Hacettepe University Graduate School of Social Sciences

Department of English Language and Literature

THE WAR POETS AND WILFRED OWEN'S SUBVERSION OF THE OFFICIAL DISCOURSE OF THE WAR

Pelin Gökmen

Master's Thesis

Ankara, 2011

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KABUL VE ONAY

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To my dear thesis advisor, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Huriye REİS,

With my eternal gratitude, reverence and ever-lasting love …

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ÖZET

GÖKMEN, Pelin. *Savaş Şairleri ve Wilfred Owen'ın Savaşın Resmi Söylemini Yıkması,* Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Ankara, 2011.

Bu çalışma, I. Dünya Savaşı'nın resmi olarak "tüm savaşlara son verecek savaş" olarak idealize edilmesine rağmen, hiçbir savaşa son vermediği; aksine kendi içinde bir savaş yaratarak resmi ve egemen söylem karşıtı savaş söylemlerinin, savaşın yiğit ve kahraman karşıtı betimlemelerinin şiir aracılığı ile pekiştirildiği, çürütüldüğü ya da yeniden oluşturulduğu ideolojik ve siyasi bir muharebe alanına dönüştüğünü savunmaktadır. I. Dünya Savaşı'nın savaş yandaşı ve savaş karşıtı olmak üzere iki karşıt tür şiir doğurduğu gözlenmektedir. Savaş yandaşı şiir, I. Dünya Savaşı'nı eki şövalyelerin Haçlı Seferleri ve Homer usulü kahraman muharebeleri ile özdeşleştirmiş; askeri vatanı için kendisini kahramanca feda eden, yiğit savaşçı olarak betimlemiştir. Savaş yandaşı şiir, savaşı egemen kahraman söyleme uygun olarak şanlı, şerefli ve onurlu bir Haçlı Seferi olarak yüceltmesi bakımından, savaş boyunca hükümetin güçlü ve egemen bir aracı olarak hizmet etmiştir.

Öte yandan, savaş karşıtı şiir, toplumsal bir sorumluluk yüklenerek, savaş hakkında bilinmeyen gerçekleri anlatan bir araç olmuş ve bu anlamda, savaşın resmi, romantik ve şövalyece söylemini yıkmış ve yerine kahraman karşıtı bir savaş söylemi yaratmıştır.

Giriş kısmında, resmi savaş söylemini ve savaş yandaşı şiiri incelerken bir çerçeve oluşturması açısından, savaş öncesi dönemin ve savaşın başlangıç yıllarının sosyal, kültürel ve siyasi tarihi ele alınmıştır. Tezin Birinci Bölümü'nde, savaş yandaşı şiir, savaşın egemen söylemini ve barış, adalet, kahramanca fedakarlık, şövalyece şan, şeref, onur gibi egemen ideolojileri yayan şovenist bir araç olarak incelenmektedir.

İkinci Bölüm'de ise, savaş karşıtı şiiri incelerken bir çerçeve oluşturması açısından, savaşın yeni kahraman karşıtı gerçeği ve askerlerin savaş karşıtı tutumları ele alınmıştır. Savaş karşıtı şiir, savaşı anlamsız ve acınası teknolojik bir katliam; askeri ise mekanik bir savaşın, çaresiz ve edilgen kurbanları olarak tasvir etmesi bakımından, kahraman

karşıtı bir savaş söylemi yaratan ve bu anlamda, savaşın egemen ideolojisini çürüten bir protesto şiiri olarak incelenmektedir.

Üçüncü Bölüm ise, savaşın ikinci yarısında şiirin edindiği egemen söylem karşıtı toplumsal misyonunu ve şairin savaşın söylenmeyen gerçeklerini anlatan dürüst bir sözcü olduğunu şiirlerinde açık bir dille ifade eden Wilfred Owen'ın savaş karşıtı şiirini incelemektedir. Bu anlamda, Üçüncü Bölüm, Wilfred Owen'ın savaş karşıtı şiirini, savaşın egemen kahramanlık efsanelerine karşı taarruzda bulunan, resmi söylemi çürüten ve yeni, kahraman karşıtı bir savaş doğrusu yaratan ve bununla birlikte, tüm ulusu gelecek nesillere de aynı kahramanlık yalanlarını anlatmaya devam etmek yerine el birliği ile sebep oldukları trajedi için pişmanlık ve utanç duymaya davet eden bir protesto şiiri olarak incelemektedir.

Tezin sonuç bölümünde ise, savaş yandaşı ve savaş karşıtı şiirin incelenmesi sonucunda, Birinci Dünya Savaşı esnasında şiirin, savaşın ve askerin tasvir edilmesinde ideolojik ve siyasi bir savaş yarattığı görülmüştür. Birinci Dünya Savaşı İngiliz şiirinin savaş ve asker hakkında resmi ve egemen söylem karşıtı söylemler ve betimlemeler oluşturması bakımından, Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nın anlaşılmasında güçlü ve etkili bir araç olarak hizmet ettiği sonucuna varılmıştır. Bu bağlamda, Wilfred Owen şiire savaşın egemen söylemi ile kandırılan bir ulusu uyandırma ve uyarma misyonu yüklemiş ve bu anlamda, şiiri savaş ve asker hakkında resmi söylem karşıtı bir gerçek yaratan siyasi bir silah olarak kullanmıştır.

Anahtar Sözcükler

Birinci Dünya Savaşı İngiliz Şiiri, savaş söylemi, savaş yandaşı şiir, savaş karşıtı şiir, Wilfred Owen.

ABSTRACT

GÖKMEN, Pelin. *The War Poets and Wilfred Owen's Subversion of the Official Discourse of the War,* Master's Thesis, Ankara, 2011.

This study demonstrates that while the First World War was officially idealized as "the war to end all wars", ironically, it became the "Great War" itself as it produced a radical, ideological and political battleground where official and anti-official discourses, heroic and anti-heroic representations and truths of war were reinforced, contested and reconstructed by means of poetry. The First World War produced two oppositional kinds of poetry: the propagandistic war poetry and the anti-war poetry of protest. The pro-war poetry, produced in the early period of the war, served as a powerful medium for the promotion of the knightly, heroic-romantic and jingoistic official discourse of the war through its representation of the soldier as a happy, self-sacrificial, warrior-hero of Homeric quality

The anti-war poetry, on the other hand, adopted an oppositional, socially responsible, anti-official discursive mission to contest and deconstruct the false hegemonic heroic ideologies of the pro-war poetry.

In the Introduction, a socio-cultural, political history and the national mood of the pre-war and early war years are given to serve as a framework for the official discourse of the war and the propagandistic war poetry. Chapter I examines the propagandistic war poetry as jingoistic poetry, committed to the promotion of the hegemonic ideology and official ideals of Empire such as duty to one's country, heroic self-sacrifice, knightly glory, honour, peace, justice and Christian knightly crusade.

In Chapter II, the anti-war mood of the trench poets is studied closely with respect to the birth of a new kind of poetry of experience, protest and disillusioned warning. The anti-war poetry is analysed as a reconstructive poetry of counter-attack committed to the construction of an anti-official discourse of the war through its controversial re-presentation of the war as inglorious and anti-heroic, and the soldiers as passively suffering, helpless victims.

Chapter III presents a reading of Owen's poetry of protest as a poetry of truth, satire, warning and "pity". Owen's anti-war poetry contests the hegemonic ideals of the war through its subversion of the official myths and legends, and invites all to suffer and feel pity and guilt for the futile waste of the innocent youth.

This study of the propagandistic and anti-war poetry of the First World War shows that, during the Great War, poetry created a rhetorical and ideological battle for the true representation of the war and the hero. This thesis, in this context, studies the English Poetry of the First World War as a powerful discursive medium that constructs and/or de-constructs the soldier as hero, and thus influences the way the Great War was imagined and represented. In this context, Wilfred Owen's poetry serves as a truthful weapon to denounce the officially sanctioned ideals of the war through its re-definition of the truth of war and soldier as futile and disgraceful.

Key Words

English Poetry of the First World War, discourse of war, propagandistic war poetry, anti-war poetry, Wilfred Owen.

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INTRODUCTION

The First World War is considered to be one of "mankind's greatest tragedies" and ironies (Roberts 7). It was billed as "the war to end war", but it ironically marked the "most violent century" in the history of mankind (Hibberd, "The First World War" 37) and, instead of stopping any wars, it produced a battle for the true representation of war and soldier. As Roberts argues, the First World War was a "war of delusions, euphemism and bitter ironies" (10). There is not a more concise statement of the central myth of the Great War than that made by Samuel Hynes:

> A generation of innocent young men, their heads full of high abstractions like Honour, Glory, Heroism, Knighthood, Crusade and England, went off to war to make the world safe for democracy, peace and justice. They were slaughtered in senseless battles planned by stupid generals. Those who survived were shocked, disillusioned and embittered by their war experiences, and saw that their real enemies were not the Germans, but the old men at home who had lied to them. They rejected the values and ideals of the society that had sent them to war, and in so doing separated their own disillusioned generation from the past and from their cultural inheritance. ("A War Imagined" xi)

The pre-war period was marked by naive innocence or chauvinistic and jingoistic complacency. It promoted a heroic-romantic idealism and displayed an inadequate realisation of the true nature of war. Indeed, the modern war was inevitably comprehended within "the established culture, traditional ideals and values of the British nation" (Fussell 118). Similarly, Yosef argues that "the gentlemanly tradition of medieval chivalry, Honour, Glory, knightly crusade" and public school sportsmanship

were central to the way in which the Great War and the soldier were represented and idealized (89).

Accordingly, the nation's vision of this historic event was determined by a "traditional literary response" to it (Hibberd, "Poetry of the Great War" 24). The British inherited from the classical Greek epic tradition, the Homeric ideals of heroism and used these ideals in the representation of the modern war and soldier (Johnson 186-8). Consequently, the soldier was perceived as the ideal warrior-hero of the Heroic Age; "a man admired for his great physical strength, courage, outstanding achievements, or noble qualities" ("Hero" def. 1). Indeed, the modern soldier was identified with the great heroes of epic battles of Achaeans and Trojans in the *Iliad.* He was considered to possess a strong sense of honour and dignity, martial prowess and physical excellence as well as courtesy and faith, patience and endurance, duty and loyalty, and wilful patriotic self-sacrifice for the sake of his country and people (Toohey 9-11). The British, thus, ennobled youthful death on the battlefield whereby the modern hero could demonstrate the excellence or prowess, physical strength and heroic honour of an ideal Homeric warrior. Consequently, he would win undying glory, lasting fame and immortality as rewards for his martial excellence, great bravery and his dedication to the principles of heroic ethos (Trypanis 32-3; Schein 81-3).

Beside the Homeric ideals of heroism, the medieval knightly crusading heritage was taken up during the First World War in the justification of the war and the glorification of the soldier. The ordinary soldier was legendized as an ideal medieval knight. Accordingly, he was "a well-skilled, courageous mounted warrior raised to honourable military rank" ("Knight" def. 1). A medieval knight fought to maintain justice and law,

to defend his lord, the faith of Christ and the Holy Church of God, and to protect his *patria*, people and the weak (Embleton 32-3). As a perfect Christian knight, the modern soldier was represented as the honourable champion of the right and the good against injustice and the infidel, and as a hero who was willing to die and endure sufferings for the peace and security of his Christian brothers and sisters, for God's grace and divine forgiveness (Keen 219-25).

As will be explained below, the First World War, too, was presented as a holy, knightly crusade for the right, law and the honour and love of humanity and God. The modern soldier's heroic sacrifice was further identified with Christ the Saviour's sacrificial love and redemptive sufferings through which he repaid the vast debt for the sin humanity owed God and brought salvation and rebirth to the rest (Smith 82-3; Kaeuper 43-6). In this context, the modern war was represented as a "penitential", devotional and "meritorious quest" for repentance and salvation from sins (Kaeuper 45-6), as well as a right and godly cause for the freedom and safety of humanity. Hence, the Great War offered an opportunity for great deeds of knightly prowess, an honourable life, heroic glory, gallantry and immortal fame to the ordinary soldiers.

This particular heroic-warrior and knightly view of war was promoted by the pro-war government that operated a powerful system of propaganda throughout the country from the very beginning of the war. As Parfitt states, the public opinion and common sense were completely overwhelmed by the official discourse of the war, and "the declaration of war was greeted with mass enthusiasm and expressions of patriotic fervour and heroic idealism" (8). At the outbreak of the war, the British army consisted entirely of volunteers. Although Lord Kitchener, who was then the newly appointed Minister for

War, had asked for one hundred thousand volunteers[1], two million idealistic young men besieged the recruiting offices with Homeric and chivalric excitement (Roberts 45).

The real experience of trench warfare, however, proved the pre-war knightly legends and heroic ideals misguided. When the modern soldiers fought at the Western Front, early enthusiasm dramatically turned into "disillusioned scepticism, frustration and anti-war agitation" in the anti-chivalric and unheroic trenches (Winter, "The Great War" 286). Indeed, modern warfare was incomparable to the ancient heroic combats of the heavily armoured Homeric warriors or medieval knights who fought hand-to-hand as "frontline warriors" on the open plain with identical weapons like sword, lance and spear (Hopkins 125). In fact, twentieth century technology dramatically changed the nature of warfare. The First World War introduced machine guns, infantry rifles, indirect fire, tanks, aircraft, strategic bombers, artillery bombardments, howitzer, sniper fire, mortars, flame-throwers, bomb-throwers, grenades, submarines, poison gas and barbed wire never used before (Ellis 35-41). Consequently, modern warfare was a mechanized warfare. It required neither the knightly ethos of individual combat nor the heroic achievement, chivalric prowess, courage, bravery, or physical excellence of the warrior. The twentieth century soldier, indeed, was a passively suffering victim at the hands of "an artillery gunner five miles away" that had no personal involvement with, or even knowledge of, injury it might have inflicted (Crawford 73). The machine gun made heroic frontal attacks suicidal; heavy shelling and artillery bombardment together with poison gas, flamethrowers, grenades, tanks and the massive bombs placed in tunnels reduced the soldiers to mere victims.

As the machine-gun fire made attacks almost impossible, both sides - the Entente Powers and the Central Powers - constructed trench and dug-out systems opposing each other along a front, protected from assault by barbed wire. The open field between opposing trench lines, known as "no-man's land," was fully exposed to artillery fire from both sides. As Roberts states, before a major attack, the massive long range guns fired onto the enemy lines for "many hours or even day and night for a week or more" (112). After the heavy bombardments, in an attempt to overwhelm the enemy, "hundreds, and sometimes thousands of men" were ordered to go over the top (over the parapet of the trench) to advance across the open ground of no-man's land. They walked in a line, carrying their rifles with bayonets fixed, into a blaze of fire from the enemy's machine guns, tanks, howitzers and artillery (Roberts 112-3). The modern machine-made warfare proved itself to be a futile and inglorious slaughter of the youth since as soon as the soldiers marched in line across the open field, they were exposed to high explosive shells and, as Wilfred Owen wrote in a letter, "the lines had broken [...] the entire field of fire was covered with the lines of helpless figures, all crawling and wormy with mutilated bodies" (Owen to Colin Owen, 14 May 1917, *Selected Letters* 611).

However, as Hynes argues, rather than the modern war's shocking technological horrors and anti-Homeric nature, the political and military betrayal and exploitation of the high crusading and holy ideals of the war resulted in the frustration and pacifist dissent of the trench soldiers ("A War Imagined" 119). While the soldiers had begun the war with high hopeful expectations and crusading ideals that it would be a short war, that "its existence would restore the nation to some previous condition of Englishness" (Press 7-9), that it would be a holy, knightly crusade fought to save others from war in the future,

make a lasting peace and defend humanity and justice, by 1916, it was clear that none of these romantic dreams and chivalric ideals which could justify their sufferings would come true. While the United States put forward a proposal for a negotiated peace settlement, Field Marshal Haig's, the commander of British forces, insistence on an all-continuous fight till Germany had been crushed caused scepticism about the holy and righteous war aims of Britain. The trench soldiers awakened to the older generation's exploitation of the youth for military and political profits and imperial passions, and as Siegfried Sassoon states in his declaration of protest in 1917, they awakened to the reality that "the War [was] being deliberately prolonged by those who [had] the power to end it [...] this war, upon which [they] entered as a war of defence and liberation, [had] become a war of aggression and conquest." (Sassoon "Diaries 1915-1918" 174).

The sharp change of minds inevitably had consequences in literature, too. The First World War created two oppositional kinds of poetry due to the two contrasting periods it went through. As Lehmann suggests, the English poetry of the First World War is divided into two periods: the early period, from the outbreak of the war to about 1916, the time of the Battle of the Somme; and the later period, from 1916 to 1918 and the Armistice (8). The early period produced the propagandistic war poetry with Rupert Brooke as its chief bard. The pro-war poetry of this period served as a powerful literary medium for the promotion of the official discourse of the war. Serving as the commissioned pens of the pro-war government, the pro-war poets like Robert Bridges, Thomas Hardy, Rudyard Kipling, Owen Seaman, Laurence Binyon, John Oxenham, John Freeman, Walter de la Mare, Julian Grenfell and John McCrae, promoted a knightly sacrifice far removed from the bitter realities, horrors and passive sufferings of the mechanized trenches (Crawford 25-6). In this context, the early poetry of the First

World War served as an official means of promoting the hegemonic ideals of heroism, justice and honour.

However, the actual experience of the war inevitably invited a reconsideration of the Homeric idealization of the war. The disillusioned soldier poets like Siegfried Sassoon, Wilfred Owen, Isaac Rosenberg, Robert Graves, Herbert Read, Arthur Graeme West, A. P. Herbert, Charles Sorley, Richard Aldington and Osbert Sitwell produced a poetry of warning and realism. They used their poetry as a means of protest and as a vehicle to express truth. They aimed to show the people the untold violence and the unprecedented scale of slaughter which, in Sassoon's words, "they do not share, and which they have not sufficient imagination to realise" (Sassoon, "Diaries 1915-1918" 174). The anti-war poetry of the later period, thus, acted as a reconstructive means for contesting the dominant ideology, and constructing an anti-official representation of the war and soldier.

Clearly, the Great War produced a battle for the true representation of war, and poetry acted as a discursive practise that reinforced or challenged the hegemonic ideologies. This thesis studies, in this context, the English Poetry of the First World War as a powerful ideological medium for defining and re-defining the truth of the war and soldier. This thesis, hence, presents a reading of the English pro-war poetry as a poetry committed to the promotion of the knightly official romance of the war, and a reading of the English anti-war poetry, in particular, Wilfred Owen's poetry, as a poetry of reconstruction and protest, committed to the deconstruction of the hegemonic ideology and to the construction of an anti-official discourse of the war through its controversial representation of the war as a senseless butchery of soldiers.

The First World War (often referred to as The Great War or The War to End All Wars) was a "global" military conflict which involved the majority of the world's "greatest imperial powers" (Charmley, 22). There were two opposing military alliances: the Entente Powers and the Central Powers. During the war, both powers made use of their full scientific and industrial capabilities. Over seventy million young men were mobilized and over fifteen million were killed in this technological warfare, making it the "biggest and one of the deadliest tragedies in human history" (Charmley 26). By the end of the war, four major imperial powers- Germany, Austria-Hungary, the Ottoman Empire and Russia- had been militarily and politically defeated, and the map of central Europe was completely redrawn creating numerous smaller states. While the First World War was idealized as "the war to end all future wars" and "to make the world safe for democracy," freedom, peace and civilization (Ponsonby 165-6), Germany's defeat, and the Treaty of Versailles would eventually lead to the beginning of the Second World War in 1939.

In so far as any single event can provoke a war, the assassination of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand started the First World War. As Charmley argues, it was not the real cause, however; it was only "the spark that exploded the European powder keg" (34). The true cause of the First World War was the tension that was rising between the rival powers of Europe. On June 28, 1914, Gavrilo Princip, a Bosnian Serb student, shot and killed the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne in Sarajevo. Princip was a member of the Young Bosnia, a group whose aims included the unification of the South Slavs and independence from Austria-Hungary. As Koch suggests, the assassination in Sarajevo set into motion a series of fast-moving events that eventually "escalated into full-scale war" (46).

On July 23, 1914, the Austro-Hungarian Government sent an ultimatum to Serbia and demanded action by Serbia to punish those responsible, and when Austria-Hungary deemed Serbia had not complied, she declared war on Serbia on July 28. On July 30, Russia decided to move armies up to western borders as a gesture of solidarity with the Serbs and Germany and Russia were at war on the 1st of August. On August 3, 1914, Germany put into action a plan prepared more than a decade earlier to attack France by advancing through Belgium. With the Treaty of 1838, Britain, like France, pledged to guarantee Belgium's neutrality, although she had "not in all circumstances" an "obligation" to defend it (Ponsonby 103). Britain, not only to honor her obligation, but also to save France, responded to the German move by demanding that the invasion of Belgium be halted. The German Chancellor did not take the British ultimatum seriously as he assumed that: "Just for a scrap of paper, Great Britain wouldn't make a war on a kindred race" (Horne 26). However, Britain declared war on Germany on the 4th of August, 1914. Thus, in just four days, Britain moved from neutrality to what was recognized as "the greatest catastrophe that has ever befallen the continent of Europe at one blow" (Roberts 9).

Britain's declaration of war on Germany was welcomed with "round after round of cheers" by the crowd outside Buckingham Palace, and "an effervescent wave of enthusiasm and jingoism swept the country" (Stephen 23-4). Britain was in the full tide of recruiting enthusiasm, and, as Roberts states, thousands of young men besieged the recruiting offices in an effort to join the army (45).

As Marwick argues, "a pro-war mood developed within Britain with similar astonishing speed at the outbreak of the war" ("The Impact of the First World War" 53). The Great

War was not only the war of machine guns, but the war of words as well. The mass media had never been used "as a weapon of warfare" before 1914 (Marquis 469). However, during the First World War, press propaganda was recognized as a vehicle of control of the public opinion, and the British leadership that developed the art of propaganda presumed the "chain of cover-ups, distortions, fabrications and omissions" to weaken the enemy and fan the fire of patriotism, martial fervour and heroic idealism (Ataöv 3). As Fussell argues, the war began for the British in a "context of jargon and verbal delicacy", and it proceeded in an atmosphere of euphemism "as rigorous and impenetrable as language and literature skillfully used could make it" (175).

It was in this context that poetry was perceived as an influential and powerful medium for constructing a literary myth of the war. The government established the Secret War Propaganda Bureau in Wellington House to call the well-known men of letters of the literary establishment to support the pro-war press with propagandistic war verse and prose throughout the war effort (Roberts 46). Furthermore, as Buitenhuis points out, many organizations like the Central Committee for National Patriotic Associations were established as early as 1914. These organizations carried out the efforts of some writers, journalists, politicians and the Church of England to lecture and write pamphlets, verse and articles upon the causes of the war and justify Britain's role in the struggle (22). The committees founded patriotic clubs and organized rallies throughout Britain, and set up subcommittees for various parts of the Empire and for neutral nations. The Central Committee not only coordinated the activities of groups like "The Fight for Right Movement" which included such writers as Sir Edmund Gosse, John Buchan, Thomas Hardy, Sir Henry Newbolt, and Gilbert Murray, but it also distributed the pamphlets and articles written by a group of historians commissioned by the Oxford

Faculty of Modern History (Buitenhuis 23-4). Besides, as Marwick states, many patriotic and charity organizations were founded in Belgium including "The Belgian Relief Fund" and "The National Relief Committee" which operated as means of promoting the noble, crusading cause of Britain ("The Deluge" 78).

Indeed, the German invasion of Belgium came as "a godsend cover to the Government and the war-like press" (Ponsonby 50). When the British Government decided, on August 4, 1914, to declare war on Germany, as Ataöv states, the prevailing motive of the pro-war press was to present the government as righteous and "the enemy as barbarous" (11); so, the pro-war press immediately presented the German invasion of Belgium, and therefore her violation of the Treaty of Neutrality (1839) as the immediate cause of British participation.[2]

However, as Thomson argues, behind the decisions in 1914 lay more than a quarter-century of rivalry between the great imperial States of Europe, in particular, Germany (218). In the mid-nineteenth century, Britain was the pre-eminent global power: "the hub of a world-wide empire and the world's leading manufacturing and commercial nation" (Powell 3), whose colonies and trade routes were protected by the largest navy the world had ever seen. However, by the time of Queen Victoria's death, pre-eminence was no longer assured. Britain was still immensely powerful, but on the economic and imperial fronts, her earlier supremacy was coming under increasing threat. Although Britain's economy was still growing and her role as "the centre of the international finance system" was as yet unrivalled, the long process of relative decline which was to be such "a feature of the twentieth century British experience" was already under way by 1901 (Thomson 201-2). According to Powell, "a second generation of industrial

powers, most notably Germany and the United States," were overtaking Britain as a manufacturing nation, and putting pressure on her command of world trade (4).

Similarly, Britain's colonial and naval supremacy had been challenged in the era of "new imperialism" from the 1870s onwards. Germany's Navy Laws of 1898 and 1900 foreshadowed an intensifying naval arms race. Competition for colonies and the desire to protect existing territories heightened, and led Britain to the verge of war with Russia and France in the 1890s (Thomson 203-5). According to Roberts, the British had become mentally prepared to think of the Germans as "natural enemies" long before the outbreak of the war (27). In 1870-71 the British were shocked by the success of the German invasion of France and seizure of Alsace and Lorraine. The Germans had become a power to be reckoned with. Whilst the British were "the dominant coloniser of the world," Germany was challenging British commercial and naval supremacy at every turn (Roberts 28). As Britain felt threatened, she became in many ways aggressive and jingoistic in foreign and imperial affairs. As Thomson states, "the popular ideal of imperialistic and militaristic patriotism," glorified by heroic, selfless sacrifice was voiced by Rudyard Kipling, the unofficial spokesman of "new imperialism," who wrote of the white man's burden and the ideals of Englishness, honour, glory, pride, justice, victory and patriotic duty (206-7).

In this respect, a vigorous anti-German press campaign began in Britain in 1871. The story entitled "The Battle of Dorking" enjoyed enormous popularity: "It was the first suggestion that England's natural enemy was Germany," and was the first manifestation of the British nation's sense and fear of an impending clash with Germany (Roberts 28). In an era of new imperialism which was marked by "feverish quest for overseas

territory, the race for colonies and great economic, colonial, imperial and naval rivalries," the fear of Imperial Germany and the threat of war were predominant in the hearts and minds of the British nation (Thomson 203).

Hence, with Germany's sudden invasion of Belgium, the pre-war fears of the British nation about Germany's dream of a Colonial Empire came true. Consequently, as Buitenhuis suggests, the Germans were quickly defamed and "stereotyped as the Evil of whom any barbarism could be believed" while the French became "the noble saviour of an ancient civilization" (7), and the British and imperial troops became "knights of old, riding out of the west to the succour of a beleaguered ally" (9). So as to galvanize patriotic idealism, the press immediately announced some "high-sounding moral ideals" which might give Britain's war "the character of an almost chivalrous, Christian crusade" (Bergonzi 102).[3]

It was H. G. Wells who was officially commissioned to take the idea up. He became the great "phase-maker of pro-war idealism and enthusiasm" (Buitenhuis 10) by writing his famous article "The War That Will End War" in September 1914 which was published in book form in October 1914. Wells created the most powerful official myth of the war as "a war of justice, defense, liberation and civilization" (Wilkinson 98). He wrote: "defeat of Germany may open the way to disarmament and peace throughout the earth... Never was war so righteous and holy as war against Germany, the aggressor [...]. Every sword that is drawn against her is a sword drawn for ultimate peace" ("The War That Will End War" 11-2).

Moreover, the crusading and righteous vision of the Great War was promoted by Thomas Hardy's, Henry Newbolt's and Edmund Gosse's manifesto written when they

joined the "Fight for Right Movement" in August 1914. Their manifesto, published in *The Times* on August 1914, stated: "the Spirit of the Movement is essentially the spirit of Faith: Faith in the good of man [...]. Faith in the righteousness of our Cause, Faith in the ultimate triumph of the Right." (Gosse, Hardy, and Newbolt 3).

On August 5, 1914, *The Times* wrote: "We are going into a war that is forced upon us as the defenders of the weak and the champions of the liberties of Europe. [...] We are drawing the sword of right, justice and honour, trusting in God" ("A Just and Righteous Cause" 12). The newspapers published similar ideas and speeches of the politicians and well-known men of letters that altogether justified Britain's cause by idealizing it as a war to crush militarism, to defend the rights of small nationalities and to end all future wars. The pro-war press published many posters which directly asked men to join the army and to make the world safe for peace and justice.[4]

The statement that whatever the British were fighting for, they desired "no fresh territory" was frequently made in order to consolidate the official discourse of the war as a high crusade fought for the salvation and liberty of small nations (Draper 372). H. H. Asquith, who was then the Liberal Prime Minister, stated in 1914: "We are not fighting a war of conquest unlike that of Germans" ("On War Aims" 8). In fact, the Great War was legendized and glamourized as a war of righteousness, justice and the freedom of whole humanity while it was defamed as one of aggression, injustice and conquest on Germany's side.[5] The atrocity stories about Germany contributed to the knightly romance of the war. As early as 1914, the Secret War Propaganda Bureau published hundreds of books, articles, pamphlets, posters, cartoons, reports, music-hall

songs and speeches and sermons of politicians and clergymen about merciless German atrocities (Taylor 878-80).[6]

In order to investigate the truth or falsehood of the German atrocities, the government set up the Committee to Investigate Alleged German Outrages under the chairmanship of Lord Bryce in December 1914. However, the famous Bryce Report produced as a result was largely "a tissue of invention, unsubstantiated observations by unnamed witnesses and second-hand eyewitness reports, depending far more on imagination than any other factor," and most significantly, the documents and testimony of the witnesses disappeared from British records at the end of the war (Buitenhuis 28-9).

The Bryce Report contained "stories of mass rapes", "the spitting of babies on bayonets," "the cutting of children's hands and women's breasts," "tattooing the faces of the British soldiers with a cobra," and it remained "the primary source of atrocity propaganda for the British" throughout the war (Ataöv 21-2), resulting in the burning national vendetta and racial hatred of the British nation against every German. Following the Bryce Report, the pro-war press began an anti-German campaign that incited rioting and looting of German shops and property, and the persecution of the Germans.[7] The propaganda condoned by politicians intensified the hatred for the Germans and people with German-sounding names. Shocking racist statements were printed in almost all of the newspapers. *The Northcliff Press* and *John Bull* were amongst the most prominent of the campaigners. On the 22nd of October 1914, in response to the press campaign, the Cabinet even ordered the arrest of all unnaturalised male Germans (Roberts 225-6). Horatio Bottomley, the editor and owner of *John Bull*, called the nation for a vendetta against every German. He wrote:

> We have been very patient... Our brave, honourable warriors are being asphyxiated in the trenches; our wounded are being tortured; prisoners are being starved and insulted; peaceful civilians are being raped, murdered...
>
> I should welcome the formation of a National Council of Righteous Retribution- a National Vendetta, pledged to exterminate every German-born man in Britain. As regards naturalised Germans they should be registered, made to report themselves every day, and compelled to wear a distinctive badge. ("A National Vendetta against Every German")

Following the press campaign, demonstrations and riots erupted, and distinguished men with German connections were defamed by the press. For instance, D. H. Lawrence, who had a German wife, was considered suspicious, his house was searched for "incriminating documents" and he was given three days to get out of Cornwall (Michael, "British Propaganda" 64). As Roberts ironically states, "this was the land of freedom, liberty and justice the British were fighting for!" (228).

Indeed, the anti-German press campaign and numerous German atrocity stories played a great role not only in the mobilization of the British nation and her stereotyping of the Germans as the evil aggressors torturing and conquering small nations, but also in the promotion of the war as a war for justice and peace. As Ataöv states, appeals for the rescue of the small nations and the liberties of humanity struck "old chords of knighthood and crusade" (18). The pro-war press immediately took up the well-known traditional British ideals of chivalrous crusade and published many posters which portrayed soldiers as the old gallant knights and asked these modern crusaders to fight for their country, ultimate peace and freedom.[8]

Siberry states that "the most marked use of the Crusade image" was to be found during the Great War (87). The representation of the war as a holy chivalrous crusade and the portrayal of the modern soldiers as the "ideal, medieval Arthurian crusaders" or "the last

St. Georges" seems to have originated in countless sermons preached by Anglican clergymen such as Bishop Winnington-Ingram of London, the so-called Bishop of the battlefields (Siberry 87-8). Even before the war broke out, in an appeal, "A Call to Arms", later published by S. C. Carpenter in "Winnington-Ingram: the Biography", Bishop Winnington-Ingram had already declared that "the Church should mobilize the nation for a Holy War if patriotic idealism were aimed" (Carpenter 46).

For this purpose, through mass publication, the First World War was quickly placed in a knightly crusading history. The war was presented as a means of "fighting for God against Evil" and "fighting in the holy and just cause of humanity and divine love" (Hibberd, "Poetry of the Great War" 28-9). Similarly, in poetry and cartoons, the soldier's sacrifice was identified with Christ the Saviour's crucifixion. The Christian concept of "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13) constituted "the war's most powerful inspiration," consolation and justification (Frantzen 63). Soldiers were to achieve martyrdom and, thus, eternal peace, relief and felicity through their sacrifice.

As Clarke states, the Church, like the government, focused on the evilness of German militarism, and the crusading spirit of the British. The British nation joined in what was "primarily a holy war between Christ and the Kaiser- the friend of the Devil" (154). Basil Bourchier, the vicar of St Hampstead, declared in a sermon in 1915, which was published in book form in 1915:

> We are not so much fighting for the honour of our country, as for the honour of our God. Not only is this a holy war, it is the holiest war that has ever been waged ... It is the latest of the crusades for the honour of the most high God which is imperilled ... This truly is a war of high, divine ideals. Odin is ranged against Christ [...] Every shot that is fired, every bayonet thrust that

> gets home, every life that is sacrificed is in very truth for God's sake. ("For All We Have and Are" 42)

The Reverend Paul Bertie Bull called the British nation to "place no limit to [her] spirit of self sacrifice" in a sermon entitled "The Soldier's Sacrifice" which was published in "Peace and War" in 1917. Bull declared: "In this supreme hour of England's destiny when she stands before the world as the champion of liberty, the loftiest spiritual principles of righteousness and justice, liberty and truth awakened the soul of England and made this war a holy war, a real crusade" ("Peace and War" 73-4).

During the early war years, Anglican Charles Brown's article entitled "The Modern Call to Knighthood" was one of the most popular articles published in the Anglican journal, *The Quiver*. The modern soldiers were "St. Georges" called today to fulfill their Christian, crusading duty against "modern worldly sacrilege" ("The Modern Call to Knighthood" 653). Brown called for these last crusaders to display ideal crusading characteristics, which included fighting on behalf of the oppressed:

> The modern call to Christian knighthood to play our part with crucified Christ the Saviour in winning the world, righting its wrongs, healing its woes, destroying the works of the devil and building up the Kingdom of righteousness, peace, fertility and eternal redemption [...]. That Arthurian call comes to us all. (654)

Brown's focus on the imagery of St. George and the Arthurian crusader attempted to define British consciousness as that of the holy Christian knight involved in a holy crusade against an immoral enemy.

The chivalrous heritage of the British was further used by the commissioned clergymen like A. C. Benson who was summoned to the Department of Information and was part

of the Edwardian literary establishment ("A War Imagined" 26). By means of his widely popular article, "An Ideal of Christian Chivalry," Benson propagated the official crusader image of the modern soldier using the mythological dragon slayer, St. George, as the ideal representative of Christian knighthood. According to Benson, the young high-hearted Christian knight "regards a great fight as a noble and holy adventure and may still be a worthy example of knightliness and stainless valour, who is willing to make the last sacrifice of love, and to lay down his life for his friends" ("An Ideal of Christian Chivalry" 611-2).

War politicians immediately picked up the Church's image of the war. For instance, in September 1914, Lloyd George, who then served as Minister of Munitions and the Secretary of State for War, spoke of a blessed knightly quest for justice and right: "We are the first nation that has raised over three millions of men purely by voluntary means [...]. Young enthusiasts from every quarter of the country flocked to a great crusade" ("The Great Crusade" 39). The crusade image was also used by Austen Chamberlain, in a speech given to mark his election to the presidency of the Liberal Unionist Association at Birmingham in April 1915: "We are merely embarked in a knightly crusade for the liberty of a smaller nation, without our interests engaged [...]. It is not for Belgium only we are fighting for. It is merely a holy crusade for right and for law against wrong and brute force on Earth" ("A Crusade for Law against Wrong").

Evidently, during the early war years, the clergymen, hand in hand with politicians, acted as the official voices of the hegemonic discourse of the war. Their sermons and speeches glorified the British soldier as the last crusader who enlisted in a high spirit of intense patriotism. He was a brave, ideal Christian knight who "took himself off on

Arthurian crusade of 'Christian duty', " chivalry and sacrificial martyrdom (Bontrager 779). As a result, his sacrifice would bring about exaltation, redemption and renewal of the innocent population of women and children he left behind in "Good Old Blighty" (Bontrager 781). Britain was represented to be fighting a holy war in Europe, with the Kaiser made to figure as the "Dragon against Britain's St George" (Laurie 462).

Indeed, in mythologizing the Great War as a knightly romance, the stories of chivalric romances and mythology went beyond King Arthur and St. George (Fussell 174). As Fussell argues, "one highly popular equivalent was William Morris' knight, Young Prince Ralph," who was on the spiritual quest of the magic well at the end of the world (174-5). The press published recruiting articles that mythologized the modern combat as the gallant adventures of Prince Ralph, and legendized the modern hero as being "removed of the scars of the battle wounds" by the cleansing power of waters of the magic well (Fussell 175). More popularly, Bunyan's *Pilgrim' Progress* was adapted to the experience of the Great War. The trench soldier was identified with Bunyan's Christian. He was represented to be diving from the demonic vegetable world; "City of Destruction" which became "the ruins of devastated towns in Flanders," into the purgatorial "Celestial City", passing through "the Valley of the Shadow of Death" where he kills "Apollyon, the German enemy" (Stephen 80) .

As Bourne states, the influence of this particular official discourse of the war was inevitable on a nation brought up on public school ideals and values (230). The equation of military aggression with Christian self-sacrifice and the heroic battles of ancient warriors was the pillar of the public schools from which the officers of Britain's volunteer army like Siegfried Sassoon, Robert Graves and Rupert Brooke were drawn.

For a generation of public school boys, the knightly and holy ideals of the Great War were especially poignant. As Stephen states, the late Victorian and Edwardian public schools had a Christian ethos; their headmasters were mostly clergymen and Chapel was a focal point of school life. The Christianity they were taught was of "the militant or muscular variety" (23). The concepts of Englishness, heroic self-sacrifice, obedience, duty, knighthood, honour, chivalrous crusade and patriotic athleticism were much to the fore. The schools' "secular trinity" was "imperialism, Christian militarism and athleticism" and the equation of warrior militarism and heroic athleticism with knightly Christian self-sacrifice was at the heart of the public school education (Fussell 214-5). They mingled with similar ideals of sacrificial self-denial, comradeship and loyalty derived from medieval chivalry and the ethic of team sports. In the eyes of the public school boys, "the soldier was not only Crucified Christ the Saviour, but also Sir Galahad and the war was a penitential and baptizing quest for the Holy Grail" and God's grace (Bourne 231). As Veitch points out, to the "Great Sacrifice" was added the "Great Adventure" and the "Great Game": "If wounded, Blighty; if killed, the Resurrection" (363), prevailed in the minds of thousands.

In addition, the press represented the war as "playing the game" and idealized the Western Front as a football match. The Great War was masculinized as "the greatest, most joyous, adventurous and righteous football game that any 'man' could take part in" (Roberts 162). Indeed, as Veitch points out, the late Victorian and Edwardian public schools gave utmost significance to games, in particular football, for "distinct moral and educational purposes" (365). Eminent educationalists claimed that team sports taught loyalty, selfless denial, sacrifice, manly courage, responsibility, obedience and comradeship. Together, these beliefs made up an educational ideology called

"athleticism" which had a significant influence on British thought. Advocates of athleticism saw "football as a cardinal virtue" which had helped shape the patriotic, holy and warrior characters of the British young men, now being called upon to perform their national service and play the greater game for King, Empire and humanity (Veitch 364-7).[9]

During the war, a popular figure of the British soldiers was portrayed- the Tommy, "a perfect sportsman, happily enlisted in this most righteous, holy, patriotic and chivalrous romance, exactly in the public school sporting spirit" (Hynes, "A War Imagined" 117). The Tommies were invited to "Play Up! Play Up!" Win the righteous game!" (Marquis 368). When Lloyd George, at that time the Secretary of State for War, was asked by an American journalist in 1916 to state in simple terms the British attitude towards war, he replied by focusing on the public school ideals of fair sportsmanship, patriotic self-sacrifice and courage:

> The British soldier is a good, fair sportsman. He enlisted in this war in a sporting spirit- in the best sense of the term. He went in to see fair play to a small nation trampled upon by a bully. He is fighting for fair play. He is fighting as a good, idealistic sportsman and by the thousands he dies a proper sportsman. He never asks anything more than a sporting chance. [...] when he can't get it, he doesn't quit but plays the game to its bitter, honourable and victorious end. ("Never Again! Battle Cry of the Allies" 7)

Throughout the war, the public-shool ideals were made use of to incite masculine aggression and heroic excitement. The war was represented as the good sportsmen Tommies' greatest game for proving their public-school spirit of "muscular Christianity," and for achieving martyrdom and immortal chivalric prowess. The war

was justified and ennobled as the "Tommies' biggest football match" of justice and law "against the Huns" (Hynes, "A War Imagined" 119).

Another important source of the government propaganda was the traditional English ideal of rural nationalism. As Gilbert suggests, the English pastoral tradition was made use of in the familiarization and beautification of the war as well as in the consolation of the fallen soldiers (183). The setting of many recruiting posters, pictures, cartoons and pro-war verse was the pre-urbanized, peaceful English countryside. During the war, the most famous nostalgic product of the press was the poster on which the modern warrior pointing with his finger at the lovely flowers, rivers, beautiful hills and woods of English countryside, called, "Isn't this worth fighting for? ENLIST NOW".[10] The pro-war press created the romantic illusion of harmonious English countryside by "beautifying and romanticizing Edwardian England as an ideal of rustic idyll of peace and security" (Roger 46) for propaganda aims. The lost beauty and harmony of pre-industrialized England were to be revived through her heroes' healing and fertilizing sacrifice. Thus, in this context, the Great War was quickly euphemized as a purifying and rejuvenating power that would "cure England's modern ills" and restore the nation's "ideal" home by bringing back the peace, harmony and bliss of the old, golden, pastoral days (Marwick, "The Deluge" 66).

As stated, during the early war period, a particular official discourse of the war as a chivalrous, Arthurian and pastoral quest was constructed. The nation's vision of this historic event was determined by a "traditional literary response" to it (Hibberd, "Poetry of the Great War" 24). It was the propaganda activities of the pro-war government that mobilized the public opinion throughout the war and made the whole nation be carried

away with this euphorically beautified, heroic-romantic literary myth of the war. As Hicks states, of the pro-war activities of the British Government, "propagandistic war verse was the particular influence on the mobilization of the minds and spirits of the nation" (32). Throughout the war, the press that operated a powerful system of censorship on any kind of pacifist attempts, published pro-war verse in an uncontrolled, chauvinistic manner (Michael, "Wellington House and British Propaganda during the First World War" 139). Newspapers, magazines and periodicals were full of pro-war poetry. With "the use of chivalrous cliché and feudal language" (Cobley 53), the propagandistic war poetry served as a powerful medium for promoting a heroic discourse of the war. As Mersmann states, the propagandistic war poets, writing before the outbreak of the war or at the beginning of it, wrote poems embodying the official pre-war ideals of Englishness, heroic self-denial and fighting in a holy and just cause. Rupert Brooke, for instance, created with his five sonnets entitled *1914* the first myth of a national hero who happily and idealistically sacrificed himself for the King and righteous England and so was spiritually purified, not broken, but richly reborn as a reward for his gallantry.

On the other hand, not all of the pro-war verse was written out of naive and inadequate realisation of the real nature of the modern experience. While some poets who wrote before the outbreak of the war or at the very beginning of it, romantically imagined the Great War as the heroic battles of ancient knightly warriors due to "their lack of any first hand experience of it" (Johnston 48), most of the propagandistic war poetry written and published during the war was produced by the commissioned, arm-chair poets of the literary establishment who enlisted in the Secret War Propaganda Bureau to bolster war enthusiasm and idealism throughout the war (Roberts 48). As stated, in accordance

with the official paradigm, the pro-war poets constructed a Homeric representation of the war, and ennobled the war as a chivalrous opportunity that would reward his St. Georges with spiritual salvation, undying peace, safety and heroic fame. As Lehmann argues, "the public opinion and common sense were completely overwhelmed and mobilized" by the massive promotion of the pro-war verse. Consequently, as Johnston argues, "the nation was swept by a wave of popular enthusiasm and patriotic idealism that has few parallels in modern history" (21).

However, as Fussell argues, though this wave of chauvinism swept the country, not all of the recruits were driven by the common romantic desire for knightly adventure (186). Instead, some, like C. H. Sorley, were well conscious of the senseless carnage and tragic waste of the war. However, these also preferred joining up, as non-compliance would have made life intolerable on the homefront. During the war, there was a great psychological repression on those who were not in khaki. As Hynes states, "Enlistment was strictly equated with comradeship, loyalty and manlihood" ("A War Imagined" 65). To encourage men to join the army, the pro-war press published many posters and leaflets. Most of them aimed to make the unenlisted feel guilty for not helping their friends at the front and asked why they did not come to the front and fulfill their responsibility. These posters either displayed the fighting men calling their friends to show their comradeship or reminded those not in uniform of their duty to their fellows on the battlefield. [11]

During the war, another powerful instrument of the pro-war discourse was the "Young Women of Britain" who played a significant role in encouraging and pressurising recruitment. As Woollacott states, women provided a moral force that worked together

with male soldiers' physical force in the construction of wartime nationalism (328). Women were not entirely willing to be a part of the government's recruiting project. However, there was significant pressure on women, too, to perform their duty to encourage their men to go to war, particularly in pre-conscription days during which the recruiting process was one of applying various forms of moral and emotional pressure (Khan 79). As Mitchell argues, the British woman had to bear, in addition to "separation, anxiety, loss, death and passive endurance, the cruel responsibility of influencing their men's decision" (56).

Inciting women to encourage their men to enlist took various forms. It was on August 30, 1914, that the young women of Britain participated in the recruiting campaign and started to serve as part of the official British propaganda machine. Admiral Charles Penrose Fitzgerald started the "white feather campaign" which, in the beginning, deputized only thirty women in Folkstone to hand out white feathers to men not in uniform. The purpose of this gesture was to shame every unenlisted man and to remind them of their country's call. As Gullace states, Fitzgerald's "estimation of the power of these women was enormous" (178). He warned the men of Folkstone that "there is a danger awaiting them far more terrible than anything they can meet in battle," for if they were found "idling and loafing to-morrow", they would be publicly humiliated by a lady with a white feather ("Women's War: White Feathers for 'Slackers' " 3). The paramilitary band of women known as "The Order of the White Feathers" or "The White Feather Brigade" and the recruiting methods of these "White Feather Girls" quickly spread across Britain. To contribute their influence to the war effort, many women paraded the cities placing white feathers in the lapels and hat bands of men wearing civilian clothes. The practice was widely imitated by women all over the

country and continued long after conscription was introduced in 1916, creating "one of the most persistent memories of the homefront during the war" (Gullace 178-81).

The press contributed to the feminine recruiting pressure. As early as August 1914, personal advertisements appearing in *The Times* accused men of cowardice in the name of presumed female acquaintances.[12] The advertisements of the Parliamentary Recruiting Committee implicated women in a recruiting rhetoric that "hinged on a masculinized sexual identity policed by women" and the humiliating threat of appearing unmanly (Woollacott 336). The young women of Britain declared in posters and leaflets: "Women of Britain Say- 'GO!'",[13] they asked: "Will you go, or must I?"[14], and said: "We don't want to lose you, but we think you ought to go!" (Williams 148). *The Times*, forbodingly warned, "It will not be very long before every woman in the country will be looking 'coward' at every man she sees at home" ("Public Opinion and the Laggards, Unpatriotic or Afraid" 6).

Indeed, the pro-war press put much thought into the motivation of the young men, appealing to their threatened masculinity and tried to persuade the "Women of Britain" to "Say- 'GO!' " to their men by appealing to female fragility and need for protection. A famous advertisement of the early war period asked the women: "When the War is over and your husband or son is asked 'What did you do in the Great War?' – is he to hang his head because *You* would not let him GO?".[15] As Williams states, women not only functioned in this campaign as "the direct voice of conscience", but appeared more subtly as the "objects soldiers fought to defend," the rewards only heroes dared to desire (150). Many recruiting posters and articles addressed to "Sweetheats!" reminded them of Belgian atrocities and warned them that, "If you cannot persuade your man to answer

to his Country's Call and protect you now, *discharge him* as unfit!" ("To the Women of England, the Answer to 'What Can I Do?' " 9). A poster designed for the lord mayor of London put the message more bluntly. Addressing "The Young Women of London", the mayor asked:

> Is your "Best Boy" wearing khaki? [...] If not, don't YOU THINK, he shoud be? If he doesn't think that YOU and your country are worth fighting for- do YOU think he's worthy of you? Don't pity the girl whose young husband is away as he's fighting for HER- and for YOU! If your young man neglects his duty to his King and Country, the time may come when he will NEGLECT YOU! Think it over- then ask him to JOIN THE ARMY TODAY!"[16]

Evidently, as means of persuasion, feminine pride and need for care were well exploited by the press. Through speeches, articles and posters, the unenlisted were depicted as cowards, unworthy of the ladies' courtly favour and love. The minds and spirits of the Young Women of Britain were mobilized by the idea that if their best men loved them, they would certainly make this knightly sacrifice for the sake of their ladies' and children's safety and peace. Most of the recruiting posters at this time displayed either children asking their fathers what they did in the Great War or women and children in need of protection.[17]

Moreover, during the war, there was an outburst of female pro-war verse and prose. Jessie Pope, as a member of the "Young Women of Britain" served as the feminine voice of the heroic, jingoistic and romantic official discourse of the war and attempted to encourage the women to play their part in supporting the war. Many articles written by women addressed the women and cried: "It's a righteous crusade, girl; [...] every man who fears God, honours the King and his woman, should [...] do his duty and

every woman who loves her home, God and humanity, must bravely do her part, by encouraging her man to go" ("Motherhood and War" 542).

During the Great War, it was not only the Young Women of Britain whose minds and hearts were mobilized to "Say- 'GO!' " to their men. As Zeiger suggests, war-time mothers were also turned into a powerful machine of persuasion (8). As early as 1914, mass media took on the responsibility for the persuasion of mothers that national duty was the higher road. The press valorized proper, patriotic motherhood, defined by obedience to the nation's welfare and the willing sacrifice of sons to the army whereas it vilified and devalued "unpatriotic forms of mothering," which included feminist and pacifist activism and "selfish, overly emotional attachment to sons" (Zeiger 21). More than a dozen feature-length films made during the war focused exclusively on "the holiness of maternal sacrifice" and "the maternal villain was an over-protective woman" who kept her son out of the army (Williams 152). The role of self-sacrificing mother waving her gallant son bravely and proudly off to the recruting office was promoted in countless pamphlets, films, posters and cartoons. The white-haired women in most of the posters and leaflets cried, "Go, our gallant boys' It is your duty!" (Williams 153).

Clearly, during the war, women were used as powerful and influential means of pressurising recruitment. As Khan states, feminine encouragement of young men to go to war through posters or dispensing white feathers was, like the war itself, "not female-inspired" (79). Women were themselves the target of a great deal of pressure to send their men to fight, and they were, in this respect, "merely pawns in an activity geared to suit the needs of the country" (Tylee 26). Because of their involvement in the propagation of the war, women became the target of satire and indignant contempt of

trench soldiers. As will be analysed in Siegfried Sassoon's and other trench soldiers' anti-war poetry in Chapter II and Chapter III, during the war, women were stereotyped as an uncomprehending and selfish antagonistic group that contributed to the prolongation of the war with their blissful ignorance, hero worship and false knightly romances. Women were made the "scapegoats" for all the sufferings and senseless slaughter of the war which was waged without their counsel, though whose price they had to pay in separation, loss, bereavement, and "purgatory of passive waiting" (Tylee 34).

In this context, trench poets' representation of women clearly presents a severely limited vision of the roles and position of women in the war. Women's exclusion from the actual combat was not a choice, but a patriarchal attitude forced upon them. While it was not possible for women to become fighting soldiers in the First World War because of their gender, women, however, fought their own war at home. As Helena Swanwick, an active feminist and anti-war suffragist, points out, "War is waged by men only, but it is not possible to wage it upon men only. All wars are and must be waged upon women … as well as upon men" ("Women and War" 1).[18]

As stated above, throughout the war, soldier poets expressed their hatred for women for their contribution to the war without taking their bereavement and efforts to stop the war into consideration. While men accused women of being responsible for their enlistment, as Roberts states, it was rather than feminine pressure, the chivalrous romance of the war that drove almost all of them (81). As argued so far, during the war, poetry constituted an important site where the knightly discourse of the war was promoted. While the pro-war culture produced and was supported by the pro-war

poetry, the real war experience destroyed the official myth of the war and produced an oppositional view of the war and soldier.

The first day of the Battle of Somme, which marked "the heaviest loss sustained by any army in the First World War" (Stephen 88), undermined the official vision of the war. The soldier discovered himself to be a victim passively suffering in the midst of a faceless, mechanized and endless combat. However, the press continued to present the war according to the official discourse: "EVERYTHING HAS GONE WELL [...] Our gallant crusaders have successfully carried out their holy missions, all counter-attacks have been repulsed and large numbers of prisoners were taken", wrote *The Times* on July 3, 1916.

However, by 1916, it was clear that the war was not going to be easy and glorious, as it "showed no signs of being heroic, knightly and crusading" (Hynes, "A War Imagined" 101). Accordingly, following the first day of the Battle of Somme, the war spirit began to run down and in contrast to pre-war enthusiasm and patriotic idealism, "anti-war agitation, conscientious objection and pacifist discontent swept thousands" (Stephen 114). From 1916 onwards, the trench soldier poets having experienced the unchivalrous and inglorious actuality of the misrepresented, machine-made war were completely plagued with cynicism, disillusioned anger and despise. However, Field Marshal Haig repeatedly explained that "the maintenance of an all-out continuous offensive pressure on the Western Front" was the only route to the "complete overthrow of the Evil Huns" and to European freedom, peace and democracy (Haig 157-8). In this context, the trench soldiers who had realised that the war was not to end soon, began to question the British war aims and protested against the deliberate prolongation of the war. The soldiers were

plagued with an overwhelming sense of alienation and isolation from the complacent, repressive civilian world that contributed to the war effort with the old heroic cliché: "Chivalry redeems death's disgrace".

Siegfried Sassoon was among those who was "transformed from the stereotypical happy war hero to a bitter pacifist and angry protester" (Sternlicht 18). Sassoon wrote his famous "Declaration of Wilful Defiance of Military Authority" against "the political errors and insincerities" for which "the fighting men are being sacrificed", and the "War is being [...] prolonged" (Sassoon, "Diaries 1915-1918" 174). What Sassoon protested against on behalf of his fellow-soldiers was "not the conduct of the war", but "the deception being practised on them" (Sassoon, "Diaries 1915-1918" 174).

The sharp change of pro-war minds and enthusiastic spirits inevitably resulted in the sharp turn of martial speech and heroic rhetoric, too. The new reality urged a new diction and representation of the war. As a result, the war poetry inspired by the First World War was almost immediately transformed from romantic poetry of Brookean patriotic heroism to one of warning, pity, disillusionment and anti-chivalric satire (Giddings 22-4). Consequently, the reality of trench warfare formed a kind of literary and ideological battleground where the official discourse of the war was challenged and contested. A truer representation of the war, which was based on first-hand personal experience, began to appear in the protest works of most of the poets in the army who were victimized by "the unforeseen horror, frustration, disillusionment and the mind-staggering toll of trench warfare" (Moore 100-1). As Barlow points out, the "knightly rhetoric of proud, heroic, gallant feelings of dedication to a noble and holy cause" was replaced by realistic, satiric and elegiac descriptions of the powerless and fearful

soldiers (91). Anti-war poetry, or poetry of protest, flowered in trenches as "a counter-attack to demythologize the pre-war, myth-ridden world" (Bergonzi 63). It deconstructed the ideals of public-school athletic martial code of heroism which had been exploited by the older generation for recruiting aims.

The anti-war poets were generally officers and they "served as the spokesmen" (Johnston 71) against the official deception practised on the passively suffering victim-heroes. They acted as the revealers of the anti-heroic modern truth (Johnston 155). Thus, it can be stated that the anti-war poets introduced realism to the early war poetry. Their aim was to awaken the ignorant and chauvinistic civilians and, in particular, the future generations of youth, to the inglorious waste of modern warfare. As notably expressed by Wilfred Owen, they wanted to put an end to the old official lie "Dulce et Decorum est Pro Patria Mori" ("It is beautiful and proper to die for one's country"), (Owen, "Dulce et Decorum est Pro Patria Mori).

As Crawford states, in deconstructing the dominant ideology of the war, some poets of protest employed "graphic or photographic realistic depiction," and "the stark, concrete and painfully precise, unromantic imagery" of the war's untold horrors and its shocking, violent scenes of mechanized carnage and passive mutilation (86). Some anti-war poets made use of the traditional English pastoral imagery, symbols and motifs to create "pastoral antithesis" as they discovered the untold ugliness and mechanical devastation of trench warfare in the violated, demonic anti-landscape. They communicated the passive nature of the modern soldier's physical and spiritual sufferings, fear and anguish by means of an "anti-nature tradition" and recourse to Arcadian pastoral contrast (Winter, "The Great War" 290-1).

However, not all of the soldier poets preferred shock-horror poetry or anti-pastoral verse as a means of protest. Some trench soldier poets like Siegfried Sassoon believed that their protest should be as explicit and bitter as their "burning hatred", anger and pain (Johnston 19). In this respect, they rejected the implicit protest of the pastoral ironists and combined the bleak realistic depictions of shock-horror poetry with the techniques of vindictive satire and ironic realism. These techniques served as weapons to attack the official representation of the war and as anti-official warnings both to shame and awaken the profiteering civilian world (Johnston 74-8). All of those held responsible for the tragic waste of the youth were the target of the aggressive satire and criticism of the literature of warning and truth. The absentee staff officers widely known as "cheery old cards" and "the top brass" were satirized for their incompetence (Fussell 68). They were criticized as malevolent, self-seeking "butchers and bunglers" who preferred living in their chateaus to visiting the front-line and who did not care about the losses as much as victory, glory and honour (Stephen 56-7). The top brass were believed to abuse the innocent youth's ideals for their own ambitions.

The soldier poets also satirized pressmen, "the crafty politicians yelling for German blood" (Moore 205), and the churchmen who misused the crusading heritage of the nation and the Christian concepts of Greater Love, for propagandistic and consolatory ends. In most of his poems, Sassoon, for instance, attacked "the apparent subservience of the Anglican Church to the state" (Sternlicht 38), and her treacherous sanctifying of the soldiers' battle as a purgatorial experience and the last holy crusade (Siberry 98).

The arm-chair men of letters were also the anti-war poets' target of satire and criticism for blinding and deafening the whole civilian-world with the old chivalric clichés and a

utopian image of the war. Besides, the poets criticized the "fatuous jingoes" (Stephen 92) at home for their senseless propagation of the false romantic discourse of the war. However, it was the older generation that was the target of the most aggressive satire of the trench poets. The guilt of the older generation and their betrayal of the youth's heroic-romantic dreams and sacrifices for political and military passions were the most frequent themes of their angry revolt.

Of the soldier poets who used their truthful verse as a means to deconstruct the hegemonic discourse of the war, Wilfred Owen, "the greatest English soldier trench poet of the First World War," has left "the most eloquent and moving protest against the old heroic lies, official hypocrisies and wrongs as both a soldier and a poet" (Lane 14). As Johnston argues, Owen's universal recognition as even Sassoon's superior is regarded as resulting from "his closer allegiance to the mission of poetry as a means of revealing the truth and contesting dominant ideologies (22). Owen, with his "bleak realism" and his "unique compassionate fellow-feeling" appears to have thought of his poems as "manifestos" (Lehmann 55), as satiric and elegiac reports of the untold truth and as a powerful medium for contesting the prevalent ideology. As argued in Chapter III, The clearest definition of the anti-war poetry's reconstructive aims and anti-official ideals finds voice in Owen's Preface written for a collection of war poems, which he was preparing for publication in 1919.

Owen's poetry acts as a means of constructing an anti-official discourse of the war, and of warning the callous, heroism-beguiled world of the war's disgraceful and tragic waste of humanity. As Hibberd suggests, Owen's poetry of warning is conditioned by an inescapable awareness of himself as the spokesman of the truth of war: a truth

compounded of passive suffering, brutality, horror and mechanical slaughter ("Wilfred Owen" 46). For Owen it is the mission of the true poets to act as the spokesmen of the true conditions of trench warfare, and thus, to contest the dominant official ideologies. Owen discloses the truth of war: a machine-made truth formed by the anti-heroic images of "gas attacks, invisible enemy, guns, bullets, shells, trench foot, shell shock" and the sickening smell of dozens of uncoffined, "decayed corpses" (Johnston 77). As Norgate argues, Owen's poetry stresses "the passive nature of sacrifice" (518), and in this respect, it subverts the official ideal of the warrior hero, and constructs, instead, the ideal of helpless victim-heroes "who die as cattle" (Owen, "Anthem for Doomed Youth").

Clearly, Owen's poetry of satire, pity and truth serves as a means of deconstructing the nationalistic discourse of the homefront and as a medium for shaming and calling the "wretched / cursed" and "mean" civilians who "should be as Stones / by choice made themselves immune / To pity" ("Insensibility") to stop telling "with such high zest / To children ardent for some desperate glory, / The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est Pro Patria mori" ("Dulce et Decorum Est").

This thesis, therefore, studies the English poetry of the First World War as an urgent, ideological instrument to construct or re-construct the truth of the war. Chapter I analyses the propagandistic war poetry as a powerful, official means of promoting the hegemonic ideals of Empire, heroic self-sacrifice, justice and honour.

Chapter II presents a reading of the anti-war poetry as a poetry of protest, counter-attack and warning, committed to the deconstruction of the hegemonic ideology through its controversial representation of the war and the soldier as passively suffering, helpless

victim shepherded to an inglorious scientific violence by the passions, hypocrisies and callous frivolity of their elders and uncomprehending stay-at-homes.

In Chapter III, Wilfred Owen's poetry is analysed as an anti-official medium for subverting the dominant, over-romantic and nostalgic discourse of the war by telling the hidden truth of the war. Based on his theory of poetry as "truth" and "the pity of War" (Owen's Preface, "The Complete Poems" 535), Owen's poetry inscribes a challenge to the official representation and truth of the war.

This thesis concludes that during the First World War, poetry was recognized as a powerful means of discourse construction. The pro-war poetry and the anti-war poetry both are engaged with the representation of the war and soldier, and thus they present a war of oppositional discourses and truths. Owen's poetry, in this context, can be considered as poetry of re-construction.

CHAPTER I

'GLORY IS THEIRS': THE REPRESENTATION OF THE SOLDIER AS A HERO OF HOMERIC QUALITY IN THE EARLY POETRY OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR

As explained in the Introduction, during the early years of the First World War, poetry aimed to construct a heroic discourse of the war. On November 4, 1914, George Bernard Shaw warned that war "can easily be gilt with romance and heroism and solemn national duty and patriotism and the like by persons whose superficial literary and oratorical talent covers an abyss of Godforsaken folly" ("Common Sense About the War" 24). Accordingly, the first government venture into the world of propaganda was the Secret War Propaganda Bureau established in Wellington House whose first instinct was to commission the well-known men of letters of the literary establishment to use their influential literary talent in the service of the government.

In accordance with the official paradigm, the arm-chair pro-war poets, most of whom were officially employed, and on "the Government's payroll" (Messinger 63), presented the war as a continuation of a Homeric warrior tradition, and upheld a knightly romance of a righteous, patriotic and Godly crusade for the rights of small nations, the love of God and the peace and safety of humanity. In this context, the early war poetry served as an official vehicle to call the young men of Britain to enlist by not only bolstering masculine aggression and public-school warrior excitement, but also by offering consolation within the confines of Christian crusading heritage. On September 18, 1914, fifty-two pro-war authors signed a long public statement:

> When Belgium in her dire need appealed to Great Britain to carry out her pledge this country's course was clear. [...] we in Great Britain are ourselves conscious of a destiny and a crusading duty. That destiny and duty, alike for us and for all the English-speaking race, call upon us to uphold the rule of common justice between civilised peoples, to defend the rights of small nations, and to maintain the free and law-abiding ideals of Western Europe against the rule of 'Blood and Iron' and the domination of the whole Continent by a military caste. For these reasons we feel bound to support the cause of the Allies with all our strength, with a full conviction of its righteousness, and with a deep sense of its vital import to the liberation and democracy of the world. ("Britain's Destiny and Duty/ Declaration by Authors" 1-2)

In this respect, the early propagandistic war poets sounded the "right note from the Government's point of view" (Crawford 31). Serving as the literary pens of the pro-war government, the propagandistic war poets considered poetry as a discursive means of reinforcing the hegemonic ideology. and propagating the ideals of Empire, Englishness and crusade. In this respect, while the government preffered to use "Britain" in the recruiting posters to call every man in Britain to the army without discriminating the Welsh and the Scottish from the English, the pro-war poets generally used "England" as they probably wanted to create patriotic fervour by emphasizing these imperialistic and ruralistic ideals. The pro-war poets represented the soldier's sacrifice as a national duty and promoted the ideals of glory, honour and justice to encourage enlistment. In accordance with the officially sanctioned view of the war, the early war poets constructed a Homeric truth of the war. They idealized the modern soldier as the gallantly fallen warrior who brings about honour, safety and salvation to others. As will be illustrated below, they emphasized heroic courage and martial prowess in combat, undying glory, fame and immortality in youthful and wilful patriotic self-sacrifice. In the poetry of pro-war poets, the soldier was transformed into "Christ the Saviour" or

"God's holy martyr;" he sacrifices himself for the freedom and peace of his people and as a reward for his sacrifice, he achieves knightly exaltation and redemption from sins and sorrows and finds fullness in glorious death. In this respect, the early war poetry influenced the way the First World War was imagined and ennobled as it served as a powerful, official medium for defining the soldier as hero and constructing a chivalric truth of war.

As stated by Roberts, the propagandistic war poetry embodies the "ideas and ideals prevalent" in the poetry of militarist patriotism, ruralist nationalism and imperialist warrior heroism, which were popular before the outbreak of the war (11). Indeed, the turbulent, Edwardian pre-war years, which were marked by the suffragette dissent, repeated outbreak of strikes of the unemployed working-class, threats of military revolt over Ireland and civil war in Ulster, great Labour unrest and the rise of Germany as an industrial and imperial competitor caused Britain to feel threatened, insecure and uncertain. This chaotic period of great changes urged the nation to "redefine Englishness in the face of a national uncertainty and foreign threat" (Featherstone 34). The Edwardian uncertainty and fear of war were expressed in two dominant discourses of national representation that developed in the pre-war period: one militarist and imperialist, the other essentially ruralist. The popular mood of the pre-war years is best expressed by the term "jingoism" and "the public-school ideals of militant Englishness" and "imperial patriotism" (Featherstone 28-9). In fact, militarist nationalism and patriotism depended upon the common soldier being perceived as a representative of the firmly-established national values and ideals of public-school militarist enthusiasm, duty and selfless sacrifice.

Indeed, as Roberts argues, "the spirit of hero worship" that characterised the propagandistic war poetry can be located in the popular pre-war poetry of Empire, patriotism and heroism (20). "Admirals All" is the title poem of Newbolt's best-selling collection of poetry which was published seventeen years before the First World War, and sold twenty-one thousand copies in its first year (Roberts 22). In the poem, Newbolt idealizes the soldiers of Britain's naval successes as heroes and celebrates their high sacrifice for their fatherland: "Admirals all, for England's sake, / Honour be yours and fame!" (53-4). Newbolt promises lasting heroic "fame" "honour" and "haven" (48) to "Admirals all" who fulfilled their supreme national duty and sacrificed their youth "with a righteous good will" (34) for "England's sake" (53):

> Admirals all, they said their say
> (The echoes are ringing still),
> Admirals all, they went their way
> To the haven under the hill.
> But they left us a kingdom none can take, (45-9)

In "Admirals All," "Vitai Lampada" (The Torch of Life), Newbolt equates public-school playing fields with British battlefields and links the ideals of duty, honour and warrior heroism with public-school athletic spirit of war. The classic public-school equation between war and masculine excitement, heroic self-sacrifice and sport is established by Newbolt in "Vitai Lampada" that calls the young men of Britain to prove their knightly honour, prowess and loyalty in heroic sacrifice. The poem glorifies and sanctifies the soldier as "Saviour" (4) who brings about safety and rebirth to others and calls everyone to play the game:

> Every one of England's sons must hear,
> And none that hears it dare forget.

This they all with a joyful mind
Bear through life like a torch in flame,
And falling fling to the host behind –
Play up! Play up! Play the game! (19-24)

Newbolt's "Clifton Chapel," similarly, "sums up the heroic-romantic pre-war values and chivalric ideals" (Fuller 67) that were to enable many people to regard the Great War as a means of cleansing and immortalizing, divine sacrifice. Newbolt presents the soldiers as holy crusaders who fought to "dear the land that gave them birth, / And dearer yet the brotherhood/ That binds the brave of all the earth" (14-6). Newbolt invites the warriors to follow the "pure message" (2) from the public-school chapel which is:

To set the righteous cause above renown,
To love the game beyond the prize,
To honour, while you strike him down,
The foe that comes with fearless eyes;
To count the life of battle good,
And die for greater love of God and mankind. (9-14)

The soldiers' sacrifices are not in vain since by dying for "greater love of God"(14) and "for the fatherland" (30), the heroes will achieve immortality. Newbolt wants the soldiers to regard "Pain and Death" (19) as "surest hope of life" (20) and, thus, see their sacrifice as rebirth and their sufferings as a way to salvation and eternal relief:

God send you fortune: yet be sure,
Among the lights that gleam and pass,
You'll live to follow none more pure
Than that which glows on yonder brass:
He who died so far from home, died before his time,
It was for his country he died gallantly. (25-30)

In "Farewell," Newbolt, similarly, emphasizes the ideal of selfless national service ennobled by self-sacrifice. He glorifies the soldiers who died to "keep the house

unharmed / Their fathers built so fair" (7-8). Newbolt's soldiers, believing that "Service is sweet, for all true life is death," "armed against brute despair" (10) and died "across the homeless sea" (14). As a reward for honouring and "comforting" (15) their country by dying to save her in a just cause, they achieved eternal remembrance. Newbolt consoles the soldiers saying that although "Far off they served" (17) and died "Across the homeless sea" (14) they achieved immortality and undying glory through the sacrifice of the body:

> Mother with unbowed head
> Hear thou across the sea
> And greet thou again with tender words and grave,
> For, saving her, themselves could not save.
> [...]
> Far off they served, but now their deed is done
> For evermore their life and thine are one. (1-4, 17-8)

A significant figure pioneering the pro-war ideals is Rudyard Kipling who wrote of the white man's ideals of pre-eminence, honour, duty and heroic self-abnegation. He emphasized the need for a reassessment of Britain's place in the world: "The peace is gone and the profit is gone, with the old sure, golden days withdrawn" he writes in "The Dykes" (1902). Images in Kipling's poems of the period reflect the Edwardian uncertainty, fear and unrest. In his pre-war poems, Kipling links God with Britain's conquests and sanctifies these colonial conquests as high crusades. He presents the common soldiers as holy warriors and "associates the white men with war, conquest and purification" (Silkin 62-3). In "A Song of the White Men," written in 1899, Kipling idealizes the British conquests as holy and righteous quests of justice, freedom, civilization and national duty. The British heroes "go to right a wrong" (2), and "clean a land" (10) from "the old world's hate- / Cruel and strained and strong" (3-4). They fight

in a holy cause of right, justice and defence against brute force and sacrifice their youth with the ideal crusading spirit to bring about freedom, honour and security to Britain and the future generations:

> Now, this is the faith that the White Men hold
> When they build their homes afar –
> "Freedom for ourselves and freedom for our sons
> And, failing freedom, War." (17-20)

Kipling says that the White Men "have proved [their] faith" (21) with "dear souls of freeman slain" (22). He calls the White Men of today to "join for the world / To prove their" (23-4) honour, glory and "faith again!" (4). The ideals of Empire, justice, militaristic patriotism and national duty find ample expression in his other poem, "For All We Have and Are," published in *The Times* on September, 21, 1914. Kipling presents in this poem an urgent call for patriotic sacrifice in a righteous cause of freedom and honour. The poem begins with Kipling's view of the necessity of the fight:

> For all we have and are,
> For all our children's fate,
> Stand up and take the war.
> The Hun is at the gate!
> Our world has passed away,
> In wantonness o'erthrown.
> There is nothing left today
> But steel and fire and stone! (4-8).

Kipling presents the war as a cleansing and unifying power that would heal "that sickened earth of old" (14) by bringing back honour, freedom and "the lost peace, comfort and delight" (21). The soldiers will achieve beauty, purity, cleanliness and rest through suffering. As a reward for their "courage" (7), "patience of hearts" (25) and "silent fortitude" (26), "through perils and dismays" (27) they will be "renewed and re-renewed" (28). Therefore, Kipling calls the nation to

Stand up and take the war,
[...]
Though all we made depart,
The old Commandments stand: –
"In patience keep your heart,
In strength lift up your hand." (3, 9-12)

Kipling points to the necessary "iron sacrifice / Of body, will and soul" (35-6) required for the preservation of honour, "Freedom" (39) and peace:

No easy hope or lies
Shall bring us to our just goal,
[...]
There is but one task for all –
One life for each to give,
What stands if Freedom fall?
Who dies if England live? (37-40)

In this context, Kipling transforms the common soldiers from mercenaries into symbols of national character and celebrates them as the representatives of established public-school values and ideals. As Featherstone states, the militarist, jingoistic and imperialist ethos of his pre-war poems created "a high chivalric rhetoric of war readily assimilable by a mass audience that allowed a popular, heroic war to begin in 1914" (27).

As soon as the war broke out, the propagandistic war poets took up these popular ideals of a justifiable chivalric crusade and patriotic self-sacrificial heroism. They indulged themselves in nostalgic and "romantic pre-war fantasies of Empire, honour, justice, glory and immortality" (Johnston 18). In communicating and representing the modern reality, the pro-war poets, thus, make use of the crusading, warrior heritage of the British nation as well as her established public-school ideals and pre-war imperialistic and militaristic values. They use "the high rhetoric of medieval romances and ancient heroic, Arthurian legends" and employ the "classical and medieval martial imagery":

chariots, warriors, swords, armours, knights, maidens, the fallen, crosses and crusaders (Mersmann 7). The pro-war poetry, thus, represents the war as a holy, knightly and noble crusade fought righteously in the sacred cause of humanity, divine love and honour of Britain, and idealizes the soldier as hero. As Bergonzi states, they enrich and immortalize the modern soldier in their "verse of rebirths, exaltations and conversions" (45-6).

The first propagandistic verse of the war to appear in print was "To the Troubler of the World" (published in the London *Times* of August 6, 1914) written by the pro-war enthusiast William Watson, who received a knighthood for his pro-war poetry (Crawford 70). Watson's poem was quickly followed by the lofty idealism of Poet Laureate Robert Bridges in "Wake Up England," published in *The Times* on August 8, 1914. As Bergonzi points out, Bridges' poem, which directly urges "Thou peace-maker, fight!" (2) echoes "Newbolt and Kipling's early heroic rhetoric of the righteous crusading spirit of the war" (46), and aims to foster the public-school warrior courage, patriotic loyalty and Christian militaristic and heroic athletic spirit. The poem introduces the war as a just cause of "Honour" (3), defence, "Peace" (13) and civilization:

Stand, England, for Honour,
And God guard the Right!
[...]
For Peace thou art armed
Thy Freedom to hold
Thy Courage as iron,
Thy Good faith as Gold (3-4, 13-6).

Bridges calls the nation to continue "the fame of their fathers" (23) and sacrifice their youth wilfully and gallantly with the "love of patria" (6) in their hearts:

Through Fire, Air and Water
Thy trial must be:
But they that love life best
Die gladly for thee.
The Love of their mothers
Is so strong to command:
The fame of their fathers
Is might to their hand. (17-24)

In this context, the Germans are "the aggressor" (8) and invader while English soldiers are "peace-makers" (30), who are baptised, beautified and revitalized by fire and blood. Bridges galvanizes martial excitement by presenting the war as a devotional and purgatorial opportunity. The youthful death in battle promises immortality, redemption from sins and sorrows, lasting relief and peace:

Much suffering shall cleanse thee:
But thou through the flood
Shalt win to Salvation,
To beauty through blood, pain and mud!
Ye peacemakers, Fight!
GOD DEFEND THE RIGHT!" (25-30).

Similar to "Wake Up England," Thomas Hardy's poem, "Men Who March Away," published in the London *Times* of September 9, 1914, expresses the official ideals of justice, duty, honour and righteous warrior spirit of war. Hardy records the high heroic and crusading spirit of soldiers who march away with "the faith and fire within" (1) their "heart of hearts" (22). In Hardy's poem, the soldiers "well see what we are doing, / [...] England's need are we;" (15, 18). In other words, the poem sums up the romantic idealism and optimism of the early enthusiasts:

Leaving all that here can win us;
Hence the faith and fire within us
Men who march away
We well see what we are doing,
Though some may not see-

[...]
In our heart of hearts believing
Victory crowns the just! (12-16, 22-3)

The same conviction of the soldiers of Britain's volunteer army and their "whole and perfect" loyalty to Britain are voiced by Sir Cecil Spring-Rice in his poem, "I Vow to Thee, My Country." The poem serves as a means of calling the youth of Britain to prove their patriotic love "all earthly things above" (1) and fulfil their duty to their country with "the final sacrifice" (6). Spring-Rice's ideals are familiar: selfless patriotism, obedience and national service glorified by heroic self-sacrifice:

I vow to thee, my country, all earthly things above,
Entire and whole and perfect, the service of my love:
The love that asks no question, the love that stands the test,
That lays upon the altar the dearest and the best;
The love that never falters, the love that pays the price,
The love that makes undaunted the final sacrifice. (1-6)

Through the pain of the soldiers' suffering and death, Britain achieves "pride" (10), honour and peace. As a result,

Her fortress is a faithful heart, her pride is suffering;
And soul by soul and silently her shining bounds increase,
And her ways are ways of gentleness,
And all her paths are peace. (10-13)

William Noel Hodgson, in "Before Action," has a soldier who "must say goodbye to all delights" (4) of civilian life, but he finds a richer life in "fresh and sanguine sacrifice" (6). Thus, the soldier prays, "Make me a soldier, O Lord / Make me a man, O Lord / Help me to die, O Lord" (12-14).

Evidently, the necessity of self-sacrifice and courteous service for the peace and safety of the future generations constitutes the core of the early war poetry's representation

and justification of the war. In his poem, "Pro Patria" which means "For One's Country," Seaman adresses "Our warrior sons, to whom in this high test / Our fortunes we confide" (35-36). Seaman propagates the ideals of justice, honour, peace and sacrifice for the love of "brotherhood", fatherland and God. He glorifies the soldiers as "High-hearted ever, strong in faith and prayer" (18) who fight to save "a gallant past" (10) against "the brute sword" (10). The war as a just crusade fought "in one wide brotherhood" (24) transforms the "warrior sons" (35) into holy Saviours who are willing to give up their lives for the sake of their sons and their country's pride:

> [...] teach that he who saves himself is lost;
> To bear in silence though our hearts may bleed;
> To spend ourselves, and never count the cost,
> For others' greater need; - (25-8)

As Cobley states, "the use of the archaic, heroic-warrior diction and feudal language" contributes to the presentation of the soldiers as the old crusaders of knightly romances (53). Seaman's fighting men are knights who prove their chivalric "prowess" (34), honour, dignity and glory with their youthful, patriotic death on the battlefield. They demonstrate their honour and dignity in sacrifice:

> England, in this great fight to which you go
> Because where Honour calls you, go you must,
> [...]
> This be your part, for you serve England best,
> So best confirm your prowess and pride. (1-2, 33-4)

Seaman not only stresses the chivalric ideals of obedience, prowess and pride, but also reassures the soldiers that "Be glad, whatever comes, at least to know / You have your quarrel just" (3-4). Similarly, E.A. Mackintosh, in his poem "Recruiting," romanticizes the Great War as a chivalric combat and "the gallant sacrifice" (7) of warrior heroes. He

challenges the modern knights to "Come and learn / To live and die with honest men / Learn the gaiety and strength/ In the gallant sacrifice" (8-11). Mackintosh's soldiers will, thus, "Share the martyrdom of the millions of old martyr-patriots" (16).

Martyrdom is much emphasized, however, it is not the only reward for the holy sacrifice of Britain's heroic warriors. As Major Sydney Oswald writes in his poem, "Dulce et Decorum Est Pro Patria Mori," the rewards of proper conduct in the war are also undying youth and glory. Accordingly, Oswald offers consolation to the fallen heroes through these lines: "Full soon they died, yet made / A name of lasting glory; gained applause / From all the brave; a fame which cannot fade" (6-8). For soldiers, grieving is senseless, for

> Glory is theirs; the People's narrative
> Of fame will tell their heroic deeds of gallantry,
> And for all time their memories will live
> Shrined in our hearts. (13-16)

The official myth of a cleansing and enriching war that rewards the fallen crusaders with eternal youth, glory and relief also found voice in Laurence Binyon's pastoral elegy, "For the Fallen" which remains as "the most satisfying classical elegiac treatment of the lost generation" (Fussell 80). In the poem, the soldiers "fallen in the cause of the free/ [...] went with songs to the battle" (4, 9), and gallantly "fell with their faces to the foe" (12). Their "mother" (1) is grateful to these heroes who glorified and honoured her with their selfless, chivalric service:

> With proud thanksgiving, a mother for her children,
> England mourns for her dead across the sea.
> [...]
> There is music in the midst of desolation
> And a glory that shines upon our tears. (1-2, 7-8)

The poem's fourth stanza which is "inscribed in gold at the Menin Gate Memorial," and recited at Remembrance Sunday services and on the anniversary of Armistice Day (Roberts 351) states that there is no need for much mourning for the fallen heroes since they were reborn into richness, everlasting glory and immortality through their high sacrifice:

> They shall not grow old, as we that are left grow old:
> Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
> At the going down of the sun and in the morning
> We will remember them. (13-16)

For the fallen heroes, all earthly delights and joys are ended, but their great sacrifice is a sacred path to heavenly peace, happiness and eternal remembrance:

> They mingle not with their laughing comrades again;
> They sit no more at familiar tables of home;
> [...]
> To the innermost heart of their own land they are known
> As the stars are known to the Night; (17-8, 23-4)

Binyon resembles the soldiers to "stars" since, like them, the fallen will always shine in darkness in glory, heavenly peace and safety:

> As the stars that shall be bright when we are dust,
> Moving in marches upon the heavenly plain;
> As the stars that are starry in the time of our darkness,
> To the end, to the end they remain. (25-8)

Oswald and Binyon were not alone in their representation of the war as rewarding, immortalizing and enriching. If the heroes' knightly sacrifice rewarded them with undying youth and fame, the modern soldiers who died for their Christian brothers and

sisters also achieved heavenly bliss and felicity and cleanliness from sins and sorrows by means of their wilful sacrifice.

The discourse equating the soldier's sacrifice with Christ's sufferings and presenting the war as a penitential and redemptive opportunity for repaying the debt for sin of humanity was propagated by John Oxenham's poetry, too. Oxenham was immensely popular during the war as his poetry offered "massive comfort and total assurance to many hundreds of thousands of people within the confines of a chivalric Christian crusading vision of the war" (Stephen 139), and propagated the idea of sacrificed youth as morally baptised, beautiful and clean.

In his poem, "The Vision Splendid," Oxenham identifies the soldiers with Christ whose "rich blood shall bring like healing" (9) and salvation to the nations. The poem promises: "Be this your vision! - through you, Life transfigured / [...] healed, restored, and wholly consecrate" (12, 14). Oxenham blesses the modern soldiers as "Saints" (14) and "God's holy martyrs built on His foundations, / Built with their lives and died that Life might live" (11-2). Oxenham offers consolation to the soldiers by assuring them that their high sacrifice is not futile since their "rich blood, / Poured through their hearts the message of reprieve" (10) and rest from all earthly woes and sins:

> Now, in your train, your blood shall bring like healing;
> You, like the Saints, have freely given your all,
> And your high sacrifice, God's purposes revealing,
> Sound through the earth His mighty Clarion Call.
> O, not in vain has been your great endeavour;
> For, by your dyings, Life is born again,
> And greater love hath no man tokened ever,
> Than with his life to purchase Life's high gain. (13-20)

An important strategy employed by the pro-war poets is the use of pastoral imagery of English Romantic nature poetry (27). As argued, the smooth and elegant surface of Edwardian life in the years before 1914 was, after all, a great illusion. As Powell states, "traditional England, prosperous, pacific, humane, optimistic" went through a dramatic change in political, social and international life in the years that led up to the Great War (46). The early twentieth century marked the birth of a new and very different England. Edwardian England was in a condition of moral chaos in which her inner state was marked by profound industrial, colonial, imperial, social and political unrest, discontent and uncertainty. The overwhelming atmosphere of fear and insecurity of the Edwardian era inevitably resulted in the shaping of "a strong sense of nostalgia" for the lost beauty, innocence, peace and security of pre-industrialized, rural and peaceful England (Bergonzi 38).

The nostalgic atmosphere and the strong sense of ruralistic nationalism affected the poetry of the era. Georgian poets, "dissatisfied with this insecure world", celebrated the modern, industrial and imperial England as a pastoral oasis of peace and felicity (Roger 86). The pro-war poets, most of whom were Georgians like Rupert Brooke, Walter de la Mare, John Freeman, John Masefield and G. K. Chesterton, turned to the English countryside that has always been celebrated as the ideal of home and that "promised security and peace in a world threatened by continued change in nearly every area of human life" (Johnston 6-7). As Johnston states, the early war poets seemed intent on "savoring the present as a golden, euphoric culmination of the Victorian past" (3). Yet, at the same time, they apparently felt that "something irretrievable was passing out of English life, that a vague menace lurked on the horizon of their 'sunlit, tolerant, daylight world' " (Johnston 4). Rupert Brooke, generally celebrated as "the most gifted of the

Georgians" (Crawford 22), summarizes this feeling in the conclusion of his poem, "The Old Vicarage, Grantchester" which was included in Edward Marsh's *Georgian Poetry 1911-1912*, a famous anthology of new verse:

> Say, is there Beauty yet to find?
> And Certainty? And Quiet kind?
> Deep meadows yet, for to forget
> The lies, and truths and pain? … Oh! Yet
> Stands the Church clock at ten to three?
> And is there honey still for tea? (135-40)

With the loss of contact with contemporary reality and a strong sense of nostalgia for "Beauty", "Certainty" and "Quiet kind", the early war poets forgot "The lies, and truths and pain" and took inspiration from traditional pastoral themes. As Bergonzi states, they envisioned their art as a "timeless refuge wherein the church clock might always stand 'at ten to three' " (39) and, thus, found peace and security in a turbulent world threatened by the loss of Victorian values.

Significantly, the early war poets make use of the pastoral elegiac convention as an instrument of "comfort and official propaganda." By means of the English ideal of home, they euphemize and romanticize the experience of the Great War as a "cleansing, purifying, rejuvenating and unifying pastoral opportunity" that would "unify and restore the nation in one nationalistic, patriotic and rural condition of Englishness" (Hynes, "A War Imagined" 101). In this context, the traditional pastoral imagery, motifs and symbols of Romantic nature poetry like "crimson roses and scarlet Flanders poppies" become "the sacramental symbols of England, loyalty, sacrificial love, eternal remembrance and oblivion of the battle scars" (Fussell 241), and facilitate the combination of the chivalric, warrior tradition and the pre-war ideals of militaristic and

imperialistic nationalism with pastoral elegiac convention. The use of such pastoral imagery and motifs helps celebrate modern England as a rural ideal. Accordingly, the pastoral illusion not only incites patriotism and Englishness, but also consoles the fallen warriors and the restless Edwardian generation by pledging them "the resurrection of the lost Paradise" (Millard 64) through their rejuvenating and enriching sacrifice. In this respect, in the pro-war poetry, there are modern Christs, "Teutonic knights", "Arthurian Crusaders" and public school "Tommies" as ruralistic, national heroes who fertilize, heal and bring back the lost pastoral bliss, peace and safety to "a world grown uncertain, old, cold and weary" (Rupert Brooke, "Peace").

In this context, Rupert Brooke's war sonnets form a unique focus for what the English felt, or wanted to feel, in 1914-15. Brooke, with his five sonnets entitled *1914*, which "form the basis of his widespread popularity" (Stephen 23), hits exactly "the right note of love of his country" and patriotic self-sacrifice in a noble cause of right and honour at a moment when the country needed to find a "youthful hero" to embody its most idealistic dreams of a just and holy war against ruthless enemies (Johnston 42-3). At the time, his series of five sonnets served as eloquent vehicles for voicing the heroic-romantic ideals such as glory, honour, military heroism, patriotic duty, and the rejuvenation and baptism of a nation. Winston Churchill, who was then the First Lord of Admiralty, idolised Brooke as "the symbol of England's patriotic and noble youth" (Featherstone 15) in his obituary of Brooke which was published in *The Times* on April 26, 1915, three days after Brooke's death:

> Rupert Brooke is dead. [...]. He was willing to die for the dear England and he advanced towards the brink [...] with absolute conviction of the rightness of his country's cause [...]. The thoughts to which he gave expression in the very few incomparable war sonnets [...] will be shared by many thousands

> of young men moving resolutely and blithely forward in this hardest [...] of all wars that men have fought. [...] Joyous, fearless [...] ruled by high undoubting purpose, he was all that one could wish England's noblest sons to be. ("Death of Mr. Rupert Brooke. Sunstroke at Lemnos" 5)

Clearly, as Lehmann states, Churchill celebrates Brooke as "a national war poet," "an ideal English warrior" and "a national military hero" (27) standing for the ideals and values of Englishness. In his romantic, nostalgic and patriotic sonnets, Brooke constructs the ideal of the happily and enthusiastically fallen hero sacrificing himself to be worthy of the King, the majestic, beautiful England and for the redemption and salvation of the rest from the sorrows and atrocities of the war. Accordingly, Brooke's holy crusaders, passing through the estranging and enriching remoteness of battle, are reborn into eternal cleanness, purity, peace and immortal heroism. As Stallworthy states, Brooke's high rhetoric of heroic, chivalric and warrior tradition is inextricable from the traditional imagery of romantic nature poetry ("Anthem for Doomed Youth" 15). With his Georgian lyricism, Brooke celebrates, beautifies and ennobles England as a pastoral and glamorous idyll that is worth fighting and dying for. By means of the illusion of rustic oasis evocative of the lost peace and harmony of Victorian golden days, he not only provides consolation to the modern hero-Christs by asserting that before their holy sacrifice, they enjoyed all the beauty of majestic England, but also propagates the ideal of home and the concept of "Dulce et Decorum est Pro Patria Mori.".Brooke's heroes will bring back "the broken springs," "the cheerful songs of larks and nightingales," " the hopeful dawns and peaceful dusks" and the "pastoral rain" to an uncertain and old civilization (Roger 83-5) through their sacrifice.

Brooke's first sonnet in *1914* is "Peace" which begins with a direct contrast between the false peace, dishonour and "sick hearts" (6) of the pre-war years, and the true "peace"

(12), "honour" (6) and "release" (9) that the war will bring about. Brooke is thankful to "God [...] Who has matched" (1) his tired generation "with His Hour, / And caught the youth, and wakened them from sleeping" (1-2). Brooke envisions an exhausted and ageing world, one in which "sick hearts" (6) cannot be moved by "honour" (6), a tired world of "half-men, and their dirty songs and dreary, / And all the emptiness of love!" (7-8). On the contrary, the war is not only a pastoral opportunity for the renewal of the lost peace and security of pre-industrialized, rural England, but also is "a moral chance for personal spiritual revitalization" (Johnston 31).

For Brooke, the war cleanses and purifies all the ills. The "shame" (Brooke, "Peace") and "emptiness" ("Peace") of the pre-war years are destroyed and honour, youth, warmth and restedness are restored by the war. In this respect, Brooke sees himself, and others of his generation turning, at the outbreak of the war, "as swimmers into cleanness leaping" ("Peace"). The young heroes joining up to fight on the side of goodness dive from a muddy, diseased and dirty world into "a cleansing simplicity, a purgatorial experience" that will buy rejuvenation for society in return for "the sweet wine of its youth" (Stephen 95). In Brooke's poem, "Peace", those "half-men" (7) who "have known shame" (9) and whose sinful, dirty and "sick hearts [...] honour could not move" (6) will become real and honourable men:

> Oh! we, who have known shame, we have found release there,
> Where there's no ill, no grief, but sleep has mending,
> Naught broken save this body, lost but breath;
> Nothing to shake the laughing heart's long peace there
> But only agony, and that has ending;
> And the worst friend and enemy is but Death. (9-14)

Brooke puts significant emphasis on the soldier's eternal happiness, peace, rest and safety through his sacrifice in his second sonnet, "Safety," too. In the poem, the honourably fallen warriors are "all happy in the hour, most blessed" (1) since they have found safety and lasting rest from all their sins and sorrows through the pain of the divine sacrifice of the body. The happy heroes ask, "Who is so safe as we?" (4) since they have

> [...] found safety with all things undying,
> The winds, and morning, tears of men and mirth,
> The deep night, and birds singing, and clouds flying,
> And sleep, and freedom, and autumnal earth. (5-8)

The soldiers will never age since they have "found security, / Assured in the dark tides of the world at rest" (2-3). As Caesar states, with "public-school Christian militaristic ethos" (53), Brooke romanticizes the soldier's sacrifice as a great opportunity which enables the immortality and unfading peace and felicity of sacrificed youth:

> We have built a house that is not for Time's throwing.
> We have gained a peace unshaken by pain for ever.
> War knows no power. Safe shall be my going,
> Secretly armed against all death's endeavour;
> Safe though all safety's lost; safe where men fall;
> And if these poor limbs die, safest of all. (9-14)

The idealization of the war as a purifying and regenerating knightly quest is clear in Brooke's "The Rich Dead," too. The fallen heroes are "not broken, but richly reborn." The soldiers, like Homeric warrior heroes, preferred youthful and gallant death on the battlefield for the sake of their country and the future generations:

> These laid the world away; poured out the red
> Sweet wine of youth; gave up the years to be
> Of work and joy, and that unhoped serene,
> That men call age; and those who would have been,
> Their sons, they gave their immortality. (4-8)

The selfless generosity of the young heroes restores the lost "Holiness" (10), "Honour" (11), "Peace"(3) and "Nobleness" (13), as the poem states that

> [...]brought us, for our dearth,
> Holiness, lacked so long, and Love,
> Honour has come back, as a king to earth,
> [...]
> And Nobleness walks in our ways again;
> And we have come into our heritage. (9-11, 13-14)

Thus, Brooke offers consolation to the heroes by assuring them that their holy and knightly sacrifice for "Their sons" is not in vain as it is a rich metamorphosis into "immortality" (8), "Holiness" and prowess.

As Stephen points out, "the chivalrous consolatory mode" of "The Rich Dead" turns into a Georgian pastoral elegiac tone in the fourth sonnet, "The Dead" (96). The poem begins with Brooke's consolation of the soldiers with the joys and beauties in death which are richer than those the soldiers had experienced to the fullest before dying. The octave speaks of the delights and happiness of the soldiers' pre-war lives:

> These hearts were woven of human joys and cares,
> Washed marvellously with sorrow, swift to mirth.
> The years had given them kindness. Dawn was theirs,
> And sunset, and the colours of the earth.
> These had seen movements, and heard music; known
> Slumber and waking; loved; gone proudly friended;
> Felt the quick stir of wonder; sat alone;
> Touched flowers and furs and cheeks. [...]. (1-8)

However, with their sacrifice, "All this is ended" (8), but, according to Brooke, the fallen's "rich death" (2) gathers and immortalizes rather than cancelling the nostalgic, peaceful and secure pastoral beauties, joys and high hopes of dawns and dusks. The

fighting men are baptised and revitalized by the "waters blown by changing winds to peaceful laughter" (9). They achieve harmony through "the richer skies" (10) that "dance with "the waves, all day" (11), and find undying glory and peace in darkness: they leave "[...] a white / Unbroken glory, a gathered radiance, / A width, a shining peace, under the night" (12-14).

Brooke's fifth sonnet, "The Soldier" which is generally celebrated as "the most famous single poem of the war" (Mersmann 7), subsumes the pastoral elegiac consolations of the first four, and promises that the fallen heroes from whose "hearts, all evil shed away" (9) are "at peace, under an English heaven" (14). In his poem "The Soldier", Brooke returns to the "Beauty," "Certainty" and "Quiet Kind" of "Grantchester" and idealizes rural England to reinforce the ideals of pastoral nationalism, patriotic loyalty, and the national duty of England's noble sons to their glorious, beautiful home. To some extent, as Parfitt states, Brooke dramatizes the pathos of his own death and writes "his own elegy" (22) in this poem. The opening lines offer a heroic-romantic consolation in their pastoral emphasis on "immortality" (7) achieved in death. The hero-soldier poet says:

> If I should die, think only this of me:
> That there's some corner of a foreign field
> That is for ever England. There shall be
> In that rich earth a richer dust concealed: (1-4)

"In that rich earth," Brooke's English body is cleansed and transforms into "a richer dust" (4) whom "England bore, shaped, [...] / Gave once, her flowers to love" (5-6). It is a body "Washed by the rivers, blest by suns of home" (8). The hero is "not broken,

but reborn," enriched and sanctified by his patriotic sacrifice. He finds unending happiness, fullness, love and purity in death:

> [...] this heart, all evil shed away,
> A pulse in the eternal mind, no less
> Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England given;
> Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day;
> And laughter, learnt of friends; and gentleness,
> In hearts at peace, under an English heaven. (9-14)

As Crawford states, the thought that, "the dust out of which the happy warrior's patriotic body that was once compacted was consecrated for ever" had a heavy influence on Dean Inge (38-9). To console the bereaved civilians, Inge read this sonnet on the Easter Sunday Service 1915 at St. Paul's. According to him, "enthusiasm of a pure and elevated patriotism, free from hate, bitterness and fear, had never found a nobler expression. [...] The spirit of heroism and self-sacrifice knew no restrictions of this kind" ("Dean Inge at St Paul's / Spirit of the Martyr-Patriot" 1).

At a time when tens of thousands of young English men accepted that they should risk their lives fighting a war of justice against England's enemy, "these complex effusions of picturesque imagery and high-sounding sentiment" (Roberts 72) fostered the idea that death in battle was a wonderful opportunity for patriotism, heroic self-sacrifice, holiness and moral redemption. Consequently, Brooke's five sonnets had a great importance in the First World War. His sonnets played an important role in the "national preparation for war," as they contributed to the construction of an ideology of war which is drawn from pre-war public-school, imperialistic, militaristic and ruralistic ideologies (Parfitt 21). As Silkin argues, Brooke's war sonnets were turned from "fanciful logic-defying verse to key expressions of national will" by the promotional powers of the establishment (72). The legend of Brooke as a national war poet and hero was created

by the patronage of influential public figures like Churchill and Dean Inge; Brooke was canonized for "the needs of the nation" and he was used as "an instrument to promote further slaughter" (Featherstone 16).

Moreover, Brooke's "celebrated arcadian recourse to pastoral elegiac mode and chivalric tone" as a medium for ennobling and romanticizing death in battle had a great influence on the pro-war verse written during the early war years (Johnston 37). John Freeman's "Happy Is England Now" presents a similarly idealistic image of the war as glory and renewal: Freeman typically creates a rustic English oasis which becomes "much richer" (2), "dearer" (19) and "sweeter" (21) thanks to "Her faithfullest children" (9) who "give, give, and endure / The pain that never the new years may cure" (15-16). Freeman idealizes "England's beloved sons" (3) who "die / For wrongs sternly not hers" (13-14) as modern St Georges ready for their holy and righteous crusade at a moment "When the destroying Dragon wakes from sleep" (6). Brookean ideal of an enriching and reviving war is reiterated in the poem as the dead soldiers beautify, purify and cleanse England from all ills, agonies and disgrace:

> Happy is England now, as never yet!
> And though the sorrows of the slow days fret
> Her faithfullest children, grief itself is proud.
> Ev'n the warm beauty of this spring and summer
> That turns to bitterness turns then to gladness
> Since for this England the beloved ones died. (7-12)

According to Freeman, "the brave that die" (13) make "Whate'er was dear before [...] dearer now" (19) since, through them, rebirth and "the warm beauty of old springs and summers" (10) come back. The birds "sing sweeter in English ears" (20), and "loveliest is England now / in all her dark woods, green fields / Her hills and rivers and her chafing sea" (17-19). As a result of the battle: "happiest is England now / In those that

fight, and watch with pride and tears" (23-24) her gallant warriors in whom eternal "nobleness, purity and peace shine" (22).

As in "Happy Is England Now," in Walter de la Mare's "Happy England," the soldiers' sacrifice makes "woods and wilds, her loveliness, / [...] / richly at rest" (15, 13). Mare presents the war as a war of peace and redemption from disgrace and disharmony. Mare heartens the soldiers by stressing the righteousness of their cause and the worthiness of their sacrifices:

> England's loyal children [...]
> Remember happy England: keep
> For her bright cause thy latest breath!
> Her peace that long hath lulled to sleep
> May now come back [...] (8-12)

Clearly, the poem romanticizes the war as a healing and purifying pastoral quest. The rich "harvest" (14) of sacrifice revitalizes and beautifies "the dust which [...] had given its all for these" (18):

> With harvest now [...] richly at rest"
> Safe in her isled securities
> Her woods and wilds, her loveliness
> Thy children's heaven is her breast: (13-16)

As Bergonzi suggests, the Brookean sense of death as rebirth found its "most eloquent spokesman" in Julian Grenfell whose poem, "Into Battle," written after hearing of Brooke's death, was generally celebrated as "the clearest lyrical expression of the crusading, chivalric, heroic and warrior spirit of England" (45-6). The poem was published in the London *Times* on May 27 1915, the day Brooke's death was announced, and was immediately celebrated as "one of the finest poems of the war" (Parfitt 25). As Crawford states, "Into Battle" is still "unique among the poetry of

World War I" (38) as it is made up of a variety of constituent elements: the warrior's sense of dedication to a cause, his high sensations and joys. His chivalric combat will give "Great rest, and fullness after death" ("Into Battle"). Grenfell symbolically identifies sacrifice with the renewal of nature, the spiritual regeneration and fulfillment of the fallen, and asserts that to die as a warrior is to share nature's "increase" (8), revitalization and undying peace and rest.

The poet first creates a rustic English paradise bursting with "colour and light" (5), the "warmth of spring" (6), the beauty of "green grass / [...] trees" (2-3) and "the sun's gaze glorying" (3). All of these beauties stand for the emotions of the warrior-knight who is happily preparing for his own fulfillment and chivalric exaltation. Clearly, Grenfell's strategy is to make the fighting hero an inherent part of the natural order and equate the soldier's sacrifice with the particular regenerating powers and cleansing processes of nature. As Johnston states, he establishes an intrinsic relationship between the soldier and the sources of life (36). Grenfell says:

> And he is dead who will not fight;
> And who dies fighting has increase.
> Life is colour and warmth and light,
> And a striving evermore for these. (5-8)

When dead, the fighting hero becomes recipient of nature's "sympathies" (3), increasing beauties and "warmth" (5). He achieves rebirth and youth:

> The fighting man shall from the sun
> Take warmth, and life from the glowing earth;
> Speed with the light-foot winds to run,
> And with the trees to newer birth. (9-12)

"When fighting shall be done" (17), the soldier finds "Great rest, and fullness" (14) in the renewed and enriched "dust" (6). Accordingly, "All the bright company of Heaven / Hold him in their high comradeship" (15-6); he is not lost since

> The woodland trees that stand together,
> They stand to him each one a friend;
> They gently speak in the windy weather;
> They guide to valley and ridge's end (19-22).

Grenfell encourages the fighting man by stressing nature's assistance and guidance during the "dreary, doubtful waiting hours" (31). The soldier shares nature's increasing powers and delights "before the brazen frenzy starts" (32):

> The kestrel hovering by day,
> And the little owls that call by night,
> Bid him be swift and keen as they,
> As keen of ear, as swift of sight. (24-7)

Beside the kestrel and owls, the blackbird sings the "joyous song of battle" (29) and "the horses show him nobler powers" (31). Nature with all her powers and virtues prepare the soldier for his "bright quarrel" and "when the burning moment breaks" (33), the fighting man is ready for his "crucial test" (34) "with patient eyes, courageous hearts" (35) and "nobler powers" (31). He is taken "by the throat" (36) and "blinded" (36) by the "joy of battle" (35). Grenfell's poem promises that when "the thundering line of battle stands, / And in the air Death moans and sings", the soldiers will be protected by the elemental forces of life of which they are an inherent part: "Day shall clasp him with strong hands, / And Night shall fold him in soft wings" (43-44).

Similarly, John McCrae's pastoral elegy, "In Flanders Fields," combines the Georgian pastoral tradition with the chivalric rhetoric of the recruiting-posters. As Crawford

states, it manages to accumulate the maximum number of well-known motifs, symbols and imagery of Romantic nature poetry (149). McCrae consoles the soldiers by a brief description of the pastoral beauties that the fallen had experienced before they died: the heroes had enjoyed "dawn / saw sunset glow / loved and were loved" (7-8). According to McCrae, although they died, none of these delights of life were ended. Instead, the heroes' sacrifice will immortalize the high hopes and joys of those beloved dawns and peaceful dusks since when they "fall" (2), they will "lie / In Flanders fields" (8-9) at eternal rest and safety among "the poppies [...]/ [...] row on row" (1-2). The heroes' "beds" (13) will be of "poppies" (14) that stand for their sacrificial love, oblivion of the battle scars and undying youth. The larks "in the sky" (4) will be "still bravely singing" (5) their song of freedom, and "the crosses row on row" (2) will decorate their holy "beds" of high "sacrifice" (10).

The Georgian pastoral elegiac tone of the poem suddenly turns into the high heroic-warrior rhetoric of Sir Henry Newbolt's "Stand Up! Stand Up and Play the Game" as the fallen invite the young men of England to "take up the righteous quarrel with the foe" (10) and "hold the torch" (12) of freedom and honour "high" (12). The dead soldiers urgently call all to fight for the ideals for which they had sacrificed themselves, and say: "If ye break faith with us who die / We shall not sleep, though poppies grow / In Flanders fields" (13-5). Evidently, McCrae's poem romanticizes war as a chivalrous quest, offers consolation within the confines of the pastoral elegiac and heroic-romantic, warrior tradition, and acts as a direct call to knightly sacrifice and white man's imperialistic "faith" (12).

It can be observed that during the First World War, the propagandistic war poetry acted as a powerful, discursive and ideological practise that reinforced the dominant heroic, patriotic ideologies. In accordance with the officially sanctioned view of the war, the war poets encouraged death in battle and offered consolation to the fighting men by sanctifying and beautifying their sacrifice as purification, glory, heroism and immortality. The war was romanticized as an opportunity not only for achieving fullness and unfading safety in death, but also for demonstrating the public-school heroic warrior, militaristic spirit and the chivalric ideals of patriotic loyalty, courage, martial excellence and piety. The pro-war poetry constructed, in this context, a particular truth of the modern war through its representation of the modern soldiers as the high-powered swordmen and cavalry knights of romance who idealistically went off to a holy crusade for the rights, defence, honour, safety and peace of future generations. The propagandistic war poetry, in this respect, made a significant and urgent contribution to recruitment as it issued as a discursive, official means of defining the truth of war as glorious and purificatory.

CHAPTER II

'WE, BEGGARS, LEFT ON PALLETS OF MUD; WHAT HEROES WE HEROES MUST BE!' : THE DECONSTRUCTION OF THE ROMANTIC VISION OF THE WAR BY EXPERIENCE

> In the future, something will cry out: 'No, this is not right; this is not a holy cause of Right, in which the brightness of innocent youth is destroyed, dimmed and exploited. It is we, the old, who have sinned; we have sent these innocent doomed young men to the battlefield for our evil passions, imperial zeals, honour and pride. [...] It is we, the betrayers of the youth's high sentiments and ideals, [...] who are responsible for this huge, futile technological massacre.
>
> - Bertrand Russell, "What We Can Do", *Principles of Social Reconstruction* 246-7.

As Hynes argues, "two different Britains" came out of the war ("A War Imagined" 125). On the one side, there was the ignorant homefront that believed in the official idealization of the war. On the other side, there was the modern victim-hero who had awakened to the untold atrocities and futile wastes of a machine-made violence caused by their elders' imperial zeals. The war they experienced was far removed from the ancient heroic battles of Arthurian warriors, and thus proved the official myths and romances misguided. Consequently, the modern experience of mechanized trench warfare gave birth to an anti-heroic truth of the war. The soldier poets acted as the truthful spokesmen of this anti-official reality of the war to shame and awaken a romantic world to the either unimagined or deliberately masked horrors of war

In this context, in the midst of the war, poetry adopted an oppositional anti-official discursive mission to contest the hegemonic, heroic-warrior ideologies, and to construct an anti-official, anti-chivalric discourse of the war. It deconstructed the official ideal of happily fallen and enriched warrior-heroes and in its place re-presented soldiers as fearful, shell-shocked and mutilated victims. It presented ordinary soldiers passively suffering with "loud curses and sobs", and "putrefying in nameless shell-holes with old scared faces and miserable eyes/ sick for escape" (Sassoon, "Counter-Attack"). Bertrand Russell's prophecy in 1915 that "In the future, something will cry out: 'No, this is not right; this is not a holy cause of Right, in which the brightness of innocent youth is destroyed, dimmed and exploited" (Sasson, "Diaries 1915-1918" 174), came true quite earlier than he had expected. As early as 1916, the soldier poetry of protest developed in trenches to speak of the untold truth and the need for the reconsideration of the official representation of the war. Thus, the anti-war poetry acted as a means of deconstructing the heroic-warrior myths by "crying out" the official hypocrisies, civilian insensibilities and political and military abuses practised on the modern soldiers.

As Fussell states, the Great War was more ironic than any before or since. It was "a hideous embarrassment to the prevailing Meliorist myth" which dominated the public consciousness during the pre-war years (30). While the war was conceived as an "easy victory to be gained all over by Christmas," the British fought the war for four years and three months, and the first Christmas of the war saw "an absolute deadlock in the trenches" (Audoin-Rouzeau 45). The new year, 1915, had been one of the most depressing years in British history since it brought the repeated failure of British attempts to break through the line and to send the cavalry through to end the war. The Second Battle of Ypres introduced the German use of gas against which the British

were "virtually unprotected", and the earliest cost was sixty thousand British casualties (Fussell 12). Another attack near Loos added sixty thousand more British casualties to the total.

Sir Douglas Haig, the commander of British forces, spent the first six months of 1916 preparing an immense penetration of the German line on the Somme which he romanticized as the last crusade that would crush militarism forever, and bring eternal peace, justice and freedom to the world (Parfitt 19). The Somme affair was "the largest engagement" fought since the beginnings of civilization; the number of men destined for the attack, "equal to twenty-six World War II infantry divisions, constituted a seven-to-one superiority over the Germans" (Parfitt 20). As Silkin states, "at the outset of the Somme, the British were over-confident about an easy victory" that would end war, but "the ironic pattern in 1916 was that of the vast optimistic hope leading to one vast ironic catastrophe" (32). It was on the 1st of July, 1916, that the pre-war innocence and complacency were almost totally destroyed in No Man's Land. The first day of the Battle of Somme swallowed Kitchener's early innocent enthusiasts, and marked the destruction of the crusading and chivalric ideals of the war. Haig's "romantic idealism of breaking the German line" and sending the cavalry through to end the war was completely devastated, and the ignorant frivolity of gaining "an easy victory by Christmas" and ending militarism forever was shattered with a catastrophe (Simpson 79-80). The British nation experienced "the greatest disaster in her military history": nineteen thousand British men were killed and fifty-seven thousand were wounded on the first day of the offensive and the terrible four months' struggle cost the British some 420,000 casualties (Silkin 34-5).

Consequently, a new anti-heroic awareness came out in the midst of the war. As Johnston states, "the old epic standards of heroic achievement in battle" disappeared entirely since trench soldiers could no longer depend on their personal courage, physical excellence or fighting skills for heroic victory or even survival (10). Mechanization and the scientific efficiency of long-distance weapons destroyed the elements of human individuality: bravery, heroic hand-to-hand combat, courage and physical strength. The modern soldier became a passive and often degraded victim of circumstances, indirect fire, artillery bombardments and poison gas. The machine-made violence, the intensity of mechanized warfare and the unprecedented scale of death, destruction, mutilation, dismemberment and the agony of passive suffering proved the public-school athletic, martial code of honour, glory and heroic self-sacrifice senseless. Consequently, the new anti-official truth required, in Lehmann's words, an "anti-heroic rhetorical way" (11). In diaries and letters, soldiers began to describe their helpless victimization by the modern mechanized violence: "Men cowered and trembled. The machinery had been set going and the men were its bloody slaves. [...] I was as helpless as any decaying corpse on any battlefield" (West 67). Beside soldiers, war correspondents altered their rhetoric in the course of the Somme battles. Philip Gibbs, the *Daily Chronicle*'s war correspondent, wrote in his book, "The Battles of the Somme":

> If any man were to draw the picture of those miserable things or to tell them more nakedly than I have told them [...] no man or woman would dare to speak again of war's "glory" or of "the splendour of sacrifice," or any of those old lying heroic clichés which hide and justify the dreadful truth. (130)

Similarly, Gilbert Murray, a liberal and pacifist by nature, pointed out that the war had crushed the old heroic, warrior ideals:

> Romance and melodrama were a memory, broken fragments living on, of heroic ages in the past. We live no longer upon fragments and memories. The old phrase about "dying for freedom," about "Chivalry redeems death's disgrace" are not fit for this unromantic, machine-made war. War-patriotism is proved to be a very barren emotion when brought into relation with the 'grim realities'. ("The Evil and the Good of the War" *Faith, War and Policy* 91-2)

Clearly, the first day of the Battle of Somme unmasked the inglorious, tragic butchery of the war with its terrible casualty lists, and subverted the official idealization of the war. As Edmund Blunden wrote eighteen years later, "by the end of the day, both sides had seen, in a sad scrawl of broken earth [...] Neither race had won, nor could win the War. The War had won, and would go on winning" ("The Mind's Eye" 38). In this context, as Stephen states, the war spirit began to run down, and in contrast to pre-war enthusiasm, anti-war agitation, conscientious objection and pacifist movement swept thousands (114).

On the other hand, the British government reinforced her propaganda activities and intensified controls so as to counter-attack the pacifist propaganda, and promote determination to "fight to a finish" (Fussell 102). It became clear that Britain would not be able to supply the army with enough men in an era of growing pacifist dissent. Thus, the government introduced the institution of conscription in January 1916 with the Military Service Act and called up all unmarried men aged between eighteen and twenty-one. On the 26th of April, the Act was extended to include married men (Roberts 197). Among the small list of categories who might claim exemption - such as

men who were medically unfit or in essential occupations – were "those who could show a conscientious objection to military service" (Brown, 252). Many early war-enthusiasts transformed into conscientious objectors, often known as 'conchies,' a term almost always used in contempt.

As Marwick points out, "by 1916, altogether 16,000 became COs", some of whom accepted some form of alternative service like serving in the Non-combatant Corps or doing various forms of ambulance work, but "1500 took the 'absolutist' step of refusing to partake in any service at all with the war" ("The Deluge" 121). For the absolutists there were arrest, court-martial, imprisonment, release, then arrest and court-martial. During the war, as Brown suggests, about seventy men actually died from their brutal prison treatment, most of the imprisoned were sentenced to death after being court-martialled, and the COs that were not sentenced to death were sentenced to penal servitude by General Haig and were returned to English prisons where they were both physically and spiritually abused (252-4). Clearly, the early persuasion tactics of the government that depended on moral or masculine challenge had changed in nature as pro-war enthusiasm diminished.

As Taylor suggests, it was not only conscription that was introduced, but the government decided to take further steps to promote inflexible determination to continue to a victorious end the struggle in maintenance of the old crusading ideals of justice, honour and patriotic self-sacrifice (153). In 1916, a special National War Aims Committee was formed to combat the rising pacifist sentiment. The War Aims Committee, hand in hand with the Secret War Propaganda Bureau, the Department of Information and the Press Bureau organized hundreds of meetings throughout the

country addressed by politicians, authors and other volunteers, and commissioned hundreds of pro-war articles, posters, banners, films, cartoons, music-hall songs, and leaflets for the press (Marwick, "The Deluge" 252-3).[19] As Winter argues, newspapers campaigned against conscientious objectors, and accused the COs of betraying the war's high ideals of freedom, democracy, and its Christian crusading spirit. Quakers were prominent in promoting conscientious objection (Winter, "The Great War" 291), and were thus harshly criticized by Harold Begbie in his poem, "A Christian to a Quaker." In his poem, Begbie justifies the bad treatment of the COs since while "With a Christian vow, we are marching to freedom and love / to destroy every shape of tyrant sin and the hosts of hate / to make war cease that men may live at peace" (3-5), the COs will not join in.

As Caesar suggests, if conscientious objection was "one big obstacle for the nation's morale" and the war's ideals, the terrible casualty lists of the Somme Offensive was "a greater problem" for the British determination to fight to the bitter end (83). Therefore, newspapers published the pro-war speeches of politicians who promoted the crusading, public-school ideals of patrotic duty, Englishness, human freedom, and fighting righteously against military aggression, conquest and imperial tyranny. The pro-war press glorified the sacrifices of Britain's early volunteer army which Winston Churchill idealized as "a young army, but the finest we have marshalled" ("The World Crisis" 1091-2). Churchill celebrated and ennobled the dead soldiers who "conscious of their race, proud of their righteous cause [...] grudged no sacrifice and by a widespread conviction that human freedom was challenged by military and Imperial tyranny, fulfilled the high purpose of duty with no word of complaint" ("The World Crisis" 1091-2). Churchill continued the heroic rhetoric and romance of the war by sanctifying

and beautifying Kitchener's lost generation as "Gallant Martyrs not less than soldiers who have set up a monument of native virtue and honour which will command the wonder, reverence and the gratitude of the English nation as long as the nation endures" ("The World Crisis" 1091-2). Besides, there were many reports of the Somme Offensive published in the newspapers. The journalistic rhetoric was the heroic official one which disguised the painful actuality of the war and, instead, idealized the Somme offensive as one of the knightly crusades of ancient heroic warriors. One of the reports entitled "The Historic First of July" wrote:

> Our gallant troops, fighting with very splendid valour and prowess, have swept across the enemy's front-trenches along a great part of the line of attack, and have captured many hundreds of enemy as prisoners. [...] And so we may say with pride and gratitude: All goes well. It is a heroic day for England and France and a glorious day of promise in this holy Crusade! (Gibbs 1)

However, despite the government's efforts, the pacifist discontent spread rapidly in the country. Crowded meetings were held in the towns and industrial centres demanding that the war should be brought to an end (Marwick, "The Deluge" 261). Even distinguished statesman like Lord Lansdowne, Unionist leader in the Lords and a former member of Asquith's cabinet, advised negotiations for an early settlement. *The Daily Telegraph* published "the most influential and publicised call for peace moves" (Roberts 202). In the letter, Lansdowne protested against the prolongation of the war, and asked: "What are we fighting for?" :

> We are not going to lose this war, BUT its aggressive prolongation will spell ruin for the civilized world, and an infinite addition to the load of human suffering which already weighs upon it. [...] If the war is to be brought to a close in time to avert a world-wide catastrophe, it will be brought to a close because on both sides the peoples of the countries are

> war-exhausted and involved realise that it has already lasted too long and surpassed its initial ideals and Crusading spirits. ("Peace Letter" 2)

Landsdowne was not alone in his protest, "men of high standing and of unchallengeable patriotism" privately urged the Landsdowne appeal on the government (Roberts 203). There were political conflicts and demands for peace in many belligerent countries. Lloyd George, the British Liberal politician who then served as Secretary for War, was repeatedly challenged to state the British war aims and, as Winter states, suspicion grew that the war now had more to do with "trade and imperial rivalry" than with liberating Europe ("The Great War" 264). In 1917, the American President, Woodrow Wilson, put forward a proposal for a negotiated peace settlement which was remarkably close to the Kaiser's proposal in 1914. Wilson addressed the Senate on January 22, 1917 and said that the United States should work for peace without complete victory, thereby saving all sides from a legacy of bitterness and humiliation, and for a post-war world led by a league of peace which would ensure freedom on land and sea and a reduction of armaments:

> I am proposing that all nations henceforth avoid entangling alliances which would draw them into competitions of power; catch them in a net of intrigue and selfish rivalry [...]. I am proposing government by the consent of the governed; that freedom of the seas [...] and that moderation of armaments which makes of armies and navies a power for order merely, not an instrument of aggression, of conquest or of selfish violence. ("Address of President Woodrow Wilson to the U.S. Senate 22 January 1917")

However, there was not much evidence that these ideas would appeal to the combatants. As Roberts argues, Germany would not stop fighting so long as Britain continued to declare that the war must be a fight to the finish, until Germany had been crushed (324). Since the very beginning of the war, the Germans had believed that the crushing of

Germans would be "the poorest way to accomplish disarmament" (Roberts 325). The newspaper the *Evening World,* published in New York on September 17, 1914, carried a report on Kaiser's views about a peace settlement in the early days of the war. Kaiser stated that a crushed and dismembered Germany would "repeat the era after the Napoleonic wars and arm every man, child, cat and dog in the Empire for the day of revenge" ("Peace without Complete Victory" 1). In this respect, complete victory on either side would not lead to stable future peace in Europe.

However, while Kaiser declared that "Live and let live is the policy that Germany wishes its enemies to observe" ("Peace without Complete Victory 1), Field Marshal Haig repeatedly explained that "the maintenance of an all-out continuous offensive pressure on the Western Front" was the only route to the "complete overthrow of the Evil Huns" and to ultimate peace (Haig 157). Thus, there seemed to be no end in sight to the fighting, and the second half of 1917 brought what is often thought of as the "archetypal battle" of the war (Hibberd, "The First World War" 134). The Third Battle of Ypres, commonly known as Passchendaele, lasted from July 31 to November 6, 1917. The troops fought for months in terrible conditions. The heavy rain and shelling soon turned the trenches into a nightmare of deep mud, and Haig's aim to break the German line proved impossible to achieve. Thousands literally drowned in the mud, and "370,000 British were dead and wounded and sick and frozen to death" (Fussell 16). Haig always believed that the campaign had been necessary, but he was bitterly criticized for it by intellectual liberal pacifists.

As Hynes suggests, this costly and apparently futile offensive gave rise to "more frustration, resentment and cynicism" in the ranks than had been felt before ("A War

Imagined" 107). Soldiers, politicians and such intellectual pacifists as Bertrand Russell, Lady Ottoline and Philip Morrell began to question the political and military aims of the war, and became sceptical about its deliberate prolongation. For instance, Lloyd George openly criticized the tragic violence of the useless offensives and the older generation for their betrayal of the high ideals of Kitchener's soldiers:

> Passchendaele with Somme and Verdun will always rank as the most gigantic, grim and FUTILE fights ever raged in the history of war. None of them attained the object for which they were fought [...] Taken together, they were responsible for the meaningless slaughter or mutilation of between 2,000,000 and 3,000,000 of brave, innocent idealists. This is the heroic tale of the million who would rather die than own themselves cowards [...] and also of the two or three evils who would rather the million perish than they as leaders should own that they were blunderers. ("War Memoirs" 1247)

As the spirit of pacifist discontent and dissent intensified, and found their voice of protest in the circle of intellectual pacifists and their anti-war pamphlets and leaflets, the government heightened the spirit of control and censorship, and legislated to restrict expression.[20] In 1916, amendments to the Defence of the Realm Act had the effect of making "any expression of opposition to, or criticism of the war in any art form [...] a criminal offence" (Hynes, "A War Imagined" 146). In 1917, the prohibition was explicitly expanded to include art forms that had not previously been specified: plays, pictures, films and photographs. As Booth argues, it was another mid-war turn in the control of the instruments of expression, which "withdrew authority from the individual creator and placed it in the pro-war hands of the police and the Army," whose officers became the agents of state censorship and controllers of the arts (21). With this new authority of the strict control of any instrument of expression, police and War Office officials began to raid offices of organizations thought to be subversive (Booth 22).

Such raids were conducted against the headquarters of the National Council Against Conscription, the Independent Labour Party, the Union of Democratic Control and the Women's Labour League. Censorship and the control of any sorts of instruments of expression like films, photographs, plays, pamphlets, articles, pictures, verse and cartoons were very strict. Any pacifist document was immediately censored, destroyed and punished (Booth 23-4).

However, as Hynes argues, as control, censorship, restriction and suppression intensified in Britain, so did "the spirit of dissent, and especially in print" ("The Edwardian Turn of Mind" 145). The more the government restricted expression, the more the dissenting groups expressed their opposition to restriction. As Featherstone states, "dissent had begun to establish its own canon" (27). The Quakers continued their pacifist journal and *Ploughshare* published "more and more outspoken criticisms of the war," including anti-war writings, diaries, letters and pamphlets by men in the forces and by intellectuals and politicians (Hynes, "A War Imagined" 146-7). By 1916, the *Cambridge Magazine* had become a principle voice of dissent in Britain. It served as the only journal to publish regular abstracts of news from the European press, including German newspapers. It also published the first anti-war poems of trench soldiers like Siegfried Sassoon's "The Hero." Furthermore, No-Conscription Fellowship, which was an anti-official private press was founded and pamphlets and leaflets appeared from many organizations- some political, some military, some religious, some simply anti-war (Hynes, "A War Imagined" 147).

Under Fire (1917), the English translation of Henri Barbusse's *Le Feu* (1916), was one of the most outspoken protests of the period (Hibberd, "The First World War" 148).

Writing from first-hand experience and as a fervent Communist, Barbusse believed that the troops were being duped by the passionate ruling class. According to Barbusse, the official knightly rhetoric about the glory and honour of war was a "device for exploiting and deceiving" the innocent youth, and it was the soldier writer's social mission to show the falseness of the hegemonic ideologies by telling the untold horrors and futile carnage of trench warfare (Moeyes 77). In *Under Fire*, Barbusse warns the doomed youth against the older generation's heroic-romantic lies through a bitter speech between "poor bloody infantrymen":

> "They will say to you," [...] 'My friend, you have been a gallant hero!' I don't want them to say it! "Heroes? [...] We've been murderers. [...] Don't talk to us about military virtue, racial honour or gallantry because we've killed Germans" [...] "The old will talk about the ideals of Justice, Freedom and Peace and our holy sacrifice for the healing of humankind, and pay us with glory and pride. [...] The soldier's glory is a lie, like every other fine looking thing in war. In reality, the soldier's passive suffering is a frightful inglorious nothing; soldiers are poor little names of nobodies." [...] "may you even speak of the glory of war? You'd be cursed! [...] They've made around a Marshal's plumes a religion as bad and stupid and malignant as any other chivalric lies!" (340-1).

As Hynes argues, from 1916 onwards, Barbusse's anti-war arguments, hand in hand with the terrible casualty lists of the Somme and Passchendaele Offensives and the passionate conviction of the intellectual pacifists about the government's deliberate prolongation of the war created a deepening sense of disillusioned frustration and alienation.

However, as Roberts argues, "in mid 1916, the general public had no way of knowing the facts and official lies, and arm-chair poets, clergymen and politicians could easily go on imagining our gallant Arthurian Crusaders valiantly fighting for Justice, Right,

Freedom and God" (218). The propaganda machine that made use of the well-known British ideals and values to justify and ennoble the British cause was so pervasive that clear thought and common sense were completely overwhelmed, and the non-combatant world continued to believe in the knightly spirit of the war.

As Johnston states, it was the trench soldiers' burdening sense of disillusioned embitterment about this huge gap between the homefront's heroic myth of the war and the reality of trench warfare that gave birth to a new kind of war poetry (19-20). Their poetry became the voice of protest, confrontation, satire, warning and anti-official truth. The soldier poets felt totally estranged and isolated from the romantic homefront that was inhabited by uncomprehending and oppressive "fatuous jingoes" (Williams 142-3). Thoroughly ill-informed about the unheroic nature of modern reality and entirely mobilized by the official representation of the war, the non-combatants fought their own war against the young men: As stated above, women not only continued to distribute white-feathers, but were still crying: "Go! It is your duty, lad!" through posters and leaflets, as well. Meanwhile, fathers told heroic tales of "dying a gallant death," "Chivalry redeems death's disgrace," and "Dulce et Decorum est Pro patria mori" (Williams 148-51).

As Winter suggests, civilians' indifferent complacency and their contribution to the continuation of the war with chauvinistic jingoism and propagation of the official high crusading ideals and myths were "the real burden of the war generation" ("The Great War" 293-4). The soldier poets were driven by hatred and anger for the uncomprehending noncombatant world as well as by a burdening sense of responsibility for revealing the untold truth so that all shall suffer, agitate and stop telling the old

heroic lies. The poets who wanted to counter-attack the civilian idea of war by telling the "truth untold," used poetry as a medium for contesting the dominant ideologies and deconstructing the official definition of the soldier as a hero.

The soldier-poets felt it their special mission to "help rob war of the last shred of Brookean glory and the last shine of knightly glamour" (Trotter 98). They wanted to subvert the homefront's Homeric discourse of the war by bringing the war's shocking horrors, helpless passive sufferings and bitter waste into the safety and peaceful ignorance of the homefront. As Siegfried Sassoon, the first of the anti-war poets, states in his famous "Declaration of Wilful Defiance of Military Authority," the soldier poets protested "against the political errors and insincerities for which the fighting men are being sacrificed" and used their truthful poetry as a means to "destroy the callous complacence 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" (Sassoon, "Diaries 1915-1918" 174).

However, as Fussell argues, the problem in communicating the untold truth was the "indescribable nature of the modern experience" since it had nothing to do with the feudal, chivalric language, the knightly ideals and the heroic ethos of ancient warriors (148). The unexpected duration and mechanized nature of the war on the Western Front, and the high casualty lists were beyond civilian comprehension. As traditional techniques and conventional heroic rhetoric were inadequate to convey the modern tragedy and to create a new sort of anti-Homeric consciousness, the soldier-poets "refashioned lyric poetry" (Kendall 78). Anti-war poetry introduced realism, colloquial language and directness of statement to poetry. The soldier poets employed graphic or

photographic realistic depiction and the stark, concrete, immediate and precise imagery of the war's shocking horrors. In this context, the soldier poetry of protest and warning was against the music hall treatment of the war.

Hence, the trench poets made use of a number of techniques to convey the new, anti-official reality of the war. As Lehmann suggests, curative realism was one technique of the shock-horror poetry of the trench soldiers (62). Some of the trench soldier poets preferred making explicit and bitter protest and used vindictive satire and ironic realism as aggressive weapons against the political, military and civilian hypocrisies, betrayals and complacency. Others preferred making implicit protest by means of pastoral elegiac tradition (Lehmann 64-6). As argued, for the soldier-poets, traditional forms of language and the Brookean heroic rhetoric of war seemed unsuited to transmit the images of the surreal nightmare that Verdun, the Somme and Passchendaele provided in abundance. Seeking to describe the startling, unforeseen horrors and ugliness of the war, the poets of implicit protest, could only try to seize the new uses of the Georgian language which was the only one they had, and thereby, to turn its "pastoral modes into bitter irony" (Winter, "The Great War" 291).

In this respect, the anti-war poets of implicit protest turned to English pastoral and the Romantic tradition of nature, and applied the tactic of pastoral contrast to describe the devastated souls and bodies of soldiers (Stephen 228). With recourse to pastoral contrast, the anti-war poets acted as pastoral ironists who by means of pastoral antithesis described the contrast between the pre-war peaceful English pastoral oasis and war's mechanical devastation (Stephen 228-9; Crawford 88-9). As Bergonzi states, the soldier-poets tried to communicate the war's dehumanized, mechanical carnage and

the passive nature of both physical and spiritual suffering by means of "an anti-nature tradition of a devastated, demonic anti-landscape" (74). Consequently, in contrast to the official beautification of the war, modern combat did not regain the "lost Paradise." Instead, it brought about a demonic waste land dominated by constant shell-fire, "torn-up black sky," shattered trees, ravaged houses and dead poppies. The anti-pastoral landscape was inhabited by wounded men either lying helplessly in the shell holes among their comrades' "putrefying flesh eaten by rats," or screaming, cursing and hanging in agony on the barbed wire with "bowels dropping out," lungs shot away, with blinded, smashed faces or "limbs blown into space" (Hibberd, "Poetry of the Great War" 100-1).

In this poetry, the shattered, violated landscape remained as a "sinister symbol of the modern soldiers' helpless spiritual and physical sufferings" (Johnston 225-6), of their loss of peace and harmony, and of their weariness, pain, fear and death. This represented the burdening sense of victimization, oblivion and anguish of the soldiers in "the shell-chopped black trees" that "mourn for the dead / Groan for the slaughter and desecration" (Edmund Blunden, "Trees on the Calais Road"). As Blunden reveals in "Trench Raid," the modern victim-heroes are imprisoned, hopeless and woebegone as, for them, even the traditional Romantic "dawns" (14) are "false" (14) bringing, instead of high hopes and peace, endless bombardments, blood, fear and passive suffering. The poem evokes a contrast between the conventional poetic visualization of dawn and the brutal reality of a pre-dawn bombardment:

> At an hour before the rosy-fingered morning should come
> To wonder again what meant these sties,
> These wailing shots, these glaring eyes,

[...]
[...] down they swept,
Successions of similars after leapt
And bore red flame and pain.
[...]
East and west false dawns fan-flashed
And [...] false thunders clashed. (1-3, 9-11, 14-5)

The soldiers who inactively "stood and watched" (16) these "false thunders" (15) of fire, mud and blood are the helpless and fearful slaves of "the fierce truth" (20) of the machine-made war. The victims

Who stood and watched
Caught piercing horror from the desperate pit
Which with ten men
Was centre of this. The blood burnt, feeling
The fierce truth there and the last appealing helplessly,
"Us? Us? Again?" (16-21)

Similarly, in Rosenberg's poem, "Returning, We Hear the Larks," the cheerful songs of skylarks offer a "sinister threat" (3), and death instead of the harmonious joy, and regenerative force of peaceful and hopeful early dawns. The poem describes the effects of an incongruous beauty on the fighting men whose senses have been starved by the ugliness and danger that have encompassed their fearful and hopeless lives. For them, "Sombre the night is" (1) since though they are now alive, they know "What sinister threat lurks there" (3). In the "heights of dangerous night ringing with unseen larks" (8), there is no safety or rest for the soldiers who helplessly and fearfully wait for their inescapable rendezvous with mutilation and death:

Dragging these anguished limbs,
We only know
This poison-blasted track opens on our camp-
On a little safe sleep. (4-7)

Rosenberg stresses the passive nature of suffering, victimization and death-in-life situation of the soldiers who are imprisoned in the "heights of night ringing with unseen larks" (8). For the victim soldiers surrounded by the danger of unseen larks, there is neither the joy and beauty of the "Music showering on" (9) them, nor the security and harmony of night. On them:

Death could drop from the evil dark
As easily as song-
But song only dropped,
Like a blind man's dreams on the sand
By dangerous tides,
Like a girl's dark hair for she dreams no ruin
lies there,
Or her kisses where a serpent hides. (10-17)

For the soldiers, only death is the reality and beauty a treacherous and destructive dream. Edmund Blunden's poem, "The Zonnebeke Road," similarly, points out that there is no light of freedom, hope, peace or harmony for the soldiers who must live and fight in the midst of the violated landscape. Blunden animates a lanscape with the soldiers' sensations and emotions: the weariness, pain, fear and the quiet desperation and spiritual burden of daily trench life are evoked by a vivid description of a shattered, gloomy and ugly anti-landscape:

Black-smoked, iron clouds of death hide the moonlight
The tired air groans as the heavies swing over
The snow dust whisks along the road,
Piteous and silly; the low sky like a load
Hangs over- a dead-weight. But what a pain
Must gnaw where its clay cheek
Crushes the shell-chopped trees that fang the plain- (1-7)

Blunden not only dramatizes the demoralizing effects of modern warfare on the human spirit, but also reflects upon the physical atrocities and horrors of the machine-made

tragedy: the soldiers are not only plagued "With gouged and scourged uncertainties / Of soul and soil in bitter pains," (12-14), but are helplessly enslaved by the "blinding bombs / [...] flaming burst and sour gas" (15-16), as well. For the fighting men, "The sky is gone" (8): rather than freedom or hope, there is the vicious cycle of grief, suffering and fear:

> Every morning will come in weeping and rain;
> The bombs and coils and cans by strings of
> Slaves
> Are borne to serve the coming day of days; (18-21)

All day "Agony stares from each gray face" (11) and "men clench their chattering teeth with fear / And freeze with that one hope, disdain" (22-3). Living with the rotten corpses of their fellow-soldiers "in this dark maze of flesh and blood" (9), the fighting men cannot even sleep at night: fear catches them in "That dugout fallen in awakes, / Some formless haunting of some corpse's chaps" (Edmund Blunden, "The Zonnebeke Road"). Fear accompanies them till they become a part of the "mass vile sickly smell of rottenness" (8) or "wobbling carrion roped upon a cart" (Arthur Graeme West, "The Night Patrol").

The anti-war pastoralists, thus, subvert the Brookean heroic-romantic ideal of a beautifying and enriching combat, and reconstruct the image of the ordinary soldier as the victim-hero who is neither regenerated nor purified as a result of the war. With the use of concrete and precise imagery and photographic description, the anti-war pastoral ironists make the soldiers an inherent part of the war-devasted anti-nature, demonic landscape. The modern soldiers are poor, helpless and agonized victims who are both physically and spiritually broken "with torn lungs and shell-rent limbs/ blinded with painful sobs / And choked with loud curses" (Hubert Dayne, "To the Moon"). Rather

than undying glory and harmony, "fear" (6), agony and "rottenness for ever groan and bleed" (8).

Indeed, the poets of protest were myth-destroyers. Their representation of the war shows that death in modern warfare is neither admirable, nor heroic-romantic: it is passive, obscure, ignominious and pitiable, and the soldier is a powerless, helpless and horrified participant, who cried: "For God's sake, send and help us! / [...] / While the shells crashed over / And the earth was rent and torn by endless bursting steel" (Richard Aldington, "Bombardment").

Isaac Rosenberg's "Dead Man's Dump" is "one of the clearest expressions of the frightful massacre of the modern warfare" (Press 47). With shocking concreteness and immediacy, Rosenberg begins his poem with a realistic depiction of plunging wheels limbering "over the "shattered track" (Rosenberg, "Dead Man's Dump") of the anti-pastoral trenches. As an anti-war pastoral ironist, Rosenberg discovers the mechanical slaughter and the physical and mental victimization of modern warfare in a shattered anti-pastoral lanscape populated by butchered, "rotten bones" (61), "sinister faces / Burnt black by strange decay" (65-6) and "choked souls" (72) that are "sunk too deep / For even human" (63-4) compassion (Rosenberg, "Dead Mans Dump"). The poem acts as a report of the horrors and brutality of trench warfare whereby the wiring wheels

> [...] lurched over sprawled dead
> But pained them not, though their bones crunched,
> Their shut mouths made no moan
> They lie there huddled, friend and foeman
> And shells go crying over them
> From night till night and now. (7-12)

Rosenberg makes the nameless, agonized soldiers a part of the demonic, "Maniac Earth" (49) by envisioning this "Maniac Earth" waiting eagerly for men's senseless and tragic waste: "All the time of their growth/ Fretting for their decay/ Now she has them at last!" (15-7). Only death liberates the soldiers from their pains, sufferings and the burden of their "dark souls" (24). The poem reveals the real experience of the war by depicting the desperation, fear and passive endurance of the modern anti-heroes: life is much more intolerable for the living who have to live not only with the dead and dying bodies of their "brothers dear" (7), but also with their living-dead spirits that depart when "the flames beat loud on them, / [...] / And the startled blood may stop" (37, 39). For the living, all day and night,

The air is loud with death,
The dark air spurts with fire,
The explosions ceaseless are.
[...]
The shrapnel called "An end!"
But not to all. In bleeding pangs
Some borne on stretchers dreamed of home,
Dear things, war-blotted from their hearts. (40-42, 45-48)

Rosenberg depicts the ferocity of the war and the tragic pity and inglorious waste of the fighting men in detail:

A man's brains splattered on
A stretcher-bearer's face;
His shook shoulders slipped their load,
But when they bent to look again
The drowning soul was sunk too deep
For human tenderness. (59-64)

The war inflicts a range of tragedy beyond which compassion cannot penetrate. The passively suffering, mutilated man for whom pity is irrelevant is left at the crossroads

with the "older dead" (76) whose rotten faces the poet sees under the wheels of the limber:

Burnt black by strange decay
Their sinister faces lie,
The lid over each eye,
The grass and coloured clay
More motion have than they,
Joined to the great sunk silences. (65-70)

Among these "smelly corpses" (80), already half-absorbed into the "dark earth", the grievously wounded man lies with his "drowning soundless soul" (55). However, as the limber approaches, he struggles with death and a final, desperate hope for survival is aroused in his heart. Even if he is beyond "human tenderness" (64) or aid, his voice sounds from the edge of the "great sunk silences" (70), and his "choked soul stretched weak hands" (72) in an ultimate plea for human contact and recognition: "Will they come? Will they ever come?" (81). However, all of the soldiers are helpless in controlling the brutal violence of the modern trench warfare:

The rushing wheels all mixed
With his tortured upturned sight.
So we crashed all round the bend,
We heard his weak scream
We heard his very last sound, (84-88)

None of the fighting men could help their dying comrade as "the wheels grazed his dead face" (89) and the dead man like many of his fellow-soldiers eventually became an inherent part of the demonic "Maniac Earth" which was "All the time of their growth / Fretting for their decay" (15-6).

Similarly, Robert Graves records the savagery of the trenches and the tragic bloodshed of the youth in "A Dead Boche" which was among the first poems to describe with

photographic realism the physical atrocities of battle, focusing on the inglorious and anti-chivalric putrefaction of a nameless, butchered corpse (Stallworthy, "Anthem for Doomed Youth" 93). As a poet of pastoral antithesis, Graves portrays a ravaged and ugly anti-nature inhabited by a rotten corpse. The poem, thus, records an incident in Mametz Wood during the Battle of Somme and re-presents the war as "Hell!" (4). The poet warns the ignorant homefront:

> To you who'd read my songs of War
> And only hear of blood and fame,
> I'll say [...]
> 'War's Hell!' and if you doubt the same,
> To-day I found in Mametz Wood. (1-5)

In the war-devastated anti-pastoral landscape, "Sat a dead Boche / propped against a shattered trunk" ("A Dead Boche"). Neither does the dead man's unburied corpse metamorphose into a "richer dust" (Brooke, "The Soldier"), nor can "the People's narrative / Of fame / [...] tell [his] heroic deeds of gallantry" (Oswald, "Dulce et Decorum est Pro Patria Mori"). In fact, the mechanical slaughter of the rotten "dead Boche / [...] With clothes and face a sodden green / [...] Dribbling black blood from nose and beard" ("A Dead Boche") can only arouse pity.

Similarly, in "Break of Day in the Trenches," Isaac Rosenberg focuses on the burdening anguish, the unremitting fear and the unavoidable unnatural terror of the soldiers. What Rosenberg sees when "The darkness crumbles away" (5) is "a queer sardonic rat" (6) as a symbol of the ugliness of unnatural, demonic death in "the torn fields of France" (8). Even the rat which "the decaying bodies fed" (12) wonders at the senseless carnage of men when the poet asks:

> What do you see in our eyes

At the shrieking iron and flame
Hurled through still heavens?
What quaver- what heart aghast? (14-17).

The traditional Romantic dawn now reveals images of terror: "poppies whose roots are in man's veins / Drop and are ever dropping" (12-13). Poppies, "the traditional Romantic sanguine flowers inscribed with woe", blood, suffering and sacrificial love (Fussell 252), grow crimson in No-Man's Land as they nourish on the blood and oblivion of the dead lying beneath them. The poppies "Drop and are ever dropping" (13) just like the "haughty athletes" (6) whose "strong eyes / fine limbs" (7) are of no avail against the mechanized destructiveness. However, the poppy the speaker has plucked and put behind his ear is "safe" (16) for the moment so long as he hides his head below the parapet. The apparent "safety" (17) of the poppy is as delusive as that currently enjoyed by the soldiers. If the poppy is now "Just a little bit white with the dust" (18), it is already destined to be very white and turn wholly to "dust" (18) just like the helpless, fragile victim-heroes who will continue feeding rats and poppies with their "blood, filth" (19) and "decay" (19) as soon as they raise their head above the parapet or "cross the sleeping, dead green between" (11).

In addition to the implicit protest of the pastoral ironists, the anti-war poetry preferred also a more direct and spontaneous voice of anger or pain to cry out "all the wrongs," political-military abuses and civilian insincerities (Lane 23). In fact, from 1916 onwards, the Great War was not only a war fought between the two opposing military alliances. As has been illustrated, it was also a war fought between the anti-official, unheroic reality of the embittered trench soldiers and the official knightly romances of the non-combatants (Fussell 86). The aggressive verse of counter-attack as an anti-

official medium for deconstructing the heroic-crusading, official ideals of the war attacked the ideology of war on many fronts. The anti-war poetry of warning became an expression of "disillusioned and outraged protest" against all those who were responsible for the prolongation of a war, the aims of which could no longer justify the continued reckless sacrifice of human life (Quinn 180-1).

As Quinn argues, the poetry of explicit political protest, aggressive realism and burning hatred and dismay provided a new insight and revealed the truth of modern war (184-5). The satirical poets not only depicted the shocking scenes of the modern technological massacre, but they openly examined questions of significance and necessity of sacrifice. They used their poetry of truth and awakening as a means of constructing an anti-official discourse of the war, and as an angry counter-attack against civilian callous complacency and profiteering as well as official optimism and hypocrisy. Among their targets were military incompetence and the older generation that had betrayed the high ideals of the war for self-seeking profits.

In this context, Siegfried Sassoon's poetry of protest is the first real attempt to shame and shock the homefront out of their easy complacence and ignorance (Moore 297). As Moore states, Sassoon became "the most articulate spokesman" for the mood of disillusioned protest and aggressive rejection that "animated the later poetry" of the war (29). Appalled by the general civilian attitude towards the war and civilian misapprehensions about the spirit of fighting soldiers, Sassoon, who was "a happy war hero", became "a bitter protester" (Sternlicht 18). During his six months' sick leave, Sassoon was frustrated and "disillusioned by the civilian apathy he experienced in England" (134). He clearly saw that "the bitter waste and agony of the Lost Generation"

had been concealed beneath "a patina of civilian ignorance, lies, distortions and the cruel patriotic myths and knightly romances of the nobility of armed struggle" (Silkin 135-6).

In fact, Sassoon himself illustrates the turn of minds about the war. Sassoon initially believed that war "was inevitable and justifiable [...] Courage remained a virtue [...]," and said, "I had serious aspirations to heroism" (Sassoon, "Siegfried's Journey" 46). He would state, in poems like "Absolution", "War is our scourge: yet war has made us wise / And, fighting for our freedom, we are free" (Sassoon, 2-3).

However, the actual experience of the war led Sassoon to write in a "scornful, harsh and discontented" manner (Sassoon, "The Poet as Hero"). He felt it his duty to protest against the prolongation of the war, the aims of which could "no longer justify the continued reckless sacrifice" (Sassoon, "Diaries 1915-1918" 174) of the innocent youth. As clearly stated in his poem "The Poet as Hero," Sassoon regarded poetry as a means of speaking of the reality of war on behalf of his fellow-sufferers. As a soldier poet, he used poetry as a medium for constructing an anti-heroic discourse of the war. Accordingly, in contrast to the pro-war poetry, his poetry of realism and satire speaks of the bitter truth untold instead of seeking the "Grail / riding in armour bright, serene and strong" (Sassoon, "The Poet as Hero"). As stated, as the true spokesman of the modern reality, Sassoon used his anti-war poetry of aggressive realism and protest as an anti-official instrument to "repent" (3) the "silly sweetness" (3) of an obtuse world, "to smite their wrongs" and to "change" (4) their "ecstasies [...] to an ugly cry" (4):

> You've heard me, scornful, harsh, and discontented,
> Mocking and loathing War: [...]
> [...]
> You are aware that once I sought the Grail,

Riding in armour bright, serene and strong;
And it was told that through my infant wail
There rose immortal semblances of song.
But now I've said good-bye to Galahad,
And am no more the knight of dreams and show:
For lust and senseless hatred make me glad,
And my killed friends are with me where I go.
[...]
And there is absolution in my songs (1-2, 5-12, 14)

Thus, Sassoon adopts photographic realism and reports the ignominious nature of sacrifice in machine-made slaughter. He, thus, displays the discrepancy between the contemptible sufferings of the modern fighting men and the blissful chivalric romance of ignorant civilians (Silkin 155; Johnston 92-4).

The extremely restricted space within which trench warfare was fought simultaneously ensured that Great War soldiers would "die as cattle" as Owen would say in his poem ("Anthem for Doomed Youth"), and live with the corpses of their fellow-sufferers, and that British civilians would not see dead soldiers. As McPhail suggests, while the trench soldiers in the Great War inhabited "worlds constructed of corpses", civilians at home experienced the death of their soldiers as "corplessness" (92). In this sense, the modern anti-chivalric truth included not only the unheroic, mechanized physical carnage, but the spiritual one, as well. Most of the soldiers were overcome with mental breakdown, insanity, loss of sensitivity, and they suffered from shell shock (Leese 63-5). Self-wounding and suicide were at the heart of the unheroic war as these were preferred by many "to facing the ordeal of going over the top" (Harari 66).

It was this world of disturbing realities that the anti-war poetry of the trench soldier poets portrayed to "explode the Georgian romanticism and chauvinistic jingoism of the pompous civilian wonderland" (Parfitt 40). Accordingly, under heavy shelling,

Sassoon's victim-heroes with "faces pallid and thirsty and blind with smoke" ("Counter-Attack"), helplessly and fearfully watch "the clamour of shells burst" (19):

> Spouting dark earth and wire with gusts from hell,
> While posturing giants dissolved in drifts of smoke.
> They crouched and flinched, dizzy with galloping fear,
> Sick for escape,—loathing the strangled horror
> And butchered, frantic gestures of the dead. (20-24)

Sassoon reports the brutality and passive endurance mechanized warfare inflicts on the fighting men during a counter-attack. The soldiers go over the top and as soon as they climb on the "fire-step" (26), they are victimized by the inescapable "Bombing on the right" (28) and the "machineguns on the left" (29). Sassoon reflects upon the modern soldier's despair, unheroic misery and fear. He portrays the ordinary fighting man as the powerless and fearful slave of heavy shelling, artillery bombardment and indirect fire:

> An officer came blundering down the trench:
> 'Stand-to and man the fire-step!' On he went...
> Gasping and bawling, 'Fire-step ... counter-attack!'
> Then the haze lifted. [...]
> [...]
> And stumbling figures looming out in front.
> 'O Christ, they're coming at us!' Bullets spat,
> And he remembered his rifle ... rapid fire...
> And started blazing wildly ... then a bang
> Crumpled and spun him sideways, knocked him out
> To grunt and wriggle: none heeded him; he choked
> And fought the flapping veils of smothering gloom, (25-28, 30-35)

In Sassoon's representation of the war, there is no glory or heroism. On the contrary, the infantry rifles hand in hand with flame-throwers and grenades murder men and prove their sacrifice senseless since while the attacks fail, the tragic waste and bloodshed of war succeed. The fighting men who had "gained their first objective hours ago / While dawn broke like a face with blinking eyes" (1-2) and "held their line, / With bombers

posted, Lewis guns well placed" (4-5) are still incapable of protecting themselves against the ferocity and terror of trench warfare. The soldiers,

> Lost in a blurred confusion of yells and groans
> And sobs and curses …
> Down, and down, and down, sank and drowned,
> Bleeding to death. The counter-attack had failed. (36-39)

The infantrymen in the poem are neither enriched nor sanctified. Instead, their unidentified butchered corpses fall into oblivion and rottenness in "this place" that "was already rotten with the mouthless dead; green clumsy legs / High-booted, sprawled and grovelled along the saps / And trunks, face downward, in the sucking mud and blood" (7-9).

Similarly, Arthur Graeme West's poem, "A Night Patrol" depicts the soldiers as victims of endless fear, passive sufferings and misery. The poem reports the despair and death-in-life situation of the fighting men who go "Over the top! / in pain, pain continual; pain unending" (6-7). In darkness, the soldiers "crept to the barbed wire / Drowned in utter fear and misery" (3-4) and as soon as they went over the top, the machine-gun reduced them to impotent sufferers of inglorious and unfair savageness. The poem shows the falseness of the heroic idealization of the war and soldier, and reconstructs the truth of the war as unheroic and worthless waste:

> […] the bandoliers,
> Packs, rifles, bayonets, belts and haversacks,
> Shell fragments, and the huge whole forms of shells
> Shot fruitlessly – and everywhere the senseless death. (32-35)

Instead of heroic achievement, glory and rebirth, "only the dead are always present – present / As a vile sickly smell of rottenness" (25-6). The machine-guns butcher the

fighting men and make them a part of the ravaged landscape inhabited by their comrades' "rotten corpses" (36) that "lay down in hollows, huddled as in bed" (38). The modern soldiers are the incompetent and fearful preys of the machine-made terror:

A sentry fired and a machine-gun spat;
They shot a flare above us, when it fell
And spluttered out in the pools of No Man's Land,
We turned and crawled past the remembered dead;
Past him and him, and them and him, until,
A bunch of half a dozen men were
All blown to bits, an archipelago
Of corrupt fragments. (40-47)

A similar view of the war dominates Sassoon's "A Night Attack." Sassoon remembers "the spouting shells" that "dig pits in fields of death, / And wounded men moaning and weeping in the woods" (11-2). The soldiers as "piteous beggars" (27) who are "sick for escape" (8) and "tired of peaceful thoughts of home and hours of sleep" (9). Rather than peace and safety, "Terror and ruin lurk behind their gaze" (18). Sassoon points out the universal tragedy and the "unpitying waste" (17) of the war. What all fighting men feel is a longing for "peace" (33) rather than hatred for the enemy. He remembers a "young, fresh and pleasant Prussian / Dead in a squalid, miserable ditch, / Heedless of toiling feet that trod him down" (28-30). Sassoon focuses on the futility of war saying: "No doubt he loathed the war and longed for peace and truth for the rest, / And cursed our souls because we'd killed his friends" (33-4). The poem subverts the ideal of honourable and estimable death on battlefield by reporting the young soldier's sufferings and disgraceful end in mud and rottenness:

One night he yawned along a half-dug trench
Midnight; and then the British guns began
With heavy shrapnel bursting low,
Rifles rattled angrily on the left
Down by the wood and there was noise of bombs.

There were shouts, sobs and curses.
Men stooped and shovelled [...] and moaned and died with agony in the sludge.
[...]
I found him there
In the grey morning when the place was held.
His face was in the mud, one arm flung out
As when he crumpled up, his sturdy legs
Were bent beneath his trunk; heels to the sky. (35-41, 53-57)

As Johnston states, the use of photographic realism was the basic technique of the anti-war poets to bring shock and horror to the civilian world (92). The soldiers are no longer the valiant warriors falling happily and nobly. Instead, as Sassoon depicts in "How to Die," they suffer "with sobs and curses / And sullen faces white as chalk" (9-10). As Sassoon states, ironically in "Lamentations": "Such men have lost all patriotic feeling" (12) and Brookean public-school heroic-warrior spirit. Dying "nameless in shell-holes with / old scared faces and miserable eyes" (13-14), the fighting men "Moaned, shouted, sobbed and choked" (16) rather than being transformed into a "richer dust" (Brooke, "The Soldier).

As stated, the anti-war poetry was not only a realistic poetry, but it was also a satirical one. In this poetry, satire served as a means of bitter revolt and warning against the victimization and exploitation of the youth by the war-profiteers. As Crawford states, among their targets were the generals and staff officers whose incompetence contributed to the carnage; the churchmen who abetted efforts to prolong the holy crusade; the politicians "yelling for German blood" (119); the arm-chair journalists who did well out of the war, and the civilians including women who contributed to the war effort with their heroic-romantic clichés (119-20).

Civilian insensitivity and selfishness were openly criticized by many anti-war poets who were outraged at the non-combatants' "sitting quiet and peaceful, safe at home,/ never

thinking there was a bloody carnage on!" (Sassoon, "Remorse"), but instead "talking proudly of dying heroes and their deathless deeds" (15) despite clearly "hearing the monstrous, bloody guns" (17). A poem that represents the attitude of the soldier poets towards such ignorance is Sassoon's "Suicide in the Trenches." The non-combatants are "smug-faced crowds with kindling eye" who "pray [they] will never know" (11) the wretchedness and hardships of the fighting men who sacrificed their youth for the safety and peace of their country. "In winter trenches, cowed and glum, / With crumps and lice and lack of rum" (5-6), Sassoon's soldier "put a bullet through his brain" (7) to end "the hell" (12) and "crimson sobs" (3). However, those "smug-faced crowds" (9) who cheered when he marched away had already forgotten him and "No-one ever spoke of him again" (8). Sassoon attacks the hypocrisy of the non-combatants who send the innocent youth to death with false heroic lies and "Sneak home and pray [they]'ll never know / The hell where youth and laughter go" (11-12).

Similarly, in Robert Graves's "The Leveller," the civilian population in general is condemned for projecting onto their soldiers the image of the hero. By depicting the two fighting men's despair and their worthless death, Graves criticizes the civilian ignorance and indifferent complacency. He presents the fighting men as "slaughtered sheep" (4) who suffered helplessly in the midst of a "senseless" (4) tragedy. In contrast to the idealization of death in battle as chivalrous, Graves's soldiers die in fear, grievance and indignation. Contrary to the dominant glorification of the soldier as a happily fallen hero, Graves's "poor innocent" (15) soldiers "Groaned 'Mother! Mother! Like a child" (14) and "Died cursing God with brutal oaths" (16). However, "the womenfolk cheer" (20) as they take pride in their men's heroic achievement and knightly glory. Rather

than mourning for the senseless waste of their men, they feel proud when they receive the "two copies" (18) of the letter of "Old Sergeant Smith, kindest of men" (17) writing:

"He died a hero's death: and we
His comrades of 'A' Company
Deeply regret his death: we shall
All deeply miss so true a pal." (21-4)

Like Graves, Sassoon in "The Hero," attacks the civilian complacency and "the journalistic fiction of universally heroic-warrior spirit on the part of the British soldier" (Moeyes 63). In "The Hero," "the Mother" (1) receives the casualty letter that writes: "Jack fell as he'd have wished" (1), and says: "The Colonel writes so nicely. We mothers are so proud / Of our dead soldiers" (5-6). With the news of the magnanimous death of his courageous son, the mother's "eyes / Had shone with gentle triumph, brimmed with joy, / Because he'd been so brave, her glorious knight" (11-13). However, after "the Brother Officer [...] / had told the poor old dear some knightly lies / That she would nourish all her days, no doubt" (7-9), "he thought" (13) how cowardly and unchivalrous Jack's sacrifice was:

[...] "Jack," cold-footed, useless swine,
Had panicked down the trench that night the mine
Went up at Wicked Corner: how helplessly he'd tried
To get sent home, and how, at last, he'd
Blown to small bits. (13-17)

A strong and unsparing criticism of women is voiced in Sassoon's "Glory of Women." Sassoon directs his scorn at woman's "shallow ingenuousness," her selfish, hypocritical inclination to accept the falsities of the romantic interpretation of the war, and her permission of false heroic myths to prevail over pity (Johnston 104). As argued, during the war, women were instrumental for the continuation of the war, and the soldier poets

resented the fact that they had to fight in the war, while the women stayed at home safely and contributed to the war effort with their white-feathers and heroic aspirations. Accordingly, in the poem, Sassoon presents women's role in the continuation of the war as a complex set of mistaken notions. He portrays women as bearers of a false sense of glory and heroism that contrasts with the "dirt and danger" (6) of the war.

Emphasizing women's superficiality, Sassoon bitterly states, "You love us when we're heroes, home on leave, / Or wounded in a mentionable place. / You worship decorations; [...]" (1-3). Sassoon targets women's dangerous hero-worship. According to Sassoon, women have a dangerous false consciousness about the war: "you believe / That chivalry redeems the war's disgrace" (3-4). He further presents women as shell-makers contributing to the disastrous power of the war: "You make us shells" (5). Sassoon attacks the inconsiderate women who entertain themselves with their men's real stories of battle and want their men out there fighting and being heroic without considering what war actually does to them:

> You listen with delight,
> By takes 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. (5-11)

Sassoon's direct address to the German mother at the end of the poem aims to shatter such illusions: "O German mother dreaming by the fire, / While you are knitting socks to send your son/ His face is trodden deeper in the mud!" (12-14).

As Patrick Campbell states, "Reconciliation" is one of the clearest protests of Sassoon against the civilians who contributed to the war effort with their fanatical patriotism and oblivion about the truth of war (93). Sassoon denounces the non-combatants by calling them to be "shameful" (2) and feel guilty for having "nourished hatred harsh and blind" (6). Sassoon aims to show the meaninglessness of the youth's sacrifice and sufferings by pointing out the universal anguish and desperation the war has inflicted. The poem makes it clear that nothing has won except for the war itself. Sassoon calls the civilian world to agitate and feel remorseful rather than take pride in the universal tragedy:

> When you are standing at your Hero's grave,
> Or near some homeless village where he died,
> Remember, through your sick heart's rekindling pride,
> The German soldiers who were young, loyal and brave. (1-4)

Sassoon blames the non-combatants for their betrayal and exploitation of the youth's high sentiments and accuses them of contributing to the pointless slaughter and global bereavement:

> Men fought like brutes; and hideous things were done;
> And you have nourished hatred harsh and blind.
> But in that Golgatha perhaps you'll find
> The mothers of the men who killed your son. (5-8)

Still, perhaps the war's bitterest protest against the frivolous and vulgar jingoism of the civilians is Sassoon's "Blighters," in which the "patriotic music hall" ("Blighters") is crowded with "harlots" (3) that "shrill the chorus, drunk with din; "We're sure the Kaiser loves our dear old Tanks!" (3-4). Outraged at the apathy of the heroism-beguiled, romantic civilian world, Sassoon would like "to see a Tank come down the stalls" (5), and crush the "fatuous jingoes" (6) to death so that "there'd be no more jokes and joy in Music-halls / To mock the riddled corpses round Bapaume" (7-8).

Moreover, the rulers of Britain were believed to "exploit the youth's lofty ideals" and heroic-romantic dreams "for their aggressive passions" (Press 42). Consequently, the generals and staff officers were hated for their "insistence on fighting to an ultimate victory" and their "chateau generalship" (Hibberd, "The First World War" 137); i.e., their absenteeism from the front-line and total unawareness of the wretchedness of the troops. The popular image of military leadership in the anti-war poetry was the "incompetent," "callously pompous" and "ruthlessly ambitious" "butcher and bungler" who combined a passionate desire to upgrade his rank, with "congenital stupidity" and a selfish capacity to launch unsuccessful attacks that were wasteful of soldiers' lives (Stephen 56-58).

Among all of the generals, Sir Marshal Haig was the most notorious who was widely criticized for throwing away lives on the Somme and Passcheandaele, and for succeeding to high command "through intrigue and private relations with important political figures" (Lloyd 1056-7). Hence, the hypocrisy of the military leadership was frequently criticized by the soldier poets. For example, Sassoon's "Base Details" attacks the pompous and incompetent staff officers who were safely remote from the dangers of the front-line, "Guzzling and gulping in the best hotel" (5):

> If I were fierce, and bald, and short of breath,
> I'd live proudly with scarlet Majors at the Base,
> And speed glum heroes up the line to death.
> [...]
> And when the war is done and youth stone dead,
> I'd toddle safely home. (1-3, 9-10)

Similarly, Osbert Sitwell protests the the inept and self-seeking older generation in "Arm-Chair." A monologue of dramatic irony, "Arm-Chair" opens with lines recalling

"Base Details": "If I were old or only ninety-nine / I would become either a military leader or a politician" (6-7) and

Send grandsons to France,
And make the Bishops go nigh mad with joy
By not making peace until
All the younger generation had been crippled in battle. (8-10)

In another poem, "Hymn to Moloch," Sitwell, similarly, attacks the deceitfulness and self-indulgence of the political and military leaders who pray that they will sit safely at home and refrain from saving youth at the front:

Lord, it is the better way
Swift to send them to the grave.
Those of us too old to go
Send our sons to face the foe,
But, O Lord! *we* must remain
Here, to pray and sort the slain. (3-8)

In "The General," Sassoon, too, criticizes the British generals for their wanton consumption of soldiers' lives, their insensibility, safe absence from the front-line and ineffective leadership. The smiling General says "Good-morning, good morning" (1) to the soldiers who "met him last week on their way to line" (2). The absentee General is ignorant of the "dead" (3) soldiers whom "he smiled"at a week ago (3). Now the soldiers are "cursing his staff for incompetent swine. / "He's a cheery old card," grunted Harry to Jack" (4-5). All of the fighting men know that the ambitious General has already made another "plan of attack!" (7).

"To Any Dead Officer," too, protests against the passionate determination of the military and political leadership to fight until Germany is crushed. Sassoon, in this poem, focuses on the obliviousness and insensitivity of the authorities about the destitution of the fighting men and the terrible casualty lists. He, ironically, wishes the

"pompous generals" (32) were "killed in a decent show" (40). The poet imagines a telephone conversation with his dead comrade and expresses his sorrow for his tragic end. The dead soldier was "so desperate keen to live" (25) and was "proud of nothing more than having good years to spend; / longed to get home and join the careless crowd / Of chaps who work in peace with Time for friend" (17-19). Sassoon ridicules the political-military romantic idealism and the rhetoric of war by asking the dead soldier:

> How are things in Heaven? I wish you'd say,
> Because I'd like to know that you're all right.
> Tell me, have you found everlasting day,
> Or been sucked in by everlasting night? (1-4).

Sassoon, further, holds a realistic mirror to the pitiable life in the trenches. He depicts the contemptible death of the fighting men:

> Now you are one of the poor lads left for dead in shell holes dying slow,
> With nothing but blank sky and wounds that ache,
> Moaning for water till you know
> It's night, and then it's not worth while to wake! (29-32)

Frustrated and exhausted by the misery and endlessness of the war, Sassoon cries: "Jesus Christ! When will it stop? / Three years ... It's hell unless we break their line!" (23-24). The poet who is aware of his contemptible end in mud and blood expresses his resentment at the political and military authorities who "swear they won't give in till Prussian Rule's been trod / Under the Heel of England!" (34-35):

> Good-bye, old lad! Remember me to God, and tell Him
> [...]
> no matter how blind is the youth with tears staring into the dark
> The War won't end for at least two years:
> But we've got still stacks of men for honourable waste!
> Cheero! I wish they'd killed you in a decent show. (33, 37-40)

A. P. Herbert summarizes the soldiers' hatred of the deceptiveness and selfishness of the political and military leadership in "After the Battle". In the poem, Herbert addresses leaders to caution themselves against exploiting the troops for self-seeking desires and profits. After the battle, the infantrymen are aware that they "shall have the usual Thanks Parade" (3) as the General is "satisfied with [their] Brigade" (1). "The beaming General," (4) who is not only ignorant about, but also rather indifferent to, the terrible losses, shall come up to offer them "his usual soapy praise" (4). The soldiers know that the General, who has been absent from the front-line,

> will come up in his capricious car
> To find his heroes sulking in the rain,
> To tell them how magnificent they are,
> And how he hopes they'll do the same again. (5-8)

However, the soldiers "who know his old abusive tongue" (9) and "heard him hector them a week before" (10) are well aware that what the leaders desire is only the gains that will upgrade them. The unshared sufferings of the soldiers "have bled to boost him up a rung - / A K.C.B. [Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath] perhaps, perhaps a Corps – " (11-12). "Weary [...] of blood and noise / and pain" (21), the victim-heroes protest against their leaders' "soapy praise" (4) and false chivalric tales:

> We do not want your Sermon on knightly Success,
> Your greasy benisons on Being Heroic and Gallant!
> We only want to take our wounds away.
> To some warm village where the tumult ends,
> And drowsing in the sunshine many a day, (15-19)

What the soldiers want their leaders to do is to end the war and make them "Forget [their] aches" (20). The fighting men beg their leaders "for God's sake" (26) to "say no more" (26) how well "we have done" (25), and how they "hope we'll do the same

again" (8). They challenge their absentee and uncaring leaders by offering them to fight on behalf of them if they want the victorous end:

> This was a week we shall not soon forget;
> And if, indeed, we have to fight again,
> We little wish to think about it yet.
> [...]
> Fight, if you must, fresh battles far ahead,
> But keep them dark behind your chateau door! (22-24, 27-28)

Similarly, in "When You See Millions of the Mouthless Dead," Charles Sorley criticizes the political and military exploitation and victimization of the youth with the old heroic-chivalric lies and ideals. Sorley warns the older generation not to "Say [...] soft things as other men have said" (3), and "Give them praise / [...] Nor honour, Pride and Glory" (5-6) as "For, deaf, how should they know!" (7). The poet protests against the futility of "heroic words" (9) and "false tears" (8) which cannot repay the great sacrifice of the poor men whose "blind eyes now see not [...] their false tears flow" (8). In this respect, the poet calls them to "Say only this, "They are dead" (10), and feel pity and "guilty" (1) rather than being proud "When [they] see millions of the mouthless dead / Across [their] cursed dreams in pale battalions go," (2-3). Even if the youth's "blind eyes" can not see their tears, F. S. Flint, in "Lament" calls the "guilty" (4) old men to "weep and weep" (30). He calls them to "break [their] Stone-hearts" (28) for the young men of the world who "have been cast for a cruel" (12) imperial "purpose" (12), and "have been called up to futile waste / For the crime of their fathers" (22-23).

Similarly, in "Great Men," Sassoon satirizes the guilt of the older generation, and protests against their "abuse of the youth's sacrifice" (3). Instead of justice or peace, "the great men of the earth have brought into birth/ the rage [...]/ And monstrous tyranny" (3-5). Since the "Great Men" are "much more concerned about the wars they

wage" (5) than the worth of youth's lives, they "Approve" (2) this tragedy with "sinister smiles and bland salutes" (2). Believing in the necessity of change in strategy, Sassoon asks "Marshals, gilt and red, / Ministers and Princes, and Great Men," (7-8): "Why can't you keep your mouthings for the dead?" (9). He asks the authorities to abandon their chateau generalship and to "Go round" (10) the trenches and then "Talk of the noble sacrifice and heroes" (11) who were "led to battle for the passions of the strong" (12).[21]

Among the groups castigated by the poets of angry protest were also those who acted as official instruments of propaganda during the war and thus, were responsible for the exploitation and victimization of the innocent youth. As Stephen argues, during the war, the clergymen who frequently visited the Western Front were hated for their "exploitation of Christianity for political ends" (108). The Bishops promoted the official sanctifying of the war as a spiritually baptizing, purgatorial crusade that was fought for the love of God and the justice, freedom and defence of humanity and that brought about redemption from sins, undying youth, beauty and peace to the sacrificed. In "They," Sassoon ridicules the clergymen's "false rhetorics" (3) which ennoble and bless the victim-heroes as Christ the Saviour, "not broken, but reborn" through their cleansing crucifixion:

> The Bishop tells us: "When the boys come back
> They will not be the same; for they will have fought
> In a Just, Holy cause: they lead the last attack
> On Anti-Christ: their comrades' healing blood has bought
> New right to breed an honourable race,
> They have challenged Death and dared Devil face to face." (1-6)

However, the modern crucifixion neither purifies nor beautifies the modern Christs. Instead, it brings about deformity and misery for the soldiers. The fighting men cry to the Bishop in disillusioned anguish:

> We're none of us the same!"
> For George lost both his legs; and Bill's Stone blind;
> Poor Jim's shot through 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! (7-11)

Similarly, in "Vicarious Christ," Sassoon criticizes the insincerity of the clergymen who contributed with their journalistic rhetoric to the military and political betrayals, dishonesty and old lies. Sassoon ridicules the unfaithfulness of the Bishop:

> The Bishop of Byegumb was an old friend of our General
> In fact he knew him out in the Soudan.
> He preached to our poor Brigade; and the impression that he made
> Was astounding: he was such a Christian man.
> He compared us to the holy martyrs who were burnt alive and
> strangled; (1-6)

The fighting men scorn the Bishop's recruiting sermon: "O, it made us love the war – to hear him speak!" (7). Even if the soldiers have not "seen it mentioned in the Press" (11), the Bishop "has certainly preached on Victory" (10), instead of the moral and holy ethics of war. The Bishop's clear exploitation of religion for political ends causes the soldiers, "his victims" (12) to "love Religion less and less" (13) and makes the speaker wish he "could have kicked him" (12).

The disparity between the church's espousal of a just and holy cause and the war's actual conditions is similarly satirized by Colin Ellis in "Spaniel's Sermons" which defines the Bishop's war-time sermons as official instruments of propaganda:

> But when the shells begin to fly and the carnage unmasked

The Bishop calls our quarrel a modern Crusade of Right
And bids us keep our powder dry
And place our trust in God. (7-10).

As argued, the protest against war-time profiteering was a common theme in anti-war poetry. G. K. Chesterton in "France" satirizes, in a similar way, "the ambitious rulers crying "War!" (3), "the usurers" (5) and "little men of disgrace [who] climbed high seats and sold / Honour to the vulture and the worm" (11-12).

Similarly, Dugald MacColl in "The Miners' Response" attacks war-time opportunism and profiteering. The Minister of Munitions says: "We must keep on striking, striking, striking!" (8), and the workers respond: "We do: the present desperate stage / Of fighting brings us luck; In the higher war / For higher wage we struck!" (10-12). Similarly, Sitwell's "Judas and the Profiteer" equates the profiteers' betrayal of the soldier for self-seeking gains with Judas's betrayal of the Nazarene, and criticizes the war-mongers for their exploitation of the high ideals and sentiments of the innocent youth: "You deserve your gold; / It's not only his waste body, but His Soul / you've sold!" ("Judas and the Profiteer").

"In War and Peace," Sturge Moore, too, protests against all of the war-mongers who support the prolongation of war for either "hard cash" (8) or "Power" (3) and "Pride" (4). Moore asks, "Should Peace return from Paradise / Would zealous men not reabuse their reign?" (6-7), and "Renounce the lordship of hard cash / and Honour? [...]" (8-9). For Moore, "deep within War's cavernous smoke and noise / ruined faces deserve peace" (12-13) while "hypocrites rejoice!" (14).

It can be argued that the most violent and angry protest against war-profiteers is Sassoon's "Fight to a Finish" which presents soldiers taking revenge on the "Yellow-

Pressmen" (2) and the "Junkers" (12) in the Parliament. The war is over and the army is marching through London in a Victory Parade, cheered by the "Yellow-Pressmen" along the way. Suddenly, the "Grim Fusiliers" (8) fix bayonets, and Sassoon in the role of commander of a "guerilla" (9) grenade attack is accompanied by "trusty bombers" (10): "I heard the Yellow-Pressmen grunt and squeal with heroic rhetoric / And with my trusty bombers turned and went / To clear those Junkers out of Parliament" (11-13).

As Winter argues, during the war, some anti-war protests went beyond Sassoon's curative realism and vindictive satire to "the ethics of war" (185). The futility of the betrayed soldiers' sacrifices and the endlessness of aggressive battles were the frequent themes of these protests (Winter, "The Great War" 185-6). The anti-war poets of protest cried during the war:

> How long, O Lord, how long, before the flood?
> Of crimson-welling, carnage shall abate?
> [...] how long, shall Satan lead the blind
> To futile, endless battles for the passions of the strong? (Robert Palmer, "How Long, O Lord?")

No matter how bitterly the soldier poets protested against the prolongation of the war, the British fought their war to end war for four years and three months. At the end of the war, the suspicions of the war generation about the falseness of the ideals of the war came true. The unjust terms of the Armistice and Britain's behaviour in continuing the blockade against a defenceless nation in the post-Armistice period causing between a half and three quarters of a million Germans to die of starvation refuted the ideals of justice and peace. Moreover, the Treaty of Versailles branded Germany as solely responsible for the war and thus not only obliged her to pay for the whole damage, but also stripped her of her colonies, reduced her armaments to a mere police force and her

navy to that of a fifth-rate power (Strachan 54-7). Consequently, as Lloyd George states, the "victory gained by the British" proved "the white men's aggressive spirit of conquest" rather than the long idealized crusade for peace and right ("The Truth about the Peace Treaties" 45-7). The war, in this context, proved itself not to be "a war to end war," but instead "a peace to end peace in earth" (Strachan 7).

In fact, by the war's end, the suspected hypocrisies became clear, and an overwhelming sense of disillusioned frustration against the senselessness of their sacrifices burdened the post-war generation who feared that the next generation of youth would be similarly deceived and wasted in the future wars (Bergonzi 62-3). In this respect, the soldier poets wrote poetry of warning to awaken the next conscripts to the worthlessness of their sacrifices and the old chivalric lies of glory and heroism. In "On Passing the New Menin Gate," Sassoon warns the next generations against the falsity of the ideals of immortality, honour and fame won through sacrifice. The poem reflects upon the pointlessness of ennobling the soldiers as heroes after they have died since neither glorification nor immortalization can cleanse or repay the fighting men's vain sufferings and destitution. Sassoon is embittered by the emptiness and falseness of what the Gateway claims: "Their name liveth forever" (10) since the real experience of trench warfare proved this particular chivalric rhetoric fallacious. As a trench soldier poet who saw that the only thing that the war brings to its victims is oblivion, disgrace and rottenness, Sassoon challenges what the Gateway claims and bitterly asks:

> Who will remember passing through this Gate,
> The unheroic dead who fed the guns?
> Who shall absolve the foulness of their fate,-
> Those doomed, conscripted, unvictorious ones? (1-4)

Sassoon makes it clear that there is no point in honoring the dead with "a pile of peace-complacent stone" (7) since nothing is sufficient in compensating the useless waste and betrayal of the youth:

> Here was the world's worst wound. And here with pride
> "Their name liveth for ever," the Gateway claims.
> Paid are its dim defenders by this pomp;
> [...]
> The armies who endured that sullen swamp. (9-11, 13)

The poem protests against the deception practised on the innocent youth and warns the future generations against the inadequacy of glory and heroic fame in paying up their "intolerably nameless" (15), ignominious death:

> Was ever an immolation so belied
> As these intolerably nameless names?
> Well might the Dead who struggled in the slime
> Rise and deride this sepulchre of crime. (14-17)

Similarly, in "To a Conscript of 1940," Herbert Read cries how "vain / we gave in [...] / absolutely to nothing / nothing / nothing!" (11-14) as the world was renewed with neither Justice nor Peace" (19-20), and "we, one of the many mutilated, horror-struck youths / Of the many who returned were / yet sunk in dark oblivion" (23-25). Read insists that "But one thing we learned: "Our misused dreams were our defeats; / there is no 'glory' in the dead" (27-28), and "If you can go / Knowing that there is no heroic reward, no certain use / In all your patriotic sacrifice, then honour might be reprieved!" (31-33).

"Armistice Day, 1918" written by Robert Graves sums up the main ideas conveyed by the anti-war poetry. As a truthful poet of protest, he warns the next generations against the dangerous, official heroic lies:

We've been promised a "Land Fit for Heroes"-
What heroes we heroes must be!
[...]
With tears falling fast on cheeks,
Armless and legless and sightless -
It's seldom that one of us speaks.
The boys who were killed in the trenches,
Who fought with no rage and no rant to make the world safe for peace,
We left them stretched out on their pallets of mud
Low down with the worm and rot. (12-13, 20-26)

In conclusion, the anti-war poets used their poetry of warning, realism and satire as a means to attack the old chivalric legends and official heroic myths of the war. With curative realism, pastoral antithesis and satire, the poets of protest aimed to introduce the masked horrors and anti-heroic truths of war to the civilian world. As Hynes argues, what the trench soldier poets protested was not the war's destruction, but the betrayal of war's high ideals ("A War Imagined" 46). In this respect, the anti-war poets acted as the revealers of "the untold truth" of the war. They painted realistic, elegiac and satirical pictures of the real, unheroic and passive nature of the machine-made carnage, in great contrast to the official representation of the war. In this context, their truthful poetry contested the hegemonic truth of the war and served as an anti-official medium for constructing an anti-heroic truth of the war.

CHAPTER III

WILFRED OWEN'S RECONSTRUCTION OF WAR POETRY AS "THE PITY OF WAR"

> 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, might, majesty, dominion, or power, except War.
> Above all I am not concerned with Poetry.
> My subject is War, and the pity of War.
> The Poetry is in the pity.
> Yet these elegies are to this generation in no sense consolatory. They may be to the next. All a poet can do today is warn. That is why true Poets must be truthful.
>
> (Owen's Preface, "The Complete Poems" 535)

Wilfred Owen is the poet who gives the clearest re-definition of the war poets' reconstructive, social role and poetry's new moral responsibility for contesting the hegemonic ideologies. As argued in Chapter II, from 1916 onwards, the nineteenth-century Romantic poetic traditions which the Georgians represented could not cope with the anti-romantic nature of the modern machine-made reality. As Lewis states, "poetry, if it would live, had to change" (23). The heroic-romantic poetry of meditation and consolation showed a significant departure towards a poetry of experience, truth and disillusioned warning. The new truthful poetry born in the trenches showed a startling reversal of the conventional poetic process: instead of "language bestowing significance on experience," the pressure of experience and truth to it began to compel a new significance in the use of language (Johnston 157). As Crawford states, the main

importance of the war poetry "lies more in its content;" the "truth untold," "than its technique, more in what the poetry says than in how poetry says it" (24).

Owen's Preface quoted above illustrates this radical transformation from poetry as the "thoughtless pursuit of beauty" to poetry as the product of the "true Poets" who, in being faithful to their actual experience, must abandon their preoccupation with poetry which is either false or irrelevant to the present historical situation (Kerr, "Wilfred Owen's Voices" 36). True poets, according to Owen, must use their art as an urgent, discursive and reconstructive vehicle for voicing their disillusioned protest and the truth untold: the futile and tragic "pity war distilled" (Owen, "Strange Meeting"). As Welland argues, in this sense, Owen postulates a far higher role for poetry than that of a "skilled art" in which moral standards and modern truth are irrelevant (32). Evidently, Owen rejects poetry for its own sake, as he states: "Above all, I am not concerned with Poetry" (Owen's Preface, "The Complete Poems" 535). Instead, he uses poetry as a truthful medium for constructing an unchivalric discourse of the war. For him, poetry should serve as an instrument to communicate "the pity of War" (Owen's Preface, "The Complete Poems" 535) to the civilian world.

Accordingly, the subject of Owen's poetry is "not [...] heroes. [...] Nor [...] deeds, or lands, nor anything about glory, honour, might, majesty, dominion, or power" (Owen's Preface, "The Complete Poems" 535). As he states in his Preface, for Owen, English poetry which is "not yet fit to speak of" these traditionally sanctioned values and heroic official lies, can only speak of the modern truth which is the senseless waste and disgraceful "pity of War" ("The Complete Poems" 535). This, cleary, is an important challenge to the way war was represented. Conditioned by an inescapable awareness of

himself as the socially-responsible spokesman of the truth of the war, Owen saw poetry as a vehicle to awaken an unknowing world to the untruthfulness of the dominant ideals of war: "All a poet can do today is warn. That is why true Poets must be truthful," he states in his Preface. In this context, instead of officially commissioned, public-school romantic poems of glory and honour, Owen wrote elegies of warning. He hoped that "these elegies [that] are to this generation in no sense consolatory [...] may be to the next" (Owen's Preface, "The Complete Poems" 535).

In fact, before joining the war, Owen was a typical representative of the patriotic discourse. The sentiments behind Owen's decision to enlist were the same as those of his enthusiastic generation of betrayed young men. When the war broke out, Owen remained in France to fulfill the terms of his tutorial contract, returning to England in the summer of 1915. He joined the Artists' Rifles and spent the next sixteen months in infantry and officers' training. On his return to England, Owen came up against the tremendously powerful propaganda machine. As his brother, Harold, states, "being branded as anti-Christ," lacking the heroic and patriotic spirit in the new Homeric age, "Owen found appalling and more frightening than the horrid thought of army discipline" ("Journey from Obscurity" 120). With his deep sense of militaristic responsibility and the ideals of Christian sacrificial love which he had been taught in a deeply religious family atmosphere, Owen began to feel he could not stay aloof for ever (Williams 28-9). In a letter written home before he left for the front, he says: "There is a fine Heroic feeling about being in the front, and I am in perfect spirits. A tinge of warrior excitement is about me, but excitement is always necessary to my happy crusade" (Owen to Susan Owen, 7 November 1916, *Collected Letters* 512). Accordingly, Owen's early romantic poetry displayed the well-known, hegemonic

ideals of chivalric crusade: the soldiers are idealized as the knightly champions of right and justice who sacrifice their youth to "save the soul of England" (7-8), and leave "safe gardens for children" ("Ballad of Purchase Moneys").

However, as Stallworthy suggests, Owen's happy, heroic-warrior mood underwent a drastic change immediately as he was assigned to the Somme Front in early January 1917 ("Wilfred Owen" 36). The Somme front welcomed Owen with "the coldest winter for thirty years", and with a demonic anti-pastoral landscape covered in deep snow and "ponds frozen ten inches thick" (Roberts 176). The shattered desert was inhabited by impotent soldiers who had no dug-outs, but had to lie in the snow and mud under the deadly wind during long, fearful hours and even weeks of artillery bombardments and hopeless waiting (Roberts 265-6). The fighting men either suffered from shell-shock, poison gas, trench feet, frostbite, bronchitis, rheumatism, or froze to death, butchered by faceless machine-guns, and eventually became an inherent part of the hundreds of unburied, rotten corpses sitting outside the dug-outs all day and night (Leese 61-4). Appalled by the horrors and the ignominious nature of sacrifice in modern warfare, Owen saw "no excuse for deceiving" his mother about the pity of war, and wrote to her:

> War is Hell! I have suffered seventh hell. [...] My frozen dug-out held 25 poor victims tight packed. Water filled it to the fullest depth. [...]. Some froze to death, some let themselves drown in the water that was rising over shoulders and I nearly broke down. Those at home want to call No Man's Land 'England' because we keep supremacy and honour there. [...]. The people of England needn't hope. They must Agitate. But they are not yet agitated even. Let them imagine 50 helpless men trembling as with ague and fear and unshared anguish for 50 hours! (3-4 February 1917, *Collected Letters* 502)

Soon after being introduced to the unromantic atrocities of trench warfare, Owen took a month's transport course at Amiens and returned to his battalion on March 1. Two

weeks later, while going up the line, he suffered a slight concussion as the result of a fall into a cellar and was trapped for several days. After he was pronounced fit, he went back into action outside St Quentin (Purkis 52-3), and wrote later that "going over the top" was like "falling over a precipice. [...] There was an extraordinary exultation in the act of slowly walking forward, showing ourselves openly across the open grassland," (Owen to Susan Owen, 6 April 1917, *Selected Letters* 509). However, after that it was purely torture for the powerless victims of the mechanical slaughter: "Then we were caught in a burning tornado of shells [...] When I looked back, I saw the broken ground all crawling with butchered [...] sobbing and loathing mutilated carrion," helplessly waiting to be "rotten and wormy" (Owen to Susan Owen, 6 April 1917, *Selected Letters* 509).

In early May, Owen had to shelter in a railway cutting, in a hole just big enough to lie in for twelve days with the unburied body of another second lieutenant who was blown all over the place by the shells (Purkis 56). At the edge of mental breakdown, Owen protested against the wretched and contemptible nature of his soldiers' death in a letter to his mother:

> I suppose I can endure cold, fatigue, and the face-to-face 'Heroic' death, but extra for me there is the universal pervesion of Ugliness, machine-made Violence, Hideous landscapes... everything unnatural, inhuman, broken, inglorious; the distortion, faint sickening smell of the innocent dead, whose unburiable, butchered bodies gradually sink into mud, into oblivion and rot, though sit in the dug-outs one on top of each other six feet high all day and night, and men must climb over corpses in every position; the most execrable sights on earth! In *poetry* we call them 'most glorious'. But to sit with them all day, all night... and a week later to come back and find them still sitting and gradually putrefying there in motionless and nameless groups, THAT is what saps the "soldierly spirit" as well as "poetic glory". (16 June 1917, *Collected Letters* 518)

Hence, Owen began to seek poetic honesty through which "The people of England" who were "not yet agitated [...] must Agitate" (16 June 1917, *Collected Letters* 518). Clearly, Owen's poetry gets its truth and honesty from the first-hand experience of the falsehood and deception of the pro-war poetry's heroic myths of the war.

At exactly the same time, Owen was judged unfit for the front because of his mental breakdown Thus, he was sent to Craiglockhart War Hospital which was used for the care of shell-shocked, horror-stricken trench soldiers (Stallworthy, "Wilfred Owen" 33). Owen remained at Craiglockhart for only four months, but these months constituted a crucial period in his poetic life and made a great contribution to his search for how to write truthful and unconsolatory war poetry.

Sassoon is an important figure in Owen's development as an anti-war poet. He arrived at Craiglockhart on July 23, 1917. Owen read Sassoon's first substantial volume, *The Old Huntsman and Other Poems* which had just been published when Owen arrived at Craiglockhart. Owen was deeply influenced by Sassoon's use of poetry to speak "on behalf of those who are suffering" (Johnston 154), and tell the truth untold to "destroy the callous complacence 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". (Sassoon, *Diaries 1915-1918* 174). Sassoon's use of colloquial language, his deliberately unpoetic concrete imagery, his vindictive satire, his painful realism and his truth to experience had a great impact on Owen. He wrote home with excitement: "I ... am feeling at a very high pitch of emotion. Nothing like this trench life sketches has ever been written or ever will be written." (Owen to Tom Owen, 26 August 1917, *Collected Letters* 543). About a week later, "after long hesitations", Owen

"dared" to introduce himself to Sassoon whose poems of warning had just been published in the *Cambridge Magazine* and other journals, and who was beginning to acquire a "respectable status in the literary circle" (Hibberd, "Owen the Poet" 97). For Owen, this was "the most significant meeting of his life" as it would strengthen his poetic impulse and start him writing truthful war poetry (Williams 32).

Consequently, Owen kept visiting Sassoon, he exchanged views about the war, discussed poetry and received Sassoon's advice and encouragement (Johnston 160). As Hibberd states, the first lesson to be learned from Sassoon's precept and example was that truth to experience was essential to poetry ("Owen the Poet" 104). Owen realised that his disillusioned and grievous knowledge of trenches was not just material for letters, but could be employed in poetry, too. Sending a copy of *The Old Huntsman* home, he said that "except in one or two of my letters, (ahem!) you will find nothing so perfectly truthfully descriptive of war!" (Owen to Tom Owen, 27 September, *Selected Letters* 549).

Sassoon had not only shown Owen how to express experience, anger, disappointment and bitterness in truthful poetry, but had crystallised his attitude to the war, urging him to read *The Nation,* his wilful defiance of military authority, Wells, Russell and Barbusse's *Le Feu* (Kerr, "Brothers in Arms" 522-4). Indeed, as Williams argues, before Owen met Sassoon, his front-line experiences had already awakened him to the hypocrisy and falseness of the crusading ideals of the war: before Craiglockhart Hospital, Owen had defined his general attitude towards an unholy and unrighteous war which was to inspire his war poetry. He had seen "how pure Christianity will not fit in with pure patriotism": He states:

> I am more and more Christian as I walk the unchristian ways of Christendom. Already I have comprehended a light which never will filter into the dogma of any national church; namely that one of Christ's essential commands was: Passivity at any price! Suffer dishonour and disgrace; but never resort to arms. Be bullied, be outraged, be killed; but do not kill. [...]. It can only be ignored. [...].Christ is literally in no man's land. There men often hear His voice: Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life – for a friend. Is it spoken in English only, and French? I do not believe so. (Owen to Susan Owen, 16 May 1917, *Selected Letters* 512)

Owen was aware that although the modern soldier's supreme sacrifice was officially identified with Christ the Saviour's sacrifice, the modern crucifixion made "Passivity at any price!" impossible since the modern machine-driven savageness obliged the modern Christs to act as impersonal and automated killing machines. "Suffer dishonour and disgrace; but [...] do not kill", was clearly ignored.

Still, Sassoon's influence stimulated Owen towards self-revelation in poetry (Lehmann 73). He suggests in his letter to Sassoon : "You have *fixed* my Life, however short. You did not light me: I was always a mad comet; but you have *fixed* me. I spun round you a satellite for a month, but I shall swing out soon, a dark star in the orbit where you will blaze" (7 February 1918, *Selected Letters* 578). In a short time, Owen's poetry became an extraordinarily sensitive medium of the compassionate attitude- the only attitude- he felt, through which the pity of War could be truthfully revealed and interpreted. Owen communicated without brutality, but with a universal feeling, pity, the brutal sources of painful feeling, and thus, achieved to leave "the most eloquent and moving protest" (Lane 14) to make "the people of England [...] Agitate" and suffer rather than taking pride in death in war. He managed not only to record what the devilish war did to men's bodies and senses, but also what it did to their incurable, tormented souls" (Lehmann 46). Thus, Owen, as "the icon of suffering and protest", wrote elegies not to console,

but to get all to imagine, sympathise and share in the masked anguish and helplessness of his fellow fighting men (Welland 14). In this context, Owen's enterprise as a myth-destroyer was to refute the prevalent portrayal of the war by disclosing the spiritual and physical sufferings of the mechanized savagery.

In this context, for Owen, poetry acted as a discursive agent to denounce the authorized apotheosis of war and soldier. In one of his letters, Owen described his role as both an officer and a truthful war poet: "I came out in order to help these poor 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" (Owen to Susan Owen, 4-5 October 1918, *Collected Letters* 580).

"Dulce et Decorum Est" is the poem where Owen's "pity and aggressive protest are knitted together inextricably" (Williams 78). In the poem, by means of realistic depictions of the fighting men's mental and physical sickness, Owen clearly exhibits the socially faithful, pleading function of the true poet. The poem serves as an ideological means of refuting the established myths and legends of the war through its re-definition of the war as dreadful and lamentable. Owen reconstructs the official ideal of happily fallen hero as ignoble, fearful and powerless victim. Owen's fighting men are woebegone and have become insensible under the burden of the war's unending torture and passive endurance. The soldiers are "Bent double, like old beggars under sacks, / Knock-kneed, coughing like hags" (1-2) and "cursed through sludge" (2). Far from being admirable and glorious, Owen's victim-heroes are exhausted by the war's endless misery and bloodshed and simply arouse pity and sorrow for their worthless sacrifice.

The grievous soldiers are in a death-in-life situation; they have lost sensitivity as well as arms and legs:

> 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 (6-9).

While they are off guard and restlessly waiting for the attack, the soldiers are exposed to a mustard gas attack and the only action they are capable of is to display "An ecstasy of fumbling" (9) which describes a frantic race against time. As Reis argues, Owen's elegiac description of the slaughter and agonies of a defenseless soldier who is not able to "fit the clumsy helmet just in time" ("Dulce et Decorum Est") is a warning to future generations to awaken to the cruel falseness of the heroic view of the war (236). There is neither heroic achievement nor knightly dignity won by the soldier whose skin is burnt and blistered. Contrary to the traditionally acknowledged view of war as cleansing and enriching, the modern warrior finds neither peace nor rest in sacrifice. Instead, he is "yelling out and stumbling, / And flound'ring like a man in fire or lime" (12-13). The poet knows he will be haunted in his shell-shocked dreams by the slow and torturesome death of his fellow soldier who will "In all [his] dreams, before [his] helpless sight," (16) will "plunge at [him], guttering, choking, drowning" (17).

Owen forces his readers to watch the anti-hero's affliction and challenges the people of England who "are not agitated yet" that if they witnessed the soldier's abominable death, it would not be possible to speak of the ideals of magnificence and immortality in battle:

> If in some smothering dreams you too could pace
> Behind the wagon that we flung him in,

And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,
His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin;
If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,-
My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
To children ardent for some desperate glory,
The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est
Pro patria mori. (18-29)

In his address to "My friend", Owen includes everyone who ennobles death in war with the old chivalric lies (80), and tells about exaltation in sacrifice to "children ardent for some desperate glory" ("Dulce et Decorum Est"). To them, Owen says, "if you could hear, if you could see". By means of the bleak description of dying soldiers, Owen acts as a true poet who invites overzealous patriots to see and comprehend the pity of war (Johnston 174). He, further, renders: "It is sweet and honourable to die for one's country", to an official lie.

Similarly, "Apologia pro Poemate meo" ("Justification for My Poetry") justifies Owen's poetic mission as the true spokesman who must get a blinded and deafened world to sympathise with the tragic waste of the desperate fighting man. Similar to soldiers in "Dulce et Decorum est," Owen's fighting men in the poem are war-exhausted, and not only physically, but also spiritually broken "helpless wretches" (2). They "curse" (6) and can not even "feel sickness or remorse of murder" (8). The heavy burden of war's agonies and tortures have afflicted the soldiers with emotionlessness and unresponsiveness: "War brought more glory to their eyes than blood,/ And gave their laughs more glee than shakes a child" (3-4). For these shell-shocked living-dead who have lost all human feelings and sensibility and are left with butchered flesh without spirit, "death becomes absurd and life absurder" (6).

Clearly, the war has brought about an unending death-in-life imprisonment to the soldiers: their "world is but the trembling of a flare" (31). In contrast to the hegemonic representation of sacrifice as a quest for eternal relief, death in battle does not bring peace to soldiers: for them "heaven" is "the highway for a shell" (32). The modern victims are enslaved by the iron chains of "hell the sorrowful dark of hell" (30). The continual suffering makes them lose humanity and sensitivity: they have "dropped off fear-/ Behind the barrage, dead as the platoon" (9-10) as well as "sickness or remorse of murder" (8).

As Norgate suggests, this poem is indeed a justification of Owen's truthful poetry as it introduces a different crusading quest to tell the truth untold and warn the apathetic generation against not thinking of modern soldiers as happy and valiant warriors (521). Instead, it creates an image of the soldier as piteous and anguished. Thus, as a true poet, Owen calls the complacent world to stop propagating the false portrayal of the soldier and to feel pity for the fighting man:

> Nevertheless, except you share
> With them in hell the sorrowful dark of hell,
> [...]
> You shall not hear their mirth:
> You shall not come to think them well content
> By any jest of mine. These men are worth
> Your tears. You are not worth their merriment. (29-30, 33-36)

"Insensibility" curses the civilians who "should be as stones" to the wretchedness and sufferings of the soldiers. Paralyzed by the overwhelming calamity and horrors of the war, Owen's infantrymen have lost not only youthful innocence, but human sympathy and sanity, as well. Overcome by the sharpness of grief and fear, the soldiers are spiritless and have "lost imagination" (18). The poem acts as an attack on the dominant

ideology of war and soldier. "Having seen all things red" (22), the soldiers' "eyes are rid / Of the hurt of the colour of blood for ever" (23-4). Fatigued by anxiety, despair and terror, the soldiers have become dispassionate:

Their spirit drags no pack.
Their old wounds, save with cold, can not more ache.
[...]
And terror's first constriction over,
Their hearts remain small drawn.
Their senses in some scorching cautery of battle
Now long since ironed,
Can laugh among the dying, unconcerned. (20-21, 24-28)

Owen finds these lifeless, coldhearted men who "keep no more check on armies' decimation" (17) fortunate since it is much more difficult for the "alive" (43) to endure the war's vicious cycle of torture, grief and bloodbath:

Happy are men who yet before they are killed
Can let their veins run cold,
Whom no compassion fleers.
[...]
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. (1-3, 39-48)

When compared to the fearful hours of silent waiting for death in a rotten dug-out together with the butchered corpses of one's beloved comrade, Owen says: "Dullness best solves the tease and doubt of shelling" (14). As the spokesperson of the soldiers, Owen expresses resentment at the stay-at-homes who "By choice [...] made themselves immune / To pity" (53-54) and "deaf and blind" (56). Owen calls them "wretched" and

"mean" (51) and says that they can not be forgiven for their "paucity" (52), which means littleness of heart and mind:

> But cursed are dullards whom no canon 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 moans in man. (49-54)

As McPhail argues, Owen's belief is that "reciprocity – instinctive sympathy, often expressed through tears- " is an essential human duty in an anti-Homeric age when the vain sacrifice of youth can only arouse pity rather than give dignity (80). "Mental Cases," which Owen wrote during his Craiglockhart period, aims to inflict pity and guilt in the "stoned hearts" (22) and "blind minds" (23) of those "who dealt [...] war and madness" (28). To arouse remorse and compassion in civilians' hearts, Owen depicts the mental devastation and insensitivity war inflicts on its fatigued and wretched victims. The fighting men are paralyzed by an overwhelming sense of guilt for killing their German brothers and are exhausted of bloodshed, pain and awful silence:

> These are men whose minds the Dead have ravished.
> Memory fingers in their hair of murders,
> Multitudinous murders they once witnessed.
> Wading sloughs of flesh these helpless wander,
> Treading blood from lungs that had loved laughter.
> Always they must see these things and hear them,
> Batter of guns and shatter of flying muscles,
> Carnage incomparable, and human squander
> Rucked too thick for these men's extrication. (10-18)

Another thing which contributes to the distress of the soldiers is their victimization by the "hilarious, hideous, / Awful falseness of set-smiling corpses" (23-24) of their fellow comrades. War is clearly "hell" (9) for the modern soldiers. There is neither the hope or

liveliness of romantic dawns nor the healing and enriching promise of "Sunlight" (21) in their "Carnage incomparable" (17). For them, "Sunlight seems a blood-smear; night comes blood-black;" (21) and "Dawn breaks open like an incurable wound that bleeds afresh." (22). The infantrymen are destined to "sit here in twilight" (1) and suffer between life and death, light and darkness with their "purgatorial shadows" (2). In the last stanza, Owen's elegy turns into a painful bite of satire and bitter warning:

> Thus their hands are plucking at each other;
> Picking at the rope-knouts of their scourging;
> Snatching after those who smote them, brother,
> Pawing those who dealt them war and madness! (24-27)

Owen's satiric theme of the responsibility of the stay-at-homes for the tragic waste of the youth is echoed in another satiric and elegiac poem, "S.I.W." ("Self-Inflicted Wounds"). Owen as the representative of his fellow soldiers who "have no skill / To speak of their distress, no, nor the will" (Owen, "And I Must Go"), acts as the revealer of the untruthfulness and worthlessness of easy, heroic civilian dreams, compared to the malignant reality of trench warfare. In the poem, Jim's family represent the ignorant and repressive non-combatants who prefer "Death sooner than dishonour!" (23). "Patting good-bye" (1) Jim's proud father, heroism-beguiled mother and sisters "doubtless [...] told [...] / He'd always show the Hun a brave man's face; / I'd rather you were dead than in disgrace" (1-3). Carried away by the hegemonic romance of the war and the traditional ideals of the splendor of death in war, the modern hero's family "were proud to see Jim going, aye, and were glad" (4). While his proud mother "whimpered how she'd fret / Until he got a nice safe wound to nurse" (5-6), the soldier's "Sisters would wish girls too could shoot, charge and curse" (7). Clearly, Jim, too, does not disturb the contentment of his family throughout the war by writing "Each week, month after

month" (9) that he "sheltered safely in Y.M. Hut" (10). However, the truth is that in his horrific trench,

> Where once an hour a bullet missed its aim
> His fearful eyes grew old with wincing, and his hand
> Reckless with ague. Courage leaked, as sand
> From the best sand-bags after years of rain. (13-16)

The civilians are ignorant about the realities of trench life: the fearful soldiers "shoot their hands, on night patrols" (21) and suffer passively from "intolerable wounds, fever, trench-foot, shell-shock" (17). Contrary to their heroic view of the soldier, the fighting men were desperate as they were confined to "endless torture of lying machinally shelled" (19). Despite these atrocities, the soldiers continued to fight to a victorous end since "Death sooner than dishonour, that's the style!" / So Father said." (23-24). However, the father's clichés sound hollow, compared to the reality of slow torture and unfading anguish in battle. Jim's world is described in its entirety and realistically: he commits suicide to save himself from the never-ending despair of war:

> Against more days of inescapable thrall,
> Against infrangibly wired and blind trench-wall
> Curtained with fire, roofed in with creeping fire,
> Slow grazing fire, that would not burn him whole
> But kept him for death's promises and scoff,
> And life's half-promising, and both their riling (29-34)

While Owen's anti-hero commits suicide in an extreme state of impotence, fear and dismay, his comrades who want to prevent Jim from being shamed as a coward of "disgrace" (3) by his family, "buried the muzzle his teeth had kissed, / And Truthfully wrote the Mother, 'Tim died smiling' " (35-36).

As Welland argues, this poem clearly illustrates the great gulf between the official ennobling of the war and the modern trench reality (59). During the war, it was not only censorship that resulted in the blissful blindness of the homefront. The victim-heroes preferred hiding their indescribable horrors, dishonorable fear and desperation from the civilian world for the sake of their gratification and ease as well as for not shaming them with their "contemptible deaths" (Welland 61-2). Thus, as both a truthful war poet and an officer, Owen chose to subvert the official representation by constructing a disgraceful truth of the war. By brutally realistic description of trench life, the suicidal depression and the spiritual tortures of his fighting men, Owen contests the dominant ideologies. His poetry of reconstruction re-presents the war as an inglorious and senseless mechanical slaughter and aims to be consolatory to the future generations by making civilians feel guilty in telling the old lies: "Chivalry redeems death's disgrace" or "Dulce et Decorum est Pro Patria Mori".

Similarly, in "The Deadbeat," written at Craiglockhart soon after Owen had met Sassoon, pity for the soldiers is mixed with a vein of harsh satire of indifferent non-combatant world. The modern savagery leaves Owen's fellow infantryman dehumanized and "incurably agonized" (4). The war presents its warrior with "tormented flesh" (8). Both physically and psychologically broken, the soldier "dropped, - more sullenly than wearily,/ Lay stupid like a cod, heavy like meat" (1-2), and "Didn't appear to know a war was on" (5). He could neither see nor "smell the rotten trench at which he stared at all" (3-4), just like the unresponsive victims in "Dulce et Decorum Est". The frustrated soldier in "The Deadbeat", like all soldiers Owen depicts in his poems, "dreams of all the valiant, that *aren't* dead / Though sit safely at home" (11-12) and says with "A low, dying voice" (7) that, " "I'll do 'em in'

[…] / If this hand's spared, I'll murder them, I will!" " (7-8). Owen's soldier appears to be angered more by the civilians at home and their ideas than the actual enemy at the front: "It's the bold uncles smiling ministerially" (12) and his "brave young wife, getting her fun / In some new home, improved materially" (13-14) that "have crazed him; not the Hun" (15).When taken away by "Stretcher-bearers", it becomes clear that his death after all was useless: his comrades,

> […] heard the Doc's
> Well-whiskied laugh next day:
> "That dirt you sent me down last night soon died in wounds.
> So glad!/ Hooray!" (19-22).

Owen's warning and expression of pity continues in his poems telling about the soldiers disabled in the war. In "Disabled," Owen presents the uncaring attitude and hypocrisy of civilians who regard the mutilated soldiers as "dirt" or "some queer disease" ("Disabled"). In the poem, after the happy warrior hero marches away "with drums and cheers" of "crowds" (36), and with the public-school excitement of fame and "smart salutes" (33), he returns home "Legless, sewn short at elbow" (3). As an inglorious figure who could not die a hero's death, the unvaliant soldier is destined to suffer from the humiliation and discrimination of civilians "All of" whom "touch him like some queer disease" (13). On his return to the homefront, the disabled young man is sitting "in a wheeled chair, waiting" hopelessly "for dark" (4), and his death while the rest of the world is out enjoying itself with "Voices of play and pleasure all day" (5). It is clear that as a result of the war, the soldiers lost more than legs. His "youthful innocence" (16) and joy are "now very far from here" (28). The rest of the world lives on regardless:

> About this time Town used to swing so gay

When glow-lamps budded in the light blue trees
And girls glanced lovelier as the air grew dim, -
In the old times, before he threw away his knees (7-10).

Indeed, as Williams argues, the disabled soldier has now become an embarrassment since his survival with his hideous mutilation does not fit into the heroic stereotype (83). As a shameful, anti-Homeric burden on a heroism-devoted world:

Now he will never feel again
How slim girls' waists are,
Or how warm their subtle hands;
All of them touch him like some queer disease (11-14).

The poem, moreover, reveals a great deal about how soldiers were persuaded to fight in the war. As one of thousands of the innocent youth, the disabled soldier was totally ignorant of the motives for war. He "scarcely thought of Germans; all their guilt, / And Austria's, did not move him" (30-31). What he thought of the war was the masculine aggression and public school excitement of a "football match" (22) after which he would again be "carried shoulder-high" (22) and would "please his Meg" (26). At this time, he just

thought of jewelled hilts
For daggers in plaid socks;
Of smart salutes;
And care of arms; and leave; and pay arrears; (32-35).

Whereas, "Now, he will spend a few sick years in Institutes, / [...] / And take whatever pity the rules may dole" (40,42). Pointing out the civilians' indifference and the soldier's post-war tribulation and ignominy, Owen displays the unworthiness of the fighting men's sacrifices. As he states in his Preface, "the Poetry is in the pity".

Owen's "Anthem for Doomed Youth" furthers the theme of the futility of young deaths and the indifference of the world. The speaker denies the relevance of ceremonies: "What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?" (1). The second line supplies the answer to this angry question, and suggests that Christianity which had betrayed itself by ignoring one of Christ's essential commands could hardly be called upon to sanctify and remunerate the senseless murder with its consolatory rituals (Johnston 181). It is just the machine-guns that can announce the world the soldiers' tragic waste:

> 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,
> [...]
> The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells,
> And bugles calling for them from sad shires. (2-5, 7-8)

Owen stresses the ineffectiveness and hypocrisy of the civilians' mourning for those whom they sent to "die as cattle" (1). The youth has been wasted in nameless, insignificant masses as cattle so all human mourning is a "mockery" (7). As in "Disabled", it is too late for any "prayers nor bells, / Nor any voice of mourning" ("Anthem for Doomed Youth") to represent grief and contrition for the huge loss. The sestet maintains the tension of the octave's search for an appropriate response to the futile sufferings and unshared pity of the soldiers. Owen believes that the only adequate commemoration of the doomed youth will be the "candles" (9) that a true poet of warning will light and that shall produce tears in the blind eyes of the lost generation's sons and brothers. Owen concludes that the true poet's memorial candles of truth untold shall bring rather than "tenderness of patient minds" (13), pain and guilt to civilians.

Thus, "the holy glimmers of good-byes" (11) shall soon shine and console the dead at "each slow dusk" (14) during a bereaved "drawing down of" civilian "blinds" (14).

Owen's conviction that a true poet must represent the war is clearly voiced in "Strange Meeting". Sassoon called this poem Owen's "passport to immortality," and the *Guardian* named it "the poem of the century" (Hibberd, "Owen the Poet" 96). Welland celebrates it as "Essentially a poem of the 'pity' of trench warfare, [...] and a very fine statement of Owen's moral idealism" (34). In fact, the poem echoes Owen's Preface in that it aims to warn. It stresses the power of poetic honesty as the only hopeful consolation for future generations. "Strange Meeting" opens with a dramatic incident: Owen, who by this stage of the war, had already been trapped several times underground during raids and bombardments, and thus, knew the dark tunnels that were inhabited by soldiers, feels as if "out of battle [he] escaped and finds himself "down some profound dull tunnel" (1) where "encumbered sleepers groaned / Too fast in thought or death to be bestirred" (4-5).

In the poem, Owen, who was still in the grip of his former habits, insensitively "probed" (6) the "woebegone" (42) soldiers. Among them, the enemy whom Owen has killed "sprang up and stared / With 'piteous' recognition in fixed eyes, / Lifting distressful hands as if to bless" (6-8). The enemies reconcile since no one except for the pity of war has won. "By his dead smile" (9), Owen confronts the modern reality of the war: "I knew we stood in Hell!" (10). The modern dead warriors are neither resurrected nor baptised in the Christian heaven which the official discourse promised for their high crusading sacrifice. Instead, the soldiers are confined to "Hell" (10) where they have to live "for ever" (28) "with a thousand pains" (11). The enemies reconcile since they

clearly see the powerlessness of mourning and "conflict" (14) to console or repay their tragic waste. In this respect, Owen says to his fellow-victim-hero:

"Strange friend," I said,
"here is no cause to mourn."
"None," said that other, "save the undone years,
The hopelessness. [...]" (15-18).

As Owen states in his Preface, the only consolation in this anti-chivalric age can be "truthful" elegies of warning and realism. Only the truth shall "save the undone years, / The hopelessness" (17-18). These two enemies who are reconciled in the same "pity of War", find mourning for their "hellish" (40) sacrifice pointless since they believe that they might find comfort and peace later in the knowledge that a "true" voice had dared to speak of the truth on behalf of those innocent and for the sake of future generations:

"[...] of my weeping something had been left,
[...] I mean the truth untold,
The pity of war, the pity war distilled.
[...]
Let us sleep now. . . ." (23-25, 44)

As has been argued, as a true poet, Owen uses his anti-war poetry of protest, satire and pity as an anti-official medium for constructing an anti-Homeric truth of the war. Owen represents the disaster and disgrace of war and hopes that the dreamy stay-at-homes shall feel guilt and sorrowful rather than be delighted with their sons' sacrifices. As stated, for Owen the pity of war produces the true poetry, and the truth untold makes the true poet. In his poems, Owen clearly demonstrates the radical, reconstructive role of the poet who has an immediate social role to tell the truth untold for the safety and peace of future generations. Owen's unconventional, unconsolatory elegies disprove, in this sense, the dominant ideology through their representation of the soldier as the

defenseless prey of machine-driven violence. In a medievalized world where the false knightly romances and crusading legends mobilized the common sense of a nation and thus, sent "children ardent for some desperate glory" ("Dulce et Decorum Est") to an inhumane catastrophe, Owen's poetry of protest invites all to acknowledge "the pity war distilled" ("Strange Meeting"). The truthful poetry, in this context, reconstitutes the war and its truth.

CONCLUSION

"It would seem to be not so much a fact that the war has made poetry, as that 'Poetry' has, now for the first time, made War."

Arthur Waugh, "War Poetry 1914-1918" 381

Poetry played an immediate and urgent role during the First World War. It acted as a powerful means of discourse construction and re-construction; it defined and re-defined both the truth of war and the soldier as hero or victim hero. In this context, poetry had a significant power to influence the way the First World War was conceived, represented, legendized or demythologized. Indeed, the First World War was not only a war fought between the two opposing military alliances: the Entente Powers and the Central Powers, but it was also a literary and political war. The war created an ideological battle between official and anti-official discourses, chivalric and anti-heroic rhetorics and representations of contrasting pre-war romances and mid-war trench experiences. As Waugh's statement above clearly confirms, instead of the power of war to make poetry, the discursive power of "poetry, has [...] made War" (Waugh 381). During the Great War, poetry generated a rhetorical battlefield where discourses, representations and truths of the war were reinforced, challenged and reconstructed.

The First World War produced two contrasting kinds of poetry due to the two oppositional pro-war and anti-war periods and sentiments it gave birth to. As argued, the Great War began for the British in a literary context of knightly rhetorics and heroic myths. During the early war years, the nation's vision of the war was mobilized by a

particular official discourse of the war as a righteous, chivalrous crusade. To encourage men to join the war, the war was quickly placed in Christian history, and the gentlemanly tradition of chivalry, Arthurian legends and Homeric warrior culture were taken up in the idealization of the war. The war was presented as the heroic, Arthurian quests of ancient crusaders fighting gallantly to defend their country, King and the rights of small nations, to make the world safe for peace and justice, and to end all future wars.

In the determination of the nation's vision of this historic event by a traditional literary response to it, poetry was perceived by the government as an influential and powerful medium for constructing a heroic truth of the war. The government established the Secret War Propaganda Bureau that commissioned the well-known men of letters of the Literary Establishment to write propagandistic war verse throughout the war. The propagandistic war poetry reinforced the hegemonic ideologies of Empire, Englishness and national service. The pro-war poets promoted the officially sanctioned truth of the war through the represention of the soldier as a valiant warrior of Homeric quality and the war as a knightly quest for right, honour and peace.

The actual experience of trench warfare, however, caused a radical reconsideration and reconstruction of the dominant ideologies and representations. The experience of modern warfare was unparalleled since it had nothing to do with the heroic achievements or knightly ethos of its warriors. In contrast to the Homeric and knightly combats, the modern machine-made war had no heroes who would demonstrate their courage and physical excellence. The modern fighting men were the defenseless and fearful victims of the faceless enemies: the machine guns, artillery bombardments and poison gas. The Great War not only disproved the chivalric legends and myths, but also

discredited the official portrayal of the war. As Sassoon states in his "Declaration of Wilful Defiance of Military Authority," "this war, upon which" men "entered as a war of defence and liberation" invalidated the ideals of righteousness and peace, and proved to be an endless war of "aggression and conquest" ("Diaries 1915-1918" 174). Consequently, a deepening sense of disillusionment and alienation burdened the men at the front.

As stated, this truth of trench warfare necessitated a new representation of the war and the soldier, and determined a radical, socially responsible and reconstructive role for war poetry. As Sassoon wrote in his poem, "The Poet as Hero," in the modern warfare, it was the war poet, not the fighting man to be conceived as a hero. The new, anti-official truth of war gave the war poet a new, heroic mission to disclose the untold truth about the war for the safety of the next generations of youth. Accordingly, the soldier poets served as the truthful spokesmen of the war's victimization and mutilation. These poets wrote poetry to denounce the hegemonic public-school ideals of the war, and to warn an ignorant world against the falseness of the old heroic lies through their controversial representation of the war as pity and senseless tragic waste.

The new experience necessitated new techniques, too. While some anti-war poets preferred implicit protest by means of pastoral anti-thesis, others explicitly attacked the civilian indifference and political and military exploitation. Hence, they targeted what they described as the selfish and heroism-devoted stay-at-homes, politicians, generals, staff officers, arm-chair pro-war writers and clergymen. In this sense, an obvious development observed in war poetry is that the Brookean idealistic poetry underwent a radical change and became a realistic poetry of experience, disillusioned protest, satire and warning (Silkin 67)..

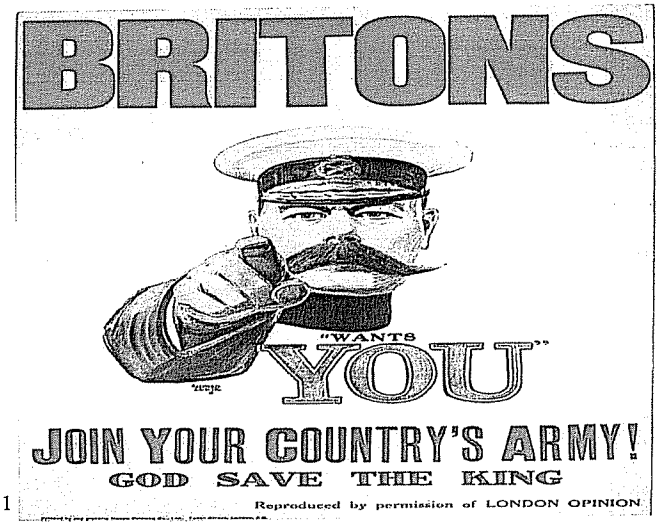
Among the anti-war poets, Wilfred Owen can be considered as the poet who became the essentially compassionate voice of protest and reconstruction. Owen, as this study shows, blends pity with bleak realism, satire and unpoetic precise imagery, and uses poetry to speak of the truth untold about the war. Consequently, his poetry provides the most explicit re-definition of the war poetry's truthful and reconstructive, social mission. Owen gives poetry a new and crucial moral responsibility for confronting the civilian world and showing the inaccuracy of the prevailing idealogies of the war. As he states in his Preface, poetry, especially war poetry, must warn people rather than providing consolation ("The Complete Poems" 535). Moreover, instead of reinforcing the false ideals of the war, poetry function as an unconsolatory and reconstructive medium for re-defining the truth of war as "the pity of War" (Owen's Preface, "The Complete Poems" 535).

Owen, in this sense, focuses on the subject matter of poetry and defines the scope of his poetry as the futility and tragic waste of war. For him, in an anti-Homeric age of passive suffering and machine-driven violence, "All a poet can do [...] is warn" (Owen's Preface, "The Complete Poems" 535), and the war poets must speak of the hidden realities of war on behalf of those who suffer and are inarticulate. However, in conveying the truth, he uses a clear and colloquial language. Owen's elegies, thus, act as powerful means of opposing the dominant ideology of the war in order to stop "The old Lie: Dulce et Decorum est pro Patria mori" (Owen, "Dulce et Decorum Est") and thus, to "save undone years" ("Strange Meeting") for future generations.

This study, in this respect, concludes that the English poets of the First World War use poetry as a discursive vehicle to construct or re-construct the official heroic idealization

of the war. While the commissioned propagandistic war poetry acts as an official instrument to galvanize war enthusiasm by means of the promotion of the high crusading and knightly ideals of the war, the anti-war soldier poetry remains faithful to modern anti-heroic experience, and uses poetry as a reconstructive means of awakening and warning an ignorant public. The English poetry of the Great War, thus, presents a serious concern with the power of poetry as a discursive and ideological practice, and suggests that the truth of the war was potentially a constructed truth.

ENDNOTES



1

This recruitment poster by Alfred Leete features Lord Kitchener's call for volunteer soldiers in 1914. The poster first appeared on the cover of the weekly magazine *London Opinion* in 1914 and had a great influence on the young men of Britain.
‹http://www.worldwar1gallery.com/propaganda/html›.



2

This poster, published by Parliamentary Recruiting Committee in 1914, aimed to justify and ennoble Britain's fight by presenting it as a crusade fought to defend Belgium and liberate her from Germany, the aggressor.

‹http://www.world-war-pictures.com/british-world-war-photos/html›.



3

This recruiting poster, published in 1915, calls men not in uniform to enlist by stressing the necessity and urgency of their service to bring back peace and liberty to their home and families.

‹http://www.archieves.gov.on.ca/english/on-line-exhibits/posters/index.aspx›.



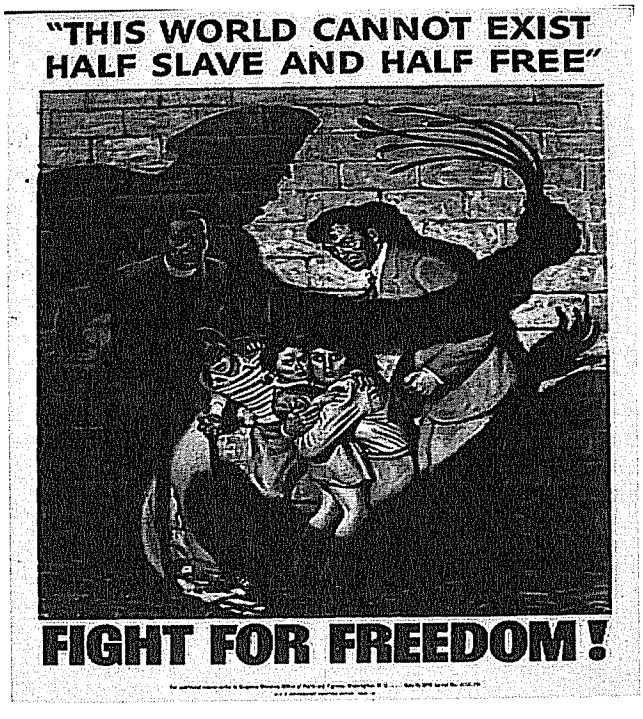
This propaganda poster, published by Parliamentary Recruiting Committee in 1914, serves as an urgent call to men to join the army. By contrasting the peacefulness of

home with the destruction and slavery of Belgium, the poster reminds the British of their pledge to Belgium and promotes the official representation of war as a holy quest for justice and peace on earth.

‹http://www.worldwar1gallery.com/propaganda/html›.

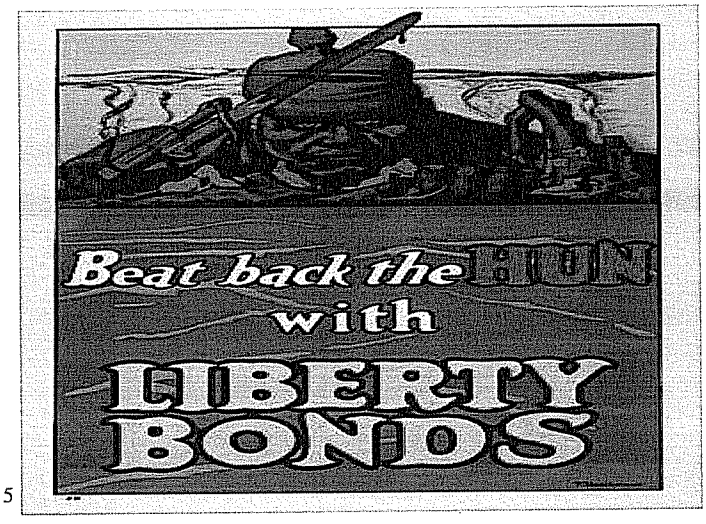
4





These two recruiting posters were published in 1915 to idealize the war as a righteous war fought for the liberty of humanity from the barbarism and unjust conquest of Germany.

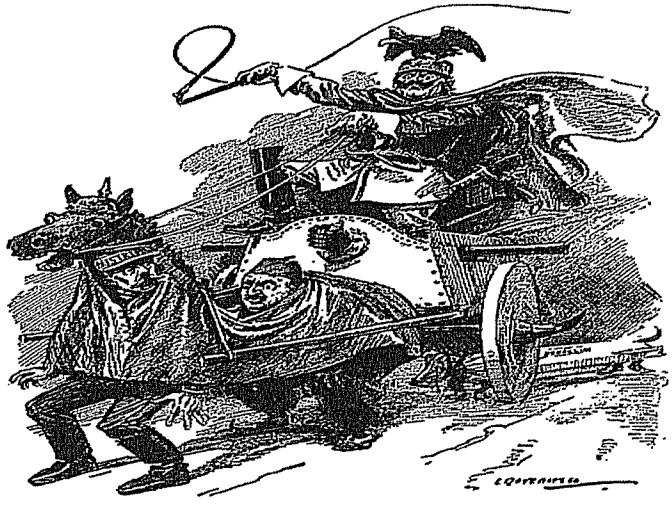
‹http://www.ww1propaganda.com/world-war-1-posters/british-ww1-propaganda-posters /html›.



5

Throughout the war, stereotying the Germans as evil aggressors and unrighteous invaders was a powerful instrument of the pro-war press to reinforce recruitment by inciting patriotic fervour and racial hatred. This anti-German poster by F. Strothmann, similarly, displays a German soldier with menacing eyes and bloody fingers looming across the Atlantic and calls the British nation to defend her freedom against the Hun.

‹http://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/ww1posters/html›.



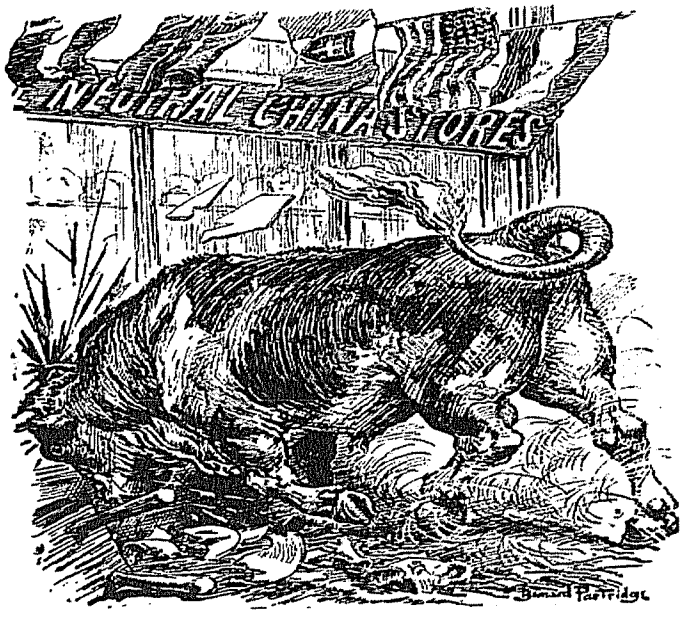
Turkey: "I'm getting a bit fed up with this. I shall kick soon."

Austria: "Well, I was thinking of lying down."

This anti-German cartoon, published by the Secret War Propaganda Bureau in 1915, displays a fat German barbarian retreating from his colonies in China. The cartoon acts

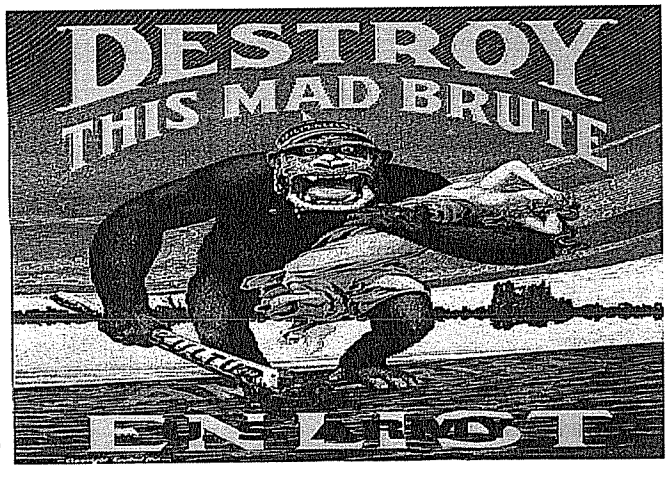
as an agent to defame Germany as inhumane and savage by depicting her driving a war weary Ottoman Empire like a horse.

‹http://www.ww1propaganda.com/world-war-1-posters/british-ww1-propaganda-posters /html›.



In this cartoon, the Germany portrayed as a bull attacking a neutral china shop and bearing the flags of the neutral nations. The caption reads: "I shall tell everybody that I was goaded into it". The point of the cartoon is that the Germans would attack neutral countries, such as Belgium, with the excuse that they had been provoked by the actions of the victims. The original cartoon appeared in the British magazine *Punch* during the early part of the War.

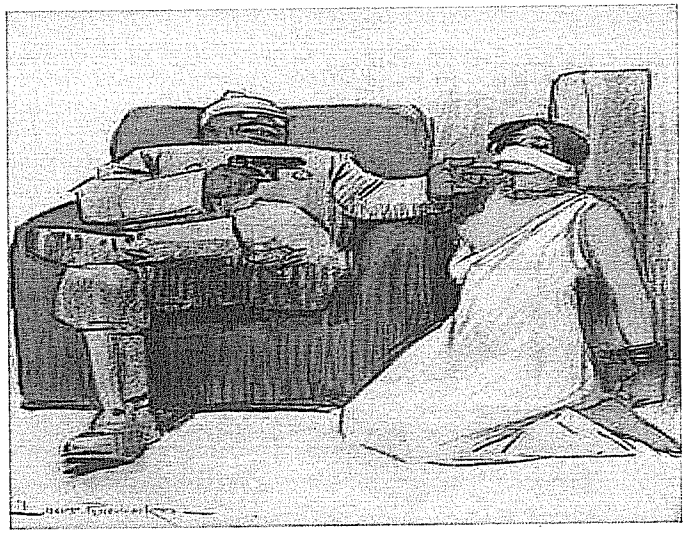
‹http://www.ww1propaganda.com/world-war-1-posters/british-ww1-propaganda-posters /html›.



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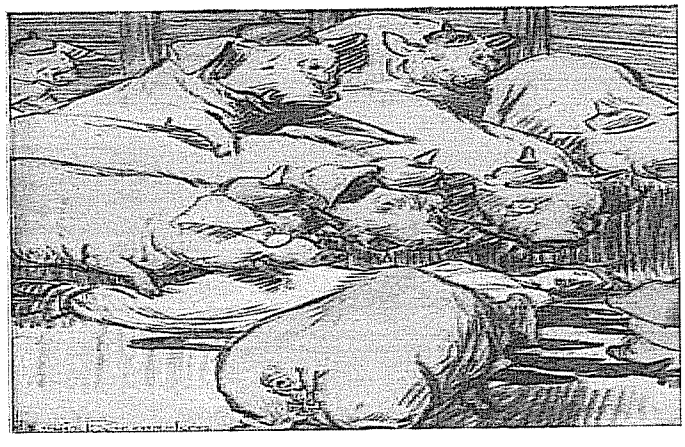
As stated, during the war, while Britain and France were depicted as civilization, Germany was shown as a "mad brute". The pro-war press published many posters and cartoons displaying German atrocities such as rape women and torture of children. Accordingly, this poster portrays Germany as a giant gorilla carrying the half-naked body of a woman. By means of such atrocity stories, the press succeeded in creating national vendetta against every German and incited the persecution of Germans.

‹http://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/ww1posters/html›.



In this cartoon, a brutal German soldier is seduces a young maiden who is bound. As stated, such posters and cartoons played an important role in intensifying the British nation's hatred and outrage against the Germans and thus, made an important contribution to motivating young men to enlist.

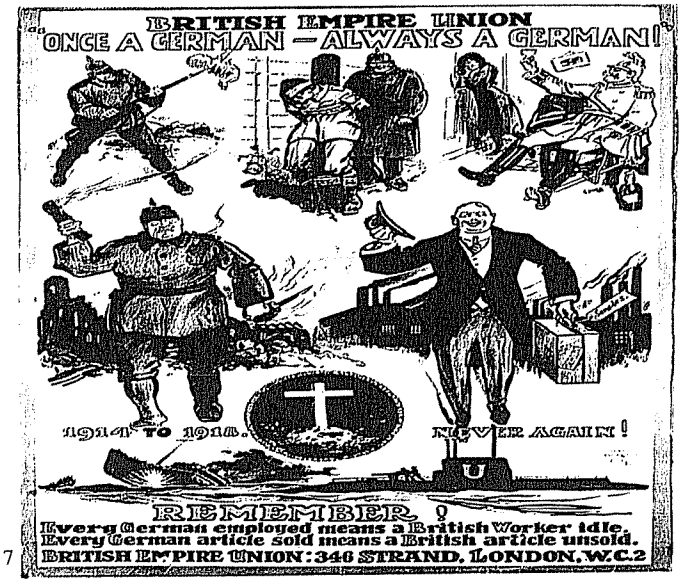
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This anti-German cartoon depicts a dead nurse being thrown to the swine. The cartoon

refers to the execution of the American nurse Edith Cavell who was working in Belgium at the time of the German occupation. She was tried, convicted and executed for spying, although there was little evidence (Buitenhuis 30).

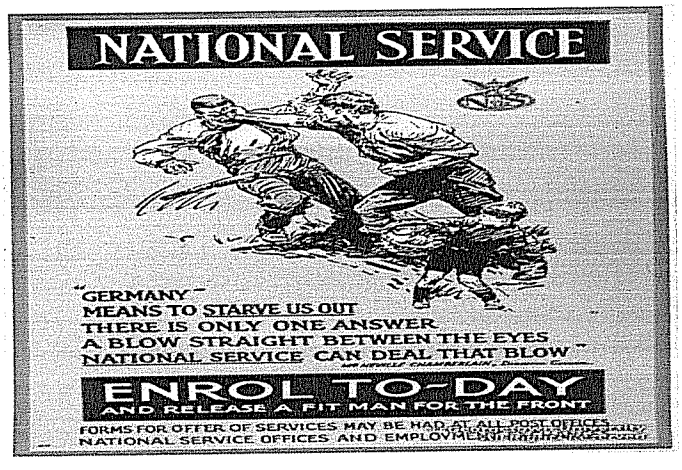
‹http://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/ww1posters/html›.



7

This anti-German poster was published by the War Aims Committee in 1917 to destroy German influence, prohibit German labour and boycott German goods.

‹http://www.worldwar1gallery.com/propaganda/html›.



This propaganda poster was published by the Secret War Propaganda Bureau in 1916 to galvanize racial hatred against Germans. As argued, throughout the war, the Germans were accused of torturing, insulting, raping and starving the British and the pro-war

press published such anti-war posters to excite nationalism and encourage enlistment.

‹http://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/ww1posters/html›.



8

This poster was published by Parliamentary Recruiting Committee in 1914. In accordance with the officially sanctioned view of the war, it idealizes the war as a knightly crusading quest for justice and peace. The modern soldier is represented as a knight fighting for the peace and defence of humanity. Through this recruiting poster, Britain calls her gallant knights to fulfill their duty as the defenders of the week and the champions of the right.

‹http://www.archieves.gov.on.ca/english/on-line-exhibits/posters/index.aspx›.

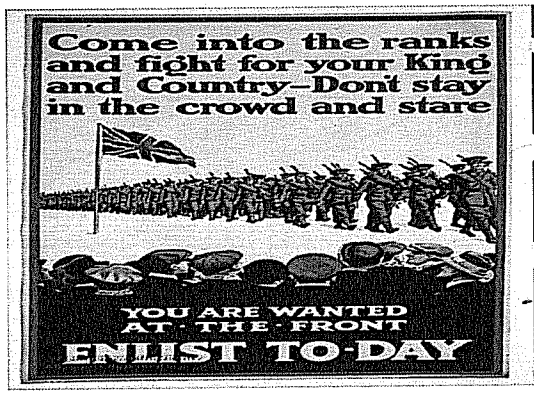


9

During the war, the pro-war press represented the war as playing a football game to excite the public-school sporting spirit of war and fire masculine excitement. The war

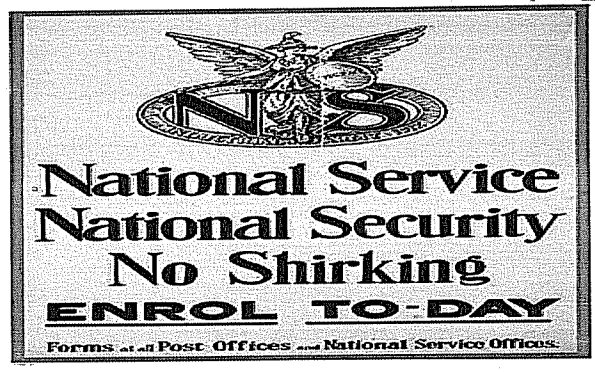
was presented as "the greater game" and men were called upon to join this "greater" game to perform their duty to their King, country and flag.

‹http://www.worldwar1gallery.com/propaganda/html›.













These six recruiting posters, published by Parliamentary Recruiting Committee between 1915 and 1917, further demonstrate Britain's call for men to enlist for ideals of Empire, Englishness, national service and peace.

‹http://www.ww1propaganda.com/world-war-1/british-ww1-propaganda-posters /html›.



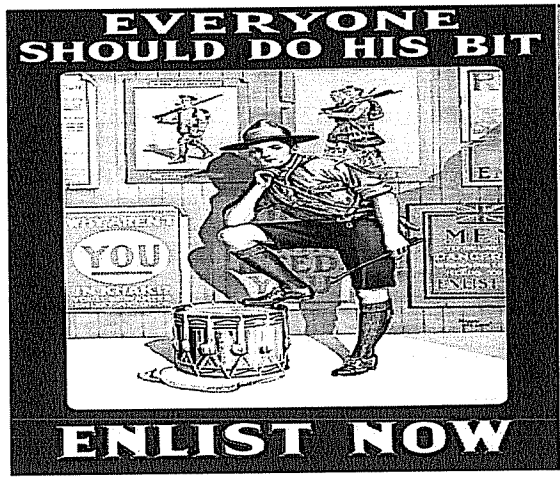
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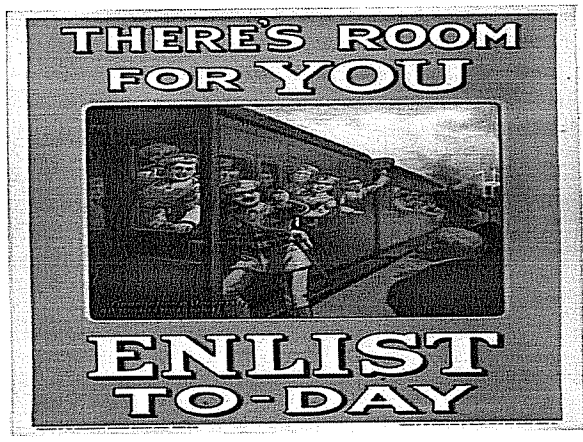


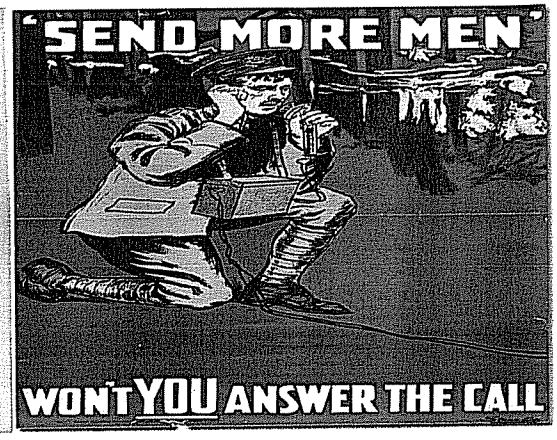
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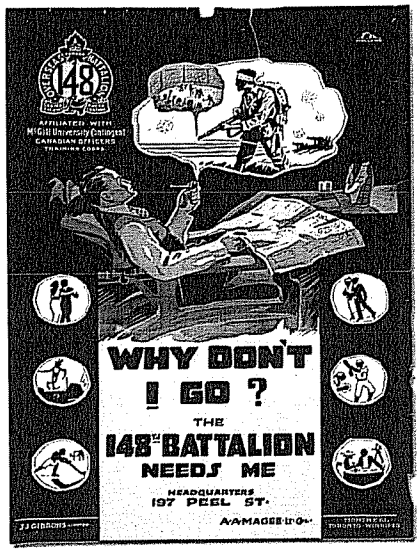




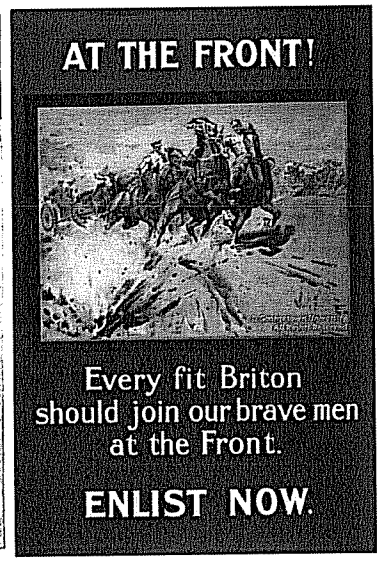












Throughout the war, the press published such propaganda posters to urge men to feel shameful for not helping the men at the Western Front. The posters served as urgent agents to call men to enlist by either appealing to the concept of comradeship or bravery. ‹http://www.europeanhistoryabout.com›.



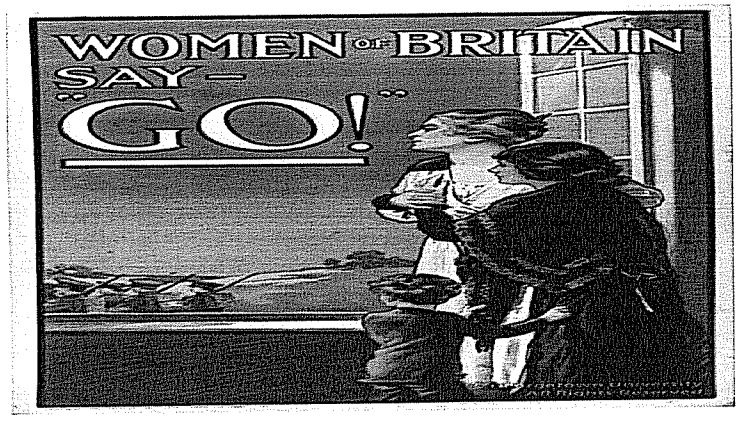


12

During the war, beside the ideals of heroism, justice and national duty, the young women

of Britain were used as a powerful medium for pressurising recruitment. Enlistment was equated with courage and through posters and leaflets, the young British women declared like these two American girls above: "BE A MAN AND DO IT".

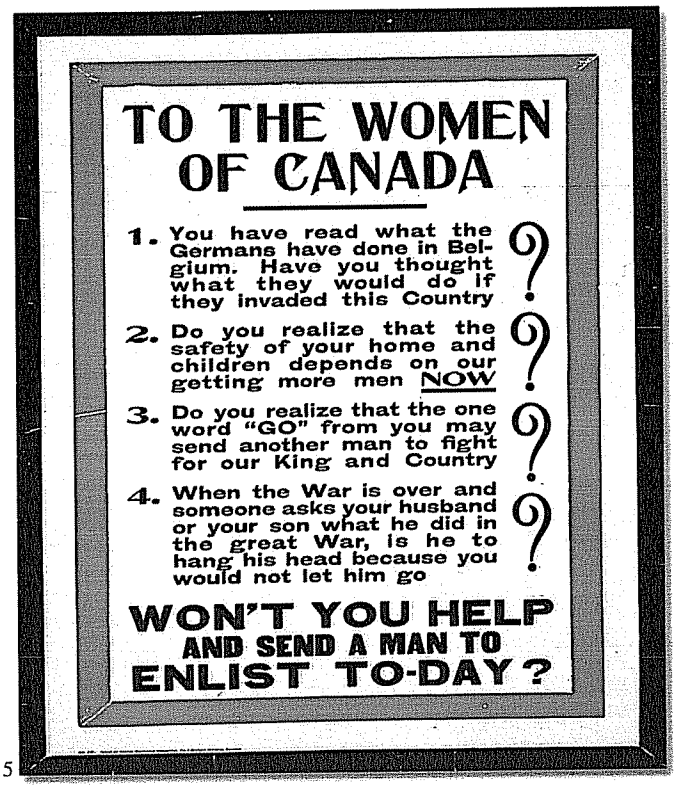
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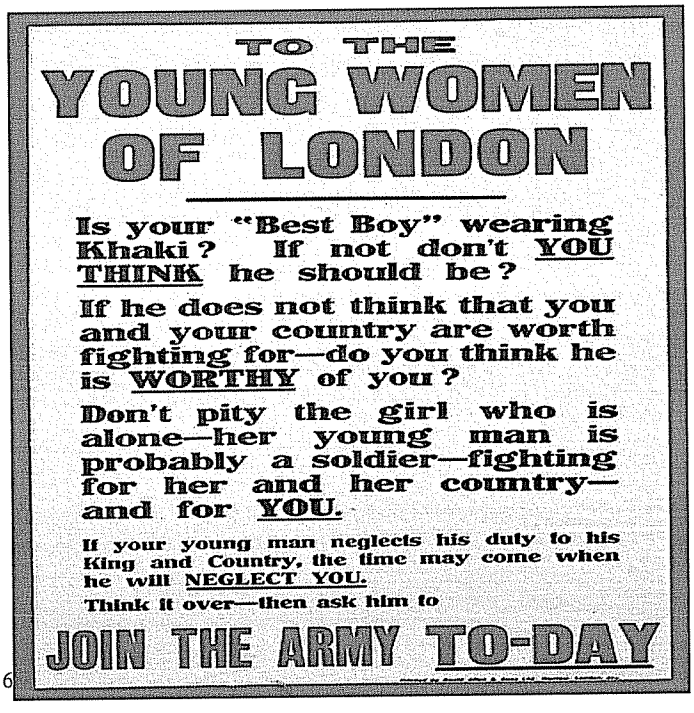
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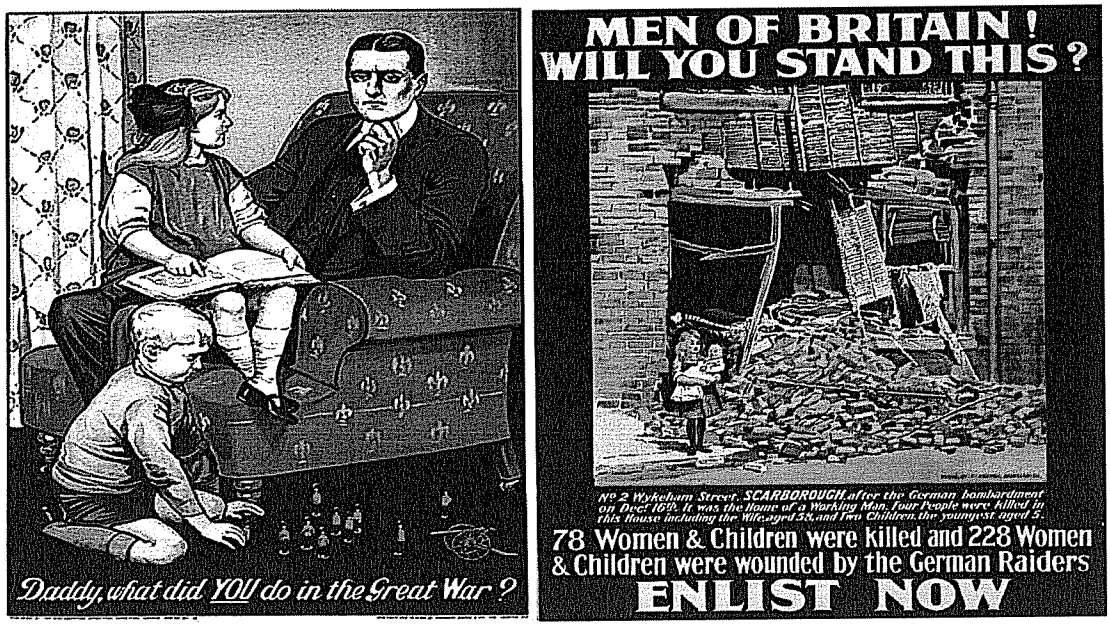
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‹http://www.archieves.gov.on.ca/english/on-line-exhibits/posters/index.aspx›.

17 

During the war, the pro-war press published posters displaying mothers and children who were either in desperate need for protection or asking the men what they did in the First World War. Such recruiting posters, in this context, obliged men to join the army to save their family and their honour.

‹http://www.ww1propaganda.com/world-war-1-posters/british-ww1-propaganda-posters/html›.

[18] Although the First World War was obviously a less directly harrowing experience for women than for the men involved, women in their various roles of mother, wife, widow and lover were profoundly affected by it. As Khan states, while the agonies of the trenches are well known, "the suffering endured by the female goes unacknowledged and unremarked" (2). War forced on women a sorrowful and lonely existence. They had to battle with "the slow torture of silent anxiety and patient endurance; fear and suspense; the long agonies of anticipation; the sleepless nights and fevered imagination; the pitiless hours usurped by visions of battered bleeding bodies" (Mitchell 72-3). Most of the women felt that the impact of the war on their lives was more enduring.

As Helena Swanwick states in her diary, "men had dropped their end of the burden of living, and left the women to carry on, while they played this silly, bloody game of massacring the sons of women" ("I Have Been Young" 247). Women lost their sons, husbands, lovers and brothers, and the wives left to carry on at home found their battlefield an extensive one; it included shouldering "the men's burden of living with all its responsibilities", while fulfilling also their own share of household duties (Goldman 46-7). The gaps left by husbands, whether dead at the Front, doubled the mothers' responsibilities towards their children; they had to fulfil the roles of both parents.



‹http://www.ww1propaganda.com/world-war-1-posters/british-ww1propaganda-posters/html›.

During the war, not all of the young women of Britain suffered passive endurance and silent waiting. Despite the trench soldiers' accusation of the whole women folk for being "eager to exhort and even intimidate men into hazarding their lives and limbs" (Wilson 707), most of the women at home like Sylvia Pankhurst, Emily Hobhouse, Catherine Marshall and Helena Swanwick, became pacifist suffragettes. They joined in women's peace movement, participated in the Woman Suffrage campaign, and rejected the nationalistic discourse of the war in their anti-war slogan: "War is not women's way! To

the Women of this Union [Women's Social and Political Union WSPU] human life is sacred" (Pankhurst 150).

As Byles states, the Suffragist movement, begun in 1867, was speeded up by women's experience during 1914-18. The First World War affected radical changes in women's conventional roles and duties (23-4). The pre-war British society was heavily patriarchal in structure. The conventional roles of women, especially middle- and upper-class women were strictly defined. The working-class women as "bread-winners" took work of some kind, factory work, the clothing trade and domestic service being the most common occupations. They were offered only the lower-paid, less-skilled work as they were devalued as "the biologically and intellectually inferiors" (Marwick, "The Deluge" 74). However, in the second half of the nineteenth century, significant feminine pressures for reforms in education, working conditions and employment opportunities were at work. From the 1850s and 1860s, an increasingly influential women's movement passed for reforms including legal rights for married women, easier access to divorce and improved educational and employment opportunities.

The formation of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies in 1897 and the Women's Social and Political Union in 1903 made "Votes for Women" the centerpiece of the campaign for women's rights ("The Deluge 75-8), and at the outbreak of the war, there was a steady mobilization of women, not just for the right to vote, but for much greater educational and job opportunities. By 1911, about twenty-nine percent of the work force was female and most workers were working class. Apart from the cotton industry, the largest source of employment of working-class women was domestic service, and many had to quit work after marriage since working after marriage was not

considered appropriate (Byles 23-4).

During the war, women forced the Suffragist movement forward and the Women's movement for the right to vote and for greater opportunities became an important force for peace movement, too. Although some militant suffragettes served as champion supporters of the war, willing to continue the war to a "glorious end", many others believed that women needed the vote to stop wars and settle ultimate peace. The pacifist suffragettes declared:

> As long as women continue to believe "that war can never cease" they prove that they do not *will* it to cease. Nor did slavery and the pestilence cease until there were people who believed in their abolition ... Therefore, the first condition of the woman's peace movement is, that all talk of the necessity of war, the ennobling influence, the beauty and the eternity of war should be silenced on the lips of women; that their lips should never be opened except to proclaim that war belongs to those phrases of life that must be conquered if humanity is to be humanised. (Key 238-39)

The First International Women's Peace Conference held at the Hague, 28 April to 1 May, 1915, claimed direct responsibility and active role of women in the war, urged women to protest against war and to unite their power as the women of the world for peace at any price; it also combined the peace efforts with women's political rights (Byles 31-5; Bussey and Tims 45-7). Emily Hobhouse asked of women's responsibility and position in the matter of war: "Where are the women? Should they not be united in an inter-national host against the suicide of Europe, and demand a peace that does not entail the subjugation of any nation, and save for humanity the lives that the war will demand to the end?" (Hobhouse 236). Women saw the vote and equal political rights with men as a way of preventing war. As Mitchell states, for many women, "the war was something of a

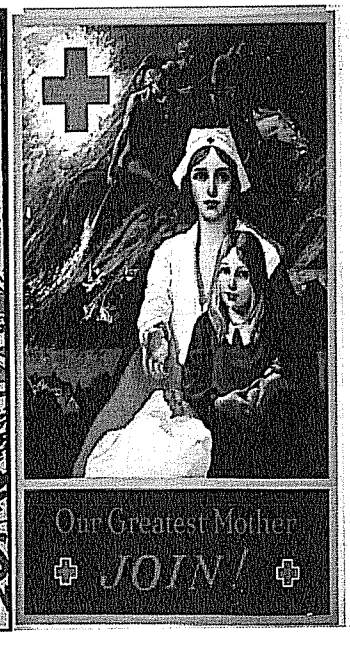
paradox. It was the product of the blunderings of male politicians, of male thinking. It was, therefore, a disgrace and might have never happened" if women had been given the right to vote and "fair share in policy making" (34). The women's argument that peace and suffrage could be achieved simultaneously and their vision of the war as senseless waste were made clear by the anti-war suffragettes:

> The present situation offers many lessons to suffragists. [...]. The women in Europe, whose motherlands are engaged in strife, are all alike in their voteless conditions. Like us, their hands are clean; they have no responsibility for this war. Like us, they have to pay the price nonetheless to the last farthing. They have to deliver up the sons they bore in agony to a bloody death [...]; they face starvation at home for themselves and their children; [...]. This is what war means to women. [...]. Until peace is established, it is the duty of women to press on with unabated energy, to increase our activities at this crisis, to preach peace, sanity and suffrage. (Park 1915).

Clearly, contrary to male accusations, most of the women in war had a clear vision of the war as destructive and futile; they were sensitive to the sufferings and agonies of their fighting men, and they actively participated in efforts to stop the war. While some preferred passive endurance, many fought actively for peace and battled not only with the grief of seperation and loss, but also with the fundamental changes in their lives. As Khan states, the First World War transformed women's conventional role of "mere spectator of a male event" into one of active participant in the running of the war machine (3). The war challenged women's traditional values and, as Reis argues, it created a "world of masculinised women" ("Whose War Is It?" 134). During the time men were away fighting the enemy, it became women's task to do men's jobs. The war, in this respect, reconstructed feminine roles and duties as it imposed conventionally masculine jobs on women.

The war hand in hand with the pro-war press forced women to do things they had never done before. Women were encouraged to be active participants in the war, and work hard to maintain the war effort at home. They worked as immunition suppliers, nurses, police, factory workers, taxi-drivers, bus conductors and van-drivers (Roberts 188-90). In this context, it can be stated stated that, trench poet's representation of women is rather restricted since it does not take into account the war-time experience of women and the impact of these experiences upon them. After the war, as Reis suggests, "one prescriptive image created by men remains intact, however" ("Whose War Is It? 135). It is that free from physical danger, the women of Britain sent their men to die with the activities of white feather humiliation or maternal persuasion that "may indeed seem a grotesque form of sexual exploitation" (Gullace 201). The psychological pressure of women who equated enlistment with manlihood or cowardice, honour or disgrace, made enlistment inevitable at all costs, and Britain's early soldiers went to war with masculine aggression and honour to prove their heroism, manly courage and bravery.







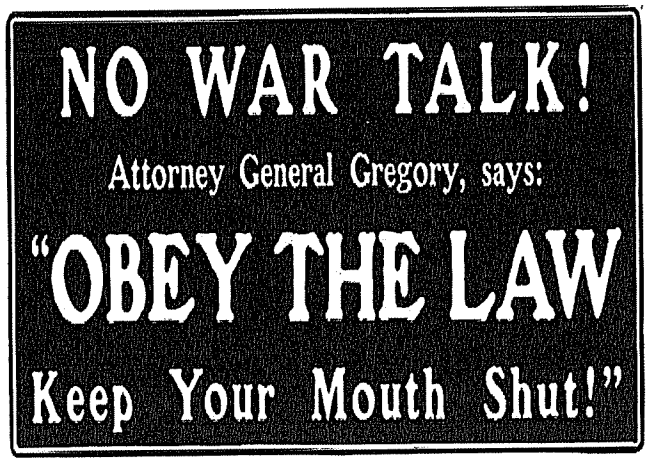


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21 Thomas Burke's "Of the Great White War," similarly, attacks the older generation's music-hall treatment of war and their misuse of the youth's high ideals of "honour and chivalry" (3) and "patriotic duty" (4). The poem records the perverse gratification that the bloodshed of the youth provided for the safe, "old fathers" (3). After the speaker observes "how the aged passionately cried aloud / Old lies of honour and chivalry and the duty of the young," (2-3), the "doomed young suddenly became old, / And marched away to defend and honour the aged." (5-6). The old became young,

> And mouthed fair phrases, one to the other, about the
> Supreme Sacrifice and knightly prowess,
> And turned to their chateaus and account-books, murmuring gravely:
> Business as Usual.
> And brought out bottles of wine and cheerfully drank the health
> Of the young men they had sent out to die for them,
> and for Honour of England. (8-14)

Rudyard Kipling's "A Dead Statesman" can be considered a good example of the angry reaction to the official discourse of the war. In the poem, Kipling attacks the ineffectual

political and military leadership, and bitterly satirizes the treachery and guilt of the older generation:

I could not dig: I dared not rob:
Therefore I lied to please the mob.
Now all my heroic lies are proved untrue
And I must face the innocent men I slew in passion.
What knightly tale shall serve me here among
Mine angry and defrauded young? (3-8)

Kipling's "Mesopotamia," further, contrasts the plight of the young who fell and the evil rise of military and political leaders through the "beguiled youth's blood" (6). The poet indignantly asks whether the "incompetent and corrupt leaders" (8) who contributed to "the slothfulness that wasted and the arrogance that slew," (11) will "come with years and honour to the grave?" (12) or continue "confirming and re-establishing each career?" (13) through the "wasted blood of the eager and whole-hearted young" (17) whom they "left thriftily to die in their own dung" (19).

Similarly, Richard Aldington's "The Blood of the Young Men" contrasts the futile sacrifice of the youth to the profits of the older generation who sent thousands to their "wastes," "blinded to" their "deceits and lies." Aldington harshly criticizes the older generation who "will grow stronger and healthier / With broad red cheeks and clear hard eyes" (7-8) through "the blood of the dear flesh of the young men" (11). Aldington points out that they "will have no graves as yet" (13) as the youth is wasted "because these old fathers had lied" (15).

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