The Poetry of the Great War and Propaganda

Božić, Nika

Odsjek za anglistiku

Filozofski fakultet

Sveučilište u Zagrebu

DIPLOMSKI RAD

The Poetry of the Great War and Propaganda

(Smjer: Engleska književnost i kultura)

Kandidat: Nika Božić

Mentor: dr. sc. Martina Domines Veliki, doc.

Ak. Godina: 2020. /2021.

Table of Contents

Introduction

Whether one considers war to be in human nature or not, it has undoubtedly been our reality for much of human history. We hear exciting warfare stories from the earliest stages of our education, such as the Trojan war, Peloponnesian wars or Mongolian invasions and conquests. In addition, it could be argued that those ancient war records informed and continue to inform our cultural narratives. Throughout recorded history, there are numerous examples of humankind drawing inspiration from the bloody histories of combat, such as the *Iliad* or the tales in the Bible. Bloodshed has influenced the production of literature throughout history, inspiring poets, and writers to describe the nature of combat or to document the specific instances in history. In this respect, one could say that war produces literary works. However, it is also possible for literature to produce wars. Language can and has been used as a weapon, as a way to manipulate and influence large masses of people with ulterior motives. In other words, language is the central component of propaganda, and, as a consequence, literature has been used for political purposes.

The main objective of this master's thesis will be to consider and examine both of these perspectives, the influence of war on literature and vice versa. In the first place, this thesis will analyze some examples of First World War poetry with regard to its function as pro-war propaganda material. To continue, the thesis will investigate how modern warfare reformed the long-established norms of British poetry and how it influenced the further production of it. In other words, it will be demonstrated how the Great War influenced the poetry of the period, but also how poetry influenced the war. The poets whose poems will be analyzed with reference to

propaganda and pro-war stance include Rudyard Kipling, Rupert Brooke, and Jessie Pope. These poets have been chosen not only for their literary prominence, but also because each of these poets came from a different background and lived their lives with respect to that background. Nonetheless, their poems illustrate some similar aspects of the pre-war and war poetry, i.e., their poetry is patriotic, it romanticizes the war, and finally, it served as propaganda material in the First World War.

In contrast to the patriotic reasoning and romanticized depictions of war stands the Trench poetry, and with respect to this, the soldier-poets such as Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon, and Robert Graves, whose poetry will also be examined. The three poets are considered to be the representatives of Trench poetry, along with Isaac Rosenberg, Edward Thomas, Charles Sorley, and Ivor Gurney. The thesis will analyze how the war transformed the poetic conventions of the time, and the poetic expressions of the three poets. Moreover, it will observe how Trench poetry entered into a dialogue with the propagandist and jingoist poetry. It must be noted that Trench poetry and the above-mentioned poets are not the sole examples of anti-war poetry, nor do they represent the entirety of pacifist and anti-war perspective in poetry of the period, as civilian poets participated in the literary production as well. Moreover, the poetry of soldier-poets is not inherently anti-war, but this will be discussed in detail later.

Brave New War

The twentieth century was the century of great changes and disturbances. More specifically, it was the century of the two world wars, which brought along a kind of destruction of unseen proportions. However, it was the First World War that was denominated 'The Great War' and 'The War to End All Wars', indicating the truly altering and all-encompassing character of the First World War, with regards to its destructive force and the people's hope to never experience it again. Even more, the term 'total war' has been popularized and utilized by historians to highlight the "radicalization of warfare between the 1860s and 1945" (Connelly 15). The industrialization did not advance only the production process, nor did it transform only the society and economy. The technological advancements of the nineteenth century introduced developments both in the fields of military combat and in the media.

Besides introducing new approaches to combat, this new technology used in the Great War, such as the tank, poisonous gasses, and the aircraft, influenced the public perception of it, or rather, it molded the public imagery. H. G. Wells, an English writer who had "the imagination of disaster", accurately anticipated the events of the twentieth century and the relationship between the machine and the man, most notably the superiority of technology over men (Buitenhuis 3). He shrewdly described the transforming character of warfare, but also the disbelief and ignorance of people about it, "No one could imagine, with all these new inventions, what horror war might bring. I believe most people still believed it would be a matter of bright uniforms and shouting charges and triumphs and flags and bands—in a time when half the world drew its food-supply from regions ten thousand miles away" (Wells as qtd. in Buitenhuis 3). Wells

astutely and concisely illustrated the schism between the reality of industrial society and the antiquated ideals of combat. People already relied on technology to better their lives, without realizing it would infiltrate all spheres of life. Furthermore, technology is not inherently good or bad, it depends on society to give it context and meaning. It was not possible to simply retain the war ideals of glory and honor while depersonalizing warfare with technological weapons.

What also changed during the turn of the century is the mentality of people in Edwardian England. Early twentieth century England represented decadence, complacency, and social agitation; the society challenged traditional Victorian and Edwardian certainties, such as "the place of women, the class structure, the political order", and the ones who defended the old conventions, or 'the Genteel Tradition', were threatened the most (Buitenhuis 4). George Dangerfield described these far-reaching changes in *The Strange Death of Liberal England: 1910-1914*, claiming that:

> Given the time, [England] might have destroyed itself—in civil war, in revolution, in the raptures of martyrdom. But it was not given the time. War, when it came, was nothing more than a necessary focus: political furies, sex hatreds, class hatreds were forgotten; with all the simulations of patriotic fervor, the united energy of England hurled itself against Germany. (Dangerfield 300)

Dangerfield suggests that World War I provided a safeguard against the social revolutions that were brewing at the beginning of twentieth century by uniting the people in a common cause. The Great War provided a distraction, a perfect solution for the political unrest at home as many

people embraced the idea of Germany as the common enemy. Finally, people could divert their energy into something worthy, causing what Wells correctly predicted once again, “a tremendous outbreak of patriotic fervour and exhilaration after the long expectation of vague dangers” (Buitenhuis 3). However, it is not only the war and the developments in the military that made difference, but also the media and the increasing globalization that transformed the mentality of the people.

Propaganda and Pro-War Poetry

It was during the second half of the 19th century that the media, and consequently globalization, started to progress. It was the century when the radio, photography and cinema appeared, and the commodification of both the new media and the old played a part in the propagation of the news from the front lines of the war. Jay Winter affirms that "the First World War happened at the very moment that the film industry became the centerpiece of mass entertainment. This was the very first filmic war. The technology provided motion-picture cameras for all major armies, but they almost never filmed the battle" (35). Even the cause of death and destruction was commodified, turned into profit making.

Nonetheless, it was not the truthfulness and authenticity of the cinema that produced profit, but rather the shocking details and the excitement that people who were not on the front lines experienced as never before. However, as in the example of Orson Welles's narration of *The War of the Worlds* by H. G. Wells, the people were not aware of the artificiality of the production; they did not know they had not witnessed actual footage (Winter 35). *The Oxford Dictionary* defines the term 'propaganda' as 'information, especially of a biased or misleading nature, used to promote a political cause or point of view'. Therefore, the media served a double purpose; on one hand, it generated profit as entertainment, and on the other, it functioned as government propaganda for the war cause.

The previous example demonstrated the nature and function of war propaganda in the film industry, but at the beginning of the 20th century, other media served this purpose as well. Other

forms of cultural production were used to this end, most notably, the posters. However, while the motion pictures brought the horrors of warfare to life, the posters were utilized primarily for motivation, that is, to encourage enlistment into the war. David Welch offers a number of examples of posters and symbols used to encourage recruitment at the beginning of the war, as conscription was not yet in force. The most distinctive images are the ones of Lord Kitchener inviting to war, and of the images demonstrating the family values, such as "two young children asking their father about his military prowess after the war" (Welch). It can be noted that the images generally appealed either to the sense of honor of young men or to their sense of shame for not participating. Another noteworthy attempt to influence the honorable nature of young men was the symbolic white feather, a badge of cowardice, given to them by young women. Besides emotionally blackmailing and publicly humiliating them, Troy Paddock asserts that this symbol "revealed that the dichotomy between the battle front and the home front was in some ways a false one", as the home front played a vital role in propagating the war and motivating the desire of young men to fight and to prove themselves (10).

However, there was another mass medium exploited for propaganda purposes, and that is the press. Newspapers and journals became a fundamental platform for manipulation of public opinion, and Sanders and Taylor maintain that it was precisely the press "by far the most important medium of communication in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century", despite technological innovation (2). With the industrialization, rise in literacy, and the growing buying power of the population, more people were able to read and participate in the news production and propagation. Besides, the newspapers functioned not only as a source of information, but also for cultural purposes, that is, literary works were published in newspapers and journals.

Moreover, Goldfarb Marquis compares the press and its function in Great Britain and Germany during the First World War, and affirms that, even though the systems and mechanisms of propaganda in the two countries differed, they served the same basic functions. More specifically, the press had to improve the morale of the nation and to discredit the enemy (Goldfarb Marquis 467-469). Because of this, she argues, it was frequent that the public did not know about the true state of warfare. Furthermore, Paddock confirms the contention that the military authorities controlled the press, especially employing censorship and concealing sensitive information in order to maintain the public morale, because newspapers conveyed the information in a way that any individual could understand and acknowledge, making it extremely useful in mobilizing the masses (7-9).

As a result, during the pre-war years and early years of the war, the public opinion about the conflict with Germany was easily manipulated. More specifically, the public mostly wanted to avoid the conflict, but also felt that Britain was justified in responding to the German atrocities in Belgium. According to Catriona Pennell, this is confirmed not only in the official propaganda through pamphlets, newspapers, speeches, etc., but also through the records of letters, diaries, everyday behavior of ordinary people and dialogue between them (Pennell 8). Nevertheless, it must be noted that not all propaganda, press or otherwise, was engendered by the government. Paddock describes propaganda as a vertical process, but also a horizontal one (10-11), and Pennell denominates these processes as ‘mobilization from above’ and ‘mobilization from below’ (3-5). In other words, the public is not a passive participant, and the public opinion obviously depends on all those who make the public. Once the public accepted the official stance on a specific issue, in this case the war, they started to participate in the propaganda of it as well.

Goldfarb Marquis enumerates eight methods of propaganda in the press, some of which are the stereotypes, such as the bull-necked Prussians; pejorative names for the enemy (the Boches); selection and omission of information presented in the press; stories depicting atrocities committed by the enemy; slogans, such as 'the war to end all wars'; hyperbolic descriptions or the censoring of battles (486). These methods can be observed in the poetry published in newspapers as propaganda as well, but also in the poetry of the Trench poets, for example, Robert Graves's poem "A Dead Boche". The characteristics of press propaganda and of poetry presented in this thesis were the means to achieve greater interest in the war, to incite the desire to fight and to kill, to offer comfort to those left behind, and to justify the acts of the British army.

A significant role in the newspaper propaganda was played by the poetry that was published in it. We can note the magnitude of it in the fact that Catherine Reilly, in her *English Poetry of the First World War: A Bibliography,* lists 2225 poets during the First World War, and maintains that the "writers were still close to their readership and were expected to write straightforwardly about matters of current importance; poetry often appeared in newspapers… and it was widely read" (Reilly as qtd. in Hibberd and Onions 8). What is more, the establishment of official government propaganda included a branch which "dealt with publicity and was responsible for press articles, literature, films and visual work", directly associating the press and literature (Sanders and Taylor 79). However, the nature of poetry changed significantly during the course of the war, and the transformation of the poetry from the pre-war years and during the war years testifies to the transformation of the mentality of the British people. What is meant by this is that

on one hand, there was a kind of compulsion to participate in the war, even by literary means, for patriotic purposes and to express the national spirit. Moreover, this endeavor included already known poets, since "a new government propaganda department held a secret conference for at least twenty-five 'well-known men of letters'", such as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Thomas Hardy (Hibberd and Onions 8) and an absent Rudyard Kipling (Buitenhuis 14).

On the other hand, a large part of what was considered to be the poetry of the First World War is the poetry of the Trench poets, or what Campbell classifies as a kind of "combat Gnosticism" (204). This ideology grants legitimacy only to the poetry engendered from the real experience of the war. What characterizes this kind of poetry is the realism of its descriptions, or rather, the truthful portrayal of the experiences, and the somber and sordid tone in which they are transmitted. Likewise, we can note that prominent poets such as Sassoon and Owen frequently employed irony and cynicism in their poems, and in Owen's words "[p]oetry must grow out of the realities of the human condition. Plain, direct language must be used, and all inversions and archaisms must be avoided like the plague" (Owen as qtd. in Hibberd and Onions 28). In addition, Bogazc argues that the Great War produced in non-combatant writers a "mobilization of an extraordinary language filled with abstract euphemistic spiritualized words and phrases under which were buried the realities of modern mechanized warfare" (643). But what this mode of writing produced in the combatants was anger, contempt, and alienation from the rest of the population.

However, the editors of the anthology of the *Poetry of the Great War* affirm that in the last decades we can note a significant change in the consideration of the Great War poetry. This is

apparent in the fact that a number of anthologies dealing with other characteristic types of poetry of the period have been published, such as the aforementioned anthology by Catherine Reilly, and another collection of women's poetry, *Scars Upon My Heart* (Hibberd and Onions 5). It is not only the Trench poets who participated in the warfare and who have made an impact, both on the front lines and in the cultural production, but also the people who did not, and could not, participate in the Great War. According to Quinn and Trout, the term 'war literature' has shifted and does not refer exclusively to the literature set in the battlefields, but to all literature that deals with the consequences of war produced by any individual (Quinn and Trout 1-2). The British civilians, non-combatants, also lived through the experience of the First World War, and while their literary works could not have truthfully represented the actual battles, they can offer a truthful perspective of the far-reaching consequences of the war.

As it was already mentioned, the poetry of pre-war and war years was shaped and reshaped, adapting to the necessities of the period and reflecting the poet's beliefs, ideologies, and opinions on the war. Moreover, even before the war started, people had been aware of the looming threat and, consequently, the public had been forming their opinion on the war for years, divided between "those who believed that strong defenses would deter aggression and those who saw the arms race as a danger to peace… almost everyone agreed that war would be terrible". These opinions were reflected in the poetry written before the war, as "verse in the national press between late July and 4 August 1914 expressed fear and horror at the growing threat" (Hibberd and Onions 8).

Nevertheless, once Great Britain officially declared war on the German troops, "the general mood changed at once from apprehension to determination, the earlier emphasis on horrors giving way to arguments that fighting was not only unavoidable but also potentially beneficial" (Hibberd and Onions 8). This was the moment in which the press and other mass media served the purpose of promoting war propaganda. Conscription Act was not yet in force, and so, Great Britain depended on its volunteers to fight in the Great War. The best way to achieve this was to motivate the young men by idealizing bloodshed, or inversely, by shaming their decision not to engage in it. Just as in the countless examples throughout history of narrating battles and conflicts by epic prose and poetry, literature became the vehicle of persuading young men to act in the interest of their nation. Therefore, "[a]uthors were soon used in a different capacity […]. Since Allied military leaders at the outset of the war prevented newspapers reporters from visiting the front and exercised a powerful censorship of whatever was published about the fighting, they starved the public of news", leaving civilians unaware of the true conditions and desperate for some information about the troops (Buitenhuis 1). Moreover, Bogazc confirms that "historic occasions and national crises seemed to demand something more than mere unadorned utilitarian prose… an exalted rhetoric alone seemed fit to express the national temper" (646). And who better to incite the passions of young warriors through poetry but the already established and well-known poets of the period, such as Thomas Hardy, John Masefield, and Rudyard Kipling.

An Old Imperialist: Rudyard Kipling

As it was already determined, one of the authors who was invited to the propaganda conference in September 1914 was Rudyard Kipling, a man whose name "had become in the minds of many synonymous with militarism and imperialism" (Buitenhuis 24). The reason for this was that Kipling was already an established author of both poetry and prose, but also "because of his strong Imperialist views and because he had written propaganda during the Boer War" (Bilsing 75). One of the poems that clearly indicates his viewpoints is "The White Man's Burden". Although the poem was written in 1899, and as such, it does not belong to the literary period principally analyzed here, it illustrates his imperialist and racist views, but even more, his acceptance of combat, because of purported morality and necessity of it. These aspects can be observed in the opening lines:

> Take up the White Man's burden
> Send forth the best ye breed
> Go bind your sons to exile
> To serve your captives' need. (1-4)

or the lines:

> Take up the White Man's burden
> And reap his old reward:
> The blame of those ye better,

The hate of those ye guard. (33-36)

What is more, the archaic language of these lines illustrates the opposition of Kipling's earlier poetry and the later Trench poets. Kipling's poetics exemplified his propagandist views, specifically, it can be observed in the collection of pamphlets provoked by a tour of New Army camps, *The New Army*. In these texts Kipling idealizes the troops, and Buitenhuis asserts that:

> The New Army is about an ideal, not a real, fighting force. All the men are brave, fit, disciplined, loyal, and true. There is no grousing, no crime. All the troops are itching to get at the enemy. Kipling ignored the real conditions, the inevitable frustrations, sicknesses, annoyances, eruptions that all men, especially new recruits, endure in training. He wanted to see this war as a crusade and so managed to endow every soldier and sailor whom he saw with his own spirit. (25)

Moreover, Kipling questions the future of these young men, but not in terms of them risking their lives and possibly losing them, but in terms of them not participating in the war effort. Once again, the willingness to sacrifice one's life is a central motif, reminiscent of the poster depicting a family, where the fear of losing one's pride is greater than the fear of death, a crucial tactic for emotionally blackmailing young men. Kipling understood and completed his role in recruiting and lifting the nation's morale through his writing, especially through poetry. For example, his poem, "For all we have and are", was published in *The Times* on 2 September 1914, a month after the start of the war (Hibberd 55). The poem unambiguously demands that the people "Stand up and take the war" (3), and that "There is nothing left to-day / But steel and fire and stone!" (7-

8). Nonetheless, Kipling does not present the war idealistically, or as a glorious affair, but as one that is unavoidable, and continuous through time:

> Once more we hear the word
> That sickened earth of old:-
> ……..
> Once more it knits mankind,
> Once more the nations go
> To meet and break and bind
> A crazed and driven foe. (13-14, 17-20)

In the poem, the speaker does not underestimate the enemy or the objective. Moreover, the speaker recognizes bloodshed and sacrifice as requirements for peace and prosperity. Kipling concludes the poem with two rhetorical, and one could say manipulative, questions, "Who stands if Freedom fall? / Who dies if England live?" (39-40).

Although Kipling was chosen to perform his duty as a propagandist of the war, and he supported the campaign by Lord Roberts for the conscription and rearmament (Hibberd and Onions 8), he also wrote poetry that was sympathetic to the ordinary soldier, and after the disappearance of his son John in combat, his poetry did not show the glorification of the war one might expect considering his stance. His *Epitaphs,* published in 1919, exhibit this shift towards a different kind of poetry, one that does not exalt the endeavor of war. There are four epitaphs, or rather couplets, "Equality of Sacrifice", "A Servant", "An Only Son" and "Common Form". The last

two are particularly poignant, portraying the sadness and guilt after his son's death, "I have slain none except my Mother. She / (Blessing her slayer) died of grief for me", "If any question why we died, / Tell them, because our fathers lied" (Kipling as qtd. in Hibberd and Onions 113). Correspondingly, the lines also relate a kind of disappointment, even bitterness, left over after the war.

Nonetheless, one month before the war concluded, in October 1918, Kipling wrote a poem that was "one more appeal that 'justice' should be done to Germany" (Kipling as qtd. in Hibberd and Onions 31). The poem was aptly titled "Justice", and it consists of six sestets. Since it was written at the end of the war, it can be argued that, while the poem was not strictly written for propaganda purposes, it was certainly written to boost the morale of the nation after suffering terrible losses, which is depicted in the last four lines:

> Whereby our dead shall sleep
> In honour, unbetrayed,
> And we in faith and honour keep
> That peace for which they paid. (45-48)

The theme of the poem centers around the aftermath of the war, and the difficulty of continuing life after such devastation, "Heavy the load we undergo, / And our own hands prepare, / If we parley with the foe, / The load our sons must bear" (5-8). Furthermore, Kipling is realistic about the consequences of this war, especially of those that will befall the sons of the British Empire.

However, the poem ends on a consolatory note; the nation must preserve the peace for which so many people gave their lives.

A Tragic Hero: Rupert Brooke

Another author, Rupert Brooke, was turned into "the embodiment of the ideal in the public imagination" (Hibberd and Onions 12). Not only did his poems illustrate the primary example of a young hero, ready to die in battle for his ideals and his home country, his person was turned into this ideal as well. In the early years of the war, the public, and even more the young men who enlisted, considered the war to be 'the Great Adventure', 'the Last Crusade', 'the Greater Game', and the editors of *An Anthology* confirm that these medieval ideals and sporting imagery were frequent in the poetry of the First World War (11). Moreover, Wilkinson demonstrates how developments in sports and the increasing demand for sporting content in newspapers stimulated the representations of war as a game, a sports event, or a spectacle (Wilkinson as qtd. in Quinn and Trout 26). The popularity of sports in the ordinary lives of the public influenced the poetry of the Great War. However, as the war continued, the war-poets resented this idealization of combat in poetry, and the idealization of themselves as the sports idols or heroes who sacrificed themselves. However, Rupert Brooke and his poems were different, and he was considered the model soldier by the public, even though he died at sea of blood-poisoning at the beginning of the Great War, in April 1915, before even reaching Gallipoli (Caesar). As reported by Bristow, the reason for his adoration is perhaps Churchill's 'campaign' to distract the home front from Britain's military defeat by portraying the death of Rupert Brooke as a noble sacrifice (Bristow 1). Brooke was already known in poetic circles, but after his death, his fame changed to veneration.

Brooke's poetry had a great influence on the early poetry of soldier-poets, especially his poetic language and descriptions. The editors of *An Anthology* assert that, while the soldier-poets were divided as far as their convictions about the war go, most of them accepted soldiery values. However, the principal aim was to portray truthfully the Great War, and "[w]hat distinguished them from Brooke was not that they dismissed the notions of heroism and sacrifice but that they were determined to report actual front-line conditions" (28). On the other hand, Brooke's poetic language does not disagree with the principles of the Georgian poetics, specifically, the value of honesty in description and a not embellished language, which Graves confirmed as well, "saying early in 1916 that Brooke's was 'exactly the language I'm floundering to catch, musical, restrained, refined and not crabbed or conventionally antique, reading almost like ordinary speech'" (Graves as qtd. in Hibberd and Onions 28). On the contrary, Brooke represented one of the key figures in *Georgian Poetry* and of the movement generally. Margot Norris claims that his poetry "may have signaled the anthology's willingness to serve as a vehicle that could provide soldier-poets with an alternative to the violence of *Blast* and to the aestheticism of the Modernists" (141). Brooke's poetry exemplified the need for a different kind of expression, one that does not glorify the violence of war, but also one that prioritizes the content rather than the form.

Perhaps Brooke's most famous poem is "The Soldier", the last one of the *War Sonnets*. This poem illustrates exactly the ideal of a young national hero and his values. The structure of the poem is that of a sonnet, that is, it consists of one stanza of fourteen lines, more specifically an octave and a sestet. However, it can be observed that Brooke's sonnet diverges from the strict norms of sonnets. M. H. Abrams establishes two types of sonnets written in the English

language: the Italian or Petrarchan sonnet, and the English or Shakespearean sonnet (290), and Brooke's poem generally follows the structure of the Italian sonnet, which indicates his public-school education and literary knowledge (Hibberd and Onions 12). On the other hand, he also incorporates two more pairs of rhyme, conforming to the norms of the English sonnet.

Furthermore, both Italian and English sonnets approached an array of subjects, but the most prevalent ones were romantic and sexual love, and later, religious themes. Furthermore, in the case of "The Soldier", there is a shift in the theme, that is, the subject is the love for one's country, and not for a woman. Yet, one could argue for "The Soldier" to be a love poem, especially since the author uses personification in his descriptions of his home country, specifically England, as his lover, "Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam / A body of England's, breathing English air" (6-7). On the other hand, preceding lines could indicate a kind of personification more appropriate for a mother, giving life to her child, raising it, and educating it, "A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware" (5).

The argumentation of the poem is appropriate for the general state produced by the war and the necessities that resulted from it, namely, the determination to fight the enemy and the propaganda to incite it. The opening two couplets introduce the somber mood of the poem, the realization, and the acceptance of possible death in the war if it is for a higher cause:

> If I should die, think only this of me:
> That there's some corner of a foreign field
> That is forever England. There shall be

In that rich earth a richer dust concealed. (1-4)

The triumph of the English nation, however small it may be, trumps the possibility of death, including the fear of it. Furthermore, the author uses religious imagery as a euphemism for his corpse by employing the term ‘dust’. In addition, by asserting that his dust is richer than the ground in which he will die, he completes his argument for the superiority of the English nation. This is also affirmed by constant repetitions of the words ‘England’ and ‘English’, but even more, by the final couplet and the sestet:

A body of England’s, breathing English air,
Washed by the rivers, blest by suns of home.

And think, this heart, all evil shed away,
A pulse in the eternal mind, no less
Gives somewhere back the thousand thoughts by England given;
Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day;
And laughter, learnt of friends; and gentleness,
In hearts at peace, under an English heaven. (7-14)

Brooke also illustrates in this poem the idealism of a young English soldier, but not with regard to his combat activities. His heroics do not lie with the fact that he is a warrior with god-like characteristics, but with the fact that he is an Englishman who is willing to sacrifice his life for

English values. The location of his death, and even his death in itself, ceases to be important; he will be under “an English heaven”, wherever he may be.

Another poem from the *War Sonnets*, entitled “Peace”, comments more on the glory of war, but also its consequences. Once again, it is an Italian sonnet with regard to its structure, but with additional rhyming pairs. In the octave, Brooke expresses his thankfulness to God for the Great War, or rather, for the resulting excitement and the arising consciousness:

Now, God be thanked Who has matched us with His hour,
And caught our youth, and wakened us from sleeping,
With hand made sure, clear eye, and sharpened power,
To turn, as swimmers into cleanness leaping,
Glad from a world grown old and cold and weary,
Leave the sick hearts that honour could not move,
And half-men, and their dirty songs and dreary,
And all the little emptiness of love! (1-8)

Not only does he glorify the experience of war, but he also castigates the mentality of people up to that moment, he condemns the world that has decayed, where the men have degenerated with their “dirty songs”, and love has no meaning. In this world, the Great War offers an opportunity for redemption and ablution from previous sins, which is compared to leaping into the water. Once again, we can note the religious imagery in the purifying function of water, and consequently, war.

The following sestet presents the worse aspects of combat, but one more time, Brooke diminishes these dangerous aspects by proclaiming its assuaging properties:

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

What Brooke suggests here is that war offers 'release' from the shameful life, that it mends the mind. According to the author, the men who go to war might find peace by fighting; they might suffer, but only physically, and even that meets its end in death. Consequently, the soldier has nothing to fear, as the alternative to going to war is worse.

In Love with a Soldier: Jessie Pope

The author who is "perhaps best known—and indeed most vilified—for her patriotic poetry of the First World War" is Jessie Pope (Potter). Her poetry attracted a lot of attention for explicitly establishing a contrast between a national hero and a man who rejects the war. Moreover, her poems express the perspective of some civilians about the brave soldiers, but even more, they also show the role that women had in propaganda design. Her poetry is often described as jingoist poetry, which Elleke Boehmer characterizes as being "a conduit for imperialist attitudes […] anthemic, exhortatory but at times elegiac – [providing] sources of inspiration and sustaining intimations of fellow feeling", especially nationalist beliefs (43). In other words, jingo poems appear frequently as means to inspire the nation and the unity of it, employing emotional connections between its people to incite nationalist feelings and convictions.

Boehmer acknowledges that the jingo poem, "with its often idealized and emblematized subject matter (lauding British Strength, Honour, Endurance) and its strong mnemonic features, its tuneful repetitions and infectious balladic and hymn-like resonances" was a literary form that circulated easily throughout the nation, even empire (43). Consequently, it could be argued that it was a literary form of globalization that united the Empire against the common enemy. The jingo poems praised the British soldier for his courage and morality, the virtues that allowed him to sacrifice himself for the greater good, for the nation and all it stands for. Furthermore, Boehmer interprets sport and athletic prowess as some of the virtues in jingoist poetry which successfully circulated throughout the Empire, unifying it in the process (53). These sporting motifs are conspicuously presented in Jessie Pope's poetry, such as poems "Who's for the Game?" and

"Play the Game". As we can see from the titles, the author establishes a link between sport and warfare, trivializing the war by comparing it to a game:

> Who's for the game, the biggest that's played,
> The red crashing game of a fight?
> Who'll grip and tackle the job unafraid?
> And who thinks he'd rather sit tight?
> Who'll toe the line for the signal to 'Go!'?
> Who'll give his country a hand?
> Who wants a turn to himself in the show?
> And who wants a seat in the stand?
> Who knows it won't be a picnic – not much-
> Yet eagerly shoulders a gun?
> Who would much rather come back with a crutch
> Than lie low and be out of the fun?
> Come along, lads –
> But you'll come on all right –
> For there's only one course to pursue,
> Your country is up to her neck in a fight,
> And she's looking and calling for you. (1-17)

As it was already mentioned in this thesis, the sporting imagery became more prevalent as sport assumed a bigger role in the society and Wilkinson asserts that "[w]hile forms of language used

sporting imagery to convey warfare, one of the most striking depictions of war as a game occurred when papers published actual war game boards of a current conflict" (29). It is obvious that the analogy between sports and combat existed, and that it was effective in promoting a rather benign and favorable view of the war, which can be observed in this poem as well. The rhythm of the poem is rather steady and uniform, while the cross-rhyme pattern is almost simplistic. However, the argument of the poem is transparent and straightforward, intelligible to any reader, and the repetition of the word 'who' is striking. By alternating rhetorical questions, the poetess praises the men who are eager to join the war cause, and mocks the men who are hesitant. The accusations are subtle but effective.

On the other hand, in some jingo poems we can also observe unreserved accusations, that is, the shaming and reproaching of the men who did not represent these idealistic values. Not only is a young hero supposed to be brave and noble, but he also exemplified family values. Therefore, a man who was not morally responsible and conscientious enough to go to war did not configure as a suitable husband and father, and he would and should have been rejected by women. This represents yet another aspect of a jingo poem, and propaganda poetry in general, the aspects of romantic love and values.

Pope's poem, "The Beau Ideal", introduces this feature already in its title. The poem consists of four octaves, and its argument follows a young girl falling in love with the epitome of male virtues:

Since Rose a classic taste possessed,

It naturally follows
Her girlish fancy was obsessed
By Belvedere Apollos.
And when she dreamed about a mate,
If any hoped to suit, he
Must in his person illustrate
A type of manly beauty.

He must be physically fit,
A graceful, stalwart figure,
Of iron and elastic knit
And full of verve and vigour.
Enough! I've made the bias plain
That warped her heart and thrilled it.
It was a maggot of her brain,
And Germany has killed it. (1-16)

In the poem the perfect man is compared to Apollo, the Greek god of music, poetry, medicine, and the sun, which seems out of place. The poem was published in 1915, and as it was already established, the central aim of jingo poems was to incite patriotic sentiments in the times of war, so it would stand to reason that the appropriate god to compare to the perfect man would be Ares, the god of war. However, the perfection for this young girl is destroyed by the war with

Germany, and so these archetypal characteristics are set in opposition to the characteristics more apt for a warrior in subsequent verses:

To-day, the sound in wind and limb
  Don't flutter Rose one tittle.
Her maiden ardour cleaves to him
  Who's proved that he is brittle,
Whose healing cicatrices show
  The colours of a prism,
Whose back is bent into bow
  By Flanders rheumatism.

The lad who troth with Rose would plight,
  Nor apprehend rejection
Must be in shabby khaki dight
  To compass her affection.
Who buys her an engagement ring
  And finds her kind and kissing,
Must have one member in a sling
  Or, preferably, missing. (16-32)

The Great War has changed everything, and with it, young Rose's desires. It is not the perfect Apollo anymore that would win her over, but a man covered by colorful scars and who has lost

his ‘stalwart figure’ in exchange for a bent back. However, the closing couplet produces an almost humorous effect, with its rhyming conclusion that the ideal husband for Rose should have lost at least one limb or have injured it in some measure. The poem functions almost as a comfort for all the soldiers that come back wounded and self-conscious, in order to assuage their fears of the life after the war. Furthermore, it serves as an encouragement for young girls not to search for the physically ideal man, but a young national hero who renounced this outward perfection for his moral principles.

The next poem by the same author, and the final poem analyzed in this thesis is entitled “The Call”, and once again, the title is telling with respect to the objective of the poem. It consists of three octaves with poetic figures typical for a jingo poem, “pressing upon its audience popular sentiments in entertaining yet also emotionally charged ways, it invited repetition, citation, reiteration, it ceaselessly flowed and circulated; it itinerated” (Boehmer 51). In essence, the poem invites the young men to enlist, romanticizing the horrors of war:

Who’s for the trench—
Are you, my laddie?
Who’ll follow French—
Will you, my laddie?
Who’s fretting to begin,
Who’s going out to win?
And who wants to save his skin—
Do you, my laddie?

Who's for the khaki suit—

Are you, my laddie?

Who longs to charge and shoot—

Do you, my laddie?

Who's keen on getting fit,

Who means to show his grit,

And who'd rather wait a bit—

Would you, my laddie?

Who'll earn the Empire's thanks—

Will you, my laddie?

Who'll swell the victor's ranks—

Will you, my laddie?

When that procession comes,

Banners and rolling drums—

Who'll stand and bite his thumbs—

Will you, my laddie? (1-24)

On the other hand, the final couplet of each stanza has a subtle mocking tone in which the author presents the hesitation of going to battle, the fear and anxiety it produces, in a derisive way, with negative connotations. Moreover, this derision is accentuated by the usage of rhetorical questions. The final stanza is especially charged with praise for going to battle; it is not only

morally responsible to fight, but the nation will appreciate all of your efforts by celebrating you. However, the tide was turning, and from the chaos emerged a different poetic style, one more appropriate to express the misery and despair of the Great War.

Trench Poetry: The Reality of War

As it was already mentioned, early twentieth century was a period of tumultuous changes, of revolts against conventions and established systems, be it politically, socially, or poetically. There was a new generation of authors who did not conform to the conventions of the Victorian era, and who wanted to create their own voice and their own expression. Modernism was a period of cultural revolution, an era of freedom from the constraints of realism and Victorian literature. However, according to Palmer and Minogue, there were two main streams of modernism: high modernism and low modernism. On one hand, high modernism includes well-known poets and authors such as Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, T. S. Eliot, W. B. Yeats, Ezra Pound, etc., and it is characterized by a break with traditional verse and form, and a move towards a fragmented subject expressed through an ordinary language and free verse. Nevertheless, "their commitment to vers libre was a technical rather than an ethical one", resulting in an "exclusive, and this excluding" poetic expression (Palmer and Minogue 233).

On the other hand, the authors contrast high modernism to low modernism, represented by "certain First World War poets". This low modernism also adopted common language and fragmentation of voices, but its poetic expression culminated in humanity and compassion (Palmer and Minogue 233). Moreover, there was another current in the literary circles, one that Palmer and Minogue put in opposition to modernism, but that could also be described as the middle ground between old conventions and ground-breaking modernism; Georgianism (229). Vincent Sherry argues for this middle position of Georgian poetics, or rather, for the "sense of invention and experiment which, if rhyming distantly with the social turmoil of these years,

participated nonetheless fundamentally with the artistic revisionism of modernism" (35). Moreover, *Georgian Poetry 1911-1912*, an anthology of poetry, was praised for its reactive character to the Victorian atmosphere and for its justifiable decadence, without it being subversive and chaotic (Sherry 35). Nonetheless, it is considered as a more traditional style rather than experimental (Abrams 116) and was even depreciated for larger part of the twentieth century precisely for being conventional (Simon 121).

One of the central figures for Georgian poetry was Rupert Brooke, whose poetics essentially epitomizes the norms of Georgian poetics. Moreover, during the pre-war and early years of the Great War, Graves, Sassoon, and Owen wrote poetry in a similar vein to the poetry of Brooke. Particularly, it was a type of poetry mainly "rural in subject matter, deft and delicate rather than bold and passionate in manner" (Abrams 216), fixated on the nature of southern England. This poetry demonstrated a desire to return to the idyllic nature, reminiscent of the Romantic poets who revealed their ruminations through nature and pastoral motifs as well. Margot Norris argues that a lack of proper poetic tradition resulted in soldier-poets making use of the existent poetic conventions that most conveniently voiced their needs, i.e., Romanticism. However, Romanticism and its pastoral elements should not be considered only for its escapist value, but that "the anti-mechanist ideology of the Georgians may have attracted the soldier-poets" (Norris 140). Nature was more than just a refuge and pastoral elements offered a relief from the technological warfare. In addition, Nils Clausson also claims that in absence of appropriate anti-war poetic tradition, the war-poets turned to Romantic lyric, and later transformed it into Trench lyric (107). In consequence, not only did Romantic conventions influence the conventions of Trench poetry, but they also dictated the subject matter of war-poetry. Surrounded by death and

decay, in the chaos and despair of the battlefield, Trench poets found distraction, and even serenity, in a field of flowers. Nevertheless, they also subverted the conventions and the themes. Although pastoral themes and rural idyll came to be insufficient in the second half of the war, the simplicity of poetic language upon which the Georgians relied influenced the Trench poets, but "the longer the war lasted, the stronger became the need for a 'turn of a speech', which in itself established new groups of poets, such as that of Graves, Sassoon and Owen" (Puissant 21). The roots of the Trench poets had not been forgotten but challenged in a way to find an adequate form for expressing the turmoil of the time.

What is more, poetry ceased to be just for poetry's sake as it obtained other functions, such as verbalizing the soldiers' emotions and carrying information about the conditions of warfare to the readers. As it was already mentioned in this thesis, people still had expectations and beliefs about warfare, but ones which were not attuned to the real conditions of this war. The technology revolutionized the combat into a mechanized warfare which, along with the traumatic conditions in the trenches, resulted not only in physical injuries, but also in mental illnesses. Jessica Meyer mentions some of the terms, such as hysteria, neurasthenia, war neurosis, and shellshock, that were used during the Great War to diagnose and label the people who exhibited a wide range of symptoms (5). Moreover, Meyer argues that these mental conditions were a direct result of this mechanized warfare characterized by its impersonal violence, which traumatized and absolutely shattered the psyches of the soldiers by displacing their civilian identities (2). The men in the trenches left their normal and conventional roles in society in order to become soldiers, who every day sacrificed their lives and were surrounded by death. It was necessary to discard their usual identities and notions about death in order to handle these traumatic events.

A figure that was especially influential in establishing and developing the theories surrounding mental disorders after the Great War was Sigmund Freud. In his essay "Our Attitude Towards Death", Freud claims that "[i]t is evident that war is bound to sweep away this conventional treatment of death. Death will no longer be denied; we are forced to believe in it. People really die; and no longer one by one, but many, often tens of thousands, in a single day" (Freud as qtd. in Strachey 291). In normal conditions, people consider their own death as an inevitable end, but also as a hypothetical situation, for they are unable to comprehend such an event in a pragmatic and unsentimental manner. However, in the battlefield, it was very much a realistic situation in which one inescapably had to engage, and consequently, handle the situation physically, mentally, and emotionally. Moreover, confronted with the aftermath of World War I, Freud concluded that given the latency of the traumatic memory, the survival of the traumatic event produces a crisis of identity (Caruth 10). It is not only the event itself that traumatizes individuals and communities, but also the continuous re-experiencing of the event, leaving the survivors with feelings of guilt or numbness.

Furthermore, Freud insists that people, when confronted with death, seek solace in literature, where "we still find people who know how to die – who, indeed, even manage to kill someone else. There alone too the condition can be fulfilled which makes it possible for us to reconcile ourselves with death" (Freud as qtd. in Strachey 291). The function of literature expanded as it acquired a therapeutic role, and when being bombarded with horrific images, "literature provides a meeting place between trauma and the visual image" (Armstrong and Langås 1). Both the authors of such literature and the readers could benefit from an illustrative representation of

death on paper to deal with death in real life. Moreover, literature helped people cope with being an active participant in death, i.e., killing someone. Specifically, it assuaged the feelings of guilt and self-hatred after taking someone's life.

Nigel C. Hunt also examines the link between literature and trauma, demonstrating the role literature has in addressing the impact of war on society and on individuals, citing Wilfred Owen, among others, as an example. Moreover, he claims that literature increases our understanding of the trauma by framing it into a narrative (161-162). When confronting a difficult situation, especially a traumatizing one, it is helpful to put it into perspective, and literature fulfills that task. By giving an account of the trauma, the author verbalizes it and controls it. Comparatively, by reading it, the reader empathizes and finds consolation. However, cultural trauma theories have questioned the possibility of placing trauma into a narrative in the first place.

Until World War I, Freud's theories revolved around hysteria and trauma that were tied to sexual experiences. However, they proved to be insufficient in explaining the war trauma and its effects on the psyche, leading to his theories on 'repetition compulsion'. Both this theory, and his earlier theories on traumatic memories, the latency period and on hysteria proved to be imperative for the development of the cultural trauma theories, manifested in the work of Cathy Caruth (Luckhurst 8-9).

Besides psychoanalysis, Luckhurst mentions two more principles that were fundamental for Caruth's work. The first one is that of Auschwitz, or rather, Theodor Adorno's philosophy of

representing the unrepresentable, and what Jean-Francois Lyotard regarded as a 'sign of history', a moment of rupture with conventional representation in history. And the last principle on which Caruth bases her trauma theories is the concept of aporia and the deconstruction of language, and consequently of literature (Luckhurst 5-7). Consequently, Caruth ties PTSD and traumatic memories with their representations in various disciplines, such as psychiatry, sociology, and literature. Specifically, she explores the inability of representing trauma by analyzing the gaps and disruptions in verbalization of trauma produced by the lack of memory integration into the consciousness or by its unspeakability (Caruth 4-6, Pederson 335).

Nonetheless, some authors question Caruth's contentions about traumatic amnesia or verbalization of trauma. For instance, Joshua Pederson proposes an alternate model of literary trauma theory by applying new research in trauma studies to literary analysis of trauma, concluding that critics should shift their focus and engage in different ways with the texts. For Pederson, it is fundamental to turn to the text itself, instead of the gaps in it, and find the "evidence of augmented narrative detail" and "depictions of experiences that are temporally, physically, or ontologically distorted" (338). It is not crucial what is missing in the text, but what is actually said and the way it is said, in minute detail and in a distorted manner. This does not imply the falsity or inaccuracy of descriptions, but the subjective experience and understanding of traumatic event, and consequently, subjective descriptions of it.

On the other hand, Sarah Anderson interprets the unspeakability of trauma through cultural norms and expectations, explaining that "resistance to telling and the silence about trauma suffered both in the battle and on the operating table, reveal important information about the

culture of post-war masculinity" (9-10). The men are kept from sharing their war traumas not because of their psychological inability to remember it, or linguistic inability to represent it, but by their cultural inability to appear weak or, contrastively, monstrous in the eyes of society. Moreover, Michelle Balaev examines the theory of intergenerational trauma, or the contagion of traumatic experiences through history, by challenging Caruth's claim that trauma is not one's own, but that other people are implicated in each other's traumas, which "therefore undoes its own referential basis because once trauma is 'spoken' and passed to another, it no longer remains unspeakable, and, thus, no longer 'traumatic' according to the model's own definition of the term" (152-154). She also maintains that "'speakability' of traumatic experience is strongly influenced by cultural models in the novel", confirming Anderson's defense of the cultural influence over traumatic representations in literature (157).

On the other hand, the function of poetry to convey information to its readers was significant as well. As it has already been demonstrated in this thesis, the censure of newspapers and the official propaganda left the public at home ignorant and oblivious to the true horrors the soldiers experienced at the front. Consequently, the manipulation at the home front provoked in soldiers a kind of frustration and resentment towards the civilians and the government. As Susanne Puissant notes, the poetry of soldier-poets:

> is overshadowed by the political implications of war poetry as a direct intervention in the contemporary situation and particularly as an opposition to official propaganda. One might even speak of a fusion of aesthetics with ethics, especially in the cases of Wilfred Owen, for whom 'poetry was in the pity', and Siegfried Sassoon, whose famous

> statement of protest was supposed to underline and reinforce his position already expressed in his war poetry. (154)

War-poets like Owen, Sassoon, Graves, etc., felt responsible for illustrating the true state of affairs, for depicting the situation in the trenches authentically and even graphically in order to undermine the representation of war as heroic and noble in the imagery at home. However, their intentions to portray the trenches as grisly as possible should not be interpreted as being against the cause. Puissant also defends their position not as pacifist, but as critical of particular methods and objectives of the government, which was later understood erroneously as being anti-war. The poets expressed their beliefs through satire, which "mainly rejected the prewar ideas of nationalism and its emotional form of patriotism", challenging "English moral superiority by attacking those associated with these ideas: the older generation, women, generals, the Anglican clergy, politicians and the press" (71). Furthermore, Claussen affirms this position by demonstrating that the patriotic sonnet, as one of two poetic traditions available alongside Romantic lyric, was abandoned as the war continued. Patriotic sonnet was not the type of poetic tradition suitable to represent the war in an authentic manner, nor was it suitable to criticize it (107). It will be demonstrated that these poets suggested their support for and conformity with the official stance on war. Nevertheless, these poets developed their own style in order to illustrate their particular position in the war, a position different from those at home, and different from the position the government strived to disseminate.

To Die for One's Country: Wilfred Owen

Comparably to Rupert Brooke, Wilfred Owen enlisted to contribute to the war effort in October 1915, albeit with less enthusiasm, considering that the Great War had already lasted for a year (Stallworhty). Both poets would also not see the end of the Great War, with Brooke dying in 1915 and Owen in 1918, a week before the Armistice of 11 November 1918. Furthermore, at the beginning of his combat career, Owen expressed much the same idealistic visions of the war effort, admitting to his mother that his primary motivation for fighting was "[t]he sense that [he] was perpetuating the language in which Keats and the rest of them wrote!" (Owen as qtd. in Stallworhty). Furthermore, with these words, Owen exposes more than just his idealized views on the warfare; he also exposes his veneration of the Romantic poetry.

What is more, Araujo mentions a ballad from 1914 that was not published at the time, and which demonstrates a romanticized perspective of the war comparable to the visions in Brooke's ballads:

> Oh it is meet and it is sweet
> To live in peace with others
> But sweeter still and far more meet
> To die in war for brothers. (qtd. in Araujo 334)

Furthermore, the verses build upon Horace's verses, which are "typically translated as 'It is sweet and meet to die for one's country", surprisingly echoing Horatian patriotic sentimentality (Araujo

328). Both Horace and Owen glorify the sacrifice of young men for their homeland; however, in these verses Owen sets in opposition war and peace, admitting peaceful coexistence is possible and advantageous, but sacrifice for one's compatriots is preferable. Nonetheless, his experience in the trenches would change his perspective on the bloodshed and, as a consequence, transform his poetic expression. This is exemplified entirely in his preface to *Poems*, where Owen in his own words proclaims his intention:

> This book is not about heroes […] nor anything about glory, honour, dominion, or power, except War. Above all, this book is not concerned with Poetry. The subject of it is War, and the pity of War. The Poetry is in the pity […] All a poet can do to-day is to warn. That is why the true Poets must be truthful. (Owen, "Preface")

Moreover, he substantiates this statement in his poem, "Strange Meeting", "I mean the truth untold, / The pity of war, the pity war distilled." ("Strange Meeting", 24-25). The poem illustrates life after death, a journey in the underworld where the narrator encounters the enemy he has killed in battle. However, it is not the narrator who speaks these words, but the enemy. This reversal of roles, or rather, the portrayal of the enemy as a human with the same intentions as the poet, makes Owen's point even clearer. In addition, Punter interprets the ambiguity of these verses cynically, questioning if Owen thought of pity as the appropriate response to the bloodshed or as a ubiquitous state of mind, unreachable until we suffer true devastation (97). In these verses, one could say that it is the war that has ignited and extracted the pity in its essence.

Unlike Rupert Brooke, Wilfred Owen got to experience combat and to witness the brutality and futility of it, provoking in him despair and even bitterness evident in his poetry. In addition to his literary expression, Owen's cynicism can be observed in his reaction to the poetry of the period. In the first stages of drafting his poem, Wilfred Owen dedicated "Dulce Et Decorum Est", one of his most famous poems, to Jessie Pope. However, the dedication has been crossed over and changed to 'To a certain Poetess'. In the article written by Santanu Das, accompanied by photographs of the manuscript, the corrections are clearly visible (Das). This direct act of dedication literally connects the two authors of First World War poetry, even though the characteristics of their poems and the intentions of their poetry fall in the opposite ends of the spectrum. Moreover, the unconcealed mention of the poetess in the original manuscript makes evident that Wilfred Owen was familiar with her poetry, and even considered his own poem to be the response.

In his work, Araujo examines this obvious link between the poetry of Jessie Pope and Wilfred Owen. Particularly, the author considers "Dulce Et Decorum Est" a retaliation to Pope's jingoist composition "The Lads of the Maple Leaf", an exemplary work of her jingoist poetry, pro-war in its sentiment. Comparing the poetry of the two poets, and considering Owen's cynical dedication, "Dulce Et Decorum Est" might be described as an anti-war counterattack on Pope's poem, or even her poetry in general. Unlike "The Lads of the Maple Leaf", which has a structured form of five quatrains and an AABB rhyme scheme, "Dulce Et Decorum Est" consists of irregular stanzas and has a crossed rhyming pattern. Four stanzas form the poem's structure, but the stanzas do not have the same number of lines; the first stanza is an octave, the second a sestet, the third a couplet, and the last stanza consists of twelve lines. The structure of the poem

challenges the old traditions of poetry by not adhering to the old conventions, disintegrating the old traditions. Moreover, one could argue that the fragmentation of the poetic form correlates to the fragmentation of identities produced by the war. However, what is more, the poet challenges Pope's depiction of war, the imagery she employs to excite her readers, and even to inspire them. Unlike her soldiers, who are adventurous and even excited, Owen's soldiers are not 'sturdy', but 'bent double', blind and deaf, desensitized to the horrors of war:

> Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,
> Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge,
> Till on the haunting flares we turned out backs,
> And towards our distant rest began to trudge.
> Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots,
> But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame, all blind;
> Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots
> Of gas-shells dropping softly behind. (1-8)

This war is not represented as a thrilling game, or an adventure without real consequences. "Dulce Et Decorum Est" challenges the rousing war poetry by presenting the aftermath of the fight where the soldiers "marched asleep", almost like the walking dead. Owen illustrates the fatigue, the pain, and the deafness one suffers after constant bombing. Moreover, the poet confronts his readers with death and the terror one feels when exposed to it:

> Gas! GAS! Quick, boys! - An ecstasy of fumbling

Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time,

But someone still was yelling out and stumbling

And flound'ring like a man in fire or lime.-

Dim through the misty panes and thick green light,

As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.

In all my dreams before my helpless sight

He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning. (9-16)

Owen illustrates the shock and the chaos the soldiers experience on the front lines, and Araujo underscores the contrast "[a]s it dawns on the troops that these are gas-shells a frenetic rush to don masks and other armour ensues, '[a]n ecstasy of fumbling'. This is certainly not the ecstasy of Pope's beatific pilgrims" (335). Contrary to "The Lads of the Maple Leaf" who are "ready to shed their blood" (3), but whose blood shedding is actually missing, Owen portrays the risk and the narrow escape from death by the soldiers "[f]itting the clumsy helmets just in time" (10). Furthermore, he accentuates the peril by describing in gruesome detail the death of a fellow soldier in the following stanza:

If in some smothering dreams, you too could pace

Behind the wagon that we flung him in,

And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,

His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin,

If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood

Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs

Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud

Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,-

My friend, you would not tell with such high zest

To children ardent for some desperate glory,

The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est

Pro patria mori. (17-28)

Although one might imagine death by poisonous gas to be peaceful in comparison to bombings and trench combat, the imagery Owen employs to depict the annihilation of this man is violent. This is accomplished by utilizing verbs which presuppose pain and agony – 'guttering', 'choking', 'writhing', 'gargling'. What is also telling, with each utterance stuck in the throat, is the striking use of alliteration to accentuate the effects of suffocation by the lethal gas. Furthermore, the poet transmits the disgust produced by such an ending of life. It is not honorable nor right to die in such a way, "like a devil's sick of sin", "[o]bscene as cancer, bitter as the cud / [o]f vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,-" (20-24). The specific description of suffering of this one man emphasizes the individual character and autonomy of each soldier – the army is not a collective, in which an individual is indistinguishable and forgotten after death. Furthermore, the detailed description corresponds to the aforementioned representation of trauma in literature delineated by Pederson. It is not the gap or the missing information that is representative of trauma, but the overflowing adjectives that portray the death in detail. Moreover, Pederson even argues for the distortion of narrator's memory illustrated by the abrupt change in scenery, from the battlefront to 'a green sea' (341). The victim dies from suffocating,

or rather drowning, and the reality of this is not questioned, but the representation of this situation poses a paradox of drowning on land, therefore confounding the reader.

Nevertheless, Tim Kendall expands our interpretation by observing that Owen's poetry should not be regarded as anti-war manifestos, but as anti-pro-war poetry, by which he underscores the ignorance that civilians demonstrate in their overzealous pro-war poetry (xxi). Given the aforementioned interconnected structures of Owen's poem and Pope's poem, but even her poetry in general, and the shift from the first-person view to third person view in the last stanza, "Dulce Et Decorum Est" might not be considered an anti-war poem, one which condemns the war, and which highlights the pointlessness of it, but one which condemns the poetry which celebrates the war. Ironically, Owen does not attack or show contempt for his enemy on the battlefront, but for people on the home front who do not understand the realities of the war, but who represent it as a glorious and honorable event. In the last stanza, the poem switches from the terrifying descriptions to direct speech, "If in some smothering dreams, you too could pace / Behind the wagon that we flung him in, […] / If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood / Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs" (17-22). What is more, the last four lines especially reveal the accusatory character of the poem by ironically addressing the reader, or even 'A Certain Poetess', as his friend. Furthermore, the author explicitly denounces Horatian verses as the 'old Lie', contradicting the verses of his youth. For Owen, war and sacrifice are no longer admirable, nor righteous reasons to end one's life.

Some other authors who question the poetry of Jessie Pope and Wilfred Owen, and who argue for the dialogic character of it, include W. G. Bebbington and Michael Williams. Williams places

in juxtaposition various poems by both authors, advocating for the interdependence between them, “'The Last Laugh', for instance, adopts the format of, but rejects the sentiments of Pope's 'The Wise Thrush'; 'Conscious' refutes the inane placebos of her 'Sister'; and 'Disabled' is as compassionate and despairing a reversal of the cynical rhyming of her 'The Beau Ideal' as you might wish to read” (196). As it was already examined in this thesis, “The Beau Ideal” functions as a reassurance to future soldiers in order to promote enlisting and participation in the war effort. In other words, it serves to soothe their fears of becoming disfigured and, hence, unlovable. For that reason, the poem portrays these injuries and afflictions as desirable, and the suffering after the war as attractive. However, Owen confronts this ludicrous consolation by introducing a disabled veteran, and “[i]n a fashion characteristic of many of Owen’s poems, the poet blends irony and compassion for the victims of war in order to drive home once again his message of war as a waste of youth” (Puissant, 129). Whereas “Dulce Et Decorum Est” explicitly criticizes the war effort and the role of the public in encouraging it, “Disabled” presents the reader with the consequences of the Great War, consequences that are a far cry from Pope’s world. In other words, the poem deliberately frames the soldier as the victim of the bloodshed, overlooked by the ordinary people:

> He sat in a wheeled chair, waiting for dark,
> And shivered in his ghastly suit of grey,
> Legless, sewn short at elbow. Through the park
> Voices of boys rang saddening like a hymn,
> Voices of play and pleasure after day,
> Till gathering sleep had mothered them from him. (1-6)

Life after the war is not as hopeful and exciting as Pope portrays it to be. Optimism fades as the reader pictures a solitary figure in a wheelchair, legless and shivering in the cold, waiting for the day to end. Owen juxtaposes the still soldier to the children playing in the park, highlighting his hopelessness as the boys' voices remind him of a somber hymn. The soldier broods over the past, reminiscing about the old days when he could experience life as anyone else:

> About this time Town used to swing so gay
> When glow-lamps budded in the light blue trees,
> And girls glanced lovelier as the air grew dim,-
> In the old times, before he threw away his knees.
> Now he will never feel again how slim
> Girls' waists are, or how warm their subtle hands.
> All of them touch him like some queer disease. (7-13)

The poet connects the happiness and playfulness of his subject's past to the agony and despair of his present. Moreover, Puissant maintains that the poet expresses his critique of the women of the period, since "[n]ot only are they made responsible for the young man's desire to enlist (as in *Dulce et Decorum Est*), but when he returns as a cripple, they ignore him and instead focus on 'the strong men that were whole'" (130). The poet effectively puts in opposition the infatuation and fascination of young Rose to the revulsion the girls feel when they touch the injured soldier like 'some queer disease'. Moreover, the soldier admits to enlisting for superficial, frivolous reasons:

There was an artist silly for his face,
For it was younger than his youth, last year.
Now, he is old; his back will never brace;
He's lost his colour very far from here,
Poured it down shell-holes till the veins ran dry,
And half his lifetime lapsed in the hot race
And leap of purple spurted from his thigh.

One time he liked a blood-smear down his leg,
After the matches, carried shoulder-high.
It was after football, when he'd drunk a peg,
He thought he'd better join. - He wonders why.
Someone had said he'd look a god in kilts,
That's why; and maybe, too, to please his Meg,
Aye, that was it, to please the giddy jilts
He asked to join. He didn't have to beg;
Smiling they wrote his lie: aged nineteen years. (8-23)

In addition to wanting "to look a god in kilts", he drunkenly decided to risk his life with the purpose of impressing the girls, or 'the giddy jilts[1]'. By identifying the women as jilts, the poet further demonstrates his disillusionment and resentment against women. Not only does he blame

[1] "a person, especially a woman, who capriciously rejects a lover" ("jilt").

women for his circumstances, but he also cynically comments on the government officials who let the soldier enlist, smiling as they accepted his dishonest age. Furthermore, there is an element of game in the veteran's lamentation, as he compares the injuries of war to the injuries he has received by playing football. Unlike the courageous games of Pope's poems, here the games take on a mournful note as the soldier expresses his regret to spend his lifetime in a race. What is more, he is not welcomed back as the hero who scored a goal, cheered on by the spectators, but put away in an institution, depending on the pity they dole out:

Germans he scarcely thought of; all their guilt,
And Austria's, did not move him. And no fears
Of Fear came yet. He thought of jewelled hilts
For daggers in plaid socks; of smart salutes;
And care of arms; and leave; and pay arrears;
Esprit de corps; and hints for young recruits.
And soon, he was drafted out with drums and cheers.

Some cheered him home, but not as crowds cheer Goal.
Only a solemn man who brought him fruits
Thanked him; and then enquired about his soul.

Now, he will spend a few sick years in institutes,
And do what things the rules consider wise,
And take whatever pity they may dole.

Tonight he noticed how the women's eyes

Passed from him to the strong men that were whole.

How cold and late it is! Why don't they come

And put him into bed? Why don't they come? (24-40)

Silkin identifies anger and compassion as two essential features of Owen's poetry, claiming that they "are complementary elements in his work, and exclusion of the former throws the latter into radical weakness of quite the wrong kind […] which can obscure the horror of war that Owen in other poems was committed to recounting" (208). Owen challenges and protests through his poetry the popular opinion about and belief in the glorious war hero by pitying him, depicting him as defeated despite his victory. There is a sense of resignation in the final stanza as the soldier is already aware of his looming death after a few sick years in the institute. Moreover, there is almost a sense of impatience and restlessness as he asks the final questions, "Why don't they come / And put him to bed?" (39-40). David Punter suggests that in this poem Owen equates this pity to death, where laying the disabled veteran to bed evokes the image of laying him to rest (98). In a sense, there is no life after war. Although the veterans of Owen's poetry survived, they only physically exist and wait for death. They are not decorated war heroes that continue doing great things; they are 'disabled', they are the 'mental cases' and the 'doomed youth'.

A Counter-Attack: Siegfried Sassoon

Most of Owen's poems were published posthumously by Siegfried Sassoon, a fellow soldier poet and patient in Craiglockhart War Hospital in Edinburgh. Not only was he responsible for the publication of the collection, the two poets socialized during their stay at the hospital, discussing the Great War and poetry (Stallworhty). What is more, Santanu Das examines the influence of Sassoon's poetry on Owen's in a close reading of "Dulce Et Decorum Est", claiming that the "manuscript bears traces of Sassoon's hand too, brushing against Owen's, pencilling in suggestions" (Das), and Jon Silkin repeatedly compares the poetry of the two, specifically their poems about the experience and effects of combat (207-223). The two poets shared a similar development of poetic expression, as their first verses expressed a belief in an idealized warfare, but which would soon transform into a more realistic style. Sassoon even explicitly expressed his opinion to Robert Graves, insisting that "war should not be written about in such a realistic way", and to which Graves responded cynically, but accurately, that "Siegfried had not yet been in the trenches. I told him, in my old-soldier manner, that he would soon change his style" (Graves as qtd. in Silkin 130).

And change he did. Not only did Sassoon protest through his poetry, which will be later examined, but he also unambiguously articulated his opinion in a statement titled "A Soldier's Declaration". In the statement, Sassoon openly castigates the war effort on the grounds that the objectives of the Great War had changed, explaining that "this War, upon which [he] entered as a war of defence and liberation, has now become a war of aggression and conquest". Moreover, as Sassoon questions the purpose of the war, he also categorically claims he does not protest against

the “military conduct of the War, but against the political errors and insincerities for which the fighting men are being sacrificed”. Not only does he direct his statement to the government and its propaganda, which was used to deceive young men, he also confronts the complacent ‘majority at home’, denouncing them for not opposing the bloodshed, and for supporting the cause in which they do not participate, and which they cannot even imagine (“A Soldier’s Declaration”).

As a consequence for refusing to further participate in the war, Sassoon expected to be court-martialed; however, Robert Graves intervened and justified his behavior as a manifestation of shellshock, for which he was sent to Craiglockhart War Hospital. Nevertheless, Sassoon could not have stayed away from the front lines too long, and so he joined the troops for a brief period of time, before being injured and sent home once again (“Poets of the Great War”). However, as it was already mentioned, he met Wilfred Owen during his time away, and there they discussed the purpose of the Great War, writing poems about the physical and psychological consequences of it. Moreover, Sassoon composed most of the poems from his collection *Counter-Attack and Other Poems* in Craiglockhart Hospital, and Puissant suggests that his fellow patients, in addition to two of his friends who suffered similar injuries, inspired his poem “Does It Matter?” (132):

> Does it matter? -losing your legs?
> For people will always be kind,
> And you need not show that you mind
> When others come in after hunting
> To gobble their muffins and eggs.

Does it matter? -losing your sight?

There's such splendid work for the blind;

And people will always be kind,

As you sit on the terrace remembering

And turning your face to the light.

Do they matter-those dreams in the pit?

You can drink and forget and be glad,

And people won't say that you're mad;

For they know that you've fought for your country,

And no one will worry a bit. (1-15)

The poem presents distinct physical and psychological repercussions of warfare with irony, questioning the seriousness of them in a flippant manner. This irony is particularly underscored with the word 'splendid' contrasted with blindness and searching for the light. Furthermore, the poem even goes so far as to suggest that people will be kind to the veteran who suffers, implying that their kindness is worthy of the sacrifice. It bears similarity to Owen's "Disabled", as the poem can be understood as an ironic counterpart to Jessie Pope's misleading consolation. The poet highlights the exclusion the veterans feel, but are forbidden from displaying, "[w]hen others come in after hunting" (4). What is more, the poem exposes the mentality of those at home, who disregard the trauma and condone fighting for their country, while "the soldiers are forced to endure not only their own mutilation, but also the platitudes of those that remained at home, namely women and politicians" (Puissant 132). By contrasting home and battlefront, the poet contrasts two distinct positions on the war, or rather, the nightmares and mental issues that

veterans suffer from are acceptable and reasonable, so “no one will worry a bit” (15). By ironically juxtaposing the normality of everyday life, such as hunting, working, sitting on the terrace, and the soldiers’ inability to participate in those activities, Sassoon effectively shocks the readers and accuses them of callousness and self-importance. Furthermore, the last five verses illustrate the mental state of the veterans after the horrors of the war, concluding that they should handle their traumatizing memories by drinking and forgetting them instead of confronting them. The public did not want to be burdened with traumatic experiences of those who fought, leading to a struggle – one between “speaking and being silent […] against the defenses they have created to protect themselves from their trauma and the desire to heal through speaking about it” (Anderson 3). While some may have experienced traumatic amnesia, one could argue that in these verses Sassoon emphasizes the soldiers’ inability, or even prohibition, to resolve their traumas and memories in fear of being shunned or labeled as mad.

Another poem that sets in opposition the two contrasting views on the war is “‘They’”. Unlike the previous poem, which is directed to the veteran as a sardonic consolation, and which does not specifically name the culprit, this poem openly attacks the Church, and by the same token, the establishment, and the public in general:

> The Bishop tells us: 'When the boys come back
> 'They will not be the same; for they'll have fought
> 'In a just cause: they lead the last attack
> 'On Anti-Christ; their comrades' blood has bought
> 'New right to breed an honourable race,

'They have challenged Death and dared him face to face.'

'We're none of us the same!' the boys reply.
'For George lost both his legs; and Bill's stone blind;
'Poor Jim's shot through the lungs and like to die;
'And Bert's gone syphilitic: you'll not find
'A chap who's served that hasn't found some change.
' And the Bishop said: 'The ways of God are strange!' (1-12)

The poem consists of two stanzas of six lines, and it is formed as a dialog between the Bishop and the boys, that is, between the home front and the battle front. Even the title of the poem indicates a division between the two groups, conveying detachment from and indifference towards 'them'. The Bishop advocates the Great War as a 'just cause', and, as a consequence, he excuses the ramifications of it on the soldiers. Moreover, the title is inside quotation marks, accentuating additionally this distance and separation from the subject.

On the other hand, the speaker identifies as one of the boys, which is telling since "the poetry of the time rarely speaks of 'men', a neutral term, it often talks about 'boys' or 'lads', a term heavily charged with emotions" (Puissant 47). The speaker introduces us to each soldier by name, familiarizing the readers and connecting them to each individual. The speaker presents the reality of war by describing the afflictions of the soldiers individually, instead of collectively like the Bishop. Whereas the Bishop describes their sufferings in general terms, such as spilling their blood and facing Death, the readers gather more information from the next stanza and "[t]hrough

a focus on the physical details of the young men, their vulnerability to modern weapons is emphasised", and their sufferings are individualized (Puissant 47). Nevertheless, the consequences with which the soldiers live are minimized through the overused platitude that "God's ways are strange". Since it was God's will to sacrifice them, their willingness to risk their lives for their country is essentially nullified. Moreover, this anticlimactic and inadequate response is almost amusing, condensing the entire ironic commentary in this one line.

The previous two poems illustrated the reality of life after war, shattering the romanticized notions of war as a heroic, but temporal inconvenience, which has to be dealt with and is later forgotten. However, in the next poem, Sassoon demonstrated another possible outcome of the war, further dismantling these myths. The poem "Suicide in the Trenches" does not depict the soldier's ending as a worthy death in exchange for safety of his nation. On the contrary, it fully exposes the death of a young boy as senseless and undeserving:

I knew a simple soldier boy
Who grinned at life in empty joy,
Slept soundly through the lonesome dark,
And whistled early with the lark.

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

You smug-faced crowds with kindling eye

Who cheer when soldier lads march by,

Sneak home and pray you'll never know

The hell where youth and laughter go. (1-12)

Once again, the poet harshly criticizes the complacent crowd at home, but this is not the primary focus of the poem. In fact, it delineates the path from life and happiness to despair and death. The boy in the poem is a simple, untroubled youth who could not cope with the expectations of life in trenches, and with this poem, Sassoon effectively presents us with another cause of death in war, and that is suicide. Even though his death is not the direct result of combat or by the hand of enemy, the psychological trauma of participating in combat, of fearing and seeing death continuously, left a mark on the boy's psyche. Seeing no exit from the torturous situation, suicide may seem like the only option. And, once again, this boy's death concludes with silence and with the evasion of trauma and psychological consequences of facing death because "No one spoke of him again" (8).

Furthermore, the reasons for despair and death are expanded upon in the second stanza, where the poem illustrates the conditions in the trenches, "In winter trenches, cowed and glum, / With crumps and lice and lack of rum" (5-6). Lice and rum are frequent motifs in Trench poetry, and Puissant asserts that the louse "serves as a symbol for the absurdity of warfare in general" and "in many other poems, the vermin are presented as the real enemy of the troops on both sides of the trenches" (38-39). While it is reasonable to fear the enemies or all the weapons that can kill

or maim someone, lice and rats are not the first association one has with combat. However, besides spreading diseases, they provided pure psychological torture by constantly infecting or biting the soldiers. The troops were stationed in grimy places, where the real enemies were hunger, cold weather and disease. The war was not a glorious fight nor were the trenches an honorable place to die.

Anti-Natural Death: Robert Graves

The last poet whose poems will be examined is Robert Graves, a poet who greatly influenced the conventions of Trench poetry. Similarly to Owen and Sassoon, he too advocated for truthfulness and integrity of war poetry, claiming during the Second World War that "the soldier-poets of the First War did fulfill a journalistic function in the absence of any other adequate media […] He defines war poetry, as the term is understood from the First World War, as essentially a form of higher journalism" (Graves as qtd. in Brearton 10). Nevertheless, accuracy and realism were not the starting points for Trench poetry. Instead, pastoral elegies, "which sanctified and idealized the soldiers so far sacrificed, were fairly general practice, as Graves implies, in the early stages of the war" (Silkin 133). And his earlier poetry reflects this position, this belief in the benevolent nature, which will pardon the horrors of the war, and sedate a tortured mind. A poem that exemplifies this conviction is "1915", which "reflects his own innocence and also the influences of the Romantics and the Georgians" (Kersnowski 50), written that same year:

> I've watched the Seasons passing slow, so slow,
> In the fields between La Bassée and Bethune;
> Primroses and the first warm day of Spring,
> Red poppy floods of June,
> August, and yellowing Autumn, so
> To Winter nights knee-deep in mud or snow,
> And you've been everything.

Dear, you've been everything that I most lack

In these soul-deadening trenches—pictures, books,

Music, the quiet of an English wood,

Beautiful comrade-looks,

The narrow, bouldered mountain-track,

The broad, full-bosomed ocean, green and black,

And Peace, and all that's good. (1-14)

Graves provides an exact location in the poem, positioning the soldier in the fields of northern France. Moreover, the time period is specified, albeit less exactly, as the seasons pass by. The first days of spring are characterized by the flowers that grow in the fields, especially by the poppies, which had already been established and frequently used as a symbolic device in war poetry, mostly because of their bloody color and short lifespan (Puissant 30-37). Thus, the poppies became an appropriate symbol for the soldiers dying in the same fields. Moreover, Norris affirms that "pastoralism was transformed into a viable and powerful expression of the British soldiers' World War I combat experience. In their imaginations, such natural images as poppies, wheat, and the cyclical year became signifiers of the war's cost" (143). The poet juxtaposes the beauty of nature to the "soul-deadening trenches" in France. Nonetheless, the bitter and devastating imagery which one might associate with war poetry is missing; the setting is idealized and romanticized, almost peaceful despite the bloodshed, and the soldier misses his lover and his home. Whereas "1915" illustrates merciful nature amidst war, "When I'm Killed" is another early poem by Graves that justifies the aforementioned argument that poetry sanctified the soldiers. The speaker is a self-sacrificing soldier, imploring his readers not to mourn his

death, but to remember him through these verses, “You’ll find me buried, living-dead / In these verses that you’ve read” (11-12).

As it was already demonstrated in this thesis, at the beginning of the war the Trench poets were guided by Georgian poetic conventions. Nevertheless, “most of the soldier-poets began to feel its inadequate nature for expressing war experience and thus the need for adaptation. The longer the war lasted, the stronger became the need for a ‘turn of speech’”, and Graves fully participated in that transformation (Puissant 21). In addition to preventing Sassoon from being ostracized and court-martialed, Robert Graves had a profound influence on Sassoon’s poetic expression, expressing to him that “the ideal of writing ‘is to use common and simple words which everyone can understand and yet not set up a complex by such vulgarities but to make the plain words do the work of the coloured ones ...’” (Graves as qtd. in Puissant 46). Graves here implies that Georgian poetic conventions are no longer an adequate style for the horrors of the warfare. The romanticized and idealistic views on combat did not complement the actual experiences of the soldier-poets. What is more, everyone, including people at home, needed to understand these experiences, and thus, this poetry, and Caruth maintains that this is the very essence of trauma studies; how to recognize and understand suffering, how to relieve trauma without questioning the reality of it (vii). Traumatic memories and their representation may be challenged by those who did not experience it since they might seem distorted, unrealistic, and even falsified. Precisely this involvement of the public with traumatic experiences was the responsibility of the Trench poets, and Graves believed it to be accomplished by simple, yet powerful language. Moreover, in their *Terrorizing Images* Armstrong and Langås defend that traumatic events “demand an immediate political or ethical response from literature and the arts”, creating new

expression and adequate context for these events (4). In order to handle these situations, the society at large has to come to terms with them, and the way to do it is to find a suitable interpretation.

In his poetry, Graves questioned the war cause, he “condemned the war and the waste of lives yet never denied the heroism of their comrades. Graves would never lose his loyalty to his comrades and to his regiment, the Royal Welch Fusiliers; yet he was always quick to condemn those who made a profit from the War” (Kersnowski 29). Nevertheless, Puissant also claims that Graves was inclined to “think as little as possible about the war and the circumstances it entailed” (45), attempting to find consolation in the beauty of natural world, but failing to express the ugliness of the war. However, in his attempt to ignore, and simultaneously convey his despair through nature, Graves’s poem “A Dead Boche” became a source for deeper contemplation as it revealed the ‘anti-landscape’ of the war-torn anti-world (Puissant 46):

> To you who'd read my songs of War
> And only hear of blood and fame,
> I'll say (you've heard it said before)
> "War's Hell! " and if you doubt the same,
> Today I found in Mametz Wood
> A certain cure for lust of blood:
>
> Where, propped against a shattered trunk,
> In a great mess of things unclean,

Sat a dead Boche; he scowled and stunk
With clothes and face a sodden green,
Big-bellied, spectacled, crop-haired,
Dribbling black blood from nose and beard. (“A Dead Boche”)

Contrary to earlier claim, this poem overtly castigates the bloodlust of its readers, the people at the home front who only read about the war. The speaker admits in the first two lines that his songs of war had celebrated the bloodshed; however, the speaker has a change of heart, and attempts to persuade his readers to change as well, to cure their bloodlust. This is attempted by describing in great detail a decaying corpse of an enemy, countering the traditional idealized descriptions of nature which the public expected. The idyll of “1915” is transformed into death and destruction personified by a dead Boche, “With clothes and face a sodden green, / Big-bellied, spectacled, crop-haired, / Dribbling black blood from nose and beard” (10-12). However, it could be argued that Graves here is also attempting to cure himself of the trauma created in his psyche by seeing such an image. Once again, the exhaustive description of the situation might point to the effort of speaking about the experience and, thus, healing through it.

What is more, Puissant emphasizes that the shattered trunk symbolizes “the destructive force of war on both man and nature”, focusing the poem “on the issue of poetic style, questioned by the presence of corpses and shattered landscapes: war turns landscape into landscape-with-corpse” (46). Through this corpse and the remnants of war, the landscape described in this poem is transformed into an anti-landscape, a contrast of the idyll. While the soldiers rot in the fields and forests, the nature remains, consuming their bodies to survive.

Conclusion

As it was demonstrated in this thesis, First World War was a revolutionary war where ground-breaking technology was used against the man; instead of it being the means for progress and prosperity, technology was used as a weapon of destruction, devastating nations and landscapes. However, it was also a war fought with information and knowledge. By censuring some information, and circulating other, the British government manipulated the course of the war and the will of people, especially young men upon which the government depended to win the war. Literature had a vital role in shaping the national imagery and justifying the war cause, while newspapers had an unprecedented task in disseminating the official propaganda. What is more, one could argue that both culminated in poetry as they overlapped in it.

However, First World War engendered not only one kind of poetry, but a number of movements, with various purposes, which reflected the fragmentation of the period. Even regarding poetry of propaganda one can conclude there is not only one type of poetry. This thesis has demonstrated the difference between the pro-war poetry of Rudyard Kipling, Rupert Broke, and Jessie Pope, each of whom represents a distinct style of poetry, but whose poetry explicitly assisted in the war cause. These specific examples illustrate different aspects of pre-war and earlier war poetry, but they also serve the same purpose, to exalt the war, to inspire the nation, to belittle the enemy. The poets, however, did not participate directly in the combat, so their perspective is one from outside the trenches.

On the other hand, the thesis has also shown the other side of the coin, that is, the Trench poetry. This is the poetry that depicted the bloodshed as the soldiers experienced it, horrifyingly and gruesomely in some cases, bitterly and furiously in others. But mostly, this poetry was mournful and heartbreaking, distressing for everyone who did not live through the same pain and terror, as the Trench poets found their inspiration in the trauma they experienced. However, it is important to note that what the Trench poets objected to the most was the depiction of war and of their sacrifice in the public imagination. Even though they expressed their hesitation and even outright disapproval of some instances, they still risked their lives by continuing to fight. What they could not accept is not being heard and being reduced to war casualties and corpses in the fields. The Trench poets could not accept glorification of their sacrifice, the embellished descriptions of their deaths. They could not accept being silenced and living with their memories alone, in fear of being rejected for what was thrust upon them.

Abstract

The main objective of this thesis is to analyze some examples of First World War poetry regarding, on one hand, its function as propaganda and pro-war material, and on the other hand, its function as anti-war material. It demonstrates how the Great War influenced and challenged the poetic conventions of the period, but also how poetry influenced the war. The poets examined include Rudyard Kipling, Rupert Brooke, Jessie Pope, Robert Graves, Siegfried Sassoon, and Wilfred Owen. The first three of the six authors are the examples of pro-war poetry that illustrate some similar aspects of the pre-war and war poetry that is patriotic and that romanticizes the idea of war. Consequently, it is important to explore the concept of propaganda, and specifically, the occurrence of propaganda during the First World War through Peter Buitenhuis's *The Great War of Words: British, American, and Canadian Propaganda and Fiction, 1914-1933*. Furthermore, various articles by authors such as Jo Fox, Alice Goldfarb Marquis and Anurag Jain will serve as a link between propaganda and literature. Meanwhile, the latter three authors are some of the more prominent authors of the Trench poetry, particularly, they are the representatives of the anti-war poetry after experiencing the horrors of the trenches. Moreover, Susanne Christine Puissant's *Irony and the Poetry of the First World War*, Jon Silkin's *Out of Battle: The Poetry of the Great War*, and David Punter's *Literature of Pity* provide the theoretical framework for the analysis of the poems.

Key words: First World War, poetry, Trench poets, propaganda

Works Cited

"Jilt." *Lexico*, Oxford University Press, September 2020, https://www.lexico.com/definition/jilt. Accessed 2 September 2020.

"Propaganda." *Lexico*, Oxford University Press, July 2020, https://www.lexico.com/definition/propaganda. Accessed 14 July 2020.

"Jingoism." *Lexico*, Oxford University Press, July 2020, https://www.lexico.com/definition/jingoism. Accessed 15 July 2020.

"Poets of the Great War." *Anthem for Doomed Youth | HBLL*, exhibits.lib.byu.edu/wwi/poets/poets.html. Accessed 23 September 2020.

Abrams, M. H. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Heinle & Heinle, 1999, pp. 290-291.

Anderson, Sarah. *Readings of Trauma, Madness, and the Body*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, pp. 1-13.

Araujo, Anderson D. "Jessie Pope, Wilfred Owen, and the Politics of 'pro Patria Mori' in World War I Poetry." *Media, War & Conflict*, vol. 7, no. 3, 2014, pp. 326–341. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/26001043. Accessed 4 September 2020.

Armstrong, Charles I., and Unni Langås. "Introduction: Encounters between Trauma and Ekphrasis, Words and Images." *Terrorizing Images*, De Gruyter, 2020, pp. 1–11. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110693959. Accessed 24 October 2020.

Balaev, Michelle. "Trends in Literary Trauma Theory." *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal*, vol. 41, no. 2, 2008, pp. 149–166. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/44029500. Accessed 6 January 2021.

Bilsing, Tracy E. “The Process of Manufacture: Rudyard Kipling’s Private Propaganda.” *War, Literature & the Arts: An International Journal of the Humanities*, vol. 12, no. 1, Spring/Summer2000 2000, p. 76. *EBSCOhost*, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edb&AN=4203313&authtype=sso&custid=s4311509&site=eds-live&scope=site. Accessed 17 January 2021.

Boehmer, Elleke. “The Worlding of the Jingo Poem.” *The Yearbook of English Studies*, vol. 41, no. 2, 2011, pp. 41–57. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/10.5699/yearenglstud.41.2.0041. Accessed 17 January 2021.

Bogacz, Ted. “‘A Tyranny of Words’: Language, Poetry, and Antimodernism in England in the First World War.” *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 58, no. 3, 1986, pp. 643–668. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/1880230. Accessed 17 January 2021.

Brearton, Fran. “How to Kill: The Poetry of War.” *Fortnight*, no. 398, 2001, pp. 10–11. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/25560382. Accessed 23 September 2020.

Brooke, Rupert. “V. The Soldier.” *The Rupert Brooke Society - War Sonnet V: The Soldier*, www.rupertbrooke.com/poems/1914/v_the_soldier/. Accessed 21 November 2020.

Buitenhuis, Peter. *The Great War of Words: British, American and Canadian Propaganda and Fiction, 1914-1933*. Univ. of British Columbia Press, 1987.

Caesar, Adrian. “Brooke, Rupert Chawner.” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004, www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-32093?rskey=3PmjYN. Accessed 1 December 2020.

Campbell, James. “Combat Gnosticism: The Ideology of First World War Poetry Criticism.” *New Literary History*, vol. 30, no. 1, 1999, pp. 203–215. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/20057530. Accessed 17 January 2021.

Caruth, Cathy. *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995.

Clausson, Nils. "? Perpetuating the Language?: Romantic Tradition, the Genre Function, and the Origins of the Trench Lyric." *Journal of Modern Literature*, vol. 30, no. 1, 2006, pp. 104–128. *ReseachGate*, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/314282177. Accessed 25 October 2020.

Connelly, Mark, et al., editors. *Propaganda and Conflict War, Media and Shaping the Twentieth Century*. Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2019, pp. 1-21.

Das, Santanu. "A Close Reading of 'Dulce Et Decorum Est'." *The British Library*, 18 May 2016, www.bl.uk/20th-century-literature/articles/a-close-reading-of-dulce-et-decorum-est. Accessed 12 July 2020.

Dangerfield, George. *The Strange Death of Liberal England*. London: Serif. 2012, p. 300.

Fox, Jo. "World War One propaganda*." British Library*, https://www.bl.uk/world-war-one/videos/world-war-one-propaganda. Accessed 24 June 2020.

Goldfarb Marquis, Alice. "Words as Weapons: Propaganda in Britain and Germany during the First World War." *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 13, no. 3, 1978, pp. 467–498. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/260205. Accessed 5 Oct 2020.

Graves, Robert. *Poems About War*. Moyer Bell, 1988.

Hibberd, Dominic. *The First World War*. Macmillan, 1990, pp. 51-58.

Hibberd, Dominic, and John Onions. *Poetry of the Great War: An Anthology*. St. Martin's Press, 1994.

Hunt, Nigel C. "Literature and Trauma." *Memory, War and Trauma*, 2009, pp. 161–171.

Kendall, Tim. *Poetry of the First World War: An Anthology*. Oxford University Press, 2013.

Kersnowski, Frank L. “The Lunatic. War.” *The Early Poetry of Robert Graves: The Goddess Beckons.* University of Texas Press, 2002. 28-50.

Kipling, Rudyard. “The White Man’s Burden.” *Kipling Society,* http://www.kiplingsociety.co.uk/poems_burden.htm. Accessed 27 June 2020.

Luckhurst, Roger. “Introduction.” *The Trauma Question*. Routledge, 2008, pp. 1-15.

Meyer, Jessica. “Subjectivity and Emotions (Great Britain and Ireland).” *1914-1918 Online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, 2014, encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/subjectivity_and_emotions_great_britain_and_ireland. Accessed 26 October 2020.

Norris, Margot. “Teaching World War I Poetry--Comparatively.” *College Literature*, vol. 32, no. 3, 2005, pp. 136–153. *JSTOR*, https://www.jstor.org/stable/25115291. Accessed 23 October 2020.

Owen, Wilfred. *The poems of Wilfred Owen*, edited by Edmund Blunden. Chatto & Windus, 1955.

Paddock, Troy R. E. *World War I and Propaganda*. Brill, 2014, pp. 1-41.

Palmer, Andrew, and Sally Minogue. “Modernism and First World War Poetry: Alternative Lines.” *A History of Modernist Poetry*, pp. 227–252. doi:10.1017/cbo9781139839242.014. Accessed 18 October 2020.

Pederson, Joshua. “Speak, Trauma: Toward a Revised Understanding of Literary Trauma Theory.” *Narrative*, vol. 22, no. 3, 2014, pp. 333–353., *JSTOR* www.jstor.org/stable/24615578. Accessed 6 January 2021.

Pennell, Catriona. “Making Sense of the War (Great Britain and Ireland).” *1914-1918 Online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, 2015, encyclopedia.1914-1918-

online.net/article/making_sense_of_the_war_great_britain_and_ireland. Accessed 17 January 2021.

Pope, Jessie. “The Lads of The Maple Leaf.” *PoemHunter.com*, 31 August 2010, www.poemhunter.com/poem/the-lads-of-the-maple-leaf/. Accessed 23 September 2020.

---. “Who's For The Game?” *PoemHunter.com*, 31 August 2010, www.poemhunter.com/poem/who-s-for-the-game/. Accessed 21 November 2020.

Potter, Jane. “Pope, Jessie.” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2014, www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-98109. Accessed 21 November 2020.

Puissant, Susanne C. *Irony and the Poetry of the First World War*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

Punter, David. “’War, and the pity of War’: Wilfred Owen, David Jones, Primo Levi”. *The Literature of Pity*. Edinburgh University Press, 2014, pp. 95-106.

Quinn, Patrick J., and Steven Trout. *The Literature of the Great War Reconsidered: beyond Modern Memory*. Palgrave, 2001.

Sanders, Michael L., and Philip M. Taylor. *British Propaganda during the First World War, 1914-18*. Macmillan, 1982.

Sassoon, Siegfried. “A Soldier's Declaration.” *Anthem for Doomed Youth | HBLL*, exhibits.lib.byu.edu/wwi/influence/ssprotest.html. Accessed 23 September 2020.

---. *The War Poems of Siegfried Sassoon*, edited by Rupert Hart-Davis. London, 1983.

Silkin, Jon. *Out of Battle: The Poetry of the Great War*. Macmillan Press, 1998.

Simon, Myron. “The Georgian Poetic.” *The Bulletin of the Midwest Modern Language Association*, vol. 2, 1969, pp. 121–135. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/1314743. Accessed 6 October 2020.

Sherry, Vincent. “First World War Poetry: A Cultural Landscape.” *The Cambridge Companion to the Poetry of the First World War*, by Santanu Das, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2013.

Stallworhty, Jon. “Owen, Wilfred Edward Salter.” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/37828. Accessed 1 December 2020.

Strachey, James, and Anna Freud, editors. “Thoughts for the Times on War and Death. Our Attitude towards Death.” *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud. Vol. 14. (1914-1916) On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement, Papers on Metapsychology and Other Works*, by Sigmund Freud, Hogarth Press, 1957, pp. 289–300.

Walter, George, editor. *The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry*. Penguin Books, 2006.

Welch, David. *Propaganda for Patriotism and Nationalism*. 29 Jan. 2014, www.bl.uk/world-war-one/articles/patriotism-and-nationalism. Accessed 24 June 2020.

Williams, Michael. “Wilfred Owen: A Poet Re-Institutionalised.” *Critical Survey*, vol. 2, no. 2, 1990, pp. 194–202. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/41555528. Accessed 4 September 2020.

Winter, Jay. “Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History.” *Oklahoma Humanities*, vol. 7, no. 3, Fall 2014, pp. 35-39. Accessed 17 January 2021.