war because it brings horror and pity, war retard economic and social progress of nations. War destroys human lives and their property. Putting all these together, the runaway soldier thinks it is better to retreat from war and save one's life from dying. In fact, he makes a more radical statement when he says "Even with truths that lie too deep for taint/ I would have poured my spirit without stint/ But not through wounds; not on the cess of war." He says war cannot tax his life. This clearly affirms that Owen is anti-war poets. He ends the poem inviting his "strange friend" in the words "Let us sleep now..." is significant in that they can sleep peaceful sleep that was not possible at the war front. It reveals that death has shattered the enmity that existed between them yesterday when they were fighting war. Why reconciliation should only come in death because of senseless wars in which helpless soldiers are butchered was obviously Owen's preoccupation and his conviction to write against war and warmongers. His anti-war stance is because war evokes pity. Elliott Gose Jr. in "Digging in: An Interpretation of Wilfred Owen's "Strange Meeting" who claims that:

"Strange Meeting" is the product of such digging in thought. It demonstrates Owen's realization that what was of transcendent importance to the fighting man should not be his physical suffering contrasted with the comfort of

civilians, but first the dehumanization of war, its ability to turn men into spiritual automatons, and second the paradoxical alternative it offered him of learning pity through involvement with suffering. This one emotion could keep alive the spark of humanity and hope which would suffice to bring regeneration to the individual, and to mankind when the slaughter finally cease. (419)

Goss Jr. in the above quote posits that "Strange Meeting" portrays that in 1918 when the poem was written, Owen had realised that physical importance is not primordial to a man in pain, but that he had realised the dehumanisation in war since soldiers were turned into machines during the war. Owen also stresses that one cannot fight war without enduring suffering and pity. Goss Jr. also notes that Owen feels the pity as a sign of hope that humanity will have after a ceasefire. However, the only hope Owen has is that since he has escaped the battle into a tunnel that is safe, it means that he survived. Hence, survival at the front only comes to escapists according to this poem. The paradox in the poem is that the persona claims that the enemy soldier, which is now his friend killed him yesterday, but the poem ends with "Let us sleep now" showing that there is hope and the hope is because they are free from the battlefield. The setting of "Strange Meeting" is possible in a dream as the persona is not certain about what is happening or where he is. In the opening line of the poem, he says; "It seemed that out of battle I escaped", if it only seems it means the persona is in a state of uncertainty. This shows that he is traumatised by the happenings of the battlefield that he would wish to escape and make friends with fellow humans whom war has compelled them to be foes.

Sassoon wrote against the war he saw as war of aggression. The experiences he had about war as time went on showed him there is nothing to venerate about war. The incompetence of military leaders and the manipulation from politicians and religious leaders roused his anger and his anti-war propaganda rose. To show his hatred for war, Sassoon wrote an open declaration condemning war. In the letter, he writes:

I am making this statement as an act of willful defiance of military authority, because I believe that the War is being deliberately prolonged by those who have the power to end it. I am a soldier, convinced that I am acting on behalf of soldiers. I believe that this War, upon which I entered as a war of defense and liberation, has now become a war of aggression and conquest. I believe that the purposes for which I and my fellow soldiers entered upon this War should have been clearly stated as to have made it impossible for them to be changed without our knowledge, and that, had this been done, the objects which actuated us would now be attainable by negotiation. I have seen and endured the sufferings of the troops, and I can no longer be a party to prolonging those sufferings for ends which I believe to be evil and unjust. I am

not protesting against the military conduct of the War, but against the political errors and insincerities for which the fighting men are being sacrificed.

On behalf of those who are suffering now, I make this protest against the deception which is being practiced on them. Also I believe that it may help to destroy the callous complacency with which the majority of those at home regard the continuance of agonies which they do not share, and which they have not sufficient imagination to realise (Qtd in Bloom, 47-48)

Sassoon intimates that his protest is an open disregard for the military authorities who intentionally prolong the war. He believes that his defiant action is proper because he acts on behalf of the suffering troops. His anger and protest also emanate from the fact that the war which began as "a war of defence and liberation, has now become a war of aggression and conquest." He thinks that soldiers were not well informed about the nature of the war from the beginning. This shows that the soldiers were not well prepared physically and psychologically. His stance is clear, he cannot continue the war and he makes it clear that his protest is against the insincerities of politicians. The protest is not just about him, but the entire troops who are suffering from war horrors. He writes this protest from the experiences he had about war while home warmongers encourage the war because they do not share the soldiers' agonies.

Just like Wilfred Owen, Sassoon's enthusiasm and exuberance to fight war to liberate his country was shattered when he saw youthful officers suffering in the trenches. Firstly, Sassoon's experience at the war front showed him that war is not an adventure to demonstrate patriotism and heroism, but an ignorant venture wherein young troops are miserable. The horrors of war made Sassoon to become an anti-war poet. He is preoccupied with the suffering of soldiers in the trenches. Also, he is embittered because those suffering this war misery are young and junior officers. He portrays the hardship of a young soldier in "A Subaltern", sonnet poem that paints how junior officers suffer in the trenches. The Subaltern is tired of taking guard for the speaker says he has a "sleepy gaze", he is shivering because he has been guarding in the rain. The speaker says "He told me he'd been having a bloody home", this portrays the misery of soldiers at the front. Looking at this hardship, Sassoon gives a vivid account to call the powers that be that war is not an option. Hence, he writes against war as a conscientious or committed writer. In analysing Sassoon's poem, "The Effect" Emirah Atasoy "Transformation of Siegfried Sassoon's War Poetry: Discourse Shapes Perspective" opines that:

"The Effect," a poem much different than 'Absolution,' is a poem that illustrates Sassoon's anti-nationalistic feelings about the War after he

experienced the brutality and the reality of the War. The battlefield is like hell and is referred to as yellow daylight. There are corpses sprawled everywhere. The narrator is shocked to learn that those places which were once a road are now ruined. Corpses are capering in the rain. The word, *caper* means 'a frolicsome leap' (*Merriam-Webster*). Sassoon uses this word for the corpses which capered in the rain. It is impossible for the corpses to caper under normal circumstances; however, Sassoon brings this image to perception through his poetic creativity. There are dancing words, jumping corpses, and so many dead that one cannot count anymore. All these images and representations can exemplify how Sassoon's nationalistic discourse has turned into the anti-nationalistic discourse. (6)

Atasoy in the quote postulates massacre, and the brutality of war transformed Sassoon from nationalistic soldier to an anti-nationalistic poet. However, we think that Sassoon was not an anti-nationalist since he did not write against nationalism, but against war, so writing to condemn war does not make him an anti-nationalist, but a compassionate nationalist concerned with the suffering of his fellow nationals at the battlefield. Sassoon's irritation against war also emanates from the fact that soldiers are deprived of happiness and worst still, they are neglected as those who send them to the front care very little of their welfare. In the poem, "In the Pink", the narrator talks of Davies who thinks of peaceful and joyful past moments when he was "as cheerful as a lark". The use of simile in this expression is to show that war has taken the joy and freedom that existed before. In the last stanza of "In the Pink" Sassoon writes:

And then he thought: to-morrow night we trudge  
Up to the trenches, and my boots are rotten.  
Five miles of stodgy clay and freezing sludge,  
And everything but wretchedness forgotten.  
To-night he's in the pink; but soon he'll die.  
And still the war goes on; *he* don't know why.

The above stanza has irregular meter with alternate rhyme scheme. Thinking about the misery of the trenches, the speaker contrasts the horror of war to the harmony of peace time. The soldiers despite their hardship are neglected upon. This is evident when the persona says "my boots are rotten." Sassoon wants to demonstrate that the soldiers are not well furnished. Death is inescapable as the narrator says "but soon he'll die". The poet's attitude comes in the last line. War brings misery and eventually leads to death as many soldiers are killed, but what one does not comprehend is why the war goes on. The poet's attitude in the poem is that of lamentation and regret. He mourns the misery and apparent death that war has brought and he regrets that despite these horrors the war is still going on which he does not understand why. The diction used in the poem evokes pity as the soldier in the poem says; "my boots are



rotten” and the persona says; “soon he’ll die”. This portrays Sassoon as an anti-war poet; if Sassoon had power and means, he would stop the senseless war that he does not understand why it is still going on. Just as he opined in his protest letter; Sassoon still holds his position that the war is unnecessarily prolonged.

Sassoon hated war firstly because of the untimely death it brought to the soldiers and furthermore, because of the manipulation from campaigners. To warmongers; war is a joke since they do not live the experience of war. Sassoon mocks these campaigners when he says to Robert Graves in "A Letter Home" that "War's a joke for me and you/ while we know such dreams are true." The irony here is that Sassoon knows that war is not supposed to be taken for granted because the horrors of war is a reality; which is why he says; “while we know such dreams are true.” War is not a joke because the soldiers who go to the front come back as dust. In "Prelude: The Troops”, Sassoon writes; “The unreturning army that was youth;/ The legion who have suffered and are dust.” Here, the persona posits that soldiers who went to the front without returning because war has claimed their lives are youths. These young men suffered in the war before dying at last. The massive deaths of young soldiers augmented Sassoon's hatred for war. In "The Dead-Bed", Sassoon says; "He's young; he hated war; how should he die/When cruel old campaigners win safe through?" In this verse, the dead young soldier who hates war is Sassoon's mouth-piece as Sassoon uses his voice to show his contempt for war that claims the lives of many people. In his autobiographical work, *Memoir of an Infantry Officer*, Sassoon writes:

Warm and secure, I listened to the gentle whisper of the aspens outside the window, and the fear of death and the horror of mutilation took hold of my heart. Durley was muttering in his sleep, something rapid and incoherent, and then telling someone to get a move on; the war didn't allow people many pleasant dreams. It was difficult to imagine old Julian killing a German, even with an anonymous bullet. I didn't want to kill any Germans myself, but one had to kill people in self-defence. (190)

The above quote culled from Sassoon’s *Memoire of an Infantry Officer* shows how soldiers are haunted by the horrors of war. The protagonist of this novel is George Sherston who laments how he fears death and the “horror of mutilation”. One of his comrades, Durley, murmurs in his sleep apparently because he is haunted by nightmares caused by the war. The cruelty of war is revealed in how Julian kills the German mercilessly. Sherston says he hates to kill the Germans, but he is without an option since he has to kill to survive from the war. This shows that war created an avenue of survival of the fittest. The use of the first person point of view in the text shows that it is Sassoon himself exposing his experiences in the war.

In the above quote, his condemnation of war is very evident when he says, "I didn't want to kill any Germans myself, but one had to kill people in self-defence." This shows that he was only compelled to fight the war. By not wanting to kill, it portrays him as a pacifist.

The poetry of Owen and Sassoon reveals that despondency pushes soldiers to hate war. He presents soldiers in his poems as people who can only dream of survival since there is no hope that they will survive the war as he says in "Dreamers" that "Soldiers are citizens of death's grey land." War has taken soldiers away from "firelit homes", "clean beds" and "wives" and they can only dream of these things because war has brought "feuds", "jealousies" and "sorrows", but since they are "sworn to action" they must sacrifice their lives in "some flaming" and "fatal climax." To show the hopelessness of soldiers in war, Sassoon writes:

I see them in foul dug-outs, gnawed by rats,  
And in the ruined trenches, lashed with rain,  
Dreaming of things they did with balls and bats,  
And mocked by hopeless longing to regain  
Bank-holidays, and picture shows, and spats,  
And going to the office in the train.

In the above quoted stanza culled from "Dreamers" the sestet is written in a regular rhyme scheme of iambic pentameter and an alternate rhyme scheme of ABABAB, the persona invites the readers to share the soldier's misery in dug-outs infected with rats. These soldiers are languishing in sodden trenches and fight in the rain that augments their miseries. Since the soldiers are not certain of not having any hope of ever experiencing a jovial life again, they can only dream of their merriment of peace time when they play "balls and bats". Despondence is personified as mocking the soldiers who cannot gain back "bank-holidays", "picture shows" and "spats". In this stanza, Sassoon portrays how devastating war can be as a joy killer. These soldiers are humans who are supposed to be enjoying the beauty of life somewhere, but rather, they "are sworn to action". The use of the passive voice "are sworn to" begs the question; who swears soldiers in to action? Sassoon wants to show the manipulation that warmongers use to deceive young men to take arms in the name of defending the fatherland. It is the despondence of soldiers at the front that made Sassoon to write against war as a way of discouraging further enlistment and conscription. Sassoon therefore wrote to create awareness about the evil of war and to discourage war that jingoists propagated, but did not fight.

Disillusionment became the plight of many soldiers in the war. Many of the soldiers were disappointed with the management of the war that exposed them to suffering. Sassoon joined the war as patriot, but soon became disillusioned due the horrors endured at the front. Disillusionment came as a result of the horrors of the trenches. Sassoon like many of his comrades who joined the army soon became embittered with horrible experiences of trench warfare. This argument is corroborated by John Lucas quoted in Yusuf Ziyaettin Turan's *Modern English Poetry* who says:

It begins with the heady innocence of those public schoolboys who immediately volunteered for action and who were, many of them at least, dead by the time that the disasters of Somme began to change the minds of others. From then on the poetry becomes marked by disillusionment, bitterness, aching sorrow for the soldiers themselves, and hatred for the government and generals who were determined that the war should continue until the enemy had totally surrendered. (Qtd in Turan, 130)

Lucas above opines that when the Great War started, impetuous and exhilarating "public schoolboys" hastily enlisted, but a majority of them died before the peak of the war. Witnessing the massacre, many of the troops' opinion about the war soon changed as they became sorrowful, upset and disillusioned thereby causing many to regret. Their bitterness was directed towards the government and military generals who were not willing to call ceasefire. Sassoon was one of these disillusioned soldiers that Lucas makes mention of in the above quote. In his disappointment with war, Sassoon becomes annoyed with the bellicose civilians and military leaders like vice regents who enjoyed the ensconced military base while soldiers languished at the front. Sassoon's disillusionment is also based on the fact that war deprives soldiers not just of freedom but also joy. In the poem, "In the Pink", Sassoon writes:

He couldn't sleep that night. Stiff in the dark  
 He groaned and thought of Sundays at the farm,  
 When he'd go out as cheerful as a lark  
 In his best suit to wander arm-in-arm  
 With brown-eyed Gwen, and whisper in her ear  
 The simple, silly things she liked to hear.

In the sestet above written in a regular rhyme and rhythm, the narrator tells of a soldier who is fed up with the precarious conditions of war. This soldier is unable to sleep since the night is not conducive. He laments the horrors of war and thinks of his happy Sundays of peace time when he was free and jocund like a bird. That time, he wore his best suit not the awkward khaki he now puts on. He enjoyed the company of a damsel called Gwen. These beautiful moments no longer exist because of wars. Disappointed, the narrator says in the last stanza that he does not know why the war continues when people are dying. This shows that

the soldiers are helpless because they do not have power of their own to end the war. It is this helpless situation of war that made that Sassoon became so disillusioned with war, which he used a lot of energy to condemn through his poetry.

### **Reactions against Warmongers**

Politicians and military leaders had the powers to call the war to a cessation, but since they did not share in the suffering of the trenches they prolonged the war unnecessarily. Soldiers were dehumanised as they had to work like machines in the trenches for long hours at times without being in possession of sufficient ammunition. These inhuman attitudes on the sides of these political and military leaders orchestrated and prompted Owen and Sassoon to direct their exasperations against these leaders; blaming them for putting soldiers in difficult trench warfare, which seemed to know no end. Saad Kassim Sagher in “Siegfried Sassoon, Wilfred Owen and World War I” opines that:

Both Sassoon and Owen turned their war experiences into poems that remain, with the poems of a few other young soldier poets, a true chronicle of the sufferings and miseries of the young soldiers who were obliged to fight in a savage war which seemed never to end. Their poems, in spite of all differences in style, technique, language, and approach, expose the inhuman effects of war on the soldiers; the dehumanization of soldiers by their superiors, who showed clear nonchalance to the fate and suffering of those soldiers; the futility and hopelessness of their trench life, and the loss of their youth and life in the war; hence these poems are replete with humanistic feelings toward young soldiers in the trenches. These poems have become a true historical document of the daily life of soldiers at the front lines during the First World War, satirizing and condemning the carelessness of the politicians at home who prolonged the war to achieve personal glories for themselves without any regard to the miserable conditions of soldiers and the high casualties among them. (219)

Sagher in the quote above postulates that Owen and Sassoon were influenced by their experiences in the war to write poems that depicted the suffering and miseries of young soldiers who were compelled to combat. Their poetry revealed to their readerships the consequences of the savage battles in which soldiers were despondent at the futile nature of the war. They did not only present war misery, which became a major documentation during the war, but also attacked and blamed politicians for their carefree attitudes towards the miserable soldiers. These politicians had personal gained from the war so they inhumanly destroyed the lives of young men fighting the war. Owen and Sassoon through their poetry gave historians a clear picture of what happened in the trenches.

Owen wrote to castigate war because he was fed up with the idea of sacrificing the youths for the self-centeredness of the old warmongers. In a good number of his poems, he is exasperated with those who encourage war, but have no experience of the horrors in the trenches. The poem "Sonnet: To a Child" paints a picture in which youths do not enjoy their youthfulness because of the callous war the old have waged. The persona says; "Beauty withheld from youth that looks for youth". Here, "youth" is synonymous to beauty; but they cannot enjoy the beauty of life because war has deprived them of that privilege. War makes youths to know no happiness. The sestet of the sonnet goes as follows:

But soon your heart, hot-beating like a bird's,  
 Shall slow down. Youth shall lop your hair,  
 And you must learn wry meanings in our words.  
 Your smile shall dull, because too keen aware;  
 And when for hopes your hand shall be uncurled,  
 Your eyes shall close, being opened to the world.

The above sestet is written in the form of a blank verse; that is, a regular metre of iambic pentameter and an irregular rhyme scheme. The persona informs the child that though he is energetic and his heart beats strong since the child is vibrant like a bird; he will soon die. The child is ironically compared to a bird. The irony is that birds have freedom whereas the child is not free from war carnage. The simile "hot-beating like a bird" illustrates how soldiers are killed for various reasons; the child is sacrificed for the so-called freedom of his fatherland. There is the use of euphemism in the expression "shall slow down" meaning the child will die and be put in the earth. The beauty of the child is snatched away from him; this is seen as the child's hair is cut off without his consent. Also, the child is manipulated by jingoists whose logomachies are twisted, misdirected and sardonic to lure the child to fight war as a patriot. The persona emphatically informs the child that his smile will soon fade away and that war will scoop away his hopes when he can no longer feel his hand. The last line, is euphemistic; "Your eyes shall close", this means that the child cannot escape doom and the child's death will bring light to the world governed by old warmongers.

Owen in "Sonnet: To a child", depicts the cruelty of war in which the insensible warmongers sacrifice the youths. He, therefore, condemns war because he sees it as an avenue in which the youth are sacrificed. The main style used is satire as the poet satirises politicians and fathers of the young soldiers for sacrificing their children in a callous war they have created and obliged their children to fight for them. In "Anthem for Doomed Youth", Owen shows that with war looming around, it means that youths are doomed for dead. The tone of this

poem is ironic because anthem, which is praise or dignifying song, cannot be sung to a misfortune youth. In fact, a suitable title should have been "Dirge for Doomed Youth". The effectiveness behind the ironic title is to mock jingoist politicians who praise dead soldiers they have designed and contributed to their doom. In "The Parable of the Old Man and the Young", Owen shows how war gives the old the opportunity to butcher the youths in the trenches. These old warmongers are described in the last stanza of "Insensibility" as follows:

But cursed are dullards whom no cannon stuns,  
That they should be as stones;  
Wretched are they, and mean  
With paucity that never was simplicity.  
By choice they made themselves immune  
To pity and whatever mourns in man  
Before the last sea and the hapless stars;  
Whatever mourns when many leave these shores;  
Whatever shares  
The eternal reciprocity of tears.

The above stanza opens with the persona cursing warmongers whom according to him are fools who encourage war whose horrors they do not suffer from. These warmongers are inhumane; the speaker calls them "stones" to show that they do not have compassion. In fact, they lack morality as they are "mean". Their wickedness cannot be taken for granted. These old men who encourage war make "themselves immune"; that is, they are safe from the dug-outs. The persona uses metaphor when he refers to soldiers as "unhappy star", which means the soldiers are not lucky as suffering and death is their fate. The use of anaphora with the repetition of the "whatever" at the beginning means that when the soldier leaves (dies) nobody cares to mourn or share their horrible plight. The last line of this stanza is ironical as the persona rather means that the warmongers do not share the suffering soldiers. Presenting the jingoistic stance of these politicians who have become insensitive and inhumane towards the suffering of the soldier, Owen developed an anti-war attitude and wrote to castigate greedy politicians.

Jingoists supported war that claimed the lives of youths and also destroyed natural habitat. Environmental concern is not a common thematic concern in war poetry; however, war is fought in nature so the massive use of shells and other dangerous weapons have effects on natural habitats. In one of Owen's poems entitled "The show", the speaker presents a degrading landscape. The poem contains an epitaph of W.B Yeats which says; "We have fallen in the dreams of the ever-living/Breathe on the tarnished mirror of the war/And then smooth out with ivory hands and sigh". This epitaph holds as subject matter the destroyed

image of the world caused by war that kills not only dreams but also lives. The first stanza of "The Show" goes thus:

My soul looked down from a vague height, with Death,  
As unremembering how I rose or why,  
And saw a sad land, weak with sweats of dearth,  
Gray, cratered like the moon with hollow woe,  
And pitted with great pocks and scabs of plagues.

The persona in the above five-line stanza which is a blank verse says when he looks at the barren hills, all he sees is massacre. The death here does not only refer to humans because nature has been killed as well that is why the land is described as "vague height". The soldier is in pain to the extent he does not remember anything, as he struggles to get up. The use of personification in "a sad land" shows this land is desolate and the persona also says the war has rendered the land infertile and the consequence is famine. The land is described as "weak with sweats of death". This verse contains alliteration, /w/ and assonance /3:/. These repetitive sounds show how war constantly destroys the fertility of the soil. The land is gloomy as bombs have left large pits in it making it to look grey and not good for habitation. The land has many trenches which the persona compares to scabs; that is, scars left on the land by war. The metaphorical use of scars for trenches shows that war does not only leave wounds on soldiers, but also on the natural landscape. In the second stanza, the grass of the land, which is metaphorically referred to as "beard", suffers from "harsh wire". This stanza also presents moving caterpillars that end up dying in the ditches dug by soldiers. Due to war, the natural habitation of these insects is being destroyed and unable to adapt to the changes they die in the trenches. A caterpillar as an insect has not completed its life cycle yet, so they are likened to young soldiers who die in trenches.

Owen disagrees with the notion that war brings heroism and that soldiers are patriots who sacrifice their lives for the love of their country. Owen calls this the "old lie" in "Dulce Et Decorum Est". Earlier war poets wrote in favour of war; that is, they venerated and celebrated war as what brings honour and respect to the fallen troops. These poets who wrote in support of war are said to be jingoistic. Prominent amongst the jingoistic soldier-poets is Rupert Brooke. Rosemary Canfield Reisman in *Critical Survey of Poetry: War Poets*, posits that Brooke wrote bravely about war and patriotism though his witness about the cruelties of war was brief as he died in April 1915. Brooke believed that by sacrificing their lives, soldiers have gained nobility and honour. While Brooke sees war as something that brings honour, Owen sees war as nothing good except what brings pity

Owen in "Dulce Et Decorum Est" ridicules the old belief that war brings honour. The poet says the pre-war propaganda brought "To children ardent for some desperate glory/The old lies: Dulce et decorum est/ pro patria mori. The first observation here is that war brings desperation in youth who are passionate or glowing to gain vain glory because they have been deceived that "it is sweet and honourable to die for one's fatherland." The poet's tone is that of condemnation as he emphasises that it is a lie that war brings glory. In fact, he writes "Lie" beginning with an upper case letter to stress that war does not bring any glory as the "children ardent" have been manipulated to think so. The pre-war propaganda was entirely pro-war which made pro-war poets like Robert Brooke to venerate war unfortunately Brooke died at the early stage of the war; who knows? If he had fought the war for long like Owen and Sassoon his perceptions of it might also have been altered by the experiences of the trenches.

Owen did not just dislike war because of the obnoxious experiences of trench warfare but also due to the fact that war creates enmity. The soldiers felt obnoxious because they were aware of the cruelties on their adversaries, but these soldiers were helpless, senseless and became enemies with fellow humans who ought to be their friends. War creates unnecessary enmity where fellow humans are compelled to become enemies; this, because war gives room to the argument of force instead of negotiation that gives room to the force of argument. In the poem "Strange Meeting", Owen says; "I am the enemy you killed, my friend". The juxtaposition of friend and foe in this line vividly captures the paradox in the line. The persona makes us to understand that these soldiers are naturally friends who are all created in the image of God, but war makes them antagonists. This shows that the soldiers are helpless and at the same time senseless. They are helpless because fate makes them soldiers who either kill or are killed. Whether they perpetuate violence or suffered from it, they will be helpless before death. Youthfulness is taken away from those who are dead while those who survive the war suffer from traumatic experiences. These soldiers are senseless in that war has made them to be irrational; they can decide not to fight the war and save humanity, but because war has made them unreasonable they create enmity with those they do not even know.

Owen's "Strange Meeting" is another representation of his anti-war position. The poem is written in a stanza of forty-four lines in iambic pentameter. It is written from the first person point of view signifying that the poet himself is the speaker as the poem depicts his personal experience. The first thirteen lines of the poem are as follows:



It seemed that out of battle I escaped  
 Down some profound dull tunnel, long since scooped  
 Through granites which titanic wars had groined.  
 Yet also there encumbered sleepers groaned,  
 Too fast in thought or death to be bestirred.  
 Then, as I probed them, one sprang up, and stared  
 With piteous recognition in fixed eyes,  
 Lifting distressful hands as if to bless.  
 And by his smile, I knew that sullen hall,  
 By his dead smile I knew we stood in Hell.  
 With a thousand pains that vision's face was grained;  
 Yet no blood reached there from the upper ground,  
 And no guns thumped, or down the flues made moan.

The persona in the above lines presents us to a soldier, possibly Owen himself who has escapes the battlefield. Though the word "seemed" suggests a doubt, as the soldier seems to lose memory, the soldier escapes the battle. This clearly shows Owen's hatred for war and its casualties. If the persona liked war, he would not definitely escape the battle. After affirming that he has escaped battle, the persona describes the physical environment. He is in a "profound dull tunnel" where there are "granites and encumbered sleepers groaned." The underground passage is deep and strong like rocks that "titanic wars" built. There are loaded sleeping soldiers who are groaning. The persona's thought rouse him then he searches the soldiers and one of them "sprang up, and stared". From the persona's description of the soldier, he is miserable though he still manages to smile with his sunken jaws which is metaphorically called a hall. The soldier's smile is described as "dead" since they are in hell. The soldier goes through pain though the massacre above the tunnel does not reach them in the tunnel. They do not even hear the sound of guns in the tunnel.

The poet's attitude in the above poem is that of condemnation. Because of the persona's dislike for war, he escapes the battle and goes to a tunnel. In the tunnel there are many dead soldiers, but one of them is still alive though suffering. Owen uses hyperbole when he says; "with a thousand pains that vision's face was grained;" this exaggeration portray the pitiful situation of soldiers at the war front as soldiers cannot even lift up their hands, which are either numbed or broken. In the tunnel, the persona and the soldier are safe; the persona says the killing up the ground does not reach the tunnel and there are "no guns thumped" in there. This portrays Owen's stance that if all soldiers escape the battle, they will be safe in their home and killing will stop since nobody will be firing the guns that does not only bring a

"thousand pains", but massacre. The tunnel is described as "Hell" but the persona prefers the tunnel-hell to the hell at the battlefield which seems fiercer.

The persona believes that people have shared his bliss, but when it comes to his woe, they have deserted him. Here Owen launches an attack against jingoists who give partial report or account of war. These jingoists and warmongers have "truth untold" and this truth is that war brings nothing but pity. It is hard to imagine that warmongers care less about both the human and material losses of war. These warmongers are metaphorically compared to "tigress" to portray their aggressive nature. Another untold truth about war is that war retards economic and social progress. The persona says "None will break ranks, though nations trek from progress." Here, it shows that the belligerents do not want to compromise even at the expense of nations' progress. Instead of trekking to progress, war makes countries to "trek from progress, yet jingoists and warmongers prefer to preserve their positions or ranks and sacrifice youths to die. Owen therefore, became an anti-war poet because of "the pity of war, the pity war distilled."

In the light of psychoanalysis, we can see how the persona in the poem is haunted by past morbid experiences that he has tried to escape from. To say that it seemed that he escaped from world shows that the persona is in a dream-like state of dilemma whereby he wishes to avoid to get rid horrible images of war haunting him, but he is unable to escape them. When he ends the poem with "let us sleep now" the reader then realises that the persona was in a state of imagination and he yearns to have a peaceful sleep, which unfortunately, war has prevented them from. What the persona cannot achieve in real life, he fulfils it in a dreams as psychoanalysis holds that dreams are wishful fulfilment of unattained desires. Sanja R. Koricanac in "A Psychoanalytic Profile of Wilfred Owen as Reflected in 'Dulce Et Decorum Est' and 'Strange Meeting'" opines that:

The stress on ambiguity is laid from the very first phrase *It seemed that* (line 1). Such an introduction sets out more tones for the entire poem ranging from dreamlike to dreadfully realistic. Psychoanalysis is founded on the idea that people subliminally undertake all kinds of endeavours to put behind the troubled past which may find peculiar ways to emerge sooner or later unless faced properly. When Owen mentions some *battle I escaped* (line 1), we imagine it as an appropriate description of those tormenting former events almost everyone would like to have left behind. Nonetheless, psychoanalysis professes that whatever one runs away from comes back, often aggravated and perhaps in an altered form, to teach the unlearned lesson. The battle is the annunciation of the conflict within the narrator who longs to find his place of

*rescue down some profound dull tunnel* (line 2) *dug through granite* (line 3) – practically indestructible material that gravestones are made of.(174)

Koricanac in the above quote argues that “Strange Meeting” open ambiguously depicting that it has multiple tones, which varies from frightful realities to a state of dreams. He posits that by escaping, it shows that Owen is running away from tormenting past events, which is a futile struggle because the more he tries to run away the more he is haunted. The presence of the war also professes internal conflicts that Owen wants to run away from. This shows that wars bring physical pains and psychological trauma and warmongers who declare the war do not face any of them as they stay in their cosy homes and dispatch soldiers to endure war miseries and die prematurely.

In "The Next War", the persona, who is also a soldier, has witnessed death to the point that he is not afraid; instead of death coming to soldiers, they go to death. He says; "Out there, we've walk quite friendly up to Death;" out there refers to the battlefield. They wait for death at anytime because death is always by them as the persona says they eat with death and it spits on them. Death is personified in this poem to show that it has control over the soldiers' lives and can claim it at anytime. The odour of the dug-outs cause soldiers to sniff and they weep but their courage is still fervent. They chant war songs while they shared with a "scythe". Having talk about the plight of soldiers before death, the second stanza goes thus:

Oh, Death was never enemy of ours!  
 We laughed at him, we leagued with him, old chum.  
 No soldier's paid to kick against his powers.  
 We laughed, knowing that better men would come,  
 And greater wars; when each proud fighter brags  
 He wars on Death—for lives; not men—for flags.

The persona claims in the above sestet that death is no longer their enemy, instead they are happy to collaborate with it. This corroborates John Donne's philosophy that death is not the end of life as he says in his poem, “Death Be Not Proud”, that “death, thou shall die”. Death is the soldiers' old friend. The presupposition in the third line is that soldiers desire to protest against leaders who usher them to their death, but if they attempt it would be considered an act of insubordination so they better just accept to die because that is what they are paid for. The soldiers are consoled with the conviction that though they will die, better leaders or in the speaker's diction "better men", will lead after them. These better men will not be jingoists or warmongers who will force soldiers to embrace death, but conscious leaders who will fight "greater wars" on the negotiating tables. These leaders are people who will launch war against war, that is, leaders who are pacifist and will opt for peaceful resolution to conflicts

through negotiation and not war as the current leaders prefer. These "better men" will fight death to save soldiers' lives contrary to the "worse men" of now who sacrifice lives for the sake of a mere flag.

In the poem, "The New War", Owen is a pacifist and believes that wars cannot be a solution to conflicts because it is violent. In this poem, Owen satirises the leaders of his time for valuing an object like a flag over the lives of soldiers. He calls on future leaders whom he hopes will be better men probably because they would learn from the mistakes of present leaders to fight "greater wars" by warring on death. It is important to note that in the poem death is synonymous with war. Owen believes that so far as there is war, death becomes eminent. Instead of using fingers to fire guns and sign declaration of war, better men will use "proud fingers" to sign ceasefire and negotiation; that is, words will replace swords. This shows that politicians in Europe in the early twentieth century were not good enough as leaders because they opted for violence as a means to solve conflict, so Owen was hopeful that future leaders will seek to solve conflict through negotiations, but it seems that future has not yet reached and such "better men" have not yet taken leadership in the world. Owen, therefore, is a war poet who fights war against war. This view is opined by George Ewane Ngide when he says:

Owen's strong believe in reconciliation and negotiations by future leaders whose interest will be in the amicable resolution of conflicts. "Greater wars" refers to the different meetings that will be held in order to avert any possibility of war. The "proud fighter" refers to the negotiators who will stage a more civilized war against war considered here as "death" in order to save lives and not in vain patriotic protection and defence of "flags" or nations. The fundamental question is why or what men are really fighting for. Are "flags" worth the sacrifice of lives? The answers to these questions do not only lie in the devastating effects of war on the soldiers that the poet earlier enounces in the poem, but also on the denunciation of war-mongers and the destructive nature of war as in "Strange Meeting". (Ngide, 175)

The quotation above, posits that Owen advocates "reconciliation and negotiation", which he calls on the future leaders to stand for. He says "proud fingers" as used by Owen is figurative for negotiators who will fight war to preserve lives. He also opines that Owen's preoccupation shows that flags cannot be more valuable than lives. Owen denounces war because of its traumatising experience on the soldiers as he enounces in the first stanza of "The Next War". This vivid description of the tormenting soldiers shows the poet's attitude as that of condemnation. The poet as an anti-war poet believes that negotiation is the solution to conflict and not war because war is violent. It is more than a centennial as Owen wrote and

he will be disillusioned if he resurrects today only to find out that there is still a plethora of wars on earth and warmongers are on the rise even when it has been proven beyond reasonable doubt that negotiation remains the best option for conflict resolution. Unfortunately, more than one hundred years since Owen was hopeful that future wars will be curbed; “greater wars” have not been fought because the powers that be are obstinate about becoming “better men”. Owen’s poetry is still relevant to be considered today because the issues he has raised in his poetry as far as war is concerned have not been addressed to the maximum.

The incompetence of military commanders also increased Sassoon's exasperation. These commanders send troops to the front without sufficient artillery or mastery of the terrain. The result was the mass death that Britain recorded during the early phase of the war. It is estimated that in the first phase of the war, Britain lost about 70,000 troops. This shows that the casualties of the war were enormous and soldiers like Sassoon blamed it on the incompetence of military commanders. In "The General", Sassoon writes:

“Good-morning; good-morning!” the General said  
 When we met him last week on our way to the line.  
 Now the soldiers he smiled at are most of ’em dead,  
 And we’re cursing his staff for incompetent swine.  
 “He’s a cheery old card,” grunted Harry to Jack  
 As they slogged up to Arras with rifle and pack.

But he did for them both by his plan of attack.

The above poem is written epigrammatically as the early years of Sassoon's poetic forms were. The poem is written in iambic hexameter except for the first line, which has eleven syllables. The incompetent general in the poem sends troops to the front only within one week, a majority of whom are dead. It is not only the general, but his entire staff that is incompetent and because of their lack of prowess, the soldiers curse them. These military commanders who are incompetent are metaphorically compared to a swine, which means their lack of competence is because they still practise old military tactics that do not yield fruits. This explains why the speaker refers to the general as "a cheery old card." The General cheers when he sends young men to go and die with his outdated tactics. The second stanza has only one line and wittingly says while Harry and Jack insult the general as an "old card", he decides their fate through the military "plan of attack".

Sassoon's satire on war correspondents that were jingoistic depicts his annoyance against false reports. In the poem, "The Effect", Sassoon quotes a war correspondent who reports;

"The effect of our bombardment was terrific. One man told me he had never seen so many dead before." This correspondent is jingoistic because his tone in reporting war carnage is that of excitement. He refers to the massacre as "terrific", which means wonderful. The correspondent takes interest in reporting the casualties of the enemy camp, but he does not report the hardship of their own troops. The persona in "The Effect" says; "The dead have done with pain:/ They've choked; they can't come back to life again." The reports given by the correspondents were partial and usually in support of war. Sassoon satirises correspondents who encourage war without knowing the effects it has on soldiers.

Furthermore, Sassoon's anti-war sentiment also made him to satirise monarchs who sent in soldiers to the front for their lust for power and greed. Rohi John in "Wilhelm, German Emperor" posits that Kaiser William II encouraged Austria to "subjugate Serbia or eliminate it altogether." In fact, Rohi holds that after his bosom friend Franz Ferdinand was assassinated Wilhelm in a diplomatic report from Vienna wrote, "Now or never! The Serbs must be swept away and that right soon!" (1) This jingoistic attitude of the German Kaiser was the same attitude discerned in the British king. Katerina Svidova in *The Role of the British Royal Family During WWI and WWII* quotes George V saying "Having drawn the sword, we would not sheathe it until we had concluded an honourable peace." This demonstrates that monarchs on both camps support the war and Sassoon showed his contempt for such pro-war stance. The poem in which Sassoon castigates monarchs is "Devotion to Duty" in which he writes:

I was near the King that day. I saw him snatch  
 And briskly scan the G.H.Q. dispatch.  
 Thick-voiced, he read it out. (His face was grave.)  
 "This officer advanced with the first wave,  
 "And when our first objective had been gained,  
 "(Though wounded twice), reorganized the line:  
 "The spirit of the troops was by his fine  
 "Example most effectively sustained."

He gripped his beard; then closed his eyes and said,  
 "Bathsheba must be warned that he is dead.  
 "Send for her. I will be the first to tell  
 "This wife how her heroic husband fell."

The poem above is written in two stanzas of octave and quatrain with the rhyme scheme being rhyming couplet and is about a king who takes command to dispatch troops to the front. He designates one of the soldiers to take command and praises his bravery despite the fact that he has been wounded twice; he has remained determined and resilient. In giving

command, the king is authoritative as the narrator says; "his face was grave." In the second stanza, this king is compared to David in the Bible who snatched his soldier's, Uriah's, wife and gave orders that Uriah should be sent to a dangerous zone at the front so that he can be killed. The biblical allusion in the poem shows or portrays the wickedness of old men who sacrifice young people in war because of their lust. After encouraging the war that claims this soldier's life, the king refers to him as a hero. It is also this cruelty of self-centred leaders that made Sassoon to write against war. Sassoon wishes he had the opportunity to set the soldiers free.

In the poem; 'Banishment', Sassoon writes; "The darkness tells how vainly I have striven/To free them from the pit where they must dwell". This verse shows that Sassoon had as determination to liberate suffering troops, but since he could not do so, he followed them to the trenches to share their pain that is why he says in "Banishment" that "Love drove me to rebel/ Love drives me back to grope with them through hell". He rebelled against leaders for prolonging the wars, but since the leaders did not heed to his protest against war, his love for the suffering troops made him to leave the Craiglockhart hospital back to the front.

Sassoon's bitter tone against war is a call for concern that war should not be encouraged. Robert Nichols, Soldier and Friend of Sassoon who wrote the Introduction to *Siegfried Sassoon: War Poems*, concurs with Sassoon when he says; "For myself this is the truth. War doesn't ennoble: it degrades." Just like Sassoon, Nichols disregards what he calls "the old men's death-or-glory stunt." The old men believed that war brings glory to the fallen troops, something that Sassoon contravenes with these warmongers when he says; "For war is hell and those who institute it are criminals." This shows his bitterness against war and against those who encourage it. While soldiers go through hell at the battlefield, those who send them there stay at home and make-merry. In "Blighters", Sassoon writes:

The House is crammed: tier beyond tier they grin  
And cackle at the Show, while prancing ranks  
Of harlots shrill the chorus, drunk with din;  
"We're sure the Kaiser loves the dear old Tanks!"

The above quatrain is written in iambic pentameter and has alternating rhyme scheme and presents old warmongers who are in fanfare. They sit in layers with broad smiles on their faces. They laugh while talking about war, what Sassoon metaphorically calls "show" meaning these old men talk of war as if it is a musical or a drama show. These old warmongers are enjoying the comforts of whores who proudly walk round the house. These

strumpets sing as the house "drunk with din." These blighters are quoted making sarcasm at the German monarch whom they claim loves his old soldiers. Just like the title suggests, these blighters are destroyers who ruin the lives of the young men they have sent to the war front while they stay back home in merriment. Sassoon even believes these old blighters have no regards for the fallen troops. This explains why in the last verse of stanza two he says; "And there'd be no more jokes in Music-halls/To mock the riddle corpses round Bapaume". Actually, these fallen troops are mocked because their corpses are not even brought back home to honour their sacrifice for the fatherland.

In summary, this chapter has discussed Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon as patriotic citizens who joined the British army in the Great War because of their exuberance to defend their country. By this time, the dominant belief in Britain was that it was a war of liberation, so they wanted to contribute in liberating their fatherland. However, Owen and Sassoon changed from patriotic soldiers to anti-war poets. With their experiences in the trenches, they witnessed the horrors of war and sharing in the miseries of their fellow comrades, they decided to write poems that condemn war. They equally wrote against war because they were exasperated with the manipulation from politicians, war correspondents and military leaders. Their attitudes, dictions, style and thematic concerns condemn war and the inhuman jingoists. While Sassoon wrote an open protest against the military leaders for prolonging the war unnecessarily, Owen proposed to future leaders to use negotiation to settle conflict since the use of violence has untold sufferings on those directly involved in the war – the soldiers.



## CONCLUSION

This work examined the war poetry of Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon and geared towards discussing the polemics of war through the lens of Psychoanalysis and New Historicism, which shows that Owen and Sassoon showed the home fronts' conception of war that contravenes the realities and or horrors at the war front. By projecting the consequences of war as having adverse repercussions on the soldiers, the attitudes of these poets in their poetry are that of denunciation of war and its casualties on humanity. These authors present the vivid description of the happenings of the battlefield as caution to the home fronts' blind belief in values such as patriotism, honour, heroism and glory that they think war brings. Their poetry equally delineates the holocaust, morbidity, trauma, and inhumanity that soldiers languish in at the war front. The home fronts are warned against the ignorant, manipulated and ignoble propagation of jingoism.

This study equally investigated the consequences of war and the anti-war stance of Owen and Sassoon. It established that by exposing the repercussion of war, these poets warn the future generation and its leaders against future wars. This is because war breeds irrational sentiments in soldiers while at the war front. They become beasts without human feelings and without civilization. Sassoon laments that he did not want to kill the Germans and this is because his morals rebuked him, but war left him with no choice due to the need for self-defence. Owen grieves over the pity of war. These patriotic soldiers at the debut of the Great War became anti-war poets during the war after experiencing hardship in trench warfare.

Theoretically, we used Psychoanalysis and New Historicism as the road the map to guide us in interpretation of the poetry of Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon. Psychoanalysis aided in the analyses and interpretations of the traumatic experiences that soldiers manifested such as melancholia, paranoia, exasperation and nightmares. It shows that, faced with the menace of danger and death, many soldiers became fearful, sadistic, and mournful. As the war continued with the life of soldiers at stake, those who were not well equipped psychologically or those who had compassion for the suffering comrades became irritated with politicians and incompetent military leaders who design fatal war strategies they did not themselves fight. A good number of soldiers were later haunted in their dreams because of what they experienced

at the battlefield and as such a majority of them became demented and suffered from shell shock or post-traumatic disorder.

Besides psychoanalysis, we equally used new historicism to examine the realities of war as demarcated in the poetry of these soldier-poets. This paradigm helped us to analyze the poetry of these soldier-poets vis-à-vis the historicity of the time. We showed that the casualties of the war were colossal because of the Industrial Revolution that preceded the war with sophisticated machinery that produced weapons like artilleries machine guns, tankers and gas shells, which rendered the war significantly devastating. The geography of Europe especially that of England, France and Middle East are very much present in the poetry of Owen and Sassoon as these were actual places they fought the war; this shows that realism occasioned their writing. The experiences of war actually paved the way for their writing career. Owen before the war had not published a single poem while Sassoon had published a few romantic poems which were not popular. We opined that war made Owen and Sassoon to become great poets.

This work is divided into an Introduction, four chapters and a Conclusion. The Introduction is subdivided into the background of the study, research problem, research questions, hypothesis, purpose of the study, motivation, scope of the study, significance of the study, definition of key terms, structure of the work and lastly the biographies of the authors under study.

Chapter One entitled "Theoretical Framework and Review of Literature," has examined the Frameworks and literatures relevant to this work. The theories used in this study are psychoanalysis and new historicism. The former was used to examine war traumas while the latter was used as a lens to analyse and interpret the war poems of Owen and Sassoon in relation to the historical and social circumstances of their lives and society. With regards to psychoanalysis, we focused our attention on the psychoanalytic theory the father of Psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud, and that proponents like Karl Abraham, S. Ferenczi, Ernest Jones, and Ernst Simmel were used to analyse war neuroses. In the light of New Historicism, we looked at proponents like Stephen Jay Greenblatt, Michel Foucault and Catherine Gallagher. The literature reviewed concentrated on the thematic concerns and the theoretical paradigm related to this work and how the various critics examines the poetry of these poets in their own works delineating areas of convergence and divergence. Finally, the chapter also brought out the contributions of this work to research.

Chapter Two is baptised, " War: Fantasy Versus Reality", which is subdivided into envisioned glory, honour and heroism of war, men's pride and quest for revenge on the one hand and the realities of the war fronts on the other hand. This chapter depicted how the home fronts especially women supported war because they perceived that it will bring glory and honour and make their sons and husband to be seen as heroes. It also examined how due to pride and desire to revenge men (fathers and politicians as well as military leaders) sacrificed their young men to war. This chapter further discussed that the realities at the war front do not match with the beliefs held about war by the home fronts. The home fronts visualise war as something gratifying and as an avenue to settle scores, but the battlefield experience showed that war is a great loss and a nuisance to human development.

In this chapter, we observed that the home fronts were largely jingoistic and supported war on the grounds that it brought heroism, honour and glory to soldiers, their families and their various nations. Pride and revenge were equally a reason the home fronts supported war. However, the realities of war, as projected by Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon in their poems, as well as critical and creative works examined revealed that the soldiers achieved little glory propagated by the home fronts. The chapter also revealed that Owen and Sassoon with other soldier-poets took the engagement to project the realities of war because journalists and politicians gave false reports about what happened at the battlefield. It was because of the undiluted realities of war brought to the home fronts through the writings of the likes of Owen and Sassoon that home fronts' attitude war changed.

Chapter Three is captioned, "The Repercussions of War", and handled the consequences of war and this chapter is subdivided into physical consequences (war miseries and deaths) inhumanity and war trauma. The chapter then examines the physical consequences of war like misery in the trenches, lack of war ammunition and suffering of sentries in rats-infected dug-outs. It also discussed how soldiers are transformed from sane to demented beings and how they are haunted from nightmares. These horrible dreams traumatized them because of the barbarism they encountered at the battlefield. By exposing the effects of war on soldiers, Owen and Sassoon aimed at creating awareness to the devastating repercussion of war and also warning the future generations against its unavoidable holocaust.

The analyses in this chapter showed that Owen depicts the consequences of war in what he calls the "pity of war" because his poetry portrays the excruciating pain that soldiers undergo at the front, which call for empathy towards these troops. The repercussions of war are

exposed through Sassoon's poetry as he paints the horror of war. The chapter also looked at inhumanity and trauma as a consequence of war since war makes soldiers to be inhumane or insensitive towards their fellow human beings and the same war renders some of these soldiers irrational. Thus, they tend to devalue the human beings. The chapter also went ahead to examine the psychological effects of war in the poetry of these two poets. Having portrayed the morbid experience of war; Owen and Sassoon observed that war brings physical and mental pain and as a result, they became anti-jingoistic.

Chapter Four is entitled "From Patriotism and Honour to Radicalism and Diplomacy ". This chapter examines how Owen and Sassoon joined the war as patriotic soldiers, but because of the gruesome nature of the war they became anti-war poets. The chapter is subdivided into; exuberant and patriotic soldiers, the pity and horror of war and reaction against warmongers. It begins with how at the debut of the war Owen and Sassoon were patriotic and excited to fight the war. The two other subtopics examined why Owen and Sassoon became anti-war poets. The consequences of war transformed these authors from patriotic soldiers to poets who condemn war. Since there are no consequences without causes as the principle of causality demonstrates that every cause has an effect as posits by Atenu Chatterjee in "Causality: Physics and Philosophy" (2). It is, therefore, the realities that these soldiers live at the war front that resulted in Owen's and Sassoon's condemning attitude towards war.

This chapter discussed Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon as patriotic citizens who joined the British army in the Great War because of their exuberance to defend their country. By this time, the dominant belief in Britain was that it was war of liberation, so they wanted to contribute in liberating their fatherland. However, Owen and Sassoon changed from patriotic soldiers to anti-war poets. With their experiences in the trenches, they witnessed the horrors of war and while sharing in the miseries of their fellow comrades, they decided to write poems that condemn war altogether. They equally wrote against war because they were exasperated with the manipulation from politicians, war correspondents and military leaders. Their attitudes, diction, style and thematic concerns condemn war and the inhuman jingoists. While Sassoon wrote an open protest against the military leaders for prolonging the war unnecessarily, Owen proposed future leaders use negotiation to settle conflict since the use of violence has untold sufferings on those directly involved in the war – the soldiers.

Nowadays, jingoism continuously dominates across the world. Most parents still send their children to war, but the motive behind the home fronts encouraging war changed from

seeking values like honour and glory to seeking economic means. Unemployment is a major reason for which children are enlisted into the army nowadays especially in the developing countries; this explains why majority of those seeking admission into the army come from poor and middle income families. The economic challenges the world faces today has pushed patriotism to the background while the quest for employment has taken the forestage. Whatever the motives behind the home fronts' support for war; they have always been selfish and exploitative and they care less about the welfare and lives of these young men whom they commission to the battlefield. The political class has maintained its pride as most politicians see war as a means to consolidate power to the extent that they would prefer to compromise and sacrifice the lives of the poor, young soldiers rather than losing their grip to power. The analyses of the poetry of Owen and Sassoon show that the home fronts are obsessed with values like glory, heroism and pride haven been replaced by the selfish interest from the home fronts either through consolidation of power or through selfish economic motives. So, the home fronts have always had ulterior motives beyond liberation from aggression.

One prominent argument with the study of war is the justness and the unjustness of war. However, we think that the justness need of war should not justify the existence of war. Owen and Sassoon in condemning the First World War did not mean that Britain was not just in declaring war against Germany; they only meant that war was not an option since the leaders did not give peace a chance to settle the conflict between Austria-Hungary and Serbia. Alexander Pope in *The Rape of the Lock* asks; "what mighty contest rise from trivia things...? This shows that no matter the severity of a conflict war is not the best resolution to that conflict because violence is not a suitable method of conflicts resolution. We do not mean that the assassination of the Austrian Prince and wife was a trivial thing because their lives were, did not warrant the 8.5 million lives Kate Kinsella et al in *Prentice Hall Literature: Timeless Voices, Timeless Themes* say that were sacrificed in a senseless war.

Wars are still a preoccupation in the world today. There are conflicts can be classified into aggression, civil wars, terrorist insurgence, on ethnic violence. These wars are sent in countries like Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Iraq, Mali, Nigeria, South Sudan, Syria, Yemen, Russia including Ukraine and Cameroon. Wars have enormous casualties on humans and nature. Chemical weapons used in these wars are very devastating to the environment and that has resulted to climate change with global warming being the most conspicuous. The war in Cameroon involving the two English-speaking (Anglophone) Regions of the North West and the South West has had enormous human and material losses. This crisis started in 2016

with teachers and lawyers who initiated a nonviolent demonstration against the assimilation of the Anglo-Saxon educational and judicial system into French soon escalated into an armed conflict. The government used repression against the peaceful demonstration; the repressive action of the government led to the creation of non-state armed groups, which since 2016 has confronted the government forces that led to severe casualties. Some notable casualties are the Ngarbuh massacre of 14th February 2020 by the government forces and the killing of eight children in a classroom in Mother Francis International Bilingual Academy in Kumba by the Ambazonians, who have adopted the infamous school boycott as their strategy since 2017. This shows that war casualties are not only timeless but does not have geographical limit either since the same massacre that took place in the First World War is still observed in wars around the world today.

Our findings have proven our premise that the home fronts support war because of virtues such as honour, heroism and glory, but these values the home fronts support war for are controversial to the pitiful and horrific realities of war exposed by poetry Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon. Also, the work has shown that the poetry of these two poets exposes the effects of war on humanity and nature. And finally, it has shown that due to the casualties of war, Owen and Sassoon wrote in condemnation war, which means they became anti-war poets. By writing to expose the horrors of war, the repercussions and their condemnation of war, these soldiers-poets caution the home fronts against their ignorant stance for war and also caution readers and leaders against waging wars since the losses of war will always outweigh its benefits. Though Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon wrote in the early twentieth century, their work is still relevant in our social context especially as they are a prevalence of war in the world today. For the sake of further research, we suggest that a comparative study on these soldier-poets' war poetry and the war poetry of non-combatant could be researched on to see how they approach aspects like themes, style and form.

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