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REFLECTIONS OF NATURE IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR NARRATIVES: AN ECOCRITICAL APPROACH

DOKTORA TEZİ

Önder ÇETİN

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* 1. Doktora Tezi savunma süresi asgari 90 azami 120 dakikadır.
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PREFACE

Is the Earth on the verge of an ecological catastrophe or is this just a notion that is popular in block-buster movies? It is a difficult question to answer but I don't want to wait to find out since it seems to me that we will not find an answer to this question as long as we, humankind, are provided with a fresh breath of air to survive, a network cable to hook on to the World Wide Web, and gasoline to operate our automobiles. However, it will be too late to react when we are deprived of these elements, which we presume to constitute the life, as we perceive it.

This study was born out of my interest in ecology, history, literature and human psychology. History has been an indispensable part of my readings and researches throughout my entire academic life, and I always think of myself as someone who has cherished the past in terms of revealing the secrets hidden under the dusty pages of books. Moreover, the integration of history into literary works makes them more valuable than ever. In addition to my interest in history, narratives such as memoirs and autobiographies are interesting literary forms that give an insight into a particular situation or event. In this context, the Great War narratives are more interesting than any other with regard to their interpretations of the period they were attributed. Reading these narratives feels like making a time travel to those times when the world went through chaos of war and death. As Erasmus said, "war is sweet to those who have not experienced it." I believe that the narratives of the Great War give me a taste of the bitter reality of the war and destruction.

My enthusiasm for nature rests in a deeper sense of perception and I care for my environment than any other person can do because nowadays, while environmental issues have been becoming increasingly problematic since the last decade and environmental activists from different branches of sciences try to create an awareness, literature is another way of taking action against the destruction of nature through creating a consciousness in the minds of human kind that there is no other place to live if we let our environment slip form our hands. As well as scientific data, words, I believe, will also make a positive difference in the world. It is my modest hope that this study highlights the unstable balance between humanity and nature and how crucial it is to protect this balance in the face of contemporary environmental crisis.

First of all, I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Prof. Dr. Dilek Direnç who has led me throughout my studies with her profound academic competence. I am thankful for her patience even at times I thought I was in an endless whirl.

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Finally, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my beloved wife and soul mate, Başak Tufan Çetin who has been there for me all the way and led me through the labyrinths of human mind and trauma. This study would have been impossible without her stimulating counseling and guidance.

Önder Çetin
11.10.2012

INTRODUCTION

Literature and environment studies become more and more important as the environmental problems have reached to catastrophic proportions in the last three decades. These environmental problems that date back to the first appearance of humankind on earth mostly emerge as the result of social, cultural and technological developments. With the emergence of science, technology and religion, nature has become the target of humankind as a source that can be abused rather than a life-sustaining system that has its inner powers and workings. Starting with the gradual emergence of humankind on earth, there has been a war with nature in order to survive which resulted in the destruction of natural flora to open living quarters, in the decrease in animal population and in the abuse of water resources. People also inflicted damage upon nature with wars they have fought since time immemorial. The relationship between war and nature is as old as human history, and it has been the subject of many works of literature throughout history.

This work investigates the literature of the First World War and will analyze it from an ecocritical perspective. Ecocriticism questions "the relationship between literature and physical environment" creating "an earth-centered approach to literary studies" (Glotfelty xviii). Ecocriticism, thus, creates awareness of the importance of nature or questions the relevance of physical world to ecological norms in a work of literature. Apart from the general popular topics in literary world like race, class and gender, an individual can see the gravity of the damage done to the environment. Cheryll Glotfelty, who is one of the pioneers of Ecocriticism, suggests:

> If you were to scan the newspaper headlines of the same period, you would learn of oil spills, lead and asbestos poisoning, toxic waste contamination, extinction of species at an unprecedented rate, battles over public land use, protests over nuclear waste dumps, a growing hole in the ozone layer, predictions of global warming, acid rain, loss of topsoil, destruction of the tropical rain forest, controversy over the Spotted Owl in the Pacific Northwest, a wildfire in Yellowstone Park, medical syringes washing onto the shores of Atlantic beaches, boycotts on tuna, over trapped aquifers in the West, illegal dumping in

> the East, a nuclear disaster in Chernobyl, new auto emissions standards, famines, droughts, floods, hurricanes, a United nations special conference on environment and development, a U.S. president declaring the 1990s "the decade of the environment," and a world population that topped fiver billion. Browsing through periodicals, you would discover that in 1989 *Time* magazine's person of the year award went to "The Endangered Earth." ("Introduction" xvi)

These are some of the critical examples of the damage to the environment. The irony is that humankind thinks the environmental crisis is not related to human life; however, nature provides the necessary elements to sustain human life on earth. Therefore, the damage caused by people will eventually affect the life cycle of humankind in one way or another. The destruction of nature means the destruction of the support systems of the environment that may result in life-threatening consequences for humankind.

Ecocriticism deals with any text that has environmental implications. The genre of autobiography and the trauma literature are two aspects of this study that will be scrutinized in accordance with ecocritical theory. War, as one of the dreadful and destructive practices of humankind, constitutes one of the most traumatic experiences for both humanity and the environment. An example of such a war was the First World War that had unprecedented results for both sides at the very beginning of the twentieth century. It was the first global war that the world had seen so far in the history of humankind. Therefore, the effect of the First World War on both humankind and the environment were unique in the sense of the damage it caused.

The accounts of the Great War in literature have emerged as poetry, diaries and letters, and after the war ended, some war veterans have turned their diaries and letters into memoirs and autobiographies providing more detailed accounts of their Great War experience. In this respect, Edmund Blunden's *Undertones of War*, Siegfried Sassoon's *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer* and Robert Graves's *Good-bye To All That* are still considered to be the most vivid representations of the Great War in British literature. Blunden, Sassoon and Graves, who are important literary figures of the Great War literature, reflected not only on the battles they had fought but also frequently gave accounts of the environment which lend themselves to ecocritical readings.

It is the intention of this work to examine the First World War memoirs of these three British officers who served in the Western Front according to two major aspects of environmental literary theory. One of these aspects concerns the interaction between human psychology and nature. The First World War left many war veterans in a traumatized condition due to their war experiences. The soldiers with a literary background were able to articulate their trauma through their works, and representations of nature played a significant role in them. Blunden, Sassoon and Graves are popular both with their memoirs and their poems that deal with the First World War. Therefore their works draw the attention of the modern reader to the connection between the physical world, trauma and human psychology as these concepts repeatedly appear in their autobiographies. With regard to the relationship between trauma and environment, nature's therapeutic effect on human psychology both at wartime and after the war will be analyzed in the light of trauma and ecological theories.

The second part of this work will focus on the direct and indirect damage caused by the war. In her book *The Ecology of War*, Susan Graham, who works on the relationship between war and ecology, writes: "since the advent of people on Earth, humans have been changing their environment. Often the most notable changes are the results of warfare" (xxiii). Wars may be regarded as the oldest practice of humankind on earth to settle the conflicts or conquer a valuable piece of land. Reasons for wars may vary, but the results seem to be the destruction of both human lives and the environment. In this respect, the types of damages inflicted upon the environment vary according to the type of warfare. Primarily it is the land, which seems to be the most affected. The destruction of the land means the destruction of the fertile ground that is arable. The First World War, which was fought over 'public land' in Europe, stands out as a good example. Secondly, forests receive collateral damage or they become the intended target of the armed forces. Another aspect of the damage to the forests in the First World War involved tree felling due to the extensive need for wood.

In addition to the environmental damage caused by the Great War, this work will explore and analyze trauma and autobiography as it is revealed in autobiographical narratives. One of the effects of war is the trauma caused by the war experience. In this respect, trauma and place are related to each other because the place in which the

traumatic experience occurs has an important role on the healing process of the experiencer. Blunden, Sassoon and Graves experience war trauma in the Western Front in France. The episodes of nature descriptions of the three authors can be seen as the representation of their war trauma. It is of crucial importance that their works should be considered in two different time frames: One of these frames is the time they experienced trauma, i.e., their actual war experience. The second time frame is the recollections of these traumatic experiences, which takes place as they write their memoirs after a certain temporal distance. In this second time frame, as discussed previously, their traumatic memories surface through the episodes of natural descriptions. In the first time frame, which is the period they experienced trauma, they turn to nature in order to cope with their painful, agonizing and stressful trench experience. With regard to these time frames, autobiography provides for the authors in scrutiny the chance to distance themselves from their traumatic experiences. Blunden, Sassoon and Graves were inevitably changed as a result of their war experience. Therefore in their autobiographies, they created new personas who represented the individuals they were at the time of the war. These new personas were the ones who sought tranquility and coping with trauma of the war.

This study intends a close reading of the works that belong to the Great War literature from an ecocritical perspective. Analyzing the works of Blunden, Sassoon and Graves that were written before the emergence of ecocriticism might seem irrelevant at first. Yet this work intends to create awareness of the destructive force of war on the environment and to highlight the therapeutic effect of nature on soldiers, which is revealed in their autobiographies.

Apart from creating the awareness of the destruction of the environment and the role of nature in the psychology of the soldiers, this study aims to demonstrate the possibility of greater destruction by setting the example of the Great War as a comparison point to the first global industrial war. Modern warfare, though human casualties may have been reduced compared to the past, is environmentally more destructive due to the technological developments in the weaponry. The dominance of technology over the First World War cannot be overlooked. For example, the Great War was the first war in which a chemical weapon was used. Gas was first used during the Battle of Loos in

1916 by the German forces. Another example of advanced technology was the airplane, which introduced both air warfare and surveillance. Although it might seem like an insignificant detail, the first machine gun was also developed during the War. With the developing technology, warfare eventually made use of the Atom bomb during the Second World War. Along with the changes in weapons technology through history, the destruction of the environment and the trauma caused by war changed shape. Therefore the Great War, which was the first global and industrial war taking its power from the technological advancements of early twentieth century, is a good starting point to investigate the literary reflections of the destruction of the environment and trauma of war.

Thirdly and more importantly this work will examine three seemingly distinct but interrelated issues: The relationship between nature, trauma and war is a subject that is rarely investigated in a work with this scope. Therefore, employing ecocritical theory, this work will offer a detailed insight into war and trauma.

In the first chapter, pastoral tradition will be examined in relation to both ecocriticism and to the authors in scrutiny. Going back to the idyllic poetry of ancient Greek, pastoral has also a long tradition in English literature reaching its pinnacle with the Romantic Movement in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century. First, historical development of pastoral beginning with the idylls of Theocritus will be reviewed, and then the types of pastoral will be discussed as suggested by Terry Gifford in *The Pastoral: New Critical Idiom*. Gifford tries to highlight the different uses of pastoral at different times in history. Another focal point of the first chapter will be ecocritical theory. As an interdisciplinary literary theory, any kind of text that focuses on environment or nature-human relationship can be read according to environmental literary theories. Some examples of such texts will be discussed in terms of their representation of the environmental problems. After providing a historical survey of ecocriticism in relation to contemporary literary theories, the relationship between nature and culture will be discussed since this dilemma constitutes much of the discussion in the contemporary ecocritical theory. Lastly, the integration of the pastoral tradition to ecocriticism will be examined. Reconsidering the origins of pastoral and the

modes of usage in history, it is not impossible to make use of pastoral while writing critically about environment.

Second chapter will focus on the trauma theory and autobiography that are crucial aspects of this work. Firstly, the definition of trauma will be given as a reference point to analyze the literary works to be discussed. Then the evolution of trauma theory will be discussed because although it was given different names throughout history, traumatic experiences and their consequences show similarities. After a short history of the development of trauma theory, writing about trauma will be discussed as a therapeutic process. In connection with writing about trauma and the recollection of traumatic memories, autobiography will be discussed as a literary genre. The process of autobiographical writing is widely discussed because the writer creates a persona that is different from his self while constructing his/her autobiography. Distancing himself from his/her past selves, writer of autobiography also claims himself/herself a safe ground. For this reason, the autobiographical accounts may sometimes oscillate between fiction and fact due to the distance created by the author.

Edmund Blunden's *Undertones of War*, Siegfried Sassoon's *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer* and Robert Graves's *Good-bye To All That* will be analyzed in separate chapters. One of the issues that will be discussed in all three works will be the healing effect of nature when these three writers turn to nature from the chaos of the Great War. It will be proposed that their turning to nature is not a pastoral retreat; they do it in order to cope with the trauma of war. Second issue that will be focused on will be the destruction of the environment and the level of sensitivity of the three writers on the destruction of nature. It will be revealed that although Blunden, Sassoon and Graves use different strategies in constructing their memoirs, they can be considered as writers, who are sensitive to the destruction of the environment.

CHAPTER 1
LITERATURE AND ENVIRONMENT

1.1. Pastoral Tradition

In connection with the purpose of this work, it is necessary to dwell on the pastoral tradition in order to understand ecological theories at hand since all the writers who will be explored in this dissertation have a background in pastoral tradition. Although they are called Georgian poets who are known to be modernist, the influence of the long intermingled history of pastoral tradition and British Romantic Movement can be spotted in the literary works of Graves, Blunden and Sassoon. The pastoral tradition can be described in basic terms as "a deliberately conventional poem expressing an urban poet's nostalgic image of the peace and simplicity of the life of shepherds and other rural folk in an idealized natural setting" (Abrams 202). Greg Garrard, in *Ecocriticism*, claims that pastoral tradition, in the context of environmental studies, is both deeply rooted in Western culture and problematic at the same time because pastoral has a tendency to be easily shaped by different political views. Yet he does emphasize that pastoral will continue to be a crucial concept in the context of ecocritical studies (33). Keeping in mind this hint of the political aspect of the pastoral tradition, it will be apt to consider the roots of the pastoral tradition in order to fully understand the relation between ecocriticism and pastoral tradition.

The roots of the pastoral go back to the "idylls of Theocritus in which shepherds lead a sunlit, idealized existence of love and song" as Margaret Drabble points out and she accentuates the fact that Virgil and Longus' romance "*Daphnis and Chloe* blended the idealization with a more authentic picture of country life, and Virgil added an important new feature to the tradition in making his poems a vehicle for social comment" (769). One of the important critics of American pastoral, Leo Marx, claims that although Theocritus is the first known pastoral poet, Virgil's *Eclogues* are the true origin of the pastoral tradition in contemporary literature because Virgil discovers "Arcadia" in his poems in which he creates the "symbolic landscape," an elusive combination of myth and reality (19). Terry Gifford expresses that pastoral has been written for the city audience and manipulated a strain between the city near sea and the highland country

life of a shepherd, between the life of the court and the life of the peasant, between nature and humankind and between refuge and return (*Pastoral* 15). However, as a historical literary form, the pastoral in its classical sense becomes extinct with the emergence of Romanticism as William Wordsworth promotes exploring comfort in a Nature bestowed with imaginary power (Drabble 769). The transformation between the pastoral tradition and British Romanticism will be dwelled on in the following paragraphs but in order to stay in the vicinity of our study, it will be appropriate to look at the types of pastoral.

In the light of the definition of pastoral and in the historical development of the tradition, Terry Gifford defines three kinds of pastoral. The first category of pastoral is the historical one that "has a long tradition which began in poetry, developed into drama and more recently could be recognized in novels (*Pastoral* 1). The examples for this literary form extend from Renaissance pastoral dramas like Shakespeare's or like Pope's Augustan pastoral poetry. The characteristics of this literary form, according to Gifford, contain the details originating from certain early Greek and Roman poems depicting country life (*Pastoral* 1). As a second category, beyond the specific definition of the first literary form, pastoral refers to an "area of content" which means that any kind of literature depicting countryside with explicit or implicit details can be considered as pastoral. The contentment in natural can be described as the main trait that these kind of literary texts are referred to as pastorals. No matter how austere these nature descriptions are, pastoral is linked with a "celebratory attitude" towards nature (Gifford *Pastoral* 2).

As the third and final type of the pastoral, Gifford introduces the difference between the "literary representation of nature and material reality" which comes to be understood as "pejorative" aspect of the pastoral, in which the preceding type goes under close examination:

> A Greenpeace supporter might use the term as a criticism of the tree poem if it ignored the presence of pollution or the threat to urban trees from city developers. … A farm worker might say that a novel was a pastoral if it celebrates a landscape as though no one actually sweated to maintain it on a low income. In this case the difference between the

> textual evidence and the economic reality would be judged to be too great by the criteria of social reality. (Gifford *Pastoral* 2)

All three definitions of pastoral by Terry Gifford can be used to scrutinize the literary texts that present the above mentioned characteristics of pastoral and further evaluation will be rendered in the course of this study. Throughout its historical development, the pastoral has been used to suit the ends of political agendas, especially in English literature during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Raymond Williams in *The Country and The City* (1973) follows the trajectory of the relationship between the rural and urban communities and describes how the rural, subject of the pastoral, has come to be used to reflect the socio-political developments taking place in those centuries. Williams sees the country as "the idea of a natural way of life: of peace, innocence, and simple virtue [and the city as] the idea of an achieved center: of learning, communication, light" (1). The characteristic Williams attributes to the country is typical of the pastoral tradition extending back to the classical times, to the times of Virgil and Theocritus. He claims that "literary pastoral developed from singing competitions in local peasant communities"; yet in the works of Theocritus, although the original form is kept, "a degree of elaboration and artifice, most evident in the use of literary dialects, is evident everywhere" (14). When it comes to Virgil who is the other epitome of pastoral one century before Christ, we observe "a continuity of pastoral which in and through its literary elaboration maintains its contact with the working year and with the real social conditions of country life" and Virgil's *Eclogues* are "in one sense more idealized, as they are also more elaborate, than the idylls of Theocritus" (Williams 16). Pastoral is disregarded throughout the Middle Ages, yet it appears again during the Renaissance when "Petrarch and his imitators composed eclogues in Latin and in the vernaculars. These were often more realistic and richer in contemporary references than their Virgilian models" (Drabble 769). It is in this period, as Raymond Williams comments, "pastoral became theatrical and romantic, in the strict senses. The pastoral romance, from Boccaccio to Sannazzaro's *Arcadia* (c.1500), was a new form, in which the eclogue and natural description were absorbed into the essentially different world of an idealized romantic love" (20). However, pastoral does not stay as a literary tradition that cherishes nature but it transforms into an instrument that will have

political connotations in the following centuries. In the course of Williams's survey, the countryside becomes both a political and economical symbol as he points out that

> the true history of the English countryside has been centered throughout in the problems of property in land, and in the consequent social and working relationships. By the eighteenth century, nearly half of the cultivated land was owned by some five hundred families. […] Beneath this domination, there was no longer, in any classical sense, a peasantry, but an increasingly regular structure of tenant farmers and wage-labourers: the social relationships that we can properly call those of agrarian capitalism. (60)

The transformation of the country from what it stands for in the classical times such as "peace, innocence and simple virtue" to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Britain is gross. The land belongs to the hierarchical system of what Williams calls "agrarian capitalism" (60).

Moreover, the reflection of this new order is also visible in literature. As this landowning system settled, the representation of the human condition influenced by this system finds expression in the novel, which manifests itself as the most imaginative form of literature. The quandaries of social relationships such as love and marriage are reflected in the novels of Richardson and Fielding. For example, the plot of *Tom Jones* revolves around the ambition to join two substantial estates by the bond of marriage in Somersetshire (Williams 62).

In addition, Romantic Movement in British literature is another phenomenon that has political roots in its origins. British Romanticism that sprung as a literary reaction to the Enlightenment ideals in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century as a literary movement demonstrates the change in the methods of literary production. Margaret Drabble's definition of Romanticism in *the Oxford Companion to English Literature* denotes this change as "the triumph of the values of imaginative spontaneity, visionary originality, wonder, and emotional self-expression over the classical standards of balance, order, restraint, proportion, and objectivity" (872). Poetry becomes the dominant literary form since William Wordsworth declares good poetry is "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" (237) in his preface to *Lyrical Ballads*. In

this literary movement, which promotes the individual and the senses, nature also becomes a crucial subject of poetry of the era. As M.H. Abrams defines the characteristics of Romanticism in *the Glossary of Literary Terms*, nature's place is emphasized as such:

> To a remarkable degree external nature – the landscape, together with its flora and fauna – became a persistent subject of poetry, and was described with an accuracy and sensuous nuance unprecedented in earlier writers. It is a mistake, however, to describe the romantic poets as simply "nature poets." While many major poems by Wordsworth and Coleridge – and to a great extent by Shelley and Keats – set out from and return to an aspect or change of aspect in the landscape, the outer scene is not presented for its own sake but only as a stimulus for the poet to engage in the most characteristic human activity, that of thinking. (178)

It can be derived from this quotation that nature in the sense of the contemporary ecocritical theories is not the center of attention but it is a medium that inspires humankind to fight back the adverse developments of the Industrial Revolution. William Wordsworth addresses this approach in his 'Preface' to *Lyrical Ballads* as such:

> Low and rustic life was generally chosen because in that situation the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language; because in that situation our elementary feelings exist in a state of greater simplicity and consequently may be more accurately contemplated and more forcibly communicated; because the manners of rural life germinate from those elementary feelings; and from the necessary character of rural occupations are more easily comprehended; and are more durable; and lastly, because in that situation the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature. (qtd in Coupe 17)

Again, Wordsworth's point of view towards nature is clear. Nature, in the eyes of the beholder, is not the subject of the literary work but it is the object. It appeals to the soul of the artist in order to inspire him. Jonathan Bate in *Romantic Ecology* also highlights the aspect of Wordsworth's works. He points out to the fact that majority of people know Wordsworth as a writer who writes poems about daffodils and that he lived in the Lake District and everyone believed he was 'nature poet' (4). However, some of the most renowned literary critics, according to Bate, think that

> Wordsworth was not a nature poet, or that there is no such thing as nature, or that if there is such a thing and Wordsworth was interested in it then that interest was very suspect on political grounds. The common reader's view of Wordsworth derives from the Victorian way of reading him, John Sturat Mill's way, John Ruskin', Leslie Stephen's. (4)

The above quotation from Jonathan Bate confirms that the content of Wordsworth's works can be analyzed in differing terms depending on the vantage point. One of the great epitomes of Romantic Movement in English literature might have a different agenda while he highlights nature. Bate's main argument dwells around the distinction between the ordinary reader and professional reader and this distinction will also be the key point of this work while the works of Blunden, Graves and Sassoon are examined:

> The common reader is interested in what literature is 'about'; the professional reader is interested in the ways in which literature is not 'about' the things it says it is about, is interested in what literature suppresses or in the proposition that literature cannot be really 'about' anything since to 'decode' a text is to 're-encode' it. (Bate 5)

In the preceding quote from Jonathan Bate suggests and confirms the various attributes of the pastoral since he names Wordsworth as the first ecological poet claiming that "Wordsworth's politics were neither Left nor Right, but, rather, were 'green'" (Glotfelty 394). Terry Gifford in *Pastoral: The New Critical Idiom* also points out to these alternate meanings in which pastoral has been characterized:

> So the pastoral can be a mode of political critique of present society, or it can be a dramatic form of unresolved dialogue about the tensions

> in that society, or it can be a retreat from politics into an apparently aesthetic landscape that is devoid of conflict and tension. It is this very versatility of the pastoral to both contain and appear to evade tensions and contradictions – between country and city, art and nature, the human and the non-human, our social and our inner selves, our masculine and our feminine selves –that made the form so durable and so fascinating. (10-11)

It is clear with evidence in our discussion of the pastoral that it has different layers of meaning and usage attributed throughout the centuries. Staying under the radar in the Middle Ages and proliferating again during Renaissance and onwards, pastoral has come to be analyzed as containing both political traits and escapist features from the developing industry and city life. This dissertation will also suggest a different perspective for the reading of pastoral in the Great War narratives, which will put nature into the center of these literary works like the contemporary ecocritical theories do at present. Yet it is of crucial importance to draw the connection of the pastoral to contemporary ecological theories. Therefore, in the following section, it will be appropriate to observe both the emergence of the literary criticism that came to be called as ecocriticism starting with the 1990s and the current ecological literary criticism about literature and environment studies.

1.2. Ecocriticism

Ecology, which covers the study of the environment that hosts both the animate and the inanimate, has been the subject of both literary and scientific works since the ancient times. With the developments in social, cultural and scientific circles throughout the centuries, ecological studies spread also into these formerly mentioned areas. The milestones such as the emergence of Christianity, the Enlightenment period and the Industrial Revolution in the eighteenth century marked the inevitable advancement and domination of humankind over nature that he actually inhabited. With the recent technological developments and the global warming threat in the twenty-first century, the role of the environment has become crucial to the different affiliations from scientists to literary and cultural critics. In literary world, the reaction to the abuse and

destruction of nature has found body and voice through 'ecocriticism' which was coined by William Rueckert (1978) in his "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism." The concerns about the relationship between humankind and nature are critically sounded as early as 1978, as Rueckert states, "the problem now, as most ecologists agree, is to find ways of keeping the human community from destroying the natural community, and with it the human community. This is what ecologists like to call the self-destructive or suicidal motive that is inherent in our prevailing and paradoxical attitude toward nature" (108). Although ecocriticism has become a popular theory investigating the relationship between human and non-human, the term ecology has a deep history dating back from ancient Greek to the Romantic Movement in the nineteenth century.

The word "ecology" is derived from the Greek words *oikos* and *kritis*, which mean when they are used together "house judge." This derivation from Greek is an important aspect for ecocriticism since ecocritics focus on the function of culture on nature; they have a judgmental point of view towards the physical world around them. At this point, William Howarth points out that *oikos* meaning nature in this derivation which is "our widest home" and the *kritos* meaning a keeper of this widest home, these two words come to mean "a person who judges the merits and faults of writings that depict the effects of culture upon nature, with a view toward celebrating nature, berating its despoilers, and reversing their harm through political action" (69). This positioning of ecocriticism in ancient Greek does not only implies the profound roots of the role of ecocritics but also it provides a different point of view as to the perception of nature in the history of the humankind. As Lawrence Buell comments on the origins of ecocriticism in *Writing for an Endangered World: Literature, Culture, and Environment in the U.S. and Beyond*, he is also aware of the fact that concern for ecology is rooted deep in the history of the earth:

> Obviously concern for environment did not originate a mere two centuries ago, though the term itself apparently did not enter English usage until the 1830s. Insofar as human beings are biohistorical creatures constructing themselves in interaction with surroundings they cannot inhabit, all their artifacts may be expected to bear traces of that. (2-3)

Another important point in the history humankind and nature is the emergence of Christianity over paganism. As Lynn White suggests the world we live in is greatly affected by the emergence of Christianity that we can observe in the way people think and act. The ideas presented by this religion still points out to a constant progress that is unknown to Greco-Roman antiquity and the progress supported by the inevitable dogmas of the religion changes nature drastically (9). The nature-friendly approach to environment before the emergence of Christianity is altered with the introduction of a Judaist religion, which put humankind in front of all the things that constitute our world. As White further discusses, nothing in the natural world can exist without a purpose and that purpose is to serve humankind since God has created Adam and as an afterthought, Eve to accompany Adam who also named all the animals accomplishing dominance over them. Moreover, although man was created from clay, he is simply not a part of nature because he is created in the image of the God itself (9).

The repercussions of the Christianity on nature are also influential with respect to the technological developments because humankind who was placed in the center of the universe also wanted to dominate nature according to his own ends. Science and technology are accepted as sacred words for people at present because modern science is the "extrapolation of natural theology and modern technology is at least partly to be explained as an Occidental, voluntarist realization of the Christian dogma of man's transcendence of, and rightful mastery over, nature" (White 12).

Contrary to the views laid out by Lynn White, man's mastery over nature may be interpreted in a different way, which emphasizes the weakness of mankind. In accordance with the realization of this weakness, mankind tries to divert his powers, as Harold Fromm comments on the issue:

> The idealized emphasis on "rational" in the concept of man as the rational animal which characterized Platonic-Christian thought for two millennia had generally been the product of man's sense of his own physical weakness, his knowledge that Nature could not be tamed or bent to his own will. In lieu of the ability to mold Nature to serve his own ends, man had chosen to extol and mythify that side of his being that

> seemed to transcend Nature by inhabiting universes of thought that Nature could not naysay. (30)

However, even in this great dichotomy created between nature and culture, they cannot be separated as William Howarth suggests, "since ecology studies the relations between species and habitats, ecocriticism must see its complicity in what it attacks. All writers and their critics are stuck with language, and although we cast nature and culture as opposites, in fact they constantly mingle, like water and soil in a flowing stream" (69). Now that culture and nature are like two elements of the earth that exist mixing together, we are confronted with the question of what is ecocriticism. Ecocriticism, in its simplest definition, as described in the 'Introduction' of *The Ecocriticism Reader*, is the

> study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. Just as feminist criticism examines language and literature from a gender-conscious perspective, and Marxist criticism brings an awareness of modes of production and economic class to its reading of texts, ecocriticism takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies. (Glotfelty xix)

Upon this definition of ecocriticism, Greg Garrard, who is one of the prominent ecocritics, points out to the fact that ecocriticism is a political mode of analyzing the text as it is compared to feminism and Marxism. The agenda of the ecocritics centers on green moral and political issues (3). What Garrard points out is the final point that the ecocriticism reached after many years of transformation since he defines the early works of ecocriticism as "an exclusive interest in Romantic poetry, wilderness narrative and nature writing" (4). Yet, environmental writing is a vast field of literary texts which cannot be squeezed into simple definitions, but again there are three main aspects of environmental writing, as Thomas J. Lyon explains, which are "natural history information, personal responses to nature and philosophical interpretation of nature"(276). Another prominent environmental critic, Lawrence Buell, on the other hand, gives a more detailed definition of texts, which can be considered as environmental. He points out to four categories as follows:

> 1. The nonhuman environment is present not merely as a framing device but as a presence that begins to suggest that human history is implicated in natural history.
> 2. The human interest is not understood to be the only legitimate interest.
> 3. Human accountability to the environment is part of the text's ethical orientation.
> 4. Some sense of environment as a process rather than as a constant or a given is at least implicit in the text. (*Environmental* 7-8)

Both outlines of environmental writing by Thomas J. Lyon and Lawrence Buell denote a vast field of study of nature writing originating from the above definitions. Spreading from these specific roots, the scope of environmental writing and criticism expand to other genres in literary studies. Perhaps, the broadest definition of ecocriticism finds voice in Scott Slovic's words:

> [Ecocriticism] is the study of explicit environmental texts by way of any scholarly approach or, conversely, the scrutiny of ecological implications and human-nature relationships in any literary text, even texts that seem, at first glance, oblivious of the nonhuman world. In other words, any conceivable style of scholarship becomes a form of ecocriticism if it is applied to certain kinds of literary works; and, on the other hand, there is not a single literary work anywhere that utterly defies ecocritical interpretation, that is 'off limits' to green reading. ("Ecocriticism" 160)

The relationship of environmental writing and criticism with ecology also support their interdisciplinary aspect finding study fields in law, philosophy and sciences. The encompassing field of environmental studies is also reverberated by Jhan Hochman in his 1997 essay "Green Cultural Studies: An Introductory Critique of an Emerging Discipline." Hochman points out to the fact that academia has come up with different branches of ecology satisfying the needs aroused from the position of nature which is becoming a socio-political object in the territory of Postmodernity. These various branches include sub disciplines such as 'ecopsychology', ecological economics', 'ecofeminism', 'ecosophy' and other derivations formed by the adjective *environmental* science, law, ethics and history (187).

Environmental criticism has gone through different phases from the time of its inception and some of these phases can still be observed to be developing staying different from the contemporary environmental criticism. As Lawrence Buell states in *The Future of Environmental Criticism*, it is impossible to draw a definitive map of environmental criticism, yet we can observe waves like first and second and even a newer wave which follows its predecessors. As Buell builds on the development of these waves, he points out to the fact that there could be no clear cut distinction or border between these waves, however the ones which put environmental criticism in motion can be observed still having strong characteristics. Therefore, Buell finds it appropriate to call them palimpsests considering these waves' interaction with each other for building on one another's criticism or for quarrelling with each other (*Future* 17). Building on the visualization of the "wave" metaphor, Scott Slovic emphasizes that using "palimpsest" or layering would be easier to "visualize multiple layers of scholarly habits than it is to imagine successive *waves* rolling ashore from the sea of ecocritical ideas" ("Third Wave" 5). These ideas from prominent literary critics of ecocriticism, which sprung as the field of environmental studies expand, can be interpreted as the enrichment of the ecocritical theories by interacting each other. Therefore, these successive "waves" or palimpsests still exist mixing together to conform to the needs of the social and cultural structures concerning environment.

It is of crucial importance to analyze these three "waves" that form the foundation of ecocriticism, which may also help to understand the evolutionary track that ecocriticism followed from the beginning of its inception. To start with the first wave of ecocriticism, it can be defined as the study of the environment as "natural environment" since the "human" and "the natural" seemed so apart in their existence. For this reason, the purpose of ecocriticism was considered in parallel to the preservation of the earth (Buell *Future* 21). In the light of this explanation, the practice of an ecocritic in the first wave would be, as William Howarth puts it, to assess "the effects of culture upon nature, with a view toward celebrating nature, berating its despoilers, and reversing their harm through political action" (69).

The second wave of ecocriticism tried to approach environment and environmentalism from the perspective of organicism meaning that everything in nature

has an organic basis and therefore they are part of an organic whole (Buell *Future* 22). Toward the end of the twentieth century, the shift from nature writing, which was non-fiction, towards the critical study of various literary genres led to the second "wave" of ecocriticism. As Scott Slovic denotes

> Circa 1995, though, some distinctly new tendencies became commonplace in Anglophone ecocriticism: the study of multiple literary genres (no longer so much focus on nonfiction) and the development of "green cultural studies" (exceeding the boundaries of literature per se); an attention to the artistic representation of environmental conditions and experiences of various cultural groups around the world (such as Japanese environmental literature and Mexican-American writing about nature); the emergence of environmental justice ecocriticism; and a new attention to urban and suburban experience, not just the valorization of wilderness. ("Third wave" 5-6)

The second "wave" of ecocriticism tries to counteract the environmental problems through the lens of different literary genres and extending the area of criticism from American or British focus to different cultures and how environment is considered to be a part of human nature. As Buell comments on the difference between the first wave and second wave ecocriticism, he is aware of the fact that focusing on "environment" as "nature" and nature writing could be limiting. Thus, a more developed politics of environment should widen its scope to metropolis and outback concerning itself with both anthropocentric and biocentric views (*Future* 22-23).

Although first two waves of ecocriticism are still studied at present, ecocriticism gains a third perspective in exploring the relationship between environment and humankind. The emergence of the new wave of ecocriticism happened to start in parallel to the second wave and as Scott Slovic emphasizes, the field of study of the third wave "toward a more comparative, trans-cultural approach to ecocritical studies" ("Third wave" 6). This multicultural and multi-dimensional approach to literature and environment studies also confirms the fact that human beings are also rooted in the same ecologic construction whatever their origins are and what kind of notions they may develop and reflect in terms of environment. One of the prominent critics that

signal the third wave of ecocriticism is Lawrence Buell. He comments on the expansion of the ecocritical theories toward a multinational and multicultural dimension by stating that "it makes sense that the reach of "ecocriticism" – the omnibus term by which the new polyform literature and environment studies movement has come to be labeled, especially in the United States – should extend from the oldest surviving texts to works of the present moment" (*Writing* 2-3). As a literary movement that emerged mainly in the United States and in Britain, ecocriticism analyzes different national literatures in order to observe the impact of human beings on environment. One of the ecocritics, who agrees that ecocriticism should look beyond the scope of American and English literatures, is George B. Handley. He anticipates the expansion of literature and environment studies in *New World Poetics: Nature and the Adamic Imagination of Whitman, Neruda, and Walcott* by stating that

> literary criticism in the Americas desperately needs comparative studies of how ideas have moved across borders, how they have appeared with a kind of inexplicable transnational simultaneity, or how their diverse locations in the Americas have perpetually transformed their ideological function. Moreover, ideas can serve ideological as well as ethical or aesthetic functions, particularly when we shift from a merely social or political analysis to an ecocritical consideration of the impact of an idea on the natural world within a particular context. (32)

The third wave of ecocriticism, though started parallel to the second wave, which the ecocritics call as the revisionist, is the yearning for national literatures to open their horizons to new national literatures such as Japan, Australia and India from the perspective of literature and environment studies. As the survey of these other national literatures can be considered to be one of the goals of the comparative third wave ecocriticism, the interaction of the ideas and notions from different and particular parts of the world and how these ideas constitute the image of nature in the public eye is one of the other traits of third wave ecocritical studies. Building on the encompassing of trans-national and trans-cultural studies that ecocriticism has set sail, Patrick D. Murphy also points out that

> If ecocriticism has been hindered by too narrow an attention to nonfiction prose and the fiction of nonfictionality, it has also been limited by a focus on American and British literatures. In order to widen the understanding of readers and critics, it is necessary to reconsider the privileging of certain national literatures and certain ethnicities within those national literatures. Such reconsideration will enable a greater inclusiveness of literatures from around the world within the conception of nature-oriented literature. It will also enable critics and readers such as myself, who focus primarily on American literature, to place that literature in an internationally relative and comparative framework. I see such reconsideration as one of the ways by which we can refine our awareness and expand the field of ecocriticism. (58)

Ecocriticism, which was literally produced and practiced in the United States as the inception and development quarters of the theory, has come to be accepted as a universal literary theory, which encircles many different national and international literatures at present. The expansion of the borders of ecocriticism coincides with the emergence of twenty-first century, which may indicate that the more humankind became aware of the ecological destruction and the consumption of natural sources, the more importance the environment gained in both the areas of the science of ecology and literature which encompasses transnational and transcultural at the same time. The catastrophe scenarios, which await us in the near future, makes the scholars of literature and environment, look at the issue both regionally and globally. Building on this argument, Glen A. Love also proposes that ecocriticism should be interdisciplinary:

> […] western American literature is not unique in its ecological perspective and that we need to recognize our kinship with nature-oriented writers in New England, in Canada, in Europe, in South and Central America, in Africa, in Australia, everywhere. Ecological issues are both regional and global. They transcend political boundaries. What is required is more interdisciplinary scholarship and more inter-regional scholarship on common issues. (237)

As a literary theory, which began as the questioning of the relationship between humankind and nature, the scope of ecocriticism, as I tried to review it in this section, is evolving and joining into other literary theories and other scientific disciplines. It is also of crucial importance that ecocriticism is expanding the borders of literature and environment studies to a more international level which enables the scholars of literature and environment handle the problematic relationship between humankind and nature from different perspectives as experienced and reflected by a variety of national literatures.

1.3. Pastoral Tradition versus Ecocriticism

In *Ecocriticism,* Greg Garrard tries to show the application of ecocritical theories to any kind of text by pointing out to Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962) which is accepted as "the founding text of modern environmentalism [that] not only begins with a decidedly poetic parable, but also relies on the literary genres of pastoral and apocalypse" (2). Garrard's exemplification of *Silent Spring*, an environmental text that depends on scientific facts, both signal the salient usage of pastoral and delineate the borders of ecocriticism if we scrutinize Carson's scientific text from a literary perspective. Scott Slovic also defined ecocriticism in the previous chapter as a literary theory, which may investigate literary texts with different orientations. Slovic described ecocriticism as both the study of environmental texts by means of any scholarly approach or scrutinizing of any text according to ecocritical theories. As Terry Gifford also emphasizes, "ecocriticism is concerned not only with the attitude to nature expressed by the author of a text, but also with its patterns of interrelatedness, both between the human and the non-human, and between the different parts of the non-human world" (*Pastoral* 5).

Recently ecocritics have criticized the pastoral tradition on the grounds that literary pastoral has been used as a means of political action that served only for humankind in the previous centuries. Terry Gifford explains the position of pastoral tradition as follows:

> The pastoral convention has come under attacking recent years as critics have examined the frames within which the writer is presenting a pastoral view of the world. The most serious accusation is the suggestion that pastoral in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries created a false ideology that served to endorse a comfortable status quo or the landowning class who had been the reading public before the nineteenth century. (Gifford *Pastoral* 7)

Being one of the points Williams emphasizes in *The Country and the City*, one example of how pastoral is integrated into the plot of *Tom Jones* has been exemplified above as the political tool of the landowning system. Raymond Williams is also aware of this change when he says, "pastoral, with its once precise meaning, was undergoing in the

same period an extraordinary transformation. Its most serious element was a renewed intensity of attention to natural beauty, but this is now the nature of observation, of the scientist or the tourist, rather than of the working man" (20). It can be simply noticed from this quotation that both the purpose of the pastoral and its practitioners has been going through some changes.

Apart from the political aspect the pastoral convention that is used to create a status quo to control the land distribution in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, pastoral as a literary form, in its purest sense, is a retreat from the real world:

> Pastoral is essentially a discourse of retreat, which may, as we have seen, either simply *escape* from the complexities of the city, the court, the present, 'our manners', or explore them. This is the difference between the pejorative and the primary senses of the pastoral. … That it is able to explore the present, or imagine an alternative future is only possible because the reader accepts that pastoral works as a discourse. (Gifford *Pastoral* 46)

Contemporary ecocritics approach pastoral, as it is reflected in the above quotation, with caution and even with contempt at some point. Michael J. MacDowell, who scrutinizes Bakhtin's literary theories from an ecocritical perspective reflects on this issue by claiming that "many ecologically oriented critics single out pastoralism as an object upon which to vent their wrath because of its benign, simplified, citified view of the natural" (385). Terry Gifford explores the pejorative attributes to pastoral in the history of the English literature as he evaluates:

> Retreat can also offer a temptation to disconnection, an escapism from complexity and contradiction. The contemporary sense of pastoral as a pejorative term perhaps resides in the Georgian poets' lasting effect upon English culture. Between 1912 and 1922 Edward Marsh edited five anthologies of Georgian Poetry containing poems by Rupert Brooke, A.E. Houseman, W.H. Davies, John Masefield, Walter de la Mare, Edmund Blunden and others. Following the horrors of the First World War, these poets sought refuge in rural images that did not disturb a sense of comfortable reassurance. Thy only wanted time, as

> W.H. Davies put it, to 'stand and stare' from a gate, their minds largely disengaged. (*Pastoral* 71)

Abrams describes the term "Georgian poetry" as a form of verse that is basically bucolic in its theme, smart and fragile rather than intrepid and ardent in mode and conventional rather than modern in practice and structure (216). Although war veterans under scrutiny came from pastoral convention, their use of pastoral was intended for a distinctive purpose different from escapism.

On the other hand, there are ecocritics who believe that pastoralism can be integrated to suit the ends of literature and environment studies for the present and the future. For example, Joan Weatherly approaches pastoral as "an ageless form of environmental literature" (73). Glen A. Love in "Revaluing Nature" points out to the dilemma between pastoral tradition and literary ecocritical theories at hand. He points out that nature is deemed "simple" whereas society is "complex" according to anthropocentric ideas that shape society. Yet, contrary to this perspective, nature can offer explanations to "adaptive strategies" that are beyond human understanding. It is true that literature, as the production of anthropocentric culture, has a challenging route to scrutinize the complicated relationship between humankind and nature. Within this framework, as Love continues, pastoral mode comes from the same tradition of anthropocentric perspective which brings pastoral to the imminent reassessment process in order to improve the image of nature at present (230-231). Concerning pastoral tradition, it is obvious that in order to close the gap between humankind and nature, contemporary ecocritics need to approach pastoral from a different angle and bring new interpretations suiting the ends of contemporary ecocritical theory. To achieve this end, Glen A. Love suggest that

> the redefinition of pastoral, then, requires that contact with the green world be acknowledged as something more than a temporary excursion into simplicity, which exists primarily for the sake of its eventual renunciation and a return to the "real" world at the end. A pastoral for the present and the future calls for a better science of nature, a greater understanding of its complexity, a more radical awareness of its primal energy and stability, and a more acute

> questioning of the values of the supposedly sophisticated society to which we are bound. (234-235)

What is suggested by Love in this quotation is a shift of focus in interpreting pastoral by emphasizing the place and importance of nature in the context of society and culture. In degrees the texts under scrutiny in this study contains the necessary qualities that Glen A. Love suggests the pastoral should have for the future. The Great War, as a catalyst, brings into consideration questions like what if human culture, or as Love calls it, “the values of the supposedly sophisticated society” is decimated along with nature that we inhabit. It is in such chaotic times that humankind considers the power and balance of nature and mourns for the destruction of it as well as finding consolation in it.

CHAPTER 2
TRAUMA, AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND LITERATURE

2.1. Trauma Literature

The Great War, which lasted roughly between 1914 and 1918, was the source of a great many psychological traumas on the part of those who fought and survived it. Vincent Sherry in his "Introduction" to *The Cambridge Companion to the Literature of the First World War,* specifies this phenomenon as such:

> For reasons that were unclear, or that changed and became even more unclear, there were 10 million dead in less than a decade, as the major nation states of Europe and North America aligned and engaged in a conflict that mobilized, galvanized, and exhausted their resources of human, financial, intellectual and spiritual capital. (1)

Sherry's emphasis on the magnitude of the Great War points out to tremendous negative effects on social, political and intellectual spheres throughout the world. Besides ten million casualties, there were the soldiers who survived the war and returned home. These soldiers, including the ones under scrutiny in this study, lived the rest of their lives haunted by the memories of their traumatic war experiences.

The atrocious trench warfare, bloody battles fought in order to break the German trench line, and the death of ten million people are some of the dreadful aspects of this disastrous war. Apart from the military aspect, the literature of the Great War consisted of the works of the literary figures of the time. These writers, who fought in the Great War, reflected their experiences through memoirs, poems and novels. Robert Graves, Edmund Blunden and Siegfried Sassoon who fought in the British Expeditionary Force on the Western Front as officers experienced traumatic events during the war and they revisited them in their memoirs. The memoirs under scrutiny become more intriguing in terms of reflecting the traumatic experiences because they were written after a considerable amount of time. The memories of Graves, Sassoon and Blunden about the war were not without a sense of traumatic imagination. Their constant references to nature and how they interacted with it were the proof of the extent of horrors of war. Their mental health was affected and they tried to cope with the stress by turning to nature. Autobiography as a literary form will be discussed in the following sections and

the credibility of the form will be questioned in terms of the ability to reflect on the writers' experiences. Yet, for the purposes of this research, trauma and its reflections in literature will be scrutinized throughout this chapter in the context of the First World War literature.

This study focuses on trauma as the literary works that will be investigated have a traumatic aspect because soldiers who participated in the Great War wrote them. In order to understand the relationship between environment and trauma literature, it is necessary to investigate the definitions of trauma and circumstances, in which it develops and its reflections in literature.

According to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 4th edition, (*DSM-IV-TR*) trauma is a "direct personal experience of an event that involves actual or threatened death or serious injury or other threat to one's physical integrity; or witnessing an event that involves death, injury or a threat to the physical integrity of another person" (463). In the long list provided by American Psychological Association (APA), combat appears as one of the traumatic incidents along with physical assault, robbery, being kidnapped, torture, disasters and dangerous car accidents.

First trauma symptoms might be said to appear as early as seventeenth century when Johannes Hofer "attributed the disease to an 'afflicted imagination', noting in patients the persistence of melancholy, relentless preoccupation with home, disturbances of sleep, images of home recurring in dreams, loss of strength and appetite, fever, heart palpitations and stupor" (qtd. in Hemmings 28). The symptoms of trauma have been observed in different forms and it has taken different names throughout the centuries. For example, in the nineteenth century Europe, symptoms parallel to what has been described by Hofer occurred such as "partial paralyses" and other physical malfunctions due to the increasing number of railway construction accidents as a result of the Industrial Revolution. In addition to Europe, in America during the Civil War, the occurrence of these traumatic symptoms was named "windage," which refers to the shockwaves of canon fire. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, "physicians began to explore more closely the connection between the memory of the shocking experience and the ensuing alteration of the self" (Hemmings 28).

"Windage" term used during the Civil War left its place to another term after the Great War broke out. In the course of the First World War, a physician from the British army named Charles Myers altered the name of the disease known as "windage" to "shell shock," which has similar symptoms referring to the fact that combat veterans suffered bodily malfunctions that also caused indiscernible changes in the nervous system due to the traumatizing power of exploding shells. Yet it was hard to prove a connection between the bodily damage and psychological aspect of the shell shock; thus physicians focused on the aftermath of the traumatic incident on the memory and how it shapes the self-understanding of the experiencer (Hemmings 29).

The trauma caused by the war experiences on the Western front of the Great War was called shell shock after the soldiers were exposed to heavy shelling from the enemy, which caused disorientation, stress, and depression. However, it took a great amount of time to define PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) after the Great War. It was no sooner than the Vietnam War the US fought during late 70s and early 80s, the long lingering term 'shell-shocked' gave way to PTSD when soldiers returning home were diagnosed with symptoms very similar to those of the shell-shocked soldiers of the Great War (MacCurdy 17).

Apart from the drastic consequences of the constant shelling of the front lines that caused a lot of casualties on the Western Front, men in the trenches were deeply traumatized because of the sound and shock wave of the exploding shells. As the fronts were determined after the initial movement of the armies of both sides and the war turned into trench warfare, "soldiers presented dramatic symptoms that included paralysis, blindness, and amnesia, along with more subtle symptoms such as headache, sleeplessness, depression and anxiety" (Jones 35-61). These symptoms show similarities with Johannes Hofer's description of trauma.

Early October 1914, which is five months after the British declared war on the central powers, Captain G.P. Pollard wrote in a letter to his family that it is very clear that this is a war of 'attrition' and they have to find more men, money and raw materials to support the troops and hold on till either of the sides calls it quits (qtd in Fussell 10-11). Obviously, the trench warfare, which depended on destroying the manpower and

resources of the enemy, involved the aspect of both mental and physical attrition attached to it.

MacCurdy dwells on the duality of the effects of trauma by describing it, as "any assault to the body or psyche that is so overwhelming that it cannot be integrated into consciousness The word 'trauma' comes from the Greek *trauma* and means 'wound,' originally referring only to a physical wound but now understood as well to be a wound to the psyche"(16). Apart from the physical wounds, the psychological 'wounds' were deeper because they haunted soldiers for the rest of their lives. The prospect of getting a wound by a shrapnel or a bullet that will have them sent behind the lines or even to England was better than staying in the trenches and waiting to be relieved by another company because "[t]o be in the trenches was to experience an unreal, unforgettable enclosure and constraint as well as a sense of being unoriented and lost. One saw two things only: the walls of an unlocalized, undifferentiated earth and the sky above" (Fussell 51). In the Great War, what was going on in the trenches was as important as the open attacks on the front. Along with such physical conditions, the sanitary state of the trenches also presented traumatizing incidents since "the men were not the only live things in the line. They were accompanied everywhere by their lice, which the professional delousers in rest billets behind the lines, with their steam vats for clothes and hot baths for troops, could do little to eliminate" (Fussell 48).

The most horrible of them all is the reek of the dead, both human and animal such as horses and donkeys used for transportation. The stink of decaying "flesh" covered the front line trenches and No Man's Land. Although men tried to suppress this detestable stench by spraying chemicals such as "chloride of lime" over the ground stinking the most, the efforts failed leaving a nasty odor for the men in the front line trenches. Parts of both dead men and horses spread over the area called No Man's Land, which was a territory that was not claimed by either side, stayed there for months becoming a part of the trench they had fallen and creating a smell that could be felt miles away before you reached the front (Fussell 49).

In such environmental conditions of the trenches, it was inevitable for the soldiers to be traumatized if the external factors like losing close friends in the attacks and being shelled constantly by the German artillery are taken into consideration. Therefore, the

consequences of this horrible environment led a lot of soldiers to break down and as these losses multiplied, the number of men lost to mental diseases, particularly shell shock in this case, raised dramatically. For example, as Herman points out, "according to one estimate, mental breakdowns represented 40 percent of British battle casualties" (20). The soldiers who had war neurosis were sent behind the front line but this application did not help them to recover from trauma:

> The treatment of war neurosis and the subsequent outcomes of those treatments evolved steadily throughout the war. Initially, afflicted soldiers were evacuated from the trenches to rearward base hospitals or to England. The distance from the line of contact weakened the soldier's sense of duty to his comrades. Coupled with the expectation of evacuation, symptoms of war neurosis were reinforced and ingrained in the wounded soldier's mind. Many of theses soldiers were lost to the army for good. Those who remained in Great Britain often demonstrated a longstanding disability. (Helmus and Glen 12)

Helmus and Glen's point clearly shows that "war neurosis" caused by the previously described war conditions, can be a long-standing problem for the soldiers who experience war. So, even if they are shipped back to England that is their homeland, the possibility of the soldiers to recover from their war neurosis seemed very low.

However, the First World War led psychologists to discover the previously unknown situations that create traumatic events and these developments helped to cure the war neurosis of soldiers who went through traumatic experiences. Yule points out to the development process of determining the nature of traumatic incidences as such:

> It was the reactions of serving soldiers in times of war that led to the greatest advances in our understanding of the effects of life-threatening stressors on psychological adjustments. Officers and enlisted men, faced with the high casualty rates in trench warfare during World War I, often broke down on the battlefield. Shell shock (Mott, 1919; Southward, 1919) was the term favored for reactions to stress that had previously been labeled nervous shock (Page, 1885). (Yule et al 1-2)

The symptoms of shell shock or post-traumatic stress disorder, as it is known in the modern world manifests itself in many different ways. One of the ways to free one's self from the traumatic memories of an incident is writing about the traumatic incident. Therefore, according to contemporary trauma theory, writing about trauma has a therapeutic effect on the traumatized subject.

Marian MacCurdy, who is one of the prominent scholars in trauma studies, reflects on the importance of writing about trauma and explains the two aspects of this writing process:

> Current research shows that writing can have a therapeutic effect on painful life experiences in two ways. First, by unlocking these experiences from the parts of the brain that store iconic images and allowing us to put words to our difficult moments, it is not only cathartic but it also creates understanding. We can realize just how bad we felt, that we are not going crazy, that indeed these traumas were hard to endure. Our emotions are validated. Second, writing can join the cognitive and the emotional, resulting in a sense of control over that which we cannot control: the past. Writing produces a sense of agency that the trauma has threatened. We write our trauma; our trauma does not write us. The person who experienced the trauma and the person writing about it are not one and the same. Writing requires construction of a persona – and a point of view – that is different from that of the protagonist. (2)

Writing about trauma intersects with the course of this work since the memoirs that will be scrutinized are written about the Great War. It is also an intriguing aspect that while writing about traumatic experiences after a certain temporal distance from the traumatic incident, the need to create a different 'persona' apart from the protagonist is also a characteristic of autobiography writing. It is at this point that the reflections on nature in these memoirs happen to attract the reader not only as nature writing but also as an attempt for healing by turning to nature at times of distress.

It is also important to define the nature of traumatic memories that are open to different interpretations. For example, Berliner and Briere discusses, "all memories are

a combination of what was encoded when the event occurred, the base within which the experience was integrated, the way the experience was interpreted, the accuracy of retrieval strategies, and the context for recall" (7). On the other hand, MacCurdy points out to a different aspect of traumatic memories:

> Normal memories are mutable because once information is coded into a meaning scheme, the individual bits of data are no longer important, and indeed are often forgotten. Traumatic memories retain their imagistic quality precisely because they are not coded unto a meaning scheme. They are too overwhelming for that. That's the definition of trauma. This does not mean, however, that traumatic memories are always indelible. (MacCurdy 25)

Human consciousness can be influenced by ineradicable traumatic incidents, which may alter the essence of one's remembrance, self-respect and social life. No matter what kind of pleasant memories we have and in spite of the fact that we have the ability to endure and adjust to the traumatic experiences, they can crowd in on our lives blemishing our gratitude of the present. This is such an incident that unbalances the mental, biological and societal life of the individual to a great extent. Both fresh and common incidents become vague and lose importance because the domination of the past hinders our capacity to give our attention to the present time. As people deliberately focus on the past, life becomes a dreary existence and we cannot learn from our present experiences (Van der Kolk and McFarlane 4).

When it comes to the authors under scrutiny in this work, the trauma they have experienced during the Great War is reflected in their narratives in the form natural imagery. Recalling these images is the way to overcome their traumas and their recalling of the environment after so many years where the fight took place is a sign of their attempt to overcome the trauma. As MacCurdy claims, re-living the physical specifics imprinted on our brain during the traumatic instants is the foundation of recovering from the trauma since these remembrances are without oral description and background. As the sufferers of the traumatic event are not able to give pure oral descriptions, they find it sufficient to depict images and noises that were imprinted in their brains (36).

The images MacCurdy mentions the traumatic event are reflected on the narratives of Blunden, Sassoon and Graves and these images contain dreadful incidents ranging from the deaths of beloved friends who fought side by side with them to the sight of No Man's Land after a bloody attack on the German front with the images of bodies mutilated or blown to bits by shell fire lying on the war fields. However, beside these horrific images reverberating through their narratives, they also retreat to nature in the memoirs, which may be an indication of therapeutic effect of nature that surrounded them in the war. According to many contemporary critics, this retreat observed in these memoirs can be interpreted as a traditional pastoral retreat to nature. As Gifford also points out to the same issue:

> Whatever the locations and modes of pastoral retreat may be there must be in some sense a return from that location to a context in which the results of the journey are to be understood. When the pastoral is merely escapist, as in the anthologies of the Georgian poets after the First World War, there is an implicit attempt on the part of the writer to resist return, to stay out there in the safely comforting location of retreat, in their case in the countryside of a mythic Old England where stability and traditional values were located. (*Pastoral* 81)

Yet the presence of nature as a retreat may be interpreted in a different way since Blunden, Sassoon and Graves wrote their memories after the Great War experience. This incident may suggest that the reason they spare so many occasions to depict the environment, as they perceived it during the war constitutes their healing process. The recurring natural episodes in both the trenches and behind the line may be interpreted as retreat that is a crucial characteristic of pastoral tradition, but this study aims to propose otherwise creating awareness towards an understanding of nature that is freed from the anthropocentric tensions. This characteristic of the pastoral is referred to as the post-pastoral, which closes the gap between the traditional outlook to the nature as a retreat, and contemporary environmental theories concerning literature that places the environment above humankind. Terry Gifford, in *Pastoral: the New Critical Idiom*, reflects on this aspect of the problem:

> This third feature of the post-pastoral is the recognition that the inner is also the workings of the outer, that our inner human nature can be understood in relation to external nature. When we have accepted the need for humility as a species we can regain our place as part of the natural world – distinctively human but able to comprehend our humanity through what David Abram calls 'the recuperation of the incarnate, sensorial dimension of experience [which] brings with it a recuperation of the living landscape in which we are corporeally embedded' (Abram 1996: 65). It has been known for some time that people who live beside a tree or with a cat, or tend a garden or a horse, gain some sense of themselves, of their own cycles of growth and decay, and of their emotional ebbs and flows that are unavailable to the inhabitants of concrete tower blocks. (156)

Forces that are out of control may at times interrupt our biologic connection to nature. The long lasting traumatic events such as wars may be the reason of this disconnection of our souls from nature. Yet we can be a part of nature if we accept 'the need for humility as a species' that is part of the outer world; it is more likely that the end pastoral served throughout the centuries come to be averted into another perspective which puts the environment before humankind. Thus, with the help of this reunion between humankind and nature, it is quite possible to overcome the symptoms of the traumatic experience that was encountered in the past.

Still for the purposes of this work, we will investigate the connection between place and trauma in literature in order to understand how this therapeutic relationship is possible. Michelle Balaev in "Trends in Literary Trauma" in which she examines the dominant psychology model of trauma in literary criticism by introducing place theory for analysis, focuses on the trauma novel and how it functions:

> The trauma novel demonstrates how a traumatic event disrupts attachments between self and others by challenging fundamental assumptions about moral laws and social relationships that are themselves connected to specific environments. Novels represent this disruption between the self and others by carefully describing the

> place of trauma because the physical environment offers the opportunity to examine both the personal and cultural histories imbedded in landscapes that define the character's identity and the meaning of the traumatic experience. The primacy of place in the representations of trauma anchors the individual experience within a larger cultural context, and in fact, organizes the memory and meaning of trauma. (149)

The utilization of the place or environment in trauma fiction enables the protagonist to connect to a greater network of cultural and historical context in the process of the defining and overcoming of traumatic experience.

For the previous two centuries, the quandary of recollecting an agonizing past has been important on the part of authors reflecting the times of unexpected 'social, economic and political changes' like 'genocide and disappearing cultures.' Fiction writers 'testify' to the past in this process in order to maintain their individual and communal remembrances from 'assimilation, repression or misrepresentation.' The works of these fiction writers represents a developing body of consciousness against the effects of calamity and repression on the personal 'psyche' with the development of a perception that has increased with the examinations conducted on the psychological results of wars, genocides, poverty, colonization and abuse in family (Vickroy 1).

Trauma in literary criticism is not only limited to fiction but also it has many aspects rooted in the periods of history. As Bessel van der Kolk denotes in *Traumatic Stress*, "From the earliest account of an adolescent's experience of a catastrophic disaster, the eruption of Mount Vesuvius, in *the Letters of Pliny the Younger* (AD 100-113); through the autobiographical description of intra-familial abuse and societal violence provided by Maxim Gorky in *My Childhood*; to the powerful literary rendering of the Holocaust by Elie Wiesel in *Night* … authors have reflected on the formative influences of traumatic experiences" (332). Cathy Caruth in *Unclaimed Experience* points out to the definition of trauma as it is used by modern literary criticism when she says, "trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way its very unassimilated nature-the way it was precisely not known in the first instance-returns to haunt the survivor later on" (4). Like any other traumatic experience,

Caruth's definition is crucial since the survivor of a traumatic incident revisits that traumatizing event with a sense of purity in which s/he had not realized how horrifying a period s/he lived at the time. It is this pure experience, which disturbs the survivor after a certain temporal distance.

The relationship between memory, trauma and nature is a complex one. This work will attempt to investigate the existing connection between nature and trauma. On the other hand, we also examined the close correlation between trauma and memory and how traumatic events affect our memoirs. For the purposes of this work, next section will dwell on autobiography and memoirs as a literary genre and tie the loose ends between trauma nature and memory.

2.2. Autobiography

Now that three autobiographies have been put under scrutiny in this study, it is necessary for the purposes of this study to survey the genre and its basic characteristics. Linda Lang comments on the genre of autobiography pointing out that "autobiography is indeed everywhere one cares to find it" (6). Lang's insight into autobiography underlines the nature of this genre as "the slipperiest of literary genres" (Eakin *How* 2).

Autobiography has been acknowledged as a separate genre in literary criticism from the end of the eighteenth century onwards, in which it is used as an experimental ground for a set of diverse aspects such as authorship, individuality, demonstration and the separation between reality and fiction. Yet "the very pervasiveness and slipperiness of autobiography has made the need to contain and control it within disciplinary boundaries all the more urgent, and many literary critics have turned to definitions as a way of stamping their academic authority on an unruly and even slightly disreputable field" (Anderson 1-2).

Autobiography may have been accepted as a literary genre for over two hundred years now. Yet it is also important to investigate the historical development of the genre before the eighteenth century. Within this context, Saint Augustine's *Confessions* (c. AD 398-400) is often considered as the epitome of the modern autobiography both as a historical starting point and presenting a form for the later examples. *Confessions* can basically be considered as the account of the conversion of Saint Augustine's into

Christianity that entails a sequence of pious and corporeal roaming. His quest which starts in the city of his birth, Thagaste in North Africa, takes him to Rome where he teaches rhetoric and then his journey end in Milan where his conversion is complete at the end (Anderson 18, 20). According to Richard Freadman, Augustine has moved

> life-writing into the domain of psychology and has sought to explain the orientation of a human being in the world on the basis of what his particular mix of recollection and introspection has revealed to him. The moment is extraordinarily dramatic, and on several levels: we witness the transformation of Augustine's soul, but from the perspective of readers who know that what we are witnessing, or at least the way it is being related, constitutes a watershed in the cultural history of the West. (25-26)

According to Linda Anderson, the *Confessions* reconstructs the past exceeding the boundaries of history by questioning it, and consequently helps to constitute an analytical description of autobiography that also surpasses history. As Anderson furthers her discussion, "in approaches to the *Confessions,* critical and autobiographical subjects crucially reflect and reinforce each other. What we see is the unified subject of modern liberal ideology successfully allegorizing their own history" (Anderson 20).

Another example of an autobiography is John Bunyan's *Grace Abounding,* which was written after 1640. It was also a period of proliferation of autobiographies and memoirs that originated out of divine tendencies because the repression of the state in the social and political environment was demolished and easy access to the print culture was maintained. Bunyan composed his autobiography *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* during his imprisonment in 1660 that lasted twelve years. There is no proof that Bunyan had read the *Confessions*, yet his autobiography resembles Augustine's in that it depicts the life story of divine conversion. Nonetheless, one common point that can be observed between the nature of Puritan identity and Augustinian model of the *Confessions* is the quest for the unison with God which may deliver souls from sin bringing consistency to it (Anderson 27-28).

Autobiography, however, in its modern sense, has emerged as a genre in the nineteenth century as William Wordsworth in *Prelude* and John Stuart Mill in

Autobiography attributed ‘redemptive value’ to their misery; they started the contemporary tradition of ‘redemptive’ autobiography writing but their writing did not involve the theological aspect of the works before them (Helsel 365). Building on this issue, Morris points out that “the very composition of the autobiography of a life conceived of as process and flow is in itself an act that may be as privately and vividly important as any of the experiences set down” (15). Thus the recollection and examination of one’s own trauma and putting it in words as the practice of autobiography constitutes a crucial moment both culturally and therapeutically. For example,

> the autobiographical act and the introspection it requires become a significant cultural moment. Wordsworth considers his *Prelude* “as an emblem of his life,” arguing that the act of retrospection and composition is in itself the source of a knowledge higher than the particular truths of the experiences recorded. Moments of “recollection” help Wordsworth toward “recovery” from a painful depression and anxious dread. (qtd. in Helsel 365).

Apart from the therapeutic aspect of autobiography writing, as discussed above, identity plays a crucial role in autobiography writing as well. As discussed in trauma theory previously, a ‘persona’ different than the protagonist is created in the writing process of autobiography. Paul Eakin, who is one of the prominent critics of autobiography, points out to the types of identity models:

> If models of identity occupy a prominent position in the theory of many different disciplines today, so do they in autobiography itself and in autobiography studies as well. […]. Criticism of autobiography compounds the preoccupation wit identity that is endemic to the writing of lives, for it, too, necessarily involves a response to the reigning general model Weintraub posits as central to the genre. When it comes to models of identity and their emplotment in a life story, autobiography studies has become a highly charged field: some would deny the existence of the self in the first place, repudiating autobiography as a stale exercise in a discredited bourgeois

> mythology; others, dissatisfied with the match between the reality of subjective experience and its representation in autobiography, have proposed alternative models of the self; still others, accepting the fundamental proposition of a fully constituted self, seek to replace its familiar white male exemplars from the dominant culture with nancanonical selves drawn from the ranks of the oppressed – whether of class, gender, or racial group. (Eakin *Touching* 77-78).

One of the most common definition of autobiography is formulated by Philippe Lejeune in 1982 who defined it as "a retrospective prose narrative produced by a real person concerning his own existence, focusing on his individual life, in particular on the development of his personality" (193). Nevertheless, as Linda Anderson points out Lejeune was not content with this definition, as it did not render adequate division between autobiography and other similar genres like biography and fiction. As Anderson furthers her point, "a certain latitude in classifying particular cases might be admitted but one condition for autobiography was absolute" that is, it should contain "identity between the author, the narrator, and the protagonist" (Lejeune 193) which seems like impossible because in application, creating identity, as Lejeune mentions, depends on the premeditation of the author (Anderson 2).

Paul John Eakin also refers to the problematic issue of identity in the genre of autobiography in *How Our Lives Becomes Stories*. He points out to the concept of 'a real person' in Lejeune's definition of autobiography rather than ' the individual life' because Lejeune describes a real person as 'a person whose existence is certified by vital statistics and is verifiable.' On the literary basis, this confirmation of the real person is achieved by the name of the author on the title page. However, Eakin draws attention to the fact that the nature of 'a real person' stays unclear since the confirmation is conducted just on the "historicity of the referent" (2). On the contrary, Michael Sprinker in "Fictions of the Self: The End of Autobiography" denies the notion that the borders of autobiography can be identified and categorized since "concepts of subject, self, and author collapse into the act of producing a text" (342). However, Eakin in *Touching the World*, discusses that "memory would be not only literally essential to the constitution of identity (we need think only of the consequences of amnesia) but

also crucial in the sense that it is constantly revising and editing the remembered past to square with the needs and requirements of the self we have become in any present" (67).

In *Acts of Meaning*, Jerome Bruner expresses one of the features of autobiography as "an account given by a narrator in the here and now about a protagonist bearing his name who existed in the there and then, the story terminating in the present when the protagonist fused with the narrator" (121). This quotation is related both with creation of a self other than the subject of autobiography and the formation of this new self in therapeutic relationship between the persona and the protagonist of autobiography. Previously discussed correlation between writing and trauma, traumatic events produces a self other than the protagonist who experiences it. Bruner's definition of autobiography may apply for traumatic life stories that consist traumatic experiences because traumatic memories, as MacCurdy suggests, are "both difficult to recall and so easy as to crowd in when they are unwanted. They can be accessible to narrative recall and so frightening and powerful that they surface in bursts of sensory images that appear to be happening in real time as they are recalled" (23).

Apart from the long-lasting attractiveness, the narrative aspect of autobiography has also been on the focus of criticism conducted on the genre. David Carr, in *Time, Narrative, and History*, points out to the fact that the attention autobiography gathers around the genre is mostly related to the narrative characteristic it possesses because theoretical origins of the narrative consciousness forms a crucial foundation of human experience. Carr argues that writing about one's life requires that the writer assumes the perspective of storyteller inside his own life and gather the bits of experience in order to bring order to his life according to chronological order (61, 168). Drawing from the discussion of Carr, Helsel denotes that the construction of these narratives with structures that is imaginative and picturesque characterizes autobiography as an innovative genre (366).

As the concept of narrative has a crucial role in autobiography and memoirs, it is suitable to have a look at the nature of narratives for the purpose of this section, which will scrutinize the historical roots of autobiography and its characteristics in the contemporary literary world. Within this context, Willie van Peer and Seymour

Chatman in *New Perspectives on Narrative Perspectives* give a definition of narratives in its basic form as such:

> Narratives are texts about events structured in time. They are about agents who act in real or fictional worlds, responding to their inner drives as well as to external circumstances. Narratives typically start with imbalances that protagonists attempt to redress. Usually these attempts lead to complications, setbacks, crises, and ultimately to success or failure. Whether it is a couple attempting reconciliation, a knight in quest of the Holy Grail, or a poor boy overcoming his humble conditions, all such narratives, be they simple or complex, rely on a similar underlying structure. (2)

The definition of Peer and Chatman above constitutes the foundations of the genre of autobiography, yet in order to be categorized as autobiography some artistic and literary features, such as formation of the self and fictional incidences, may be integrated into the life story. As one of the characteristics of autobiography, identity formation and narrative are closely related to each other. Eakin, in *How Our Lives Becomes Stories*, comments on this immediate connection between narrative and identity:

> Narrative is not merely a literary form but a mode of phenomenological and cognitive self-experience, while self – the self of autobiographical discourse – does not necessarily precede its constitution in narrative. I have always been convinced that narrative occupies a central and determining place in the autobiographical enterprise, but I now make a much bolder claim for its function in self-representation. Initially, following Paul Ricouer and others who argue that narrative is the supremely temporal form; I regarded narrative as peculiarly suited on the grounds of verisimilitude to the task of representing our lives in time. (100)

Eakin's comments on the relationship between narrative and identity also signal the fictional aspect that exists in the writing of our life stories. Providing the 'grounds of verisimilitude,' narrating our lives or part of our lives consist bits of information that

has not taken place or bits of information that we wish they had happened in the past. Therefore, the organization and categorization of these materials that are the products of our memory help us to create both a protagonist who existed in the past and a self that is totally different from the protagonist.

Autobiography which depends on aspects such as narrative and memory whether it is traumatic or not, may be dubbed as an unreliable or, in Eakin's terms, 'slippery' genre. This characteristic of autobiography may be interpreted as fallibility of the recollections of the author about his experiences in the past. The degree of remembering, in this case, depends on the nature of the experience. If the author of the autobiography is interpreting a success story, s/he is most probably to recall the specific parts of his/her life in detail and may not need to change any other aspect of the story. On the other hand, traumatic memories may present themselves in the text with a touch of change due to the damaging factors of the traumatic event. Therefore, autobiographies, in which the author has gone through a life changing experience, consist of both the remnants of the traumatic event that may be presented in the text in a distorted form and the inscriptions of the healing process that is sought by putting the traumatic experience into words.

In the following chapters, this study will analyze the autobiographies written by the Great War veterans, who were also prominent literary figures of their times, in the light of the theories discussed so far.

CHAPTER III
EDMUND BLUNDEN'S *UNDERTONES OF WAR*

Representations of the First World War come mostly from the officers. The variety and number of these narratives depended on the various fronts that the War took place ranging from Egypt, Persia in the south to Gallipoli, which was the territory of the Ottoman Empire, and finally the Western Front. Trudi Tate defines the literature of the First World War: "Several kinds of writing should be included. The work of the trench poets is most familiar; to this important body of literature can be added combatants' memoirs and fiction; memoirs by nurses and other civilian participants" who have "popular, patriotic, and propagandistic writings; pacifist writings; and civilian reflections upon the war experience" (162). Having such variety of genres, the Great War literature focused mostly on the traumatic experiences of the War.

This study will focus on the autobiographies of the Great War veterans from the Western Front since the narratives of the officers who related their experiences were British Nationals enlisted in different brigades of the British Expeditionary Force that fought in Europe. Vincent Sherry points out to the extent of literature written in English about the Great War:

> … for a number of reasons in cultural history, the literature written in English retains the largest readership. Within these conditions, the specifically British record of the war remains the most popular, the most powerful and affective. So intense is the imaginative register in British literary history, indeed, that the import of the event can be followed in the difference it made by genre by genre, in writing done by women in particular, and in view of the special grouping "modernism" confers as a term on a sensibility distinctive to this moment in modern English cultural time. (8)

Some of the narratives like the ones put under scrutiny here could be considered as canonical from the perspective of war literature as they offered different point of views on the Great War. The writers of the autobiographies under scrutiny were also acknowledged poets who also wrote verse in the trenches. However, the nature of their

narratives differs from the proposed cultural norms; Paul Edwards indicates that "one of the chief literary interests of their work is the way traditional generic or formal literary features (corresponding broadly with a set of received values about masculinity, heroism, the countryside, and so on) are twisted into something different by the necessity of representing experience that compels a revaluation of such values" (15). Building on Edward's comment, the Great War changed the world's perspective in social, political and economic aspects. Yet looking at the Great War from a closer angle, it not only affected the psychology of the soldiers who fought in the War but also the environment that received collateral damage.

One such officer was Edmund Blunden who wrote his memoir *Undertones of War* in 1928 after "sufficient temporal distance – and in Blunden's case geographical distance, for it was written in Japan – to need to take account of a possible audience not entangled in some way with the war itself" (Edwards 18). The 'temporal distance' Edwards talks about is important both from the perspective of trauma theory and autobiography studies as discussed earlier.

In this chapter, Edmund Blunden's *Undertones of War* will be examined in two sections. In the first section, Blunden's memoir will be scrutinized according to ecological literary theory. The second section will focus on the extent Blunden was able to reflect on the destruction of the environment during the Great War.

3.1. Nature and Coping with Trauma of the War in *Undertones of War*

The Great War led many literary figures in the early twentieth century to question the meaning of their existence in this world because "the First World War was much greater in geographical scope and in human cost than any previous war. It is often described as the world's first industrial war – that is, war on an industrial scale using industrial technology" (Tate 163). The literary figures like Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon, Robert Graves, Ford Madox Ford, Wyndham Lewis who participated in the war was affected as much as the rest of the soldiers. As for the women writers, for example, Vera Brittain took part as a nurse in the war. One such literary figure of the time was Edmund Blunden who was nineteen years old in 1914 and as Paul Fussell points out, he "took country walks near Oxford, read classics and English and refined his pastoral vision"

before the Great War broke out (24). Pastoral in Blunden's literary life played a crucial role and he was educated according to the pastoral tradition, which affected both his verse and prose. In *Undertones of War*, which reflects his experiences of the Great War, his devotedness to nature is evident in the nature episodes he presented throughout his memoir.

Edmund Blunden belonged to a group called Georgian poets, who adopted pastoral conventions in their works longing for an idealized English countryside in the twentieth century. Vincent Sherry's description is sufficient to draw the border of this literary tradition, when he comments, "Georgian style in verse writing, which had been in vogue since 1911 […] was a poetics of elegant simplicity, where a classical transparency in literary vocabulary combined with a steady grace of verbal music and the deep appeal of pastoral's imaginative prospects" (4). Yet Blunden's nature episodes do more than reflecting the idyllic aspect of nature that offers a retreat but they constitute episodes of psychological healing for Blunden in the chaos of the war. As Bernard Bergonzi asserts in *A Study of the Literature of the Great War*, "when dealing with Blunden it is hardly appropriate to talk of the 'rural scene' with all that implies of a background or mere setting: he knows the country with a deep knowledge and a deep love and it pervades the whole structure of his mind and feelings" (68). Along with Bergonzi's observation of Blunden's appreciation and perception of nature that is different from any other poet belonging to the pastoral tradition, Blunden's own words may stand for his knowledge of nature in *Nature in English Literature*:

> We see that times change, machines multiply, cities outrun the dreams of a century ago, agriculture declines; we lament the collapse of old and venerable parks into mere encampments of gracelessness, and the usurpation of old solitudes by despicable modern kraals, and hurtling land-liners sweeping all before them in lanes where the partridge was safe with her brood all the sunny day. Old liberties are closed by new riches, peace broken by new noises, rusticity depraved into new urbanism. (10)

Approximately one year after the publication of *Undertones of War*, Blunden's insight into the environment of England echoes the tone and style of a nature writer

whose appreciation of nature excels any other since he sees the land as the unifying force between humankind and nature when he says, "whether we approach [Englishman] through his summer holiday or his inheritance of literature, we find him Nature's man" (*Nature* 11).

The summer before the war broke out was ironically considered an idyllic period of time:

> Although some memories of the benign last summer before the war can be discounted as standard romantic retrospection turned even rosier by egregious contrast with what followed, all agree that the prewar summer was the most idyllic for many years. It was warm and sunny, eminently pastoral. … For the modern imagination that last summer has assumed the status of a permanent symbol for anything innocently but irrecoverably lost. (Fussell 23-24)

In this quotation the contrast between the pre-war idyllic atmosphere and the loss of innocence in the aftermath offers a picture of things changed with the Great War. The pastoral summer becomes a symbol for loss of innocence in many respects including environmental destruction. One of the other things that changed was the psychology of the soldiers who fought in the war. Although millions of people were affected psychologically, only a few of them were able to return to their traumatic memories by recalling the disastrous experiences they went through. Edmund Blunden was one such officer and literary man who was able to return to his traumatic past. And his genuine devotion to nature among these traumatic memories came to surface throughout his memoir.

Like any other writer, Edmund Blunden may fit into the definition of Jerome Bruner about the writing process of an autobiography. As discussed earlier, Bruner describes it as an account of the narrator which is in the present time about a protagonist who is in the past, yet both the narrator and the protagonist are the same person and they unite with each other at the end of the narrator's story. Blunden creates a persona in the past and this "personation will be of his own earlier self" as Paul Edwards draws attention (18). Blunden reveals this persona to the reader in two places in *Undertones of War*. He resembles his protagonist to a shepherd as suited to traditional pastoral at the

very beginning before he was sent to France and after he experiences a nervous breakdown and leaves the front. In one of these instances, Blunden is in charge of the soldiers who were accepted to rehabilitation due to psychological and physical damages they were exposed in France. He says: "it had been my happiness to march them out to a place at once as sequestered and sunny as I could find, overlooking the lazy Adur, and there to let them bask on the grass, and tell their tales, and be peaceful" (*Undertones* 3). Blunden's anecdote not only reflects the characteristics of pastoral but also emphasizes a point about the therapeutic effect of the environment upon the traumatic experiences. It is apparent from the above quotation that Blunden is able survive through the war with the powers vested in him with his devotion to nature. Blunden's devotion may also be interpreted as his validation that he is a part of nature that is the greater home of humankind.

Some critics like Paul Fussell asserts that Blunden's representation of the Great War is evidently a classical one because

> every word of *Undertones of War*, every rhythm, allusion, and the droll personification, can be recognized as an assault on the war and on the world, which chose to conduct and continue it. Blunden's style is his critique. It suggests what the modern world would look like to a sensibility that was genuinely civilized. (268)

As Fussell remarks Blunden uses pastoral to create a critique of the war "engaging [it] by selecting from the armory of the past weapons against it, which seem to have the greatest chance of withstanding time" (Fussell 269). On the other hand, Paul Edwards develops another perspective on the memories of Edmund Blunden emphasizing that

> [s]uch self-consciously "literary' memoirs draw the memoirists back into the experience at least as much as they resist it, and in this they parallel Blunden's reluctance at the time (reported several times in the memoir) to leave the Front and his companions to take on safer postings in the rear. Neither Blunden nor his memoir quite emerge from the confines of Romanticism or the confines of the war. … The (Romantically) sublime horror of the destruction, which will apparently change Blunden from what he has been throughout his

> experience, is deferred, beyond possible narration, by the "shepherd" he then was. (21)

The transformation of Blunden after his traumatic experiences is inevitable in the face of the horrors of the Great War. Keeping in mind the comments of the critics above, this work will propose a different reading of Blunden's memoir. It cannot be denied that Blunden's extraordinary devotion to and knowledge of nature was effective in composing his memoir; however, it will be proposed that Blunden's nature episodes, which reflect specific details of environment, may be interpreted as his coping with trauma during the war. On the other hand, in relation to trauma theory, these nature episodes of Blunden may be interpreted as the representations of traumatic experiences considering the fact that Blunden wrote the autobiography after a certain temporal distance.

Edmund Blunden was eighteen years old when he enlisted as the youngest and inexperienced officer of the Royal Sussex Regiment. He was sent to the front line in May 1916 and served for two years in the trenches where he was exposed to gas. He also got a Military Cross during his service. Eventually, he was sent back to a training camp due to his inability to serve anymore in the trenches (Fussell 255).

At the very beginning of the memoir, Blunden refers to his role in the army as a "shepherd" whose flock would consist of young soldiers in his watch. Calling himself a "shepherd" is one of the strategies of the autobiography writer to distance himself from the experiences he had gone through. Again according to trauma theory, Blunden by introducing a different persona shows that he is not the same man as the "shepherd" in the beginning of the War. These two assumptions may propose that Blunden changed due to his war experiences. Blunden was one of the writers who made use of pastoral to criticize the War. While criticizing the War by using pastoral, it also became a weapon for Blunden against the traumatic events he went through. Fussell comment on the usage of pastoral in Blunden's case as such:

> Recourse to the pastoral is an English mode of both fully gauging the calamities of the Great War and imaginatively protecting oneself against them. Pastoral reference, whether to literature or to actual rural localities and objects, is a way of invoking a code to hint by antithesis

> at the indescribable; at the same time, it is a comfort in itself, like rum, a deep dugout, or a wool vest. (Fussell 235)

Recalling the environmental details and objects in the memoir, Blunden both tries to shed light to the irony of the war that destroys nature and try to revisit his dreadful memories and get even with them by the help of these pastoral images. In other words, Blunden heals his soul with images provided by nature. Another evidence that nature has a therapeutic effect especially on the war veterans comes from Terry Gifford as he explains:

> A study of therapeutic value of trees for hospital patients found that, compared with patients whose windows looked out onto brick walls, those whose windows gave them a view of trees required fewer painkillers and were discharged earlier. The frame here is a healing one. We not only need this sort of contact, we need to communicate it, examine it, and share its meaning through our symbolic sign systems. Our semiology of nature keeps us sane by reminding us that we are animals. (173-174)

For example, during Blunden's march to report to the headquarters of Royal Sussex Regiment in France, he awkwardly follows the tramlines that are used to transport ammunition and rations with the help of trolleys. He sometimes helps to push them along the lines. He is marching around somewhere called le Touret and Blunden notices "nothing but green fields and plumy grey-green trees and intervening tall roofs; it was as though in this part the line could only be a trifling interruption of a happy landscape" (*Undertones* 9). This bucolic framework that suits for a pastoral poem, however, builds a contrast to what Blunden has to face when he reports to the headquarters and sent to C Company of the Royal Sussex Regiment. In the first morning in the trenches, Blunden realizes that the ''happy landscape" was far behind him now because although the morning was "high and blue and inspiriting, […] the landscape somewhat tattered and dingy" (*Undertones* 11). The grim picture Blunden confronts in his first morning is the beginning of the breakdown of pastoral's bucolic images into the anti-pastoral of the war. As he was given in that same morning an orientation to the trench system via a walk through the reserve trenches, Blunden notices, "at some points in the trenches,

bones pierced through their shallow burial, and skulls appeared like mushrooms" (*Undertones* 11).

The first images from the trenches Blunden recorded in his memory was horrifying enough to traumatize him because skeletons of the dead soldiers became a part of the trenches. Blunden's connection to nature is the key element in his survival in the trenches. For example, his recalling of a night in Festubert that was his first installment as an officer was at the "Old British Lane" which "had the appearance of great age and perpetuity," proves to be a way of coping with the war in the part of Edmund Blunden:

> On the blue and lulling mist of evening, proper to the nightingale, the sheepbell and falling waters, the strangest phenomena of fire inflicted themselves. The red sparks of German trench mortars described their seeming-slow arcs, shrapnel shells clanged in crimson, burning, momentary cloudlets, smoke billowed into a tidal wave, and the powdery glare of many a signal light showed the rolling folds. (*Undertones* 12)

Blunden depicts two scenes contrasting with each other in this recollection: one of them is the soothing night atmosphere and the other is the smoke cloud of trench mortars. In the first scene described, Blunden seems to compensate the discomfort of being in the trenches. Yet a night that Blunden can only imagine in the idyllic English countryside is intruded by the German shellfire that leaves unearthly materials into the air such as shrapnel pieces and the smoke of the mortars swiftly merging into air like a tidal wave. It is one of many moments for Blunden in which he focuses his attention on the positive effect of the scene presented by the beautiful night as a recuperation process rather than the horrible aspect of heavy shelling.

Blunden's first three months in France is tolerable as his battalion was often located near Festubert, Cuinchy, and Richebourg in the spring of 1916 where he also witnesses the above described scenery. However, the following days is more than traumatic because his battalion is ordered for action near La Bassée on June 1916, which is the first battle of the four that would leave him in a traumatized condition. As a result of the traumatic experiences he would be transferred to training assignments. The other three attacks on German front took place at Hamel on the 3rd of September 1916, at Thiepval

in the Somme during late October and early November, and the last one took place in July 1917 at Ypres that is also known as the battle dubbed Passchendaele (Fussell 260).

Before engaging in big attacks that will transform Blunden's psychology, he recalls the peaceful rest quarters of his battalion in Festubert. It is again one of the moments in which Blunden finds the kind of environment that is not entirely disturbed by the war. The garden described below belongs to the headquarters of the battalion in the rest billets, yet as Blunden recalls it, it is not even safe due to the enemy artillery:

> Festubert Village was an interesting contortion of whimsically balanced bricks and beams, and on the whole friendly to the fighting man. … [O]ur garden was lovely, with flowering shrubs, streaked and painted blooms, gooseberry bushes, convenient new gas and paths, and walks between evergreen hedges – 'unsafe by day,' as the notice boards said. (*Undertones* 17)

The garden for Blunden represents a safe haven from the stress of the war. It is like the kind of environment that enables Blunden to carry on in the fight. In the trench warfare, relieving of the troops in the front line was a common military conduct in the Western Front. It was done by taking the place of the troops that defended the line for a certain period of time. The relieved troops would go back to rest billets that were generally small towns or villages. In one of these incidences, while leaving the trenches across a wheat field, Blunden confesses, "the joyful path away from the line, on that glittering summer morning, was full of pictures for my infant war-mind" (*Undertones* 21). Blunden's pre-battle consciousness of his environment is visible in the above depiction of a joyful path leading to rest billets. Yet what kind of a resonance Blunden's memoirs might get in the contemporary ecological literary criticism remains a question to be answered.

In "Bakthinian Road to Ecological Insight," Michael J. McDowell tries to interpret Bakthin's literary concepts such as 'carnivalesque' according to ecological literary theories. He points out to the process of integrating earlier stages of literary criticism into ecological literary theories that is recommended by Cheryll Glotfelty. She classifies the representations of nature in literature in her "Toward an Ecological Literary Criticism." The first type of criticism Glotfelty proposes is the "images of nature in

canonical literature" type of analysis that invokes the reader's awareness of stereotypes, alterations and absences of the environment in literature. The second type of literary criticism is the discovery or identification of the works that stayed untouched works of both overlooked and acknowledged authors, in which "biographical criticism" has a crucial role. As the final type of criticism, Glotfelty points out to the theory that will involve the scrutiny of deep ecology, ecofeminism, and ecological poetics (qtd. in McDowell 383). However, there are some critics who are ecologically oriented who are not happy with the bucolic representation of nature in the pastoral tradition as discussed earlier in Ecocriticism vs. Pastoral Tradition section of this study. Building up on Glotfelty's categorization of the ecological literary theories, Barbara Currier Bell also suggests: "we readily accept that humanists can and should have new license for catalogues regarding, say, images of women, utopian visions, or 'the hero.' Why not equally flexible attention to views of humanity in nature? What is needed is a freer heuristic 'anatomy' of the views …" (249). On the other hand, according to Glen A. Love, anthropocentricism stresses that society is constructed in a complicated way whereas nature is simple which leads modern readers into a misconception that literature in which nature functions in a crucial role is unconnected and insignificant. However, Love points out to the "adaptive strategies" nature can create that is beyond human understanding such as "the earth and the myriad systems of life which it nourishes." (230-31). Love carries his disposition to literature, which is a product of culture, and he suggests that literature should scrutinize the complexity as it depicts the human lives. He claims that

> [i]n the pastoral tradition we have a long and familiar heritage in literature which purports to do just that. But the pastoral mode, in an important sense, reflects the same sort anthropocentric assumptions, which are in such dire need of reassessment. Literary pastoral traditionally posits a natural world, a green world, to which sophisticated urbanities withdraw in search of the lessons of simplicity which only nature can teach. There, amid sylvan groves and meadows and rural characters – idealized images of country existence – the sophisticates attain a critical vision of good, simple life, a vision

> which will presumably sustain them as they return at the end to the great world on the horizon. (231)

This negative view on pastoral projected by Glen Love may seem to fit what Blunden is doing in *Undertones of War*; however, nature is brought to the center in *Undertones of War* with Blunden's devotion to and his profound knowledge of it. As Love points out to the examples from American literature, he emphasizes the fiction of Willa Cather in which Nature says, "I am here still, at the bottom of things warming the roots of life; you cannot starve me nor tame me nor thwart me; I made the world, I rule it, I am its destiny" (qtd. in Love 235). Although nature in Blunden's work does not manifest itself as in Cather's fiction, it has a crucial role in gently reminding the reader that nature, against all the destruction going on in the war, is the one thing that connects humankind to life. To give an example, Blunden's style has a genteel way of inserting the place of nature in the face of human civilization while his Company starts from the rest billets:

> Acres of self-sown wheat glistened and sighed as we wound our way between, where rough scattered pits recorded a hurried firing-line of long ago. Life, life abundant sang here and smiled; the lizard ran warless in the warm dust; and the ditches were trembling quick with odd tiny fish, in the world as remote as Saturn. (*Undertones* 21)

If Blunden's memoir is evaluated from the perspective of Glotfelty's first type of criticism that "invokes the reader's awareness of stereotypes, alterations and absences of the environment in literature", the presence of nature in Blunden's work may suggest that recovering from traumatic experiences of the war is a life-long process. Blunden also declares in his final days, "my experiences in the First World War have haunted me all my life and for many days I have, it seemed, lived in that world rather than this" (Fussell 256). As Blunden could not overcome the trauma caused by the Great War, his memories were invaded with these traumatic experiences that he also relates in *Undertones of War*.

In *Undertones of War*, nature has a way of inflicting moods over the soldiers as Blunden comments in a village near Cuinchy where their rest billets are located, "the village was friendly, and near it lay the marshy and full of tall and whispering reeds,

over which evening looked her last with an unusual sad beauty, well suiting one's mood" (*Undertones* 33). As Paul Fussell comments, "to Blunden, both the countryside and English literature are 'alive,' and both have 'feelings.' They are equally menaced by the war. And the French countryside is little different" (259). Yet, despite the grim atmosphere provided by the nightfall, Blunden and his friend Limbery-Buse find solace "in a little side room of a miner's cottage, with vine leaves peeping in, and a flower-bed in front" (*Undertones* 33). As the war went on, Blunden and his Company had little time to use rest billets, yet even in these short intervals, Blunden is lucky to enjoy the comfort of a cozy cottage:

> Once again we had a night or two out of trenches, and I saw anew the farmhouse where I had joined the battalion, still steadfast, still unchangeable, children and chickens and kitchen stove. It was my luck now to have a room in a farm cottage, a bed of mahogany, sheets, the usual straw mattress, with an interesting camber. Peaceful little one, standest thou yet? Cool nook, earthly paradisal cupboard with leaf green light to see poetry by, I fear much that 1918 was the ruin of thee. For my refreshment, one night's sound sleep, I'll call thee friend, 'not inanimate.' (*Undertones* 51)

Such luxury as a good night's sleep in a comfortable cottage that resembles the one in a rustic painting is Blunden's only support to survive through the intermittent raids and battles during the war. Blunden mentions another such incident in the spring of 1917 at Ypres when they are relieved from the trenches and "migrated into the world of ivied dovecotes and orchard, where a battalion sees itself as a united family, horses and all within the same hedgerow" (*Undertones* 145). The scene above is again one of the rare ones that a soldier may find the chance to recuperate in. Yet Blunden informs the reader that they will be on their way "to attack Pilkem Ridge, of which High Command was one bastion" (*Undertones* 145). Blunden also emphasizes the power of nature that unites, in this instance, the counterparts of a Company while he also signaled the possibility of losing some of the friends from this flock of people he destined to protect.

However, Edmund Blunden, after experiencing four major battles in the Great War in which he was exposed to gas worsening his asthma and he lost a great number of

friends to the war, was no more able to fight as he recalls: “I was uneasy in my job, and could not bring myself into proper relations with my seniors. … my trench career was over” (*Undertones* 189-190). Blunden turns to nature in his memoirs as a way of healing his soul. This act can also be considered as a survival method while he accepts his existence in the earth. In other words, Blunden replaced his “ego-consciousness” with that of “eco-consciousness” that might qualify him not just as a pastoral writer but also as an ecologically conscious writer who has freed himself from the boundaries of anthropocentricism.

3.2. The War and the Representations of Destruction of Nature

Susan L. Graham defines three fundamental types of environmental destruction during wartime in *The Ecology of War*. First of them is called *direct destruction* of the environment which is related to deliberate actions that will complete a specific objective like setting fire the fields that contains the crops which will feed the enemy or destroying the trees in order to spot the hiding place of the enemy. The second category is called *incidental direct destruction* of the environment that involves again a tactical purpose for an offensive or defensive act like digging trenches or shelling the supply lines of the enemy. These two categories are not new to humankind from the time we made our first battle. Yet, the last type, Graham explains, is a long lasting and hard to notice destruction if not observed carefully. It may go unnoticed during war and it is called *indirect destruction*. Graham gives the example of birds becoming extinct due to demolition of their habitats (11-12). The First World War was not the first or the last war in which we could notice the type of destructions as Susan L. Graham defines them; however, it was the first global war that humanity saw at the very beginning of the twentieth century when many people were celebrating the extent of modernity humankind has reached.

This study will focus on the destruction of the war in Europe, specifically Belgium and northern France as they constitute the battlefield also known as the Western Front. But the impact area was not limited to Europe as Trudi Tate points out: “fighting [occurred] in Italy, Russia, Turkey, Egypt, Palestine, Persia, Mesopotamia, Cameroon, German East Africa, the North Sea and the Falkland Islands” in which “approximately

seventy million people served … [and] more than nine million died. Millions were mentally or physically injured (163). While Tate tries to draw a geographical picture of the war and mentions the human casualties, she leaves out the environmental aspect of the Great War.

In this section, Blunden's reflections on the destruction of the environment will be discussed in terms of contemporary ecological literary theory. By focusing on the extent of his reaction as an ecologically conscious writer, it will be proposed that Blunden may as well be accepted as an environmental writer considering his sensitivity to the destruction of the environment. Before continuing with Blunden's reflections on the destruction, it is necessary to examine the relationship between humankind and environment especially from the perspective of warfare.

In several parts of this work, the assumption that humankind has dominance over environment has been echoed as a pejorative perspective. Environmental literary theory defends otherwise because environment sustains life on earth and physical environment plays a crucial role in the existence of humankind. Therefore, the discussion between the social and literary critics has been put under scrutiny indicating that the relationship between humankind and nature is a complex one in literary studies because it is again humankind who gives voice to the silent nature that embraces us.

Aside from the damage of war to the general population, which provides a certain level of irony since man kills another man to survive, the destruction of environment in the warfare characterizes another level of irony that could be interpreted as the destruction of the habitat that provides a healthy existence to the both parties of the war. In Blunden's case, the environment that was affected was France.

Susan L. Graham describes the Great War as a landmark in the history of the wars fought so far due to the fact that the transportation of the troops to long distances was made easy and with the help of bombs, man could kill the enemy without even facing them. Air force and tanks were also used in this extensive war. The use of technology extensively also enlarged the area that was destroyed. As Graham points out furthermore, the trenches that went through farmlands caused the land to become infertile for many years, which can be observed even at present (19).

One soldier in a letter to his family in 1916 writes about the destruction to the whole land with the gigantic holes and ditches created by the shelling exclaiming "How ever they will get it smoothed out again is more than I can imagine" (qtd in Fussell 69). After the war, some who thought that the extent of damage to the environment was far beyond recovery defended the abandonment of the land, especially where the Somme attack took place, yet Fussell describes the recuperation of the land as follows:

> Today the Somme is a peaceful but sullen place, unforgetting and unforgiving. The people, who work largely at raising vegetables and grains, are "correct" but not friendly. To wander now over the fields destined to extrude their rusty metal fragments for centuries is to appreciate in the most intimate way the permanent reverberations of July 1916. When the air is dump you can smell rusted iron everywhere, even though you see only wheat and barley. (69)

If we go back to Blunden's memoirs, the attitude he adopts on the demolition of the environment is as Paul Edwards asserts, "a modernist stance" like "other Georgian poets compelled to represent war and destruction, adopted through force of circumstance rather than aesthetic predilection" (20). This study proposed in the previous section that nature played a crucial role in Blunden's healing process during the war. In addition to that it was also discussed that nature episodes in Blunden's memoir are the reflections of his traumatic experiences that haunted him for the rest of his life. On the other hand, Blunden may be regarded as an early ecocritic who shows his discomfort about the destruction of the environment. Fussell points out to the aspect of Blunden's enthusiasm with the following words:

> To speak of rural England as "this Arcadia" would be to register considerable pastoral enthusiasm. But to speak of it, as Blunden does quite solemnly, as "this genuine Arcadia" is to commit oneself to an extraordinary position, even if one is writing an essay titled "The Preservation of England" and defending the countryside against the commercial despoilers of the 1930's. (258)

Blunden's disposition towards nature and the destruction of it by the war leaves him in awe and he goes back to those moments of destruction in *Undertones of War*. He says in

‘Preliminary’ that I know that memory has her little ways, and by now she has concealed precisely that look, that word, that coincidence of nature without and nature within which I long to remember” (*Undertones* xi). Another critic relates Blunden’s frustration to his being “the countryman who saw ‘a whole sweet countryside amuck with murder’; for whom the sight of rich and fruitful land, much like his own, laid waste was an additional torment” (qtd. in Fussell 259). Some of his memories in this context are related to the war destroys the land that is sacred to him.

The range of demolition caused by the war certainly differed from the trenches that directly faced the enemy to the ones that were used for the rest of the soldiers. Blunden comes across with such an incident when he was going to report to his Company headquarters. On the way, he “[looks] on the cultivated fields and the colonnades of trim trees” which seems like a peaceful scenery as the man who transports them says, “Germans had dropped several very large shells almost on top of the quartermaster and his horse. Blew his horse one-sided” (*Undertones* 7). Apart from Blunden’s ironical rendering of the landscape with a horrible incidence from the war, we can understand that behind the trenches, environment is less affected, but still dangerous and full of shell holes caused by German bombs.

As this study furthers the aspect of the destruction in the Front, it will be appropriate to talk about the land called No Man’s Land that stayed between the trenches of British and German armies. This ground presents a gentle irony on the part of environmental theory since contrary to the claims of humankind to every piece of land and animate and inanimate subject, general notion of the warring parties found it suitable to dub the earth that separated adversaries as No Man’s Land. However, the reason why it is called like that is even more ironical because almost every malady and destruction that trench warfare offered, presented itself in No Man’s Land.

In order to understand the vastness of No Man’s Land, one should know about the trench system that constituted the backbone of the Western Front in the First World War. Paul Fussell asserts that the gigantic trench system could encircle the world if German trenches were included in the calculation:

> Henri Barbusse estimated that the French front alone contained about 6250 miles of trenches. Since the French occupied a little more than

> half the line, the total length of numerous trenches occupied by the British must come to about 6000 miles. We thus find over 12,000 miles of trenches on the Allied side alone. When we add the trenches of the Central Powers, we arrive at a figure of about 25,000 miles, equal to a trench sufficient to circle the earth. (37)

Looking at the above figures, we may conclude that No Man's Land was the epitome of harm done by heavy shelling and the wires that have been put up to stop any of the parties to advance on one another's front trenches. As the war went on, Blunden described No Man's Land in Cuinchy Sector as a "corrupt and dangerous" place when he and three others go for a reconnaissance mission at night to this 'corrupt' land that "smelt badly" (*Undertones* 39). No Man's Land was also a "bone yard" as Fussell calls it emphasizing the bones that appear in the earth from time to time as the fields are plowed even so many years after the war ended. He focuses on the example of Albert, which is "one of the saddest places in France" due to the "being condemned to live in this bone yard and backwater, where even the crops contend with soil once ruined by gas" (70).

Gas was another deadly counterpart of the First World War since it was the first time a biological weapon was used by both parties. It was not only dangerous for humankind but also for the environment as Fussell denotes above. Blunden was also once gassed during an offensive and his asthma was affected badly. In the beginning, Blunden is not aware of the destruction of the environment, but as he moves to the front trenches where the German shells become a daily routine; he notices the extent of destruction. In one of these many lines constituting the trench system, Blunden again gives us a picture of annihilation that is meant both for the animate and inanimate:

> Over Coldstream Lane, the chief communication trench, deep red poppies, blue and white cornflowers and darnel thronged the way to destruction; the yellow cabbage-flowers thickened here and there in sickening brilliance. Giant teazels made a thicket beyond. Then the ground became torn and vile, the poisonous breath of fresh explosions skulked all about, and the mud, which choked the narrow passages, stank as one pulled through it… (*Undertones* 30)

The above scene is one of the many which makes Blunden "understand the drift of the war" and which also depicts the degree of the destruction of the pastoral beauty of France landscape (*Undertones* 27). Blunden's transition from a bucolic representation of the environment into a grim and horrifying one in the same framework may be a confirmation of how the environment deteriorates as the war progresses. Apart from gas, shelling, and digging the earth to open up trenches, mining was another military operation that destroyed environment. The effects of mining lasted longer than expected. Tunnels were dug that was intended to reach to German trenches at strategic points during the Great War and mines with massive demolition power were implanted in these tunnels. Blunden reflects upon one of the explosions of these mines as "a big drum-tap underground, and the earth heaved up to a great height in solid crags and clods, with devolving clouds of dust; there was the flame and roar, then this dark pillar in the sunlight, then a twittering, a hissing and thudding as it collapsed" (*Undertones* 33). As Paul Fussell reflects on the long lasting effect of these mines, he gives the example of Messines, which is south of Ypres where the miners placed one million pounds of high explosives in twenty-one "horizontal mine shafts" and succeeded in blowing nineteen of them. From the remaining two mines, one went off in 1955 in the restored town of Ploegsteert " forcibly reminding the citizens" of horrendous tenacity of the First World War (14).

Blunden takes the reader into another realm in nature, the forest, as it is one of the most affected environments in the First World War. During the Somme offensive, Thiepval Wood, which "not long before had been so horrible and mad" plays a crucial role in German defenses (*Undertones* 95). Blunden's insight into this area indicates the extent of destruction. He describes the scene as such:

> …climbing the dirty little road over the steep bank, one immediately entered the land of despair. Bodies, bodies and their useless gear heaped the gross waste ground; the slimy road was soon only a mud track which passed a whitish tumulus of ruin with lurking entrances, some spikes that had been pine-trees, a bricked cellar or two, and died out. The village pond, so blue on the map, had completely disappeared. … The shell holes were mostly small lakes of what was

> no doubt merely rusty water, but had a red and foul semblance of blood. (*Undertones* 95)

Drastic changes in the environment can be observed from the account of Blunden. For example, a natural pond in a town may cease to exist and its place is taken by the shell-craters that are filled with rusty water and blood of the fallen soldiers. Yet it was not only the soldiers who had fallen in the war but also trees since they were needed for various reasons in the war. To give an example, they were used as duckboards that connected the lines of trenches in the front. And, if we recall the figures offered by Paul Fussell about the length of the trenches in France, a great many wood was needed to conduct warfare. In *Ecology of War*, Susan L. Graham also reflects on the destruction of the Thiepval Wood as "completely barren, with no grass, trees, or animals left alive" (19). Although Graham's description of the Thiepval is not as literary as Blunden's, Graham states, forests got the utmost harm in the First World War. While the war continued, 494,000 acres of forestland out of 1.5 million acres were demolished and in addition to this battle damage, enormous amount of lumber was manufactured which were about 20 billion board feet for the duckboards and other warfare tactics (19).

One of the most affected areas in the Great War was around Ypres because the Allied forces formed a salient to stop German occupation of Belgium. A salient is a military tactic that makes a loop into the enemy lines, which makes it a disadvantage for the defender as the enemy from all three sides surrounds them. Ypres Salient in which five battles were fought between the Allied forces including British, French, Canadian and Belgian saw complete demolition in the Second Battle of Ypres, in which gas was also used and Ypres was evacuated completely due the massive destruction (Wikipedia Ypres Salient). Edmund Blunden's observation of Ypres Salient is unique and quite suited to his literary diction: "the sad Salient lay under a heavy silence, broken here and there by the ponderous muffled thump of trench mortar shells round the line" (*Undertones* 119). The environment in such places as Ypres Salient is exposed to too much destruction since that geographical loop into the enemy territory makes the land more vulnerable to the enemy artillery and troops' firepower as Blunden also depicts by these words:

> We went into the naked eastward area, studied the trenches and their bleak-faced sentries, and shivered in the wind. Then, later in the day, we heard for the first time the bursting of shells in Ypres. Their shattering impact ent out a different noise to any before heard by me – a flat and battering, locked-in concussion. The silence and solitude recaptured the wilderness of looped and windowed wanes. (*Undertones* 120)

Blunden's disappointment is reflected on his descriptions of the land, yet the land in Ypres Salient at the time he visits, is already unrecognizable due to heavy battles that were fought over it. In such abnormal conditions, in which dead bodies had to be left in No Man's Land to rot and their bones and skulls spring like mushrooms from the trench walls, rodent population was multiplied beyond control. As Paul Fussell relates one officer's narrative from Ypres Salient, rats are the new malady of the soldiers: "We are fairly plagued with rats. They have eaten nearly everything in the mess, including the tablecloth and the operation orders! We borrowed a large cat and shut it up at night to exterminate them, and found the place empty next morning. The rats must have eaten it up, bones, fur, and all, and dragged it to their holes" (qtd in Fussell 49). Apart from the destruction of the landscape, whether a farmland or an ordinary field, the undesirable conditions the battles created, such as inability to collect all of the fallen soldiers from No Man's Land and giving them proper burials, led to natural anomalies like the increase of rat population. This was not only true for Ypres Salient, but all along the trench line of the Allied forces. The observation made by Blunden in the above quotation drives him into a dismal mood about the area as he writes:

> I had longed to see Ypres, under the old faith that things are always described in blacker colours than they deserve; but this first view was a tribute to the soldier's philosophy. The bleakness of events had found its proper theatre. The sun could surely never shine on such a simulacrum of divine aberration. (*Undertones* 120)

During their deployment in Ypres Salient, Blunden observes many incidents in which the effects of the war are visible to a keen eye like his. In one of these moments, Blunden mistakes German bombardment targeted on another Company along the

trenches, yet, in the morning, he learns that the bombs were intended for his Company. Blunden tries to reach to the trench that was bombed last night and he notices "along that lonely little trench by Gully Farm" that "there were many new details of landscape, great holes and hunks and jags of timber…the raided bombing post soon after appeared, trampled, pulverized, blood-stained, its edges slurred into the level of the general wilderness" (*Undertones* 126).

In and out of the trenches and battles, what another thing that leaves Blunden in amazement is his second visit to Ypres because this time he could not recognize where they came as he "asked a bystander" and "gasped at his answer" since he "looked over the befouled fragments of Ypres' the solitary sheet of water, Zillebeke Lake, the completed hopelessness" (*Undertones* 167). Edmund Blunden who had been to many major sites of action during his service in the Royal Sussex Company remarks many undisturbed landscape on his route while marching over to the next town or front line. However, these scenes that he observes with keen eyes are also doomed for destruction because of the changing movements of both armies. In one of these moments around Kemmel while marching to another camp, Blunden describes the landscape as follows:

> Gently the chestnut and aspen leaves were drifting down with he weight of the day's dampness. We passed over hills still green, and by mossy cottages, with onions drying under the eaves. It was as though war forgot some corners of Flanders. (Next year, war remembered that corner with a vengeance.) (*Undertones* 178-179)

The destruction of the environment finds voice through Blunden's recollections throughout his service in the Western Front. Yet as the environment was destroyed in four years with countless battles, Blunden's physical and psychological condition also gradually deteriorated and he was sent back to England. At the end of his memoir, his enthusiasm for nature that he is so devoted to is shown by his belief in the existence of the nymphs inhabiting the countryside when he says, "could any countryside be more sweetly at rest, more alluring to naiad and hamadryad, more incapable of dreaming a field-gun" (*Undertones* 191).

In conclusion, Edmund Blunden is considered in the context of Great War literature as a pastoral writer. This may be an undeniable fact when his involvement with nature

and archaic scenery is so intense in his memoir. However, Blunden may also be categorized as an early ecocritic who feels disturbed by the destruction of nature as a literary figure of his time. *Undertones of War* in this context may be evaluated as a criticism and protest to the destruction of the environment by the War.

CHAPTER IV

SIEGFRIED SASSOON'S *MEMOIRS OF AN INFANTRY OFFICER*

Siegfried Sassoon was another prominent literary figure of the Great War who was one of the acknowledged war poets. Sassoon was born in Kent in 1886. They were three brothers and one of them was killed in 1915 in Gallipoli. Sassoon grew up with his mother since his father left them to look for his family roots in Persia. His mother had "literary" and "artistic" relatives that helped the development of his poetry such as Edmund Gosse and Edward Marsh. He grew up in a pastoral and traditional environment and his early works are the result of his growing up in such an environment (Fussell 90). He attended Cambridge but dropped out without getting a degree. Between 1905 and 1912 he lived in rural countryside playing cricket, fox-hunting and writing poetry. It was this period of time that he published nine volumes of "dreamy Keatsian and Tennysonian verse" (Fussell 90-91).

Memoirs of an Infantry Officer was the second book of a semi-autobiographical trilogy about George Sherston that was published in 1930. Paul Edwards asserts that the whole trilogy, the *Complete Memoirs of George Sherston* (1928, 1930 and 1936) might as well be treated as fiction because Sassoon uses Sherston character in order to give an account of his pre-war life, his war experience and the aftermath. *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man*, which was published in 1928, is about young Sassoon and it covers the part of his early experience in the army (23). In *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer*, the full extent of the experience Sassoon went through in the Great War is reflected. Fussell points out to the aspect of *Fox-Hunting Man* that presents a "pastoral romance, but pastoral romance complicated by criticism from the forty year old Sassoon" (94). Fussell's comment points out to one of the features of autobiography that is the transformation of the narrator. Sassoon's transformation is psychological due to his war experiences and it is clearly visible in *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer*.

Sassoon's creation of a fictional character other than his early self presents a problem in terms of the genre of autobiography. One of the characteristics of autobiography writing, as discussed earlier, is the creation of a "persona" that is different from his present self. However, in Sassoon's case, the distancing of one's self from the person,

who went through the real experience is carried to a deeper level because Sassoon creates a fictional character, George Sherston. Paul Edwards finds it “less necessary as the experience the trilogy recounts became more distant in time” and he claims, “if the works is still read, it is because it provides an account of Sassoon’s own experience” (23). Distancing himself from what he has gone through with a fictional character, Sassoon is criticized by perhaps his best friend Robert Graves, another important literary figure of the time, on the grounds that “by writing in the guise of George Sherston, he had avoided facing the moral problems inherent in the autobiographical presentation of experience” (Wilson 3). Graves’s point might have some truth, as Sassoon became an anti-war supporter during the war. Although it points out to a part of Sassoon’s transformation, Sassoon’s anti-war tendencies almost got him court-martialed that was a moral issue Sassoon wanted to distance himself. Yet, as Edward suggests, it is still Siegfried Sassoon who was there and writes his traumatic memories. Therefore, the structure of *Memoirs of An Infantry Officer* in terms of autobiographical traits does not affect the purpose of this chapter that will scrutinize the relationship between Sassoon and nature. For this reason, the narrator will be addressed as Sassoon instead of the name of his fictional character, George Sherston in the following sections.

4.1. Nature and the Representations of Trauma in *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer*

Siegfried Sassoon like Edmund Blunden belonged to pastoral tradition that longed for an idealized way of life in the countryside. He grew up playing cricket and hunting foxes in the rural England. When the news of the war reached Sassoon, he was "busy fox hunting and playing serious country cricket" (Fussell 24). Sassoon had a considerably comfortable life than Blunden and he was twenty-eight years old when he was enlisted in the Royal Welch Fusiliers. His comfortable life made him question the realities of the war more bitterly in his memoirs. Paul Edwards comments on Sassoon's work stating that

> [t]he *Memoirs* have psychology at their center, but the psychology of Sherston is ultimately only of importance to us because of the war experience that tests it, almost to destruction. This makes the trilogy a kind of travesty of a "novel of education," tracking its hero from infancy to manhood: his early "education" consists solely in the outdoor sports of fox-hunting and cricket, with "manhood" represented by the helpless and tormented figure in hospital at the end. (24)

In this section, Sassoon's reflections on the landscape will be discussed proposing a different reading of *Infantry Officer* that will focus on Sassoon's healing process during and after the war. As far as the psychology of Sassoon is concerned, his mental condition seems very grim because at the very beginning of *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer*, Sassoon, or his persona, Sherston confesses, "as for me, I had more or less made up my mind to die because in the circumstances there didn't seem anything else to be done" (*Infantry* 1). Sassoon's declaration about his situation in the war delineates the unstable condition of his mental health that is the result of traumatic experiences he goes through during the time he spent in the trenches. In other words, the Great War destroys his vision of peaceful and quiet world before he joined the army. Robert Hemmings in *Modern Nostalgia* comments on Sassoon's traumatic experiences from a different perspective. He claims that

> his intense preoccupation with himself empowered a remarkable autobiographical focus, an energy that produced scores of poems (published and unpublished) and six separate books of prose that plumb the (albeit circumscribed) depths of one individual's ongoing representation of the fragmentary nature of modern subjectivity. This autobiographical focus is steeped in nostalgia; moreover, I maintain that the nostalgia of Sassoon's writing after the First World War is indelibly marked by the legacy of his traumatic experiences. It is through this very commingling of nostalgia and trauma that Sassoon's writing makes its most trenchant contributions to the expanding field of modernisms. (2)

Hemmings' analysis shows two aspects of Sassoon's work. One of them is the modernist tendency of Sassoon, which may sound reasonable due to the heightened sense of modernism before and after the Great War. The other aspect is Sassoon's nostalgic tendency that could seem normal at a time of heightened modernism. Hemmings assesses, this nostalgia was aroused by his traumatic experiences. As he continues his analysis:

> not only do nostalgia and trauma operate from the same liminal space between memory and forgetting, but also that they are often similarly rooted in the experience of war, and more particularly, the experience of surviving war. Nostalgia, which Sassoon sought at times to deploy consciously as a curative strategy, reaches back into a past that predates the traumatic losses of war. … . The temporal and spatial distance of pre-war life did not offer the possibility of mastery, but rather held the deceptive appeal of escape from the traumatized post-war present and the lingering after-effects of war experience. (3)

Hemmings' insight into the relationship of trauma and nostalgia may offer an insight into the relationship between nature and Sassoon. As mentioned earlier, Sassoon's nature episodes in his memoir may be interpreted as his psychological healing in nature. Thus, he tries to feel a sense of relief during the war by turning to nature. As Paul Fussell suggests,

> [r]ecourse to pastoral is an English mode of both fully gauging the calamities of the Great War and imaginatively protecting oneself against them. Pastoral reference, whether to literature or to actual rural localities and objects, is a way of invoking a code to hint by antithesis at the indescribable; at the same time, it is a comfort in itself, like rum, a deep dugout, or a wooly vest. (235)

Fussell's assumptions on the use of pastoral can be considered as a way of relief from the conditions of the war. What makes these inscriptions of memory about landscape crucial is that they represent the healing power of nature on the soldiers. Like Blunden, Sassoon also had a difficult trench experience during the war, but his experience was interrupted due to his illness and war wounds. Thus, Sassoon's memoir is constructed according to this condition that required going in and out of the front line. He also mentions this pattern, "so it will go on, I thought; in and out, in and out, till something happens to me" (*Infantry* 84). Therefore, a kind of contrast is also formed in Sassoon's autobiography that led him to see both sides of the war. Travelling to England due to a regular leave or a war wound, Sassoon develops a sense opposition in *Infantry Officer*.

Memoirs of an Infantry Officer opens in Mametz Wood in spring, which was one of the objectives in the Battle of Somme in 1916. Sassoon has instructions "to proceed to the Fourth Army School … for a month's refresher course" because his Colonel "had heard that [he]'d been looking for trouble" (*Infantry* 1). The trouble Sassoon was looking for was taking revenge of a friend's death he calls Dick Tiltwood who was actually "Lt. David Thomas, from South Wales, described by Graves in *Good-bye to All That* as simple, gentle, fond of reading" (qtd in Fussell 94). This was the first time Sassoon was going out of trenches to recuperate in the Army School.

The contrast in Sassoon's mood is evident from his first account in *Infantry Officer*. First, he is sorry because "[his] personal grievance against the Germans was interrupted for at least four weeks"; second he makes "a separate peace with the late April landscape" as he and his servant travels on the bus feeling "a fresh breeze in [their] faces" (*Infantry* 1). Sassoon's reflections on the landscape and nature that surrounded Somme were other contrasts to the conditions in the trenches. Going out of the front line

is an experience that is recalled through the nature imagery is one of the signs of psychological recovery. Sassoon's observation on the general condition of Somme gives the difference clearly between the war and peaceful landscape:

> The war was abundantly visible in supply-convoys, artillery horse-lines, in the dirty white tents of a Red Cross camp, or in troops going placidly to their billets. But everyone seemed to be off duty; spring had arrived and the fruit trees were in blossom; breezes ruffled the reedy pools and creeks along the Somme, and here and there a peaceful fisherman forgot that he was a soldier on active service. I had been in close contact with trench warfare, and here was a demonstration of its contrast with cozy civilian comfort. (*Infantry* 2)

Renato Poggioli defines the above episode as "bucolic interludes or pastoral oases" that serve as "points of illumination or refreshment in late-medieval or Renaissance narrative" (qtd. in Fussell 236). For example, Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* (1929) and Raleigh Trevelyan's *The Fortress* (1956), which is a memoir from the Second War, provide these kinds of interludes "sandwiched between bouts of violence and terror" (Fussell 236). Therefore these nature episodes may be considered as intervals that enabled Sassoon to cope with the traumatizing atmosphere of the war. On the other hand, if Sassoon remembers the landscape so vividly to account for these nature episodes, it is because they are part of his traumatic experiences and by writing about them he tries to recover from his traumatic war memories.

In this context, the Army School can be considered as a respite from the war. Sassoon's attendance to the Army School in Flixécourt helps him to put a distance between traumatic event and himself. During a walk near the school, Sassoon "looked at a chestnut tree in full leaf and listened to the perfect performance of a nightingale" which "seemed miraculous after the desolation of the trenches" (*Infantry* 4). The Army School for Sassoon is "some fortunate colony which was, for the sake of appearances, pretending to assist the struggle from afar" and he feels that "it's a place where [he] might get a chance to call [his] soul [his] own" (*Infantry* 4).

Scott Slovic in "Nature Writing and Environmental Psychology" discusses that Henry David Thoreau and his followers in the tradition of American nature writing, "are

students of the human mind, literary psychologists," whose chief preoccupation … is with the psychological phenomenon of 'awareness'" (351). Yet Slovic points out to one condition, "in order to achieve heightened attentiveness to our place in the natural world – attentiveness to our very existence – we must understand something about the workings of mind" (351). The "awareness," Slovic talks about, may be applied to Sassoon's case since his pre-war life and trench life creates a contrast that is noticeable throughout *Infantry Officer*. Writing about nature, Sassoon not only copes with traumatic experiences but also defines his place in the larger community of nature. Slovic comments on this issue:

> Both nature and writing (the former being an external presence, the latter a process of verbalizing personal experience) demand and contribute to an author's awareness of self and non-self. By confronting "face to face" the separate realm of nature, by becoming aware of its "otherness," the writer implicitly becomes more deeply aware of his or her own dimensions, limitations of form and understanding, and process of grappling with the unknown. ("Nature" 352)

Slovic applies the above mentioned theory to Thoreau's *The Journal of Henry D. Thoreau* which encompasses Thoreau's lifetime as "an example of nature writing at its purest, no conscious attempt having been made to obscure and mystify the writer's intense connection or disconnection with his natural surroundings" ("Nature" 353). Slovic remarks that *The Journal* is "an almost daily record of observations (predominantly measurements of seasonal transformations), shows the author's efforts to line up his internal rhythms with those of external nature. There are times when Thoreau takes pleasure in the apparent identity of his own fluctuating moods and 'the moods' of the passing seasons ("Nature" 353). Sassoon's position as infantry officer is not comparable with Thoreau in this case due to chaos and traumatic experiences in the front line. Sassoon notes and recalls the idyllic landscape when he has leisure time, and when he needs to sort out his feelings about the war. Nature, in this case, embraces Sassoon with a calming atmosphere.

If Sassoon's reflections on nature are examined in the light of the theories of nature writing evaluated by Scott Slovic, it may be concluded that Sassoon's "awareness" of nature in the war might be the sign of his sorting out the relationship between his inner self and the external world. While Thoreau in *The Journal* tries to align his feelings along with the natural changes in the environment, Sassoon tries to give meaning to his traumatic memories by turning spending time in nature. For example, in the Army School, Sassoon goes to a silent place to ponder about the end of the war:

> I went up the hill to my favorite sanctuary, a wood of hazels and beeches. The evening air smelt of wet mould and wet leaves; the trees were misty-green; the church bell was tolling in the town, and smoke rose from the roofs. Peace was there in the twilight of that prophetic foreign spring. (*Infantry* 6)

The transformation of Sassoon's mood might be resembled to Thoreau's in the sense that while the change in Thoreau's mood is compared to the changing of the seasons, Sassoon's mood might show differences according to short intervals of time such as his going out of the trenches and going in after a certain period of time. As Paul Fussell comments on Sassoon's autobiography, "of all those for whom remembering the war became something like a life work, Sassoon is the one whose method of recall, selection, and expression seems to derive most directly from the polarities which the war pressed into the recesses of his mind" (92).

The contrasts that Sassoon built his narrative in *Infantry Officer* may be multiplied like daily contrasts that an officer in the front may face: "those between 'his' ground and ours: the enemy and 'us'; invisibility and visibility; his dead and ours; day rest and night labor; the knowledge born of the line and the life of the ignorant innocence at home" (Fussell 92). Yet the most important contrast is Sassoon's trench and home psychology that he tries to overcome by reflecting on nature of France.

Sassoon's reflections on nature are very detailed which shows that trench experience is influencing his psychology. For example, he recalls the improvement of his billets. He notices that "the place had improved since [he] last saw it; the horse chestnut in front of the house was in flower and there were a few peonies and pink roses in the neglected little garden at the back" (*Infantry* 11). It is evident from Sassoon's close observation of

his billets environment; the tension of going back to duty in the trenches is very high. After his return to the front, his Battalion starts to wait for a raid on German line ordered by the headquarters. During the night before the raid, Sassoon's perception of his environment is noteworthy:

> *Wednesday, 6.15 p.m.*
>
> Very still evening; sun rather hazy. Looking across to Fricourt; trench mortars bursting in the cemetery; dull white smoke slowly floats away over grey-green grass with buttercups and saffron weeds. …. Sky full of lark songs. Sometimes you can count thirty slowly and hear no sound of a shot; then the muffled pop of rifle or a slamming 5.9 or one of our 18-pounders. Then a burst of machine-gun fire. Wesward the yellow sky with a web of filmy cloud half across the sun; the ridges with blurred outlines of trees. An aeroplane droning overhead. A thistle sprouting through the chalk on the parapet; a cockchafer sailing through the air. …. A Partridge flies away, calling. Lush grass and crops of nettles; a large black slug out for his evening walk (doing nearly a mile a month). (*Infantry* 18)

Sassoon, in this scene, makes use of the diary he keeps and acting as a nature writer gives the contrast between the war and nature. His perception of his environment parallels one of Annie Dillard's (who is one of the prominent nature writers following the track of Henry David Thoreau) two modes of awareness, "Seeing is of course very much a matter of verbalization. Unless I call my attention to what passes before my eyes, I simply won't see it" (30). Slovic concurs with Dillard and believes that

> it is possible to record observations without strictly keeping track of chronology, but for the nature writer the omission of time-of-day and time-of-year would betoken a vital lapse of awareness. Nature changes so dramatically between noon and midnight, summer and winter, and sometimes even minute by minute, that the observer fails to grasp the larger meaning of phenomena if he or she overlooks the temporal aspect. ("Nature" 355)

Sassoon also took notes about specific details in his diary which he made use like in the above quotation. Apart from the temporal aspect of the observation of Sassoon, psychological aspect of the scene is also crucial. The trauma caused by the stress of 'going over the top' to take well-protected German trenches is redeemed through the heightened awareness of nature. After the inglorious raid resulted in "two killed and ten wounded," Sassoon reported to Colonel Kinjack and on his way back from headquarters, he again tried to recover from the excitement trauma of the raid in nature, "The landscape loomed around me, and the landscape was life, stretching away and away into freedom" (*Infantry* 24-25). In this example, landscape becomes a symbol for freedom for Sassoon.

After the raid, Sassoon was sent on leave to England for seven days that constitutes one of his going-out-of-the-war scenes. He is convinced by "the rooks [that] cawed applaudingly in the clump of elms near by as though all were well with England on that June afternoon" that he had visited his old friend Captain Huxtable (*Infantry* 32). The return to the front brings the uneasiness of death and mutilation as Sassoon says, "Death would be lying in wait for the troops next week, and now the flavor of life was doubly strong" (*Infantry* 38). Yet Sassoon, on the contrary, was waiting for the moment to come for the Battle of Somme as he was "trying to convert the idea of death in battle into an emotional experience" because "courage […] is a beautiful thing, and next week's attack is what [he has been] waiting for since [he] first joined the army" (*Infantry* 38). Sassoon's enthusiasm for the battle was a result of his desire to do a substantial thing in his life.

Despite his enthusiasm for the fight, Sassoon's memory enacts the contrast between war and peace, embodied in the form of his landscape depictions. When his Battalion marched out of Marais for the offensive on Somme, he draws a bucolic picture of the landscape of Marais in contrast to "the horizon" where "the bombardment bumped and thudded in a continuous bubbling grumble:"

> I was sorry to be saying good-bye to the Marais and its grey-green pools and creeks and the congregation of poplar stems that upheld a cool whispering roof. Water-haunting birds whistled and piped, swinging on the brushes and tufted reeds, and a tribe of little green

> and gold frogs hopped about in the grass without caring whether they arrived anywhere. (*Infantry* 39)

The scene above is the representation of Sassoon's awareness as a nature writer. The quality and quantity of the details recorded during the march of the Battalion, which could be chaotic, is amazingly clear and detailed. Scott Slovic cites Stephen and Rachel Kaplan who are the editors of *The Experience of Nature: A Psychological Perspective* (1989) about the environmental perception. Kaplan comments on the perception, "we tend to perceive clearly, when the stimulus is vague, blurred, or otherwise ambiguous" (qtd in "Nature" Slovic 355). Building on Kaplan's definition, Slovic discusses,

> rather than attending fully and freshly to each new experience when we look at the world, we tend to rely upon previously stored information … . The reasons for this perceptual process are, of course, understandable. Often we don't have the time for thorough inspection. What especially interests me, though, is the implication that even when we feel certain we *know* our natural environment, we probably do not – we may not even have really looked at it. ("Nature" 356)

With regard to Slovic's insight into the source of nature "awareness," Sassoon's observation power of nature seems to be deriving from his knowledge of it. On the psychological level, the scene Sassoon describes, point out to the fact that his mind is looking for something to cope with the forthcoming attack as they march to one of the bloodiest battles in the Great War.

The Somme offensive began on July 1st 1916. Sassoon describes the morning of that day, "the weather, after an early morning mist, was of the kind commonly called heavenly" (*Infantry* 49). Yet the events that followed was apocalyptic because a great number of soldiers were killed or mutilated from the Allied forces. Sassoon's perception of nature during the offensive shows his striving to focus on a livelier aspect of life. The scene he observes is Fricourt that is a German stronghold:

> Fricourt half-hidden by clouds of drifting smoke, blue, pinkish and grey. Shrapnel bursting in small bluish-white puffs with tiny flashes. The birds seem bewildered; a lark begins to go up and then flies feebly along, thinking better of it. Others flutter above the trench with

> querulous cries, weak on the wing. … . I am staring at a sunlit picture of Hell, and still the breeze shakes the yellow weeds, and the poppies glow under Crawley Ridge where some shells fell a few minutes ago. (*Infantry* 51-52)

Traumatic memories, as discussed earlier, have a tendency to crowd in after traumatic experience. Sassoon's trauma, like the other authors under scrutiny, was caused by his war experience. He admits that Fricourt, bombed constantly starting from the morning, looks like a scene from Hell. On the other hand, his awareness of his environment may be interpreted as the compensation of his traumatized mind. The contrast provided in the presentation of the environment imagery is also noticeable. For example, Fricourt is described as "the sunlit picture of Hell" because it is being bombed by trench mortars, but Sassoon, in the trenches across Fricourt, is relating the flying directions of the birds that were affected by the bombing. Or he observes poppies on a Ridge that was freshly shelled a few minutes ago. Another such contrast, for example, is Sassoon's "lying out in front of [their] trench in the long grass, basking in sunshine where yesterday there were bullets" (*Infantry* 53).

After the attack, Sassoon's battalion is called out to dig a trench across Mametz Wood which was "a dense wood of old trees and undergrowth," and it was also "still full of Germans, so that it was impossible to dig a trench on the bluff within fifty yards of it" (*Infantry* 56, 57). After this assignment, Sassoon's battalion is sent back to rest to a town called Heilly. It was the routine of the Great War to rest behind the front line in order to refresh the troops holding the front line. Sassoon's rest period goes as intended, yet it was the moment of separation from Heilly that creates the contrast between healing power of the environment and war. Sassoon notes:

> […] we vacated the camp at Heilly. The aspens by the river were shivering and showing the whites of their leaves, and it was good-bye to their cool showery sound when we marched away in our own dust at four o'clock on a glaring bright afternoon. The aspens waited, with their indifferent welcome, for some other deadbeat and diminished battalion. Such was their habit, and so the war went on. It must be difficult, for those who did not experience it, to imagine the sensation

> of returning to a battle area, particularly when one started from a safe place like Heilly. (*Infantry* 72)

The above scene and the similar instances, which occur throughout the text, are synchronized with the 'going-in-and-out' structure of Sassoon's war experience. Moreover, it is scenes like these that draw attention to the impact of nature on soldiers' psychological condition.

Again, in one of the army camps between the battles, "when the weather seemed awaiting some spectacular event in this world of blundering warfare," Sassoon gives clues about his mental health, which longs for freedom from the trauma of the war. He desires peace of mind away from the war and thus the only thing he can do, now that he "couldn't alter European history, or order the artillery to stop firing" is to "stare at the War as [he] stared at the sultry sky, longing for life and freedom" (*Infantry* 81). After this soliloquy, another instance of Sassoon's going-out-of-the trench experience takes place due to his health condition and he stays out of the trenches for seven months in England. While the war goes on in the Western Front, he develops an attitude of protest against the war since he is affected by the ideas of the intellectuals and observes the non-combatant people who improved their prospects during war times.

After several medical boards, Sassoon finally finds the courage to declare that he is fit for General Service that meant going back to the front line. Sassoon reflects on his going-in to war as he is going into a machine: "It was no use worrying about the War now; I was in the machine again, and all the responsibility for my future was in the haphazard control of whatever powers manipulated the British Expeditionary Force. Most of us felt like that, I imagine, and the experience was known as 'being for it again'" (*Infantry* 119). After staying out of the war in England for a long time, trauma of going back in the trenches may not be compared to the trauma of leaving a peaceful rest camp.

After a couple of weeks, Sassoon was invalid due to fever because of German measles. He is transferred again to a field hospital where he "used to slip through the wire fence and walk in the clean–smelling pine woods" (*Infantry* 124). The healing effect of nature is once more visible in Sassoon's case as he also notes, "The surf like sighing of the lofty colonnades could tranquilize my thoughts after the boredom of the

tent and the chatter of the card players crouching by the stove. The pine-trees are patiently waiting for the guns to stop, I thought, and I felt less resentment against the War than I had done since I left England" (*Infantry* 124). The fluctuations in the psychological condition of Sassoon are evident in his confession about feeling content with the war after his last return to the front. On the other hand, his mind is looking for a way to cope with his traumatic mind and the "lofty colonnades" provided it. He even forgets "Spring Offensive" while thinking about "the lengthening spring twilights and the lovely wakening of the year" but "bitter reality" comes back to him as he "[squeezes] [himself] through the hospital's barbed wire fence" (*Infantry* 124). After his recovery from German measles, Sassoon is transferred to 2nd Battalion, which is at rest called Camp 13. Although it was "an existence which suffocated all pleasant thoughts," the environment presents a soothing atmosphere. Sassoon describes it:

> The landscape was a compensation too, for I liked its heaving grey and brown billows, dotted with corn-stacks, patched and striped by plough and stubble and green crops, and crossed by bridle tracks and lonely wandering roads. Hares and partridges hurried away as I watched them. Along the horizon the guns still boomed and thudded, and bursting shells made tiny puffs of smoke above ridges topped by processions of trees, with here and there the dark line of woods. (*Infantry* 134-135)

Finding solace in such pastoral landscape seems to be the only way to cope with the trauma of the war. In Sassoon's case, these moments provide him a retreat from the everyday routine of the army and evaluate his stand against the war. Yet Sassoon's mental health is not stable; as Robert Graves mentions, "he varied between happy warrior and bitter pacifist" (qtd. in Fussell 98).

Sassoon experiences another battle in Spring Offensive, which is the Battle of Arras. As his Battalion marches and arrives at the concentration area, he is again having second thoughts about the meaning of the war. For one thing, he thinks of it as a "religious experience," and then asks himself whether it was "some suicidal self deceiving escape from the limitless malevolence of the Front Line" (*Infantry* 145). Battle of Arras marks the end of Sassoon's service in the Great War because he is

wounded and is sent back to home. Sassoon's experience is quite remarkable since he is traumatized extensively. Apart from going out of the front for many times due to sickness and war wounds, Sassoon returns to England as a survivor of the war after the Arras Battle; being a war veteran traumatizes him as much as the war itself that will haunt him the rest of his life:

> We might be boastful or sagely reconstructive about our experience in accordance with our different characters. But our minds were still out of breath and our inmost thoughts in disorderly retreat from bellowing darkness and men dying out in shell-holes under the desolation of returning daylight. We were the survivors; few among us would ever tell the truth to our friends and relations to England. We were carrying something in our heads, which belonged to us alone, and to those we had left behind us in the battle. There were dying men, too, on board that Red Cross train, men dying for their country in comparative comfort. (*Infantry* 175)

Building up on the traumatic experience, Michelle Balaev, who is one of the critics on literary trauma studies, comments on the relationship between trauma and place,

> A central claim of contemporary literary trauma theory asserts that trauma creates a speechless fright that divides or destroys identity. This serves as the basis for a larger argument that suggests identity is formed by the intergenerational transmission of trauma. …. Considering the multiple models of trauma and memory presented in the trauma novel draws attention to the role of place, which functions to portray trauma's effects through metaphoric and material means. Descriptions of the geographic place of traumatic experience and remembrance situate the individual in relation to a larger cultural context that contains social values that influence the recollection of the event and the reconfiguration of the self. (1)

Tracing Balaev's idea of the place to Sassoon's war experience, it may be proposed that Sassoon's war experience had a destructive influence upon his identity. This is in some part true for some critics who also claim that Sassoon spent twenty years working on his

autobiography. Writing about his trauma helped Sassoon to recover from his traumatized condition. Nature episodes in his memoir, in this context, are reflections of his traumatic war memories.

In conclusion, Sassoon's psychological condition before and after the war plays an important part in his structuring *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer*. His frequent absence from the front due to the reasons discussed earlier enabled him to develop a critical view of the First World War both politically and environmentally. Some critics like Hemmings categorize Sassoon as a Georgian poet, who longs for an idealized England countryside. Yet, as discussed throughout this chapter, Sassoon's depiction of nature in his memoirs does not only indicate an escape but also becomes a way to cope with war trauma. On the other hand, he includes nature in his autobiography as a way of recovery process from his traumatic war experiences when he wrote his memoir.

4.2. Environmental Destruction Reflected in *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer*

Eric J. Leed, in *No Man's Land: Combat and Identity in World War I,* draws attention to war experience as

> a transgression of categories. In providing bridges between the visible and the invisible, the known and the unknown, the human and the inhuman, war offered numerous occasions for the shattering of distinctions that were essential to orderly thought, communicable experience, and normal human relations. (qtd. in Vernon 6)

Leed's idea of transgression of categories during the war includes the human and the inhuman that also concerns the focus of this study. The concept of inhuman, which means all existence other than the humankind, may be interpreted as constituting nature in its basic terms. Nature "which was here before we […] came," and which "bears the weight of our activities, but in the long run renews itself and remains just as it was. Left to itself, nature settles into balance, a rhythm, that is eternal and unchanging" (Turner 42). The Great War, as a global catastrophe, was one of the 'activities' of humankind that nature had to endure in time. Yet some of the lingering effects of the First World War were foregrounded in Blunden's sensitive observations of the destruction of the war.

In this section, Sassoon's narrative will be examined according to two different points of view concerning nature. One of these perspectives, as discussed in Blunden, is the destruction of the environment. Sassoon's observations on the war's destructive effect on the environment will be discussed in this respect. The second perspective is nature's role in the Great War. This includes its negative and positive effects on the soldiers and the battles.

Edmund Russell and Richard P. Tucker, who are the editors of *Natural Enemy, Natural Ally: Toward an Environmental History of Warfare,* indicate "the importance of understanding war as major and distinctive force in environmental change, as well as the environment as a force shaping warfare" (2). According to Russell and Tucker, considering both ides of the issue means

> merging two prime fields: environmental history and military history (not to mention fields such as historical anthropology and geography).

> In environmental history, it entails seeing war as an important force in environmental change. In military history, it entails understanding the role of environmental consequences of warfare, as well as the traditional concern for the ways terrain and weather have shaped the planning and course of wars. (2)

Every war inflicts certain types of damage on landscape like "bomb craters, trenches, foxholes, dead vegetation, polluted water, and even a new ground cover of corpses" (Russell and Tucker 4). The First World War is no different than any other war in creating such destructive force. Yet the destruction of the Great War can be called "collateral" damage because nature gets "caught in the crossfire rather than being the intended target" (Russell and Tucker 4). On the other hand, collateral damage is not the only type of damage war can inflict on the landscape. War needs resources like timber in the example of the Great War to build trenches and duckboards to connect them; thus "wars have changed nature less through weapons or sculpting battle fronts than through demand for resources. Sometimes armies and their followers in the field have extracted the resources directly" (Russell and Tucker 4). The above-mentioned aspects of war are important for the environmental history due to the damage inflicted on nature.

Apart from the environmental history, military history is also concerned with the environmental prospects or obstacles nature presents during the course of war. For example, nature has been an "ally of peoples at war, providing the raw materials for food, clothing, and shelter that underpin military success;" however, when nature becomes an ally for one side, it becomes the enemy for the other side "converting normally benign organisms such as food, trees, shrubs, and grass into the targets of bombing, burning, poisoning, and looting" (Russell and Tucker 6). Another perspective on transforming into enemy "highlights nature's role as a direct threat to armies, which in turn has made it the target of attacks" (Russell and Tucker 6). For example, Susan Graham, in *The Ecology of War*, mentions how the forests become "natural enemy" of the warring parties as air power becomes technologically available:

> From the seat of the cockpit, a pilot can see the battlefield from above, picking out the hiding places, the strengths, and the weaknesses of the enemy. Yet pilots cannot see inside thick forests in areas where trees

> obscure their vision from the air. This trend has turned trees into an "enemy" on the battlefield. Prior to air power, forest destruction was either incidental to warfare or part of a scorched-earth tactic. Today, forests have become specific military targets for armies. (6)

On the Western Front of the First World War, nature played the role of both ally and enemy for both sides. The phenomenon was the 'stand-to' that was done twice a day before dawn and before sunset. Therefore, the Allied Forces had the daily advantage of observing German trench lines across No Man's Land before sunset and the same was valid for Germans before dawn. Paul Fussell explains this activity while giving insight into the life in the trenches:

> The day began about an hour before first light, which often meant at about 4:30. This was the moment for the invariable ritual of morning stand-to (short for the archaic formal command for repelling attack, "Stand to Arms"). Since dawn was the favorite time for launching attacks, at the order to stand-to everyone, officers, men, forward artillery observers, visitors, mounted the fire-step, weapon ready, and peered toward the German line. (46)

During stand-to ritual, nature also gave both sides the opportunity to see what the other side had done during the night because it was the night time that soldiers went out to No Man's Land and carry out the activities of digging trenches and putting up defensive wires so that the Germans cannot come close enough to throw hand grenades:

> Wiring partiers repaired the wire in front of the position. Digging parties extended saps toward the enemy. Carrying parties brought up not just rations and mail but the heavy engineering materials needed for the constant repair and improvement of the trenches: timbers, A-frames, duckboards, stakes and wire, corrugated iron, sandbags, tarpaulins, pumping equipment. All this ant-work was illuminated brightly from time to time by German flares and interrupted very frequently by machine gun or artillery fire. (Fussell 47)

All the work that was done in the dark was visible with the "morning and evening stand-to's [that] were the occasions when the sky especially offered itself for

observation and interpretation. As long as the war continued, what the soldiers observed was actually sunrise and sunset that Sassoon also mentions in his memoirs as 'redeeming features of the war.' So sunset and sunrise become an ironic matter when considered in contrast to environmental and military histories. As Paul Fussell comments, "It was a cruel reversal that sunrise and sunset, established by over a century of Romantic poetry and painting as the tokens of hope and peace and rural char, should now be exactly the moments of heightened ritual anxiety" (52).

Nature became enemy in another way for the British Expeditionary Force regarding the place of the trenches because "Flanders and Picardy have always been notorious for dampness. It is not the least of the ironies of the war for the British that their trenches should have been dug where the water-table was the highest and the annual rainfall the most copious. Their trenches were always wet and often flooded several feet deep" (Fussell 47). Thus, the rainfall led to muddy earth that was also reputable. Two main sectors that were hold by the British army were the Ypres Salient in Flanders and the Somme in Picardy; but "the Somme mud" was famous "although the argument about whether the mud wasn't really worse at Ypres was never settled" (Fussell 40). Sassoon, for example, mentions the mud while waiting for the Somme offensive in their rest billets: "Wednesday morning was miserably wet. Junior officer, being at a loss to know where to put themselves, were continually meeting one another along the muddy street" (*Infantry* 42). He also thinks about the cause of the delay for the offensive: "Was it the wet weather, we wondered, or had the artillery preparation been inadequate" (*Infantry* 42)? Nature played a crucial role in the wars as reflected in Sassoon's narrative. One such instance of nature as enemy in Sassoon's memoir is the thickets in No Man's Land before the Somme attack as he mentions, "I was making a last onslaught on a clawing thicket which couldn't have been more hostile if it had been put there by the Germans"(*Infantry* 42). Sassoon tries to get rid of the obstacles in No Man's Land because getting "bunched up as they left their trench for a daylight attack" means that they would be the target of German artillery and machine guns (*Infantry* 45).

As for the destruction of nature, Sassoon's account is not as vivid as Blunden's. After the Somme offensive, Fricourt, which is one of the towns in control of the Germans, is captured and Sassoon interprets the mood of the attack after it ends: "Queer

feeling seeing people moving about freely between here and Fricourt. Dumps being made. Shacks and shelters being put up under skeleton trees and all sorts of transport arriving at Cemetery Cross Roads" (*Infantry* 53). Occasional reflections of Sassoon on the destroyed trees due to the artillery fire is hardly comparable to the general damage to forests because "the unprecedented power of bombs and shells leveled cities and towns, gouged craters in farmlands, and reduced forests to battered crags and stumps" (Tucker 110).

Another example, Sassoon narrates is the difficulty of the soldiers faced marching in the mud to the fire trench from which the attacks were advanced. He writes, "at one o'clock our old enemy the rain arrived in full force. Four hours' deluge left the troops drenched and disconsolate" (*Infantry* 57). Nature, in this example, becomes the enemy of the troops because of the rain. Thus Sassoon and his men "struggled through the mud" and it has taken "three and a half hours to go a mile and a quarter" (*Infantry* 59).

Sassoon's stroll among the battlefield in the aftermath presents another scene of destruction. While walking along the old front line and in No Man's Land with his friend Durley, Sassoon notices that "the ground was littered with unused ammunition" and "a spirit of mischievous destruction possessed [him]" (*Infantry* 73). Old front line was now "nothing but a few hundred yards of waste ground – a jumble of derelict wire, meaningless ditches, and craters no longer formidable" (*Infantry* 74).

It is on rare moments such as when his Battalion camped behind the front line that Sassoon notices the destruction caused by the war. For example, while waiting for orders to march to the front line, he notices "the worn landscape" that "looked parched and shabby; only the poppies made harsh spots of red, matching the head caps of the Indian cavalry who were camped near by" (*Infantry* 80). To the end of Sassoon's sick leave that lasted seven month, winter came to London, which meant additional environmental hardships. Sassoon notices the bleak winter in the army camp: "the third winter of the War had settled down on the lines of huts with calamitous drabness; fog-bleared sunsets were succeeded by cavernous and dispiriting nights when there was nothing to do and nowhere to do it" (*Infantry* 103). Winter is a time when nature becomes enemy for both of the warring parties because as weather conditions worsens,

it gets harder for the military to carry on vital duties such as digging trenches, transporting ammunition and rations.

With regard to nature's presence in *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer*, Sassoon's accounts of the weather are mostly concerned with military perspective. His accounts can be considered from the point of view of military history because he relates such information as how the weather was at certain times before an important mission. For example, before the Battle of Arras, he reports meanwhile "the weather was misbehaving itself badly. Snow showers passed by on a bitterly cold wind, and I began an intimate battle in which a chill on the intestines got the better of me" (*Infantry* 148). This scene is one of the many in which nature becomes an enemy for the soldiers at the front.

Weather can also render hardships during the march of a Battalion for an important attack as it happens in the case of Sassoon's Battalion. As they start marching for the Battle of Arras, one of the major offensives Sassoon went through, "A heavy snowstorm set in soon after we started. A snowstorm on April 11th was the sort of thing that one expected in the War and it couldn't be classed as a major misfortune. Nevertheless we could have done without it, since we were marching away from all comfort and safety" (*Infantry* 149). Apart from the dissolution of mental health caused by the march toward a deadly battlefield, physical circumstances do not help the troops either. Nature, in this case, becomes an obstacle for the Allied forces in the conduct of the war.

During this march, Sassoon and his men pass through the path of destruction that the war had left behind. His recollections on the scene is one of the rare ones as he describes both the environment and the town,

> we were now in the devastated area; villages had been leveled to heaps of bricks; fruit trees, and even pollard-willows, had been hacked down, and there was still a chance that we might be the victims of a booby trap in the shape of a dynamite charge under a causeway. … . The next Village was Ficheux [….]; but Ficheux wasn't there at all; it had vanished from the landscape. (*Infantry* 149)

Sassoon mentions the collateral damage sustained by the war in the moments when he passes through the fields that are most affected by the artillery fire and other types of

destructive ammunition. Although his perception of the environmental demolition is not as powerful as Blunden is, his recollections may help the reader to imagine the extent of damage inflicted on nature.

To the end of the march, Sassoon's perception of the landscape is also apocalyptic because ongoing bombardments turned the environment into a picture of hell as he previously declares:

> We were at the end of a journey, which had begun twelve days before, when we started from Camp 13. Stage by stage, we had marched to the life denying region which from far away had threatened us with the blink and growl of its bombardments. Now we were groping and stumbling along a deep ditch to the place appointed for us in the zone of inhuman havoc. (*Infantry* 155)

The above scene described by Sassoon can be considered as one of the most effective descriptions of the collateral damage environment sustains as he calls the scene in front of him as "zone of inhuman havoc," which can be equal to total devastation or widespread destruction of the battlefield.

Then there was the mud, which was an obstacle for both marching soldiers and the ones in the trenches. After heavy rain, the trenches were soaked by mud, which restricted the movements of the soldiers and created uncomfortable quarters. Nature, in this case, became the enemy of the troops filling the front line. Sassoon mentions the inconvenience caused by the mud in several places in his memoir. In the first example, the snow that fell as they marched to the front, "had melted, leaving much mud, which rain made worse" (*Infantry* 150). In the second example, Sassoon's platoon is detailed in one of the raids and they stay out for a long time. He narrates: "We were out nearly seven hours; it rained all day and the trenches were a morass of glue-like mud. … but we were lucky in one way; the wet weather was causing the artillery to spend an inactive Sunday. It was a yellow corpse-like day, more like November than April, and the landscape was desolate and treeless" (*Infantry* 159). In this scene, nature is both enemy and ally at the same time because rain creates in the trenches a glue-like mud, whereas the same natural phenomenon prevents German artillery to bomb the British line.

In conclusion, although Sassoon gives accounts of pastoral episodes in which he tries to find tranquility, his reflections on the destruction of the environment is limited due to his inner questioning of the war at all times. His perception of nature's role sometimes shows considerations for military conduct, which creates a dilemma for the contemporary environmental theory. By focusing on the military aspect of nature Sassoon favors an anthropocentric point of view. Nature becomes sometimes ally and oftentimes enemy in his narration. Yet his depiction of the collateral damage, though scarce compared to Blunden's, can be interpreted as the coping the trauma caused by the war. As discussed in the previous section, Sassoon constructs his narrative on the contrasts between what he faced throughout the war and his life before the war, which was peaceful and quiet. Again the nature episodes in Sassoon's memoir can be interpreted as the reflections of his traumatic experiences when he wrote his memoir. Sassoon reflects on the dead on the battlefield, "wherever we looked the mangled effigies of the dead were our *memento mori*" (*Infantry* 160). This quotation clearly shows that Sassoon was traumatized to a great extent by his experience in the Great War. Thus the reflections of Sassoon on the collateral damage nature sustains during the Great War can be interpreted as another way of highlighting the futility of the war.

CHAPTER V
ROBERT GRAVES'S *GOOD-BYE TO ALL THAT*

Along with Blunden and Sassoon, Robert Graves is another important literary man who published his memoirs of the Great War. Yet differing from Blunden and Sassoon in their reflections on nature, Graves's account of the Great War centers on human condition and irony of the war. But Sassoon's nature episodes in his memoir are worthy of scrutinizing from an ecological perspective. In this chapter, Graves's *Good-bye To All That* will be examined in terms of two aspects of his work: the role of nature in Graves's coping with traumatic experiences and his reflections on the destruction of the environment.

Robert Graves cannot be categorized only as a war poet. During his literary career that lasted until 1975, he wrote "an enormous number of books encompassing poetry, novels and nonfiction"; yet *Good-bye To All That* "remains one of the undoubted English autobiographical masterpieces" (Caesar 172). However, some critics like Paul Edwards consider Graves's literary career ambiguous: "Graves's 'good-bye' to English culture has left him difficult to classify as a writer: not really a Georgian poet, yet not a modernist, either. His later quasi-modernist obsession with Celtic myth is certainly related to the archaizing tendency of one strand of modernism" (28). Like Sassoon, Robert Graves is also affected by the transition period from Georgic tradition to modernism. Graves also makes this dilemma clear in his autobiography. The contrast he creates between his pre-war life and the aftermath constitutes the structure of his autobiography.

Robert Graves's attitude toward the war affected also the structure of his memoir. Firstly, he was trying to leave his traumatic experiences behind. As the title of his autobiography suggests, Graves was saying farewell to the events that gave him mental disturbance such as war neurosis. Paul Fussell comments on Graves's mode of writing: "working up his memories into a mode of theater, Graves eschewed tragedy and melodrama in favor of farce and comedy" (203). By presenting the war from ironical and theatrical aspects, Graves tried to release himself from the strings of the past. Graves adopted comedy in his memoir because of the "palpable character conventions

of the army, with its system of ranks, its externalization of personality, its impatience with ambiguity or subtlety, and its arcana of conventional "duties" with their invariable attendant gestures and "lines" (Fussell 204). One of the difficulty Graves had to overcome was his rank in the army. He was in Royal Welch Fusiliers that had a reputable past and treated the new comers with contempt.

Yet Graves's army life is not the only aspect of his life that creates the ironical mood in his memoir. *Good-bye To All That* is organized in three parts beginning with the childhood and adolescence years of Graves. Since his father was "a very busy man, an inspector of schools for the Southwark district of London," he spent very little time with his children (*Good-bye* 12). His father's absence led him to be raised with strong moral values by his mother as Graves also mentions, "we learned to be strong moralists, and spent much of our time on self-examination and good resolutions" (*Good-bye* 13). As Adrian Caesar denotes: "Along with this early Christian education, went a sensitive awareness of class" (173). Graves had to be nursed in a hospital due to an epidemic and he notices the different treatment to a clergyman's son:

> At the age of four and a half I caught scarlet fever; my younger brother had just been born, and I could not be nursed at home, so my parents sent me off to a public fever hospital. The ward contained twenty little proletarians, and only one bourgeois child besides myself. I did not notice particularly that the nurses and my fellow patients had a different attitude towards me; … But the respect and even reverence given to this other little boy, a clergyman's child astonished me. (*Good-bye* 14)

The incident that makes Graves become aware of the class distinction in the society is the beginning of a series of discriminatory events including his school and army life.

Another important aspect that "[equipped] Graves with the ideologies of an English 'gentleman' was his education. He attended several institutions in which "he suffered a variety of tortures" including being beaten by the Headmaster of one of the many schools he attended (Caesar 174). Graves's last school was called the Charterhouse. He was also uncomfortable; he explains: "from my [Graves's] first moment at Charterhouse I suffered an oppression of spirit that I hesitate to recall in its full intensity. Something

like being in that chilly cellar at Laufzorn among the potatoes, but a potato out of a different sack from the rest" (*Good-bye* 37-8). Graves's account indicates that he did not belong to that school. In the following semesters, his discomfort is gratified because "the House had made it plain that I [Graves] did not belong, and was not wanted" (*Good-bye* 37-8). Graves tried to overcome this sense of not belonging by boxing: "I began boxing seriously and savagely" (*Good-bye* 43). Boxing was a compensation for Graves at Charterhouse. Another consolation was his meeting George Mallory who introduced Graves to mountain climbing.

After strict discipline and problematic school years, Graves turns his attention to the Great War that covers most of his autobiography. In this second part, Graves humorously gives accounts of his war experience that led to his mental problems. Yet this humorous perspective constructs a criticism of war and of the ideologies it was supported by. This is his way of distancing himself from the burden of the past. While doing this, Graves also describes nature episodes as a reflection of his traumatic war memories. His turning to nature in the war is a way of coping with traumatic experiences he went through in the Great War.

5.1. Nature and Coping with Trauma of the War in *Good-bye To All That*

It can be said that the Great War broke out in the middle of a transition period. The transition was in the modes and style of literature and it affected young writers like Robert Graves. Graves was nineteen years old when the war began. Therefore his bringing up in the Edwardian period affected his style in literature. Bernard Bergonzi who studied the Great War literature, comments on Graves's style:

> In many respects, Graves, in his early work, was a quintessential Georgian, with a taste for ballad-like forms, unpretentious, small scale subjects with a rural flavor, and particular inclination to folk-lore and fairy-tale. But Graves's Irish background gave his work a quality that separated him from the more conventional love of rural England of the other Georgians. (65)

Like Sassoon and Blunden, Robert Graves was also a poet and writer who found peace and longed for an idyllic countryside in his early works. And like his contemporaries, he experienced the countryside with enthusiasm. Yet the First World War changed his perspective from an optimist to an escapist. The changes in the mood of Graves's post-war works are visible, as Bergonzi suggests, "The experiences of war obsessed Graves for a long time, and his post-war poetry was romantic, trivial and overtly escapist: not until he had come to terms with his wartime past in *Goodbye to All That* was he able to feel some degree of emotional liberation" (68). The eradication of pre-war life of Graves is another reason he writes bitterly about the war because the First World War affected him more than it did other writers discussed so far. Graves's life changed dramatically after the war because he had been through fierce battles then Blunden and Sassoon did. In this section, nature episodes as a way of coping with traumatizing experiences of war will be examined throughout *Good-bye To All That*. And it will be discussed that these nature episodes are the reflections of Graves's traumatic experiences and he heals by writing about them.

Robert Graves's motivation in writing *Good-bye To All That* originated from the problems in his life because it came to a dead-end in 1929. As Fussell comments, "his marriage with Nancy Nicolson had just come apart, he owed money, he had quarreled with most of his friends" (208). Yet these were not the only reasons that led him to

write his memoir "in an especially rebellious mood" in less than eight weeks (Fussell 208). One of the things changed in Graves during the war was his view of the English society that he "had become grossly contemptuous;" and "his wartime neurasthenia, which manifested itself in frequent bursts of tears and bouts of twitching" was another reason he wrote *Good-bye To All That* (Fussell 208). As discussed earlier, writing about one's trauma is one of the ways to come to positive terms with traumatic events. And Robert Graves tries to relieve himself from the burden of his trauma in his memoir and Paul Fussell observes, "relief at having done with them all is the emotion that finally works itself loose from the black humor which dominates most of the book" (Fussell 208). Graves's other motif for writing his memoir was economical. He also needed *Good-bye To All That* popular in order to attract as many readers as he could because the experiences of the war veterans attracted public interest. In "P.S. to 'Good-bye To All That," which was published by Graves two years after the publication of his memoir, he admits that he devised the structure of the memoir according to this end:

> I have more or less deliberately mixed in all the ingredients that I know are mixed into other popular books. For instance, while I was writing, I reminded myself that people like reading about food and drink, so I searched my memory for the meals that have had significance in my life and put them down… Other subjects of interest that could not be neglected were school episodes, love affairs (regular and irregular), wounds, weddings, religious doubts, and methods of bringing up children, severe illnesses, and suicides. But the best bet of all is battles, and I had been in two quite good ones – the first conveniently enough a failure, though set off by extreme heroism, the second a success, though a little clouded by irresolution. (qtd in Fussell 204-05)

Graves's declaration about his memoir leaves out the environment out of the scope of his memoir. Nature episodes in *Good-bye To All That* are not many in number. Although Graves writes scarcely about nature, this does not mean that he was not aware of his environment. On the contrary, when he turns to nature, he does it in order to cope with his traumatic experiences.

When the Great War broke out in August 1914, Graves was around the same age as Blunden and he was in his "final term at school in July 1914. But his youth did not mean that he escaped the typical rigors of an Edwardian childhood" (Caesar 173). Graves's childhood made him conscious of class distinctions and this awareness would be imposed on him during his military service in the war. Graves easily joined the Royal Welch Fusiliers as he had served in the Officers' Training Corps at Charterhouse. After three weeks of training, "I [Graves] went off on detachment duty to a newly-formed internment camp for enemy aliens at Lancaster," yet Graves "wanted to be abroad fighting" (*Good-bye* 70; 72). The dilemma of Graves was his alienation from the Regiment. The Royal Welch "had twenty-nine battle-honors, a number equaled to only by a couple of other two battalion regiments" (*Good-bye* 82) and Graves was not a regular soldier but he had just taken a commission. Therefore Graves and other officers were warned about their position in the regiment as outsiders:

> On arrival at the Depôt, we special Reserve officers were reminded of our great fortune: if the War lasted, we should have the privilege of serving with one or the other of the Line battalions. … But we were to understand that we did not belong to the 'Regiment' in the special sense. Permission to serve with it in time of war should satisfy our highest military aspirations. (*Good-bye* 88)

Alienation becomes a pattern that leads Graves to the ironic perspective in his memoir. As the original officers of the Line battalions of the Royal Welch were killed or invalidated during the war, Graves would have the chance to serve in those battalions that rejected him initially as an outsider. Graves "was glad when [he] got orders to go 'up the line,' though disgusted to find [himself] posted not to the Royal Welch Fusiliers, but to the Welsh Regiment" (*Good-bye* 91). As he reports to the Battalion headquarters, Graves notices that the front in this sector was relatively quiet as it "had only recently been taken over from a French territorial division of men in the forties, who had a local armistice with the Germans opposite – no firing, and apparently even civilian traffic allowed through the lines" (*Good-bye* 97). Beginning his trench service in such convenient conditions helps Graves to adapt to the life in the trenches because as he also

accepts that "we had no mental picture of what the trenches would be like, and were almost as ignorant as a young soldier who joined us a week or two later (*Good-bye* 96).

The number of episodes in which Graves took refuge in nature is not many. For example, he accounts for one episode in one of his letters: "we did company drill in the morning. Afterwards, Jones-Bateman and I lay on the warm grass and watched aeroplanes flying above the trenches pursued by a trail of white shrapnel puffs" (*Good-bye* 108). The above episode took place in the quiet sector Graves was assigned to. Although Graves does not explicitly comment on the healing effect of the tranquility of the scene, it can be considered a decent moment in which he experiences the soothing effect of nature. Another aspect of this episode is the contrast it provides to the reader. While Graves and his friend are lying down on the peaceful earth, the war reminds its presence in the air since airplanes are under anti-aircraft fire. Like Blunden and Sassoon, Graves also uses the contrast between the two different worlds existing together.

As Graves starts to change sectors, the suppressing presence of the war is felt intensively. Graves accounts for the changing conditions: "I am beginning to realize how lucky I was in my gentle introduction to the Cambrin trenches. We are now in a nasty salient, a little to the south of the brick-stacks, where casualties are always heavy" (*Good-bye* 114). Yet behind the lines where the Battalion is billeted, environment is not as affected by the war. For example, one such place is Vermelles where Graves spent some time resting behind the front line. Vermelles, "which was taken and re-taken eight times last October" did not have a house "undamaged" (*Good-bye* 115). Graves arrives in the town at night and notices the damage to the houses under the moonlight, but next morning, in spite of the structural destruction, environment seems to be sound and lively. Graves describes,

> Next morning we found the deserted gardens of the town very pleasant to walk about in; they are quite overgrown and flowers have seeded themselves about wildly. Red cabbages and roses and Madonna lilies are the chief ornaments. One garden has currant bushes in it. (*Good-bye* 115)

From Graves's account, the reader can understand that he has specific knowledge about the flora. The appearance of such a relaxing scene may suggest that Graves was trying to overcome the stress of the dangerous sector his Battalion was sent. He begins his trench service in a quiet sector and as the trenches become dangerous, Graves finds tranquility of mind by turning his attention to nature. Although Graves's nature episodes are not as long as Blunden's or Sassoon's, noticing an undisturbed piece of environment during the war may be interpreted as a sign of coping with the traumatic experiences.

By the end of August 1915, "particulars of the coming offensive against La Bassée were beginning to leak through the young staff officers and Graves was up for a leave to England but "the sense of impending events had become so strong that I [Graves] almost hated to go" (*Good-bye* 141). Leave was a routine in the army in order to keep the soldiers morale high. It was a way to refresh the men both physically and mentally. Graves spent some part of his leave at Harlech and "walked about on the hills in an old shirt and a pair of shorts" (*Good-bye* 142). Apart from mentioning general mood of London, Graves reserves a specific account of his leave when he strolls among the hills. His conversation with another fellow officer after he returns to France may reveal how important to Graves that he spent time in the countryside,

> 'The Actor' : 'Had a good time on leave?'
> Graves : 'Yes.'
> 'The Actor' : 'Go to many dances?'
> Graves : 'Not one.'
> 'The Actor' : 'What shows did you go to?'
> Graves : 'I didn't go to any shows.'
> 'The Actor' : 'Hunt?'
> Graves : 'No.'
> 'The Actor' : 'Sleep with any nice girls?'
> Graves : 'No, I didn't. Sorry to disappoint you.'
> 'The Actor' : 'What the hell *did* you do, then?'
> Graves : 'Oh, I just walked about on some hills.'
> 'The Actor' : Good God, chaps like you don't deserve leave.' (*Good-bye* 143)

Emphasizing his stroll on the hills, Graves reveals that he cares much more for the healing effect of nature than he intends to write about it explicitly in his memoir. While social activities like going to dances or seeing some shows are considered popular, Graves's way of spending most of his time in the countryside indicates that he takes pleasure in the outdoor activities that helps to lessen the effects of traumatic experiences.

After the Battle of Loos that resulted in failure, Graves was promoted to "a Special Reserve Captain," but by this time his physical and mental condition deteriorated as he also says, "had I returned to the trenches as a company officer, I should probably have modified my formula for taking risks; because a black depression held me" (*Good-bye* 169-70). The symptoms of Graves's condition were fit for neurasthenia and it was a common problem among the officers who served for a long time in the trenches:

> The term had been used in France since the late nineteenth century, but it was originally introduced years earlier by the American neurologist George Miller Bears to describe overworked industrialists. Though the disease was defined as a physical weakening and exhaustion of the nerves, potential symptoms could include an enormous range of physical and intellectual impairments, including mental exhaustion, memory troubles, indifference, sadness, hypochondria, muscle spasms, headaches, cardiovascular symptoms, digestive troubles, visual difficulties, and impotence. (Thomas 6)

Graves comments on the causes of his neurasthenia by comparing the conditions of officers and privates: "officers had a less laborious but a more nervous time than the men. There were proportionately twice as many neurasthenic cases among officers as among men, though a man's average expectancy of trench service before getting killed or wounded was twice as long as an officer's" (*Good-bye* 172). And the officers experience the symptoms of neurasthenia within a short period of time during their trench service as Graves also points out in his memoir:

> For the first three weeks, an officer was of little use in the front line; he did not know his way around, had not learned the rules of health and safety, or grown accustomed to recognizing degrees of danger.

> Between three weeks and four weeks he was at his best, unless he happened to have any particular bad shock or sequence of shocks. Then his usefulness gradually declined as neurasthenia developed. At six months he was still more or less all right; but by nine or ten months, unless he had been given a few weeks' rest on a technical course, or in hospital, he usually became a drag on the other company officers. (*Good-bye* 171)

Graves, who had already been in the trenches for five months, started to show the symptoms of neurasthenia discussed above. Graves's nature episodes coincide with his traumatic experiences in the war. For example, Graves depicts the change of seasons in France: "Autumn brought melancholy to the Béthune – La Bassée sector; in the big poplar forests the leaves had turned French-yellow, the dykes were overflowing, and the ground utterly sodden" (*Good-bye* 173). In this scene, Graves observes the French countryside as the season changed. This observation for Graves is an attempt to cope with his traumatic trench experience. Nature, in this scene, reminds Graves the English countryside where he spent his leaves away from the traumatic war. This scene also shows that nature has considerable effect on Graves's mental health for coping with traumatic war experiences.

The expected relief comes with the news of a training period, "early in December a rumor that we were going for divisional training to the distant countryside. I [Graves] refused to believe it, having heard stories of this kind too often, yet it turned out to be true" (*Good-bye* 177). This rest period in the guise of army training was a perfect opportunity for Graves to refresh his mind and body before the Somme offensive. Their exercises were designed for open warfare because after the Somme offensive, it was believed that the trench system would not be needed. Yet they "enjoyed [their] exercises over quite unspoiled country. The guns could only just be heard in the distance, and every man in the Battalion was fit" (*Good-bye* 178). Graves's emphasis on unspoiled country in the above quotation is important because during the recuperation period, the unspoiled countryside means tranquility when compared to the distant sound of bombing and depressed conditions of the trenches.

In April 1916, Graves went on leave since his "breaking-point was near now, unless something happened to stave it off" (*Good-bye* 198). He reaches his breaking point due to spending over six months in the trenches and he lost a close friend. When in Harlech, Graves followed the same routine as he did before and he "walked on the hills" and he cites the verse of a psalm: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help" (*Good-bye* 201-02). Although Graves seldom refers to nature in his memoir, it might be said that he also finds peace of mind in it like Blunden and Sassoon and mentions it at crucial points in his memoir. Graves coped with the traumatizing effects of the war in other ways. As a sign of his connection to nature, he "bought a small two-roomed cottage from [his] mother, who owned considerable house property at Harlech"; he confesses that "this was done in defiance of the War: something to look forward to when the guns stopped" (*Good-bye* 202). The idea of a solitary home in the countryside was another way of coping with traumatic war experiences.

Graves spent a considerable amount of time in England as he did in France because he was shot through his lungs during a raid; he later described, "a piece of shell had also gone in two inches below the point of my right shoulder blade and came out through my chest two inches above the right nipple" (*Good-bye* 218). This wound would keep him out of the trenches for a long time. Even after the wound got better, Graves had trouble with his lungs that were weak. Although the medical board passed him fit for service overseas in January 1917, he was diagnosed with bronchitis and was sent back to "Oxford: to Somerville College which like the Examination Schools, had been converted into a hospital" (*Good-bye* 245). After his recovery Graves decided to stay in Oxford, and he "applied […] for an instructional job in one of the Officer-Cadet Battalions quartered in the men's colleges" (*Good-bye* 246). However, his lungs were not in good condition because "hard work in the damp Oxford climate […] proved too much for [his] lungs. [He] kept [himself] going for two months on a strychnine tonic, then fainted and fell down a staircase one evening in the dark" (*Good-bye* 247). After Graves spent some time in the hospital, he was sent to "a convalescent home in the Isle of Wight – none other than Osborne palace"; he writes about the details of his stay, "This was the strawberry season and fine weather; we patients could take all Queen Victoria's favorite walks through the woods and along the quite seashore" (*Good-bye*

251). The recuperation period of the soldiers and officers were important because the number of the experienced soldiers were declining as the war went on. Recovery homes were one of the best chances of soldiers to leave behind their traumatic experiences to a certain extent.

No matter how much Graves tried to relieve himself from the trauma of the war, he was not successful. Although he was passed "B1, or: 'Fit for garrison service abroad'" (*Good-bye* 268), he "spends the rest of the war training troops in England and Ireland" (Fussell 218). Yet the traumatic war experience continues to haunt Graves even at home:

> I thought of going back to France, but realized the absurdity of the notion. Since 1916, the fear of gas had obsessed me: any unusual smell, even a sudden strong scent of flowers in a garden, was enough to send me trembling. And I couldn't face the sound of heavy shelling now; the noise of a car back-firing would send me flat on my face, or running for cover. (*Good-bye* 267-8).

After the war ended, Graves was discharged from the army, but the memories of the war still lingered on. His marriage to Nancy Nicholson and their daughter, Jenny, were not enough distraction to overcome the trauma he experienced. Graves's mental health was affected by the war deeply:

> I was still mentally organized for War. Shells used to come bursting on my bed at midnight, even though Nancy shared it with me; strangers in daytime would assume the faces of friends who had been killed. When strong enough to climb the hill behind Harlech and revisit my favorite country, I could not help seeing it as a prospective battlefield.

Graves returns to his education in Oxford and they were settled five miles away from the campus on Boar's Hill as John Masefield "had offered to rent [them] a cottage at the bottom of his garden" (*Good-bye* 291). Yet during the classes, Graves began to daydream about the war as a symptom of his trauma:

> In the middle of a lecture I would have a sudden very clear experience of men on the march up the Bethune-La Bassée road; the men would

> be singing, while French children ran along beside us, calling out: 'Tommee, Tommee, give me bullee beef!' and I would smell the stench of the knacker's yard just outside the town. […] Or in a deep dug out at Cambrin, talking to a signaler; I would look up the shaft and see somebody's muddy legs coming down the steps; then there would be a sudden crash and the tobacco smoke in the dugout would shake with the concussion and twist about in patterns like the marbling on books. These daydreams persisted as an alternate life and did not leave me until well in 1928. The scenes were nearly always recollections of my first four months in France; the emotion recording apparatus seemed to have failed after Loos. (*Good-bye* 293)

Graves's account of his daydreams not only shows how his mind is traumatized due to his war experiences but also indicates the time when his breakdown took place in the trenches because his dreams cover a period of four months in the front. Graves thought that his emotions were no longer recorded in the memory after first four months. It is interesting that his breakdown and the failure to record sensible memories coincide with each other. More interesting aspect, as discussed above, is the appearance of symptoms of neurasthenia after five months that leaves officers useless in the trenches.

In conclusion, Graves tries to overcome his traumatic war experience by writing about it like Edmund Blunden and Siegfried Sassoon. The number of nature episodes in his memoir is not many but Graves uses them to cope with the trauma of the war. He turns to nature to find tranquility in the middle of chaos. On the other hand, Graves tries to distance himself from his traumatic experiences to a certain extent by writing about them. His reflections on nature in his memoirs indicate that he felt comfort while he wrote about them. When compared to the memoirs of Blunden and Sassoon, the scarcity of the presence of nature in Graves's autobiography is evident, but this is because he focused on the irony of the war, which does not make his memoirs less worthy of reading from environmental perspective.

5.2. Representations of Destruction of Nature in *Good-bye To All That*

In addition to the healing process of Graves through nature, the environmental destruction caused by the War and the role of nature in the war both as an enemy and ally will be the focal points of this section. Robert Graves's observations about the destruction of nature will be discussed in terms of environmental theories. Although Graves does not explicitly protest the destruction of the environment, the presence of the scenes of destruction in his memoir shows his sensitivity to the environment.

Graves wrote about the humankind rather than nature and environment. As Paul Fussell also mentions, "compared with both Blunden and Sassoon, Graves is very little interested in nature or scenery: human creatures are his focus, and his book is built, as theirs are not, very largely out of dialogue" (219). Fussell's comment might shed light on Graves's intention in writing his memoir. But Graves also emphasizes the environmental destruction from time to time. His descriptions of the destruction are important because the "human creatures" is the focal point in the memoir. Another reason that he notices the destruction less than Blunden and Sassoon might be his involvement in the war more intensely. His attitude toward the war and the destruction dominates important parts of his narrative.

Graves was sent to France as replacement officer and he had no idea what trenches would look like because they were not trained for it. Graves's account of going up to report to the Battalion headquarters presents one of the scenes of the destruction and the condition of the trenches:

> After a meal of bread, bacon, rum, and bitter stewed tea sickly with sugar, we went through the broken trees to the east of the village and up a long trench to Battalion headquarters. The wet and slippery trench ran through dull red clay. I had a torch with me, and saw that hundreds of filed mice and frogs had fallen into the trench but found no way out. The light dazzled them, and because I could not help treading on them, I put the torch back in my pocket. (*Good-bye* 95-6)

This scene described by Graves is one of the first close observations of the environment he notices the trees shattered by the shelling. He also observes that the trench was full of

mice and frogs caught in a deadly trap. Although the sector he was assigned to was a quiet one, Graves notices the destroyed trees on his way to the headquarters. The collateral damage that was done to forests during the war was commonplace. Graves's account of the broken trees in the beginning of his narrative reveals his awareness of the destruction.

Another interesting scene Graves relates to the reader is his observation of No Man's Land that was not caught in the cross fire between the British and the German. When compared to other sectors Graves was assigned, the piece of land lying in front of Welsh Regiment is a considerably serene one:

> The enemy gave no sign, except for a wisp or two of wood-smoke where they, too, were boiling up a hot drink. Between us and them lay a flat meadow with cornflowers, marguerites and poppies growing in the long grass, a few shell-holes, the bushes I had seen the night before, the wreck of an aeroplane, our barbed wire and theirs. Three-quarters of a mile away stood a big ruined house; a quarter of a mile behind that, a red brick village –Auchy- poplars and haystacks, a tall chimney, and another village –Haisnes. Half-right, pithead and smaller slagheaps. (*Good-bye* 103-4)

The collateral damage of the environment is not as bad as other sectors where the fight went on heavily. No Man's Land stayed between the Allied forces and the German and it was generally the epitome of the destruction in the sectors where important battles took place. Yet Graves's sector had not seen a major battle in which nature the plants and flowers survived in spite of few shell holes. As discussed earlier, The First World War was the first industrial war and the weapons used in the war developed from 1914 to the end. Thus, the extent of the destruction in that specific sector described might be connected to the technology of the weapons used. Graves also points out to this aspect:

> Those were early days of trench warfare, the days of the jam-tin bomb and the gas-pipe trench-mortar: still innocent of Lewis or Stokes guns, steel helmets, telescopic rifle-sights, gas-shells, pill-boxes, tanks, well organized trench-raids, or any of the later refinements of trench warfare. (*Good-bye* 95)

Technological developments on the part of weaponry meant more destruction for the environment. As Tucker observes, "In the course of three years and more, millions of bomb and shell craters left puddles, ponds, and mud where crop fields and woodlands had been before" (29). Graves would also account for this destruction as he was sent to more dangerous sectors later in the war.

The damage of the land becomes more visible as Graves was assigned to the Royal Welch Fusiliers, his original regiment. They are positioned in a sector that had been the scene of a battle; thus Graves's description of No Man's Land becomes more chaotic compared to the first one:

> Between us and the Germans lay a flat stretch of about two hundred yards, broken only by shell craters and an occasional patch of coarse grass. … Many of the craters contained the corpses of men who had been wounded and crept in there to die. Some were skeleton, picked clean by the rats (*Good-bye* 138-39).

This scene from Cuinchy sector, which saw heavy fighting shows the signs of both death and the destruction of land because there are many shell and bomb craters caused by the artillery fire of the both sides. Another horror besides the destruction of the environment is the dead soldiers who could not be brought in from No Man's Land. They form a horrible sight during Graves's patrol.

Another example of this sort is reported by Graves in his memoir after the Battle of Loos. Battle of Loos was one of the fights that resulted in heavy casualties both environmentally and humanly. No Man's Land becomes a land of massacre. As a result of the attack, many soldiers were killed and the ones who could not be collected by the troops created a horrifying scene as described by Graves:

> After the first day or two the corpses swelled and stank. I vomited more than once while superintending the carrying. Those we could not get in from the German wire continued to swell until the wall of the stomach collapsed, either naturally or when punctured by a bullet; a disgusting smell would float across. The color of the dead faces changed from white to yellow-grey, to red, to purple, to green, to black, to slimy. (*Good-bye* 163)

The casualties of both sides still comes out of the earth where they had fallen as Fussell calls such land ‘a bone yard, where every week bones come to light. Depending on one’s mood one either quietly buries them again, or flings them into the nearby brush, or saves them to turn over to the employees of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission” (Fussell 70). The war sometimes leaves irrecoverable damage in the environment in the form of barren lands. Although in some cases, the land recovers from the collateral damage, the remnants of the war might present itself in the form of bones and other types of relics such as shrapnel pieces.

Operations in the Mametz Wood that Sassoon was also involved in make Graves notice the destruction of the forests in that area. One night after the attack, Graves goes out to the wood to look for something to make himself warm:

> The next two days we spent in bivouacs outside Mametz Wood. We were in fighting kit and felt the cold at night, so I went into the wood to find German overcoats to use as blankets. It was full of dead Prussian Guards Reservists, big men, and dead Royal Welch and South Wales Borderers of the New Army Battalions, little men. Not a single tree in the wood remained unbroken, I collected my overcoats, hurried out as quickly as I could, climbing through the wreckage of green branches. (*Good-bye* 211)

Mametz Wood was totally destroyed at the end of the battle because of the heavy artillery fire of the Allied forces. Mametz Wood was a stronghold of the German forces and the Allied forces gave thousands of casualties in order to capture it. Graves was on leave in England when the First Battle of Somme began. By the time Graves got to France, one of the raids of his battalion had been already in progress. The above scene is after Graves and his Battalion held the Mametz Wood. Graves’s senses are at his highest. Thus he notices every detail about his trip to the woods while, for example passing over a terrible dead body, “the bloating and stinking corpse of German with his back propped against a tree” (*Good-bye* 211). During his short trip in such horrifying conditions, Graves notices that the forest was totally annihilated. Graves’s attitude is not of protest of the destruction of the Wood at the time but it is more of a sad amazement reflected in his words, “not a single tree in the wood remained unbroken.”

After the Mametz Wood, Graves's battalion got orders to attack High Wood, "which could be seen a thousand yard away to the right at the top of a slope. High Wood, which the French called 'Raven Wood', formed part of the main German battle line that ran along the ridge, with Delville Wood not far off on the German left" (*Good-bye* 215). The High Wood objective would put Graves out of the trenches for a considerable amount of time because he would be wounded by a German shell exploding near him. As he later became aware of his wounds, he was pretty shattered as he accounts for the nature of his wounds:

> One piece of shell went through my left thigh, high up, near the groin; I must have been at the full stretch of my stride to escape emasculation. The wound over the eye was made by a little chip of marble, possibly from one of the Bazentin cemetery headstones. (Later, I had it cut out, but a smaller piece has since risen to the surface under my right eyebrow, where I keep it for a souvenir.) This, and a finger wound which split the bone, probably came from another shell bursting in front of me. But a piece of shell had also gone in two inches below the point of my right shoulder blade and came out through my chest two inches above the right nipple. (*Good-bye* 218).

Even his commander thought of him dead in the chaos of the attack and sent a letter to his family, but Graves, though critical, survived his wounds and was taken behind the lines to a field hospital. Interestingly, Graves hears about the rest of the High Wood attack from his doctor who "watched High Wood show through field-glasses," explained later to him, "the center of the wood was impossible for either the Germans or your fellows to hold – a terrific concentration of artillery on it. The trees were splintered to matchwood" (*Good-bye* 221). Again the collateral damage becomes visible this time through the interpretation of Graves's doctor. Neither Graves nor the doctor is an environmentalist in the modern sense. And their reception of the destruction of the woods does not imply a protest against the war, but it is their sensitivity to nature that brings these accounts of destruction into their recollections. Under different circumstances, it might be suggested that Graves would be against the collateral damage done to the environment, but his role, as a soldier does not let him act differently.

Apart from the environmental destruction, Graves gives accounts of the destruction of the tamed animal population. Mules and horses were widely used in the transport lines and in the artillery regiments. They were used to carry rations, food, ammunition, timber and they were also used to relocate the artillery positions. However, they were often destroyed due to overwork, malnutrition and weather conditions. Graves notices the dead mules and horses lying along with the dead soldiers at the beginning of the Somme offensive: "The number of dead horses and mules shocked me; human corpses were all very well, but it seemed wrong for animals to be dragged into the war like this" (*Good-bye* 209). The destruction of tamed animals like horses and mules can be considered as the part of the catastrophe of the war. As Albert E. Cowdrey, who is a military historian, points out to the destruction on the battlegrounds of the Great War:

> Such battlegrounds showed in intensified form the simplicity typical of artificial systems. Even in a part of the world where artifice was the peacetime norm, war produced gross ecological reductionism. Trees were shattered; domestic animals swept away, crops destroyed. If some particularly intrepid ecologist had dared to measure biomass on such a field, what would he have found? Surely an incredible preponderance of two species only, men and horse. Since both were existing under great stress, often wounded, and were saturating the region with their excrement while they lived and scattering it with their corpses when they died, our ecologist would have noted population explosions in flies and rodents, and in a variety of parasites. (157)

Cowdrey not only emphasizes the destructive aspect of the war but also focuses on the decaying casualties, both human and animal from an ecological perspective. Rats and lice were seen widely in the trenches in the Great War as a result of the decaying corpses of soldiers and horses. Remarkable enough, Graves, as if he had the vision of an ecologist, describes a landscape resembling to one Cowdrey presented in a sector called Bouchavesnes:

> In all this area one saw no French civilians, no unshelled houses, no signs of cultivation. The sole living creatures besides soldiers, horses

> and mules were a few moorhen and duck paddling in the unfrozen central stream of the river. The fodder ration for the horses, many of them sick, was down to three pounds a day, and they had open standings only. I have kept no records of this time, but the memory of its misery survives. (*Good-bye* 239)

Graves's account about the soldiers and the horses as the only living creatures in that sector parallels to Albert Cowdrey's description of the battlegrounds of the Great War. Graves is aware of the destruction of both environment and animals with the sensitivity of an ecologist and the misery of the destroyed horses still haunts his memories.

Apart from the collateral damage to nature, nature also plays the role of both enemy and ally in the war as discussed in the previous chapter. Graves rarely points to the difficulties of conducting operations in his memoir. Nature plays the role of enemy in his accounts because weather conditions are generally too bad to reach the designated objectives. During the conduct of these orders, the life of soldiers were dangerously affected by these environmental difficulties. One of the examples Graves mentions is about constructing a trench:

> The British trench line, which crossed a stretch of ground marked on the map as 'Marsh, sometimes dry in the summer,' consisted of islands of high-command trench, with no communication between them except at night. The battalion had been nearly wiped out here six months previously. We were set to build up a strong reserve line, and came night after night. The temperature being ten degrees below zero, and the ground frozen a foot deep, we managed only to raise a couple of hundred yards of trench about knee-high, at the cost of several men wounded by casual shots skimming the trench in front of us. (*Good-bye* 175)

In this example, the frozen land caused the difficulty. Graves had orders to construct a reserve trench behind the fire trenches, but as the temperatures were below zero the ground was frozen. Although the map reference indicates the area as marshland, meaning a softer ground, since it was winter, it made the ground even harder to dig.

Another obstacle set by nature was mud. During the winter, mud had become a routine problem while planning an attack because it prevented soldiers even with the lightest gear from moving during a raid. Graves also recalled one such memory during the planning of a raid and pointed to the difficulty of mobility:

> A thaw had now set in, and the four Company commanders assured me that to cross three hundred yards of no Man's Land, which constant shelling and the thaw had turned into a morass of mud more than knee-deep, would take even lightly armed troops four or five minutes. Not a man would be able to reach the enemy lines so long as a single section of Germans with rifles remained to defend them. (*Good-bye* 242).

Although it might seem as a trivial detail in an ordinary day, "a morass of mud more than knee-deep" can cause many casualties during a raid on the German trenches. Graves's accounts on the negative or positive influence of nature are not very detailed. This might be perceived as a problem if this study puts environment in the center, but nature in *Good-bye To All That* as a definitive force in war remains as a strong perspective to look at the Great War.

Another interesting scene Graves remembers in his memoir was the sensitivity of the Town Major to the fish population in the canal. Early in the war, the towns where the troops were billeted were not as badly destroyed as they were when compared to the end of the war. Bethune, which is seven miles behind the front line, was one of the towns that Graves was billeted early in the war. The town looked unharmed by the German shells but the interesting point about the town, Graves notices, was the environmental sensitivity of the Town Major:

> We have been billeted in Béthune, a fair-sized town about seven miles behind the front line. It has everything one wants: a swimming bath, all sorts of shops, especially a cake shop, the best I've ever met, a hotel where you can get a really good dinner, and a theater where we have brigade 'gaffs'. I saw a notice this morning on a building by the Béthune –La Bassée canal – 'Troops are forbidden to bomb fish. By order of the Town Major.' (*Good-bye* 113)

The notice posted by the Town Major who was responsible for the management of Bethune during its occupation might show the sensitivity of the officer to the environmental issues. Yet this small notice to preserve the fish population in the canal is ironic because the environment was getting collateral damage in the front line only seven miles away. By including this incident in his memoir, Graves also shows that he is aware of the environment whether in the front line or behind.

To conclude, Graves's autobiography might seem to be lacking the descriptions of nature and the environment when compared to Blunden and Sassoon. As he mentions in a later article, he wrote *Good-bye To All That* in a very short time to make money. In spite of the fact that he was trying to attract the readers' attention by various types of ironic and comic incidents, Graves also included accounts of nature and the environment in his memoir. This is an indication of his sensitivity about the environment. His recollections of the No Man's Land where he describes the gradual degradation of the land as he moves toward the front line constitutes one of the examples revealing his sensitivity. On the other hand, reflecting on the dead horses lying on the roadside with an air of protest Graves hints his connection to the animal world. Or his careful sight catches the notice board that forbids the bombing of the fish in the canal. Although destruction prevails a few miles away in the battlefield, the prohibition represents attempt to preserve the ecology even in wartime.

CONCLUSION

This work on the reflections of nature in the First World War narratives investigated the relationship between war, trauma and nature by reading the autobiographies of the First World War veterans from the perspective of ecocriticism. The representations of nature in the works of Edmund Blunden, Siegfried Sassoon and Robert Graves were the focus of this study as these writers did not only turn to nature in order to cope with traumatic war experiences but also they wrote about nature to overcome their war trauma. In other words, Blunden, Sassoon and Graves tried to forget their traumatic memories by writing about them and their nature episodes in their works indicated that nature writing was a means of overcoming their war traumas that haunted them for the rest of their lives. Apart from the psychological aspect of nature writing, these writers also related their accounts of the destruction of nature throughout their works. Each writer presented a different perspective on nature and accounted for the destruction of nature according to his literary background.

The Great War veterans in this study are poets who belonged to a group of writers called Georgian poets. Georgian poetry means the verse "which is mainly rural in subject matter, deft and delicate rather than bold and passionate in manner" (Abrams 216). These authors use rural images in their works that seem to promote a retreat from the civilization and a longing for the idyllic countryside of the past, which can be perceived negatively by some contemporary ecocritics. However, the pastoral might possibly be used in an environmentally conscious work of literature because ecocriticism as an interdisciplinary literary theory renders the possibility of looking at any kind of text that is environmentally oriented. Therefore, autobiographies of Blunden, Sassoon and Graves can be categorized as environmentally conscious since the representations of nature offer more than a retreat.

From the psychological perspective, all three writers used nature as a means of connecting to life both during the war and in the aftermath. Edmund Blunden with his deep knowledge and enthusiasm for nature criticized the war with his highly pastoral tone because he believed that the countryside was also alive and had feelings. Yet beneath the surface of Blunden's criticism lies also his need to cope with the war trauma as he spent enough time to break down before the end of the war. Compared to Sassoon

and Graves, Blunden thought of himself as part of a greater home that is nature and envisioned himself as a shepherd to his men at war just like the shepherds in the idylls of the ancient Greek. Even as he was leaving the trenches with a nervous breakdown, he was worried about the landscape of the battlefield that would be demolished towards the end of the War. Blunden's nature episodes were more frequent and intense than Sassoon's and Graves's because he was in harsher battles than the other writers and nature presented the ideal atmosphere to cope with his traumatic war experiences at the front. Besides Blunden's psychological recovery through nature, his accounts on the destruction of nature are also more detailed than other writers since he has a deeper understanding of nature. The point that separates Blunden from Sassoon and Graves was his sensitivity for the environment. He is more conscious than others about the damage done to the environment and he accounts for the destruction from various angles ranging from the loss of tamed animals such as horses and donkeys to the destruction of farmlands and forests. He also gives detailed accounts of the destruction caused by both sides. Splintered trees or huge shell craters in the ground are some of the points that he mentions in his memoir.

Sassoon's case was different than Blunden's and Graves's in the sense of both age and social background because he was older than the others and he was brought up in the English countryside playing cricket and hunting foxes. Sassoon was twenty-eight years old when he was commissioned for duty and his trench experience was initially traumatized by the death of one of his friends who was emotionally dear to him. The social background of Sassoon was another reason for his traumatic trench experience since he longed for the English countryside he grew up although French countryside offered similarities from time to time as he mentions in his memoir. Therefore, compared to Blunden and Graves, Siegfried Sassoon was the one who was psychologically challenged most. His war wounds and constant health problems did not help this situation either and he spent as much time in England as he spent in the trenches, which caused him problems adjusting to the reality of the war. Therefore Sassoon's reasons for turning to nature during the war were different than Blunden and Graves, but the psychological outcome was the same. Sassoon found tranquility in nature accepting his place in a greater whole. Compared to Blunden, Sassoon's nature

episodes represented also the contrast between the civil life and the trench life because Sassoon got to experience both almost equally and he organized his memoir according to this in-and-out of the trenches pattern. Sassoon's accounts on the destruction of nature are limited compared to Blunden's because Sassoon focused on the operational difficulties caused by the environmental factors, which implied an anthropocentric perspective.

Compared to Blunden and Sassoon, Graves's accounts on the destruction seems to lack the enthusiasm presented by Blunden's and Sassoon's accounts. This lack of enthusiasm can be explained by his choosing to focus on the human condition and irony of the war in order to attract the readers. However Graves can be categorized as a sensitive writer about nature like Blunden and Sassoon because his nature descriptions at key moments show that he is aware of the destruction of the environment and he also turns to nature in order to cope with his traumatic experiences.

Ecocriticism as an interdisciplinary theory enables the evaluation of any kind of text that deals with the relationship of humankind and nature. As Scott Slovic maintains,

> the study of explicit environmental texts by way of any scholarly approach or, conversely, the scrutiny of ecological implications and human-nature relationships in any literary text, even texts that seem, at first glance, oblivious of the nonhuman world. In other words, any conceivable style of scholarship becomes a form of ecocriticism if it is applied to certain kinds of literary works; and, on the other hand, there is not a single literary work anywhere that utterly defies ecocritical interpretation, that is 'off limits' to green reading. ("Ecocriticism" 160)

Slovic's definition of the scope of ecocritical theory is one of the most comprehensive because he proposes three distinct ways of approaching literary texts from an ecocritical perspective. Thus his second categorization, which includes looking at literary texts according to ecological implications and human-nature relationship, enables the contemporary reader to study the texts of early twentieth century from an ecocritical perspective.

In the case of Blunden, Sassoon and Graves, nature episodes in their autobiographies signify their awareness that their existence on earth depends on nature. It seems evident

at some points of their narratives that they longed for the British countryside while fighting in France, but their connection to nature featured as more than just the feel of longing. All three writers were connected to nature in a way that enabled them to cope with their traumatic experiences. When considered from the ecocritical perspective, this aspect of their connection to nature might show the importance of nature in which humans become the part of a greater home that is *oikos*, which would improve the status of the environment perceived as an auxiliary object by anthropocentricism and religion.

By focusing on the First World War literature from an ecocritical perspective, this study also emphasized the effects of a global war on the environment with today's technological developments in warfare. The Great War was chosen as the focal point because it is considered as the first global conflict in the history of humankind that led to drastic changes in the social and environmental balance of the world. Another more important reason was the utilization of technological developments of the time. The First World War is important in the sense that it was also the first industrial war in the history of humankind. The thriving industry of the early twentieth-century introduces the use of new types of weaponry during the War. Therefore, new kinds of weapons such as more powerful artillery, machine guns, mortars, and hand grenades means not only more casualties but also a more destructive effect on the environment. The Second World War and other substantial wars like the Korean and the Vietnam War followed the First World War, but it remains as the first most destructive global war in the history of humankind and stands out as an atrocious example of the extent of destruction in a possible war at present time. During the battles in the Western Front, various environmental problems occurred such as the destruction of farmlands, forests and animal population. Even the fish population was affected since the Germans dumped unused chlorine gas in Norwegian coasts.

Focusing on the genre of Autobiography is also crucial to show the connection of autobiographical narratives and their credibility with regard to 'green reading' of these literary texts. When Blunden, Sassoon and Graves wrote their memoirs, there was approximately a temporal distance of ten years between them and their traumatic war experiences. Moreover Blunden had a spatial distance because he wrote his memoir in Japan where he taught literature. It is no doubt that their experiences changed and

haunted them all their lives. In accordance with trauma theory, their autobiographies can be considered as a way of exorcising their trauma of the War. For this reason, they not only put a temporal distance to their memories but also they created personas in their autobiographies different from their very selves. Especially Sassoon's strategy is noteworthy because he chooses to create a fictional character called George Sherston that distanced Sassoon from his experiences more than Blunden and Graves. Yet none of the distance created by the authors affects the nature-oriented reading of their memories because their traumatic experiences were genuinely present in their narratives in the form of nature episodes.

In conclusion, by focusing on the Great War autobiographies of three British officers, this work not only proposes a nature-oriented reading of these autobiographies, but also explores the relationship between the traumatic experiences and nature. With regard to this, it can be claimed that nature as humankind's greater home offers a therapeutic environment at times of distress as it did in the case of Blunden, Sassoon and Graves. Apart from the healing effect of nature on human psychology, this work also claims that all three writers were aware of the destruction caused by the war, which appropriates their memoirs as examples of early environmentalist texts that reflect upon and criticize the destruction of the war on environment. As a final remark, this work hopes to pave the way for future literary studies that would focus not only on world wars but also on wars and literature located in any part of the world.

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ÖZGEÇMİŞ

Önder Çetin 1978 yılında İzmir'de doğdu. 1997-2001 yılları arasında Ege Üniversitesi, Edebiyat Fakültesi, İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Bölümü'nde lisans eğitimi gördü. Yüksek lisans derecesini 2004 yılında Ege Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Anabilim Dalı'nda "The Lost Souls: Reflections of Hybridity and the Sense of Being the Other in Multicultural and Postcolonial English Literature" [Kayıp Ruhlar: Sömürgecilik sonrası ve Çokkültürlü İngiliz Edebiyatı'nda Melezlik ve Öteki Olma Duygusunun Yansımaları] başlıklı tez çalışmasıyla tamamladı. 2005 yılında aynı bölümde doktora çalışmalarına başladı. 2010-2011 yılları arasında Fulbright Eğitim Komisyonu'nun doktora tez projesi için verdiği Araştırma bursu ile Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nde çalışmalarını sürdürdü. 2002 yılından beri Ege Üniversitesi, Edebiyat Fakültesi, İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Bölümü'nde Araştırma görevlisi olarak çalışmalarına devam etmektedir.

ÖZET

1990'li yıllarda ortaya çıkan ekolojik eleştiri kuramı edebiyat eserlerini doğa-bilinci çerçevesinde inceler ve analiz eder. Irk, cinsiyet ve toplumsal sınıf gibi sosyal, biyolojik ve kültürel kategoriler dışında, ekolojik eleştirinin odak noktası yaşayan varlıklara hayat veren fiziksel çevre olmuştur. Doğa ve çevre hakkında farkındalık yaratmak için ekolojik eleştiri kuramı, doğa ve insan arasındaki temsilleri edebiyat eserlerindeki göndermeleriyle inceler.

Bu çalışmanın amacı, Birinci Dünya Savaşı edebiyatını ekolojik eleştiri kuramı çerçevesinde incelemektir. 1930'lu yıllarda savaş hakkında yazılmış üç otobiyografi – *Undertones of War, Memoirs of an Infantry Officer,* ve *Good-bye To All That* – ayrıntılı olarak incelenmiştir. Ekolojik eleştiri kuramı disiplinler arası çalışmalara açık bir kuramdır. Kuramın bu özelliği onun esnekliğiyle alakalıdır çünkü açık olarak çevre eleştirisi yapan bir metinden, doğa-insan ilişkisine gönderme yapan herhangi bir metne kadar geniş bir yelpazede farklı metinler ekolojik eleştiri kuramının inceleme konusu olabilir. Bu varsayıma göre, incelenen otobiyografilerde doğa tasvirlerinin yan anlamları ve çevrenin yok edilmesine yapılan göndermeler, ekolojik eleştiri kuramının odağı olacak kadar önemli birer boyut oluşturur.

Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nın diğer bir yönü de savaştan sağ kurtulanların belleklerine kazınan travmatik anılardır. Bu çalışma öncelikle travma ve ekolojik eleştiri kuramlarına dayanarak incelenen yazarların travmatik savaş deneyimleriyle başa çıkabilmek için doğaya döndüklerini tartışmaktadır. İkinci olarak, bu çalışma, yine travma kuramı kapsamında, yazarların travmatik savaş anılarının etkisinden bir derece olsun kurtulmak için otobiyografilerini kaleme aldıklarını ileri sürmekte ve eserlerdeki doğa tasvirlerinin de bu yazarların savaş sırasında yaşadıkları travmaların bir yansıması olduğunu tartışmaktadır. Son olarak, bu çalışma, yazarların doğanın ve çevrenin savaş nedeniyle yerle bir olmasına verdikleri tepkileri ekolojik eleştiri kuramı çerçevesinde değerlendirmiştir. Her ne kadar büyük bir çevresel yıkıma sebep olmuş Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nın birer parçası da olsalar, incelenen yazarların verdikleri tepkiler onların doğaya ve çevreye karşı duyarlı birer insan olduklarını göstermiştir.

Bu çalışmanın iki önemli yönü vardır. Bunlardan bir tanesi, doğanın insanın akıl sağlığı üstündeki etkisini otobiyografilerde incelemektir. Bu bağlamda, insan doğanın bir parçasıdır ve insanın ekolojik sistemdeki yeri doğanın üstünde değildir. İncelenen yazarların travmatik savaş deneyimleriyle başa çıkabilmek için doğaya dönmeleri yukarıdaki ifadenin bir işaretidir. İkinci önemli nokta ise Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nın ilk endüstriye ve teknolojiye dayalı savaş olmasıdır.

Birinci Dünya Savaşı insanlık tarihindeki son savaş olmamıştır fakat küresel düzeyde doğanın ve çevrenin tahrip edildiği ilk savaş olmuştur. Bu açıdan bakıldığında Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nın sadece Batı Cephesinde verdiği zarar göz önünde bulundurularak günümüz teknolojisiyle yapılacak bir savaşın hem çevreye verilecek zarar hem de insan kaybının ne derece fazla ve geri dönülemez olacağına dikkat çekilmektedir.

ABSTRACT

Ecocriticism has emerged in the 1990s as a way of analyzing literary works from a nature-conscious perspective. Apart from the biological, cultural and social categories such as gender, race and class, the focal point of ecocriticism has been physical environment, as in the physical space that animates all living entities. To create awareness of the importance of the environment, ecocriticism investigates the relationship between physical world and humankind with regard to the references in literary texts.

In this study, the Great War literature has been the focus of scrutiny from an ecocritical perspective and three autobiographies about the war written around 1930s, namely *Undertones of War, Memoirs of an Infantry Officer*, and *Good-bye To All That,* are scrutinized. Ecocriticism is a literary theory open to interdisciplinary studies. This feature of ecocriticism makes it flexible in the sense that any literary text can qualify as the subject of ecocriticism ranging from the explicitly written environmental texts to the ones containing recurring images of nature-human relationships. According to this assumption, the connotations of nature episodes and the reflections concerning the destruction of the environment become crucial in these autobiographies from the perspective of ecocritical theory.

Another aspect of The First World War was the traumatic memories that it engraved in the minds of those who survived it. This work merges trauma theory in literature and ecocriticism to discusses that the writers under scrutiny turned to nature in order to cope with their traumatic war experiences. Secondly, these writers tried to overcome their trauma by writing about it and nature episodes in their autobiographies are the reflections of their traumatic experiences. As a final point, sensitivity of these writers to the destruction of the environment is discussed according to contemporary ecocritical theory. All in all, this work projects on two important aspects that are widely discussed in ecocriticism. One of these aspects is that nature plays a crucial role in humankind’s mental health during traumatic experiences. The second aspect is that the Great War was the first example of an industrial war that affected the environment on a grand scale. These two aspects are scrutinized in the mentioned autobiographies according to trauma theory and ecocriticism.