

# **The World Wars in British Poetry: Different Perspectives**

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**The World Wars in British Poetry: Different Perspectives**

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### **Abstract**

World War I began in 1914 and lasted till November 1918 and World War II started from 1935 till 1949. During this time period, the whole western world underwent a radical change. An entire generation was destroyed by these wars. The First World War killed more than 9 million of people and cost more than any other wars had cost in the history of the world. In the Second World War almost 11 million of people were killed. The adverse effects of war were immeasurable in scale but it had also diminished the societal value of people and left no sense of morality and ethics. John G. Ervine said, “the effect of war on all imaginative literature is immediately adverse and ultimately incalculable.” The aim of this thesis is to look at the spiritual state of post-world-war of the British society as reflected in the poetry produced at that time.

Writers and poets were inspired to produce masterpieces that reflected this condition of a society reeling from the effects of the war. A new genre of literature emerged from the poet which is known to be as war poetry. Since ancient times poets have been writing war poems, but this genre acquired a new dimension in the post world-war period.

Many poets wrote war poetry during that time period. The major British poets of this period were Wilfred Owen, Robert Graves, Richard Aldington, Rupert Brooke, Issac Rosenberg, Edward Thomas, Siegfried Sassoon, Laurence Binyon, Julian Grenfell, Edmund Blunden, Wilfrid Gibson and Charles Sorley among others. In World War II, W.H Auden, Elizabeth Jennings, Vernon Scannell and many more were well known war poets.

The wars had made people into cynics who questioned everything around them and suffered a sense of loss, alienation and isolation. They were turning to pessimists due to their tragic experiences during the wars. Their life became absurd and death became their reality. The poets and the writers wrote about their experiences, their losses, and sacrifices. The wars on one

level suppressed people's imagination; the things they could only imagine were weapons and bloodshed. It seemed as if the war would go on for a lifetime. The way people gave up their hope and forgot about positivity was shown in the war poetry. 'Each one of us in Europe, broadly speaking is connected with the battle front by bonds that are not easily broken or forgotten. (Ervine 93).' Everyday soldiers left their houses and never came back. Only a telegram used to inform their family about the deceased soldier. These issues were highly portrayed by the poets who wrote about wars. The poetry is presented the actuality of the war.

This paper will look at the work of two World War I poets, namely W.B. Yeats and T.S. Eliot and two World War II poets W.H Auden and Siegfried Sassoon to explore the issues related to war in their poems.

The entire thesis is divided into four chapters. Each chapter will expand the idea about war and literature and discuss how literature played an effective role in people's life at that time. Thus, it will be comprised into the following chapters with elaborate discussion.

## **Chapter I:**

### **Introduction**

#### **The World Wars in British Poetry: Different Perspectives**

“We were all at once terribly alone; and alone we must see it through.”

--Erich Maria Remarque

One of the major reasons behind the Great War to start was the mutual defense Alliances. All the countries around Europe made the agreement that if one country was fighting a war then the other allied countries will also get engaged for defending that country. The alliance was between Russia and Serbia, Germany and Austria, France and Russia, Britain and France and Belgium, Japan and Britain. At one point, Austria-Hungary declared a war on Serbia, Russia got involved to defend Serbia. Then Germany seeing the situation declared war on Russia. France then went against Germany and Austria-Hungary. Germany attacked France through Belgium, engaging Britain into war. Eventually Japan, Italy and United States entered into the war. Second cause was imperialism. Imperialism is when a country increases its power and wealth by including other territories under their control. Asia and Africa was the raw material provider. This gave a competition to the European countries so they went onto the war. Great Britain and Germany had the greatest military establishment at their time. Their military system was so powerful that it helped the countries to push and involve into a war. This militarism had a really big influence on the public policy. Apart from militarism another reason of the war to break out was nationalism. Bosnian and Herzegovinian people were told that they would no longer be a part of Austria Hungary. This reason actually extended the war for a long time. This is because every country wanted to prove their power and dominance. This war was the first war ever to use

technology. It had started in July 1914 and lasted till 1918. It killed over 17 million people all over. Only some chain of events led the war to break out like that.

The causes of World War II are divided in two terms; long term and short term. The long term causes of the war are assumed to be caused by the treaty of Versailles and another one is the inability of the League of Nations to deal with the international issues. Italian Fascism in the 1920s, Japanese militarism and invasion of China in the 1930s. In the 1933 when Hitler politically took over Germany and his Nazi party house, it led to the beginning of the war. The immediate cause was Britain and France declaring war on Germany after it invaded Poland in September 1939. World War II is a global war which had started in 1939 and lasted till 1945. It involved not only a large number of people but also all the great powers, military alliances and others. It had spread all over the world and more than 100 million from 30 countries were engaged in it. It was also seen that the countries were putting all their economic, industrial and military resources at stake for the war. Mass number of people was killed in this Holocaust. This war not only had the planning of strategic bombing rather they also went for atomic bombing too. This war has been enlisted as one of the most deadliest and destructive war in human history. This war was basically a continuation of the First World War.

As for long term effects of the wars many things took place. There was an economic breakdown throughout the world. "Prices of many commodities fell. But it was not long before the permanent economic effect of the war began to appear." (Hise 4)<sup>1</sup> Economically the war severely disrupted the European economies. That is because all the European countries wanted to have advanced weapons and technology for mass destruction. Thus to afford those they had to spent a large amount of money which apparently did no good rather than harm to them. There was a shortfall for all the goods and other necessary things. On the other hand, the false political

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<sup>1</sup> Hise, Charles R. Van. "Some Economic Aspects of the World War"



agenda created a fiasco. People could see their upcoming destruction but due to the political powers, had to remain silent. Wars did not only harm economy or politics rather it had its impact on literature too. Though the number of war poetry written during the Second World War was comparatively less than the first war. The writings were rigid within the experiences of an individual that how one had experienced the war. John G. Ervine further said, “the effect of war on all imaginative literature is immediately adverse and ultimately incalculable.” Not only that the adverse effects of war were immeasurable in scale but it had also diminished the societal value of people and left no sense of morality and ethics. The whole world was not only physically affected by the war rather the wars had also affected the people mentally. The soldiers and the children were psychologically harmed than anyone else. “War is the most wrenching of all political transitions. From peace to war and from war to peace - this double movement can have vast geopolitical, ideological and social consequences” (Reynolds 30). It destroyed not only people but also families, broke all the ties between people, ruined countries and so on. It moved the whole world with its brutality. In the First World War the government asked for 100,000 volunteer but instead 750,000 people volunteered. They went for the war because of the lurking propaganda which was shown to them. But as soon as they got to know about the reality, they had no other option but to fight the wars.

These wars introduced the readers to a totally new genre in the English literature which was war poetry. The young poets who wrote during the First World War basically established it. The war poets mainly were written by the soldiers but some civilians also portrayed the conflicts through the war poems. War poetry is what the poets wrote about their experiences of the war during that time period. It was first introduced after the First World War. In 1914, some young men at first wrote about their experiences. Among them Owen, Rosenberg and Sassoon were

very well known. They wrote the poems to express their extreme emotion about the experiences they were having. War poetry is not something 'anti-war', rather it is something that questions existence, innocence, guilt, loyalty, courage, compassion, humanity, duty, desire, death, identity and so on. It talked about how the lives of the soldiers became absurd. Some of them went for a war and never came back. Their families kept on counting the days they would come back, apparently they never came back. War poetry actually in other words is a collection of personal experiences. In the book "*Mr. Drinkwater*", Ervine writes "it is intensity in perception that creates poetry" (Ervine 829). This clearly sums up the idea that war poetry is written totally from one's experience and perception that how someone observed or faced the situation.

During the war people became cynical because they had seen their loved ones going away and never coming back to them. They became homeless, they lost everything. They were confused even about their existence, their being. These things were further clarified by the school of thoughts known as existentialism. Existentialism is a concept which became very popular during the World Wars in France and Europe. Existentialism says that individuals remain in a state filled with anxiety and despair and simply does not have any meaning to his life. A person does not exist unless he makes a critical or decisive choice about his own future. According to the existentialists, that is the only way through which a human being can achieve dignity in his life. Adopting a social or political cause can also add a purpose to one's life. The French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre introduced the idea of existentialism. He was also the leader of Existential movement. He wrote the book "*Being and Nothingness*", which became the cornerstone of modern existentialism. It talks about process being or not being of human beings. Other writers who wrote about existentialism are Albert Camus, Simone de Beauvoir, Gabriel Marcel, Martin Heidegger, Karl Jaspers, Miguel de Unamuno, Søren Kierkegaard, Fyodor

Dostoyevsky, and Friedrich Nietzsche. According to Albert Camus, it is necessary to wonder what the meaning of life is and also human being should desire some sense of clarity of his life in the world. In the war poetry we can clearly see the reflection of existentialism. These poems highlighted the absurdity of war. Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen showed in their poems how the war does nothing but emphasizes on the pointlessness of our existence.

After the world war, we can see that how the psychology of people changed. They experienced everything so closely, and the agony of these experiences remained so profound, that it affected them badly. No other event in the history had such enormous effect on humanity. World wars had serious impacts on everyone's life. According to Freud, the technology or science was used in a destructive way. Science ensured bloodshed more than ever. For example on 6<sup>th</sup> august 1945, during the Second World War an American B-29 dropped the first atomic bomb of the world over the city Hiroshima in Japan. It killed 80,000 of people immediately. Later on thousands of people died due to the radiation. Then after three days another bomb was dropped on Nagasaki which killed around 40,000 people. Thus that bomb was a scientific invention which killed numerous innocent people in a minute. Freud opposed the idea of scientific inventions which were mainly used for destruction and conflicts in the War. This are because apparently use of technology in wars destroyed the lives of innocents and left the survivors traumatized forever.

Many poets wrote war poetry during that time period. The major British poets of this period were Wilfred Owen, Robert Graves, Richard Aldington, Rupert Brooke, Issac Rosenberg, Edward Thomas, Laurence Binyon, Julian Grenfell, Siegfried Sassoon, Edmund Blunden, Wilfrid Gibson and Charles Sorley, T.S. Eliot, W.B. Yeats among others. In World War II, W.H Auden, Elizabeth Jennings, Vernon Scannell, Henry Reeds and many more were well known

poets. During the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, it can be seen that the poets and philosophers worked and wrote on issues like existentialism which contemplates the place of the modern human beings in a war trodden works.

## Chapter II

### Poetic Narratives influenced by the Great War

This chapter will explore the connection between various poets, their aesthetic sensibility, and their poetic narrations and see how these aspects were influenced by the First World War. The Great War profoundly influenced the literature of that time. The dominant features of the post-war literature were disillusionment, disenchantment and an extremely cynic mentality. This chapter will attempt to illustrate the inevitable connection between the agonies of the War and the poetic narratives which mirrored these agonies and cynicism. In addition to that how the poetic narratives were shaped, created and how these narratives put forth a new perception of human being and the age in which he/she lived will be discussed. Furthermore how the poets belonging in the age of the Great War sought, through their poetic creation, to find redemption and spiritual salvation in the age of destruction and meaninglessness will also be discussed.

Thomas Stearns Eliot was born in St. Louis; Missouri in 1888. He lived in St. Louis for eighteen years and attended Harvard University. In 1910, he left the United States for the Sorbonne and achieved both undergraduate and master's degrees and wrote few poems in *Harvard Advocate*. After staying in Paris for a year he then returned to Harvard to pursue a doctorate degree in philosophy but he returned to Europe and settled in England in 1914. In the next year he got married to Vivienne Haigh-Wood and started working as a teacher and later as a bank clerk for Lloyd's Bank.

In 1919, Eliot's father died. Ronald Bush in *American National Biography* stated that "...at the same time his wife, Vivien's emotional and physical health deteriorated, and the financial and emotional strain of her condition took its toll." - Which shows that Eliot was going through a negative phase of his life. Bush further stated that due to these issues Eliot suffered a

'nervous collapse'. Due to which his physician advised him to take a break for three months. Whether because of the breakdown or the long needed rest it imposed, Eliot broke through a severe writer's block and completed a long poem he had been working on since 1919. He further added that 'Assembled out of dramatic vignettes based on Eliot's London life, 'The Waste Land's extraordinary intensity stems from a sudden fusing of diverse materials into a rhythmic whole of great skill and daring'. This poem was a turn taking moment for Eliot's life. In 1922 Eliot published "*The Waste Land*" which was a complex postwar poem - it was listed among the most influential poetic work' of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. For the first time a poem talked about modernism in this way.

During that era, postwar poems, war poems etc. became very famous. War poetry includes mainly the poems which are written by the poets about their experience during the war. The young soldier poets of the First World War basically created this literary genre about war poems. During the war there was frustration everywhere. Cynicism, disillusionments, alienation etc. were very common at that time which compelled the poets about stating their point of views through the form of war poetry. Eliot's writing style mostly spoke about the confusion and bad feelings that World War I had created in European and American societies. This was most effective in the poem "*The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*" It was published in 1915. In 1917, he published his first book "*Prufrock and Other Observations*". Afterwards he became an important literary figure of those days.

In London he became friends with Ezra Pound. Ezra found out about Eliot's poetic prodigy and worked to publish his work. Ezra Pound was one of the most influential writers of prose and poetry. He was not only a writer but also a critic, impresario, and propagandist. He was a master of using free verse and techniques related to allusions. He studied several languages

including Greek and Latin languages. During 1908, he travelled a lot in Italy, Spain and England. That time he became interested in Chinese and Japanese poetry. The style that Chinese and Japanese poems follow was reflected in his writings. The narrative techniques and the allusions came from the ancient poetry. His 1909 collection of poems, "*Personae*", he showed the tactics of using the traditional lyrical forms like the dramatic monologue which definitely was a new form of expression at that time.

However after travelling in Europe he decided to change the literary scenario over there. Pound's main importance was on to the development of modernism not only in his work but also he wanted to influence other writer's through his writings. With this thought, he became friends with William Butler Yeats who was twenty years older than him. He encouraged Yeats to change his 'romantic and symbolist poetic diction' to 'poetic precision and colloquial language'. Later on, he became friends with Eliot. Eliot's poetry was published by Pound. He also edited the manuscripts of "*The Waste Land*". Ezra Pound is always considered to be the most influential poet in establishing the norm of modern poetry and in articulating its aims. Also he is considered to play a very important role in Eliot's life.

Pound invented the term 'Imagism'. The three tenets of imagism, according to Pound, were a direct treatment of the 'thing' whether that was subjective or objective, to use absolutely no words that does not contribute to the presentation and as regarding rhythm: to compose in the sequence of the musical phrase not the sequence of a metronome. Imagism played an important role in introducing modernist sensibilities to the English-Language poetry. Pound published several works related to 'Imagism' during the First World War. Barlow said in the book "*The Great War in British Literature*" about imagism that, "Imagism, the name for the style of writing which appeared in the Imagist anthologies, took a more radical view of poetry than that of the

Georgian poets, experimenting with free verse forms which took poetry much further from Victorian and Edwardian conventions than the Georgians were prepared to go” (Barlow 11).

T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound have in a way introduced modernism to the readers through their writings. Their themes, styles, thoughts reflected the way a modernist writer would write. T.S. Eliot is known to be a modernist poet. It was an attempt to find new ways of capturing experience and identity, ways that would prioritize the individual and the interior mind, and push the boundaries of language and form to its limits. The focus was on experimentation and newness, and abandonment of the fixed point of view, driven by restlessness with regard to the traditional structures of 19th-century realism. Throughout the western art, all that were visible were the propaganda issues, disillusionment, cynicism, abstract ideas, alienation, fragmented thoughts etc. In modernism all these thoughts and feelings were put together. Modernist poets and writers always went above the boundaries and limits. They introduced a new form of writing. Their main focus was on to experimentation and newness in their writings. It all started because of the tension that was going on throughout the world in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The surroundings made the poets think about stepping out of the box. Eliot’s poetry showed the devastation of the war. It eluded the fragmented thoughts and complexity of human life during the world war and post war too. His poems showed the disillusionment among the people due to war. His poems are always referential. Let alone religious references but also other myths and characters from others’ writings too are always present in his writing .war, sufferings, alienation, fear, anxiety- were the main themes of his poems.

In 1927 he got his British citizenship. He became a director of a firm from where he published many promising poets. January 1957 he married Valerie Fletcher and attained a degree



of contentedness that had eluded him all his life. He also received a Nobel Prize for Literature in 1948. He died in London, January 4, 1965.

In 1919, he wrote “Gerontion”. It was a poem written in blank verse which includes an interior monologue of an old man. It was written in a style that had never been attempted in poetry earlier. A dramatic monologue is a style of writing which includes the words coming out from a solitary speaker. No other character will have any dialogue. Writers or poets use this style to give their own point of view through the character. A blank verse on the other hand is a literary device which is defined as un-rhyming verse written in iambic pentameter. Here unstressed syllables are followed by stressed syllables.

It is coming out from a man, who has lived almost all his life in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He has witnessed the world war. The poem opens with an epigraph. These lines are taken from Shakespeare’s “*Measure for Measure*”. These are said by the Duke to Claudio, a young man sentenced to death. The duke exhorts Claudio to be ‘absolute for death’ since life is uncertain and unreal “*The Waste Land*” but death is unavoidable. But in the poem the lines quoted by Eliot are not addressed to Claudio rather it is addressed to ‘life’. The lines create a sense of uncertainty of what the poet actually meant. The lines are assumed to be addressed to the Gerontion since he is at the verge of the end of his life. The symbolism of rain and drought points to. Gerontion is a poem which remains ambiguous due to its depth and power. Much of it is because of the density of its references and the style. The poem has referred to Shakespeare, Donne, Webster and Tourneur. Their writings are mostly very deep in their contexts.

The poem has shown Christianity from modernistic approach. It has talked about salvation, incarnation etc. For Eliot, Terror was a very important factor of religious belief. He always referred to Christianity in his poems. Eliot was extremely terrified of the religion and

according to him, religion did not bring him something happy rather it brought something beyond happiness and he could sense it. As if the darkness and the barrenness of religion had always surrounded him. This vision was reflected when in the poem he referred to the 'Christ the tiger' as the one who came to destroy the one who refuse to believe and who distort religious beliefs.

In line 19 it says, "In the Juvescence of the year" which means an image of Christmas day. Then again in line 21 it says "depraved May" and "Flowering Judas" which talks about his crucifixion But according to Eloise Knapp Hay, Gerontion thinks of the coming of Christ in two ways, first as a useless infant and then as a hunted tiger. "*Gerontion*" is also shows puritanism in it. This is because as the old man, Gerontion believes his life as a product of sin.

The narrator of the poem has discussed about sexuality quite a few times. From line 57 to 60 he complains that he has lost his passion and also what is the necessity to keep that passion alive in him. Again, he goes on saying that he has lost his sight, smell, taste and other senses and how he should use these senses for someone's "closer contact". Here, it shows that he is stuck between the thoughts of committing a sin and his old age. Even if he wants something from his life he cannot get those things because of his age. He has lost his youth.

"There is a close interconnection in the poem between historical and carnal knowledge and between religious and erotic experience" (Jain 84)<sup>2</sup>. The realms is history, sexuality and religion are combined in the passage on history. Which is why Eliot wrote, "history has many cunning passages, contrived corridors" - this line shows that how people are being brainwashed at first by being told about the positive aspects of this war? They were shown false hopes and prejudice that would help them to lead a better life, which is why they even volunteered for participating in the war. This one war ruined positivity among people. The war simply left no

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<sup>2</sup> Jain, Manju. *A Critical Reading of the Selected Poems of T.S Eliot*.

spirituality among people anymore. Their life had become as if an endless labyrinth where there was no other way out. History, Eliot suggests in this poem, filled with disillusionment, is like a maze without any particular center. However it can be said that what Eliot attempts in this poem through this old man is the find a center, a center which holds humanity's spiritual dignity. This ideal point in history is failingly searched by Eliot in this poem.

In the poem, "*The Gerontion*" the poem has emphasized on the term 'think'. He has urged the generation to think and to be self-justified since 'We have not reached conclusion'. The Gerontion is caught between conscience and doubt. He is unable to believe in anything. He is incapable of absorbing anything that is visible to him which is why he remains imprisoned in his own thoughts.

Then in 1922 he published another famous poem "*The Hollow Men*". It depicted the post war disillusionment of the society. It was also one of his most complex works. It starts with a quotation from Joseph Conrad's "*Heart of Darkness*" which reminds the reader about the death of ill-fated character of Kurtz. The second expression is used by children who want money for firecrackers as they celebrate Guy Fawkes Day. On that day people burn straw figures of Fawkes who tried to setback the British Parliament back in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The poem is being narrated by one of the "*Hollow Men*".

At first several hollow men are gathered together and leaning as scared crows. Everything in their life seems meaningless. Whatever they do, they say, they think nothing has any meaning. They live in a hellish state. They are so scared that they refuse to cross the River Styx to make it into heaven or hell. Anyone who has crossed over the river remembers these human beings as 'hollow men'. Then they go on saying that these hollow men live in a world where it full of broken symbols and images. To them, it is a kingdom of death. They are scared to look at, they

are scared to experience. They are broken within and outside. They are unable to recover. Everything seems barren to them. Life has become a 'cactus land' a 'dead land' to them. Now they say their prayers to broken stones. These hollow men have no 'eyes'. They are scared to look at and to be looked at. To them their life is never ending. It has no more hopes left for them. Now all they can do is silently sit and wish for this world to end quietly rather than any more explosions.

This poem shows human psyche during the time period of World War I, how hopeless and how negative they became about everything surrounding them - a war that has destroyed a generation, numerous lives and left people to suffer endlessly. Eliot has tried to picturize the scenario that how these wars have affected each one of the survivors. They have no faith upon God. They have become skeptical even about their existence. The poem has talked about the terrifying war experiences very shortly but has been able to give the real picture of the war. In both "*The Hollow Men*" and "*Gerontion*" the narrative is inflicted with the agonies and sufferings of War, of the great distress and anxiety which filled the poetic creativity resulting in depiction of immense and a profound contemplation of the disenchantment of an age destroyed by the War.

William Butler Yeats was an Irish poet and a playwright and one of the most important figures in the 20<sup>th</sup> century literature, in both Irish and British literature. He was born in 1865, in sandy mount, Ireland. He was also the founder of Abbey Theater where he served as a chief for served in its early year. In 1923 he was given the Nobel Prize in literature as the first Irishman and the Nobel committee described his poems which gives expression to the spirit of a nation through its highly artistic form.

He has mostly talked about the transcendental beliefs of his youth, though he always remained preoccupied with physical and spiritual facts and cyclical theories of life. He was always interested in mysticism, spiritualism, occultism, astrology etc. He was a symbolist poet. He used allusive imagery and symbolic structures all over his poems. His poems always contain Irish folktale or Irish myth. He always brought his country in his writing. Some of his famous poems are- "*The Second Coming, A Cradle Song, An Irish Airman Foresees His Death, When you are Old* and so on.

The poem "*On being asked for a War Poem*" was written at the time of World War I. It is a very short poem that refuses to talk about the heart wrenching outcome of the war. In the very beginning of the poem, Yeats says that it is better not to say anything 'in times like this'. He has also added ironically that a poet has no right to judge or give an opinion about the politicians or the 'statesmen' that whether they are right or wrong in their actions. According to Yeats, in this war soldiers should not be remembered as heroes rather the veterans should be left alone. People have already suffered a lot from the genocide of the war. They have experienced a lot of negativity already. So it would be better not to make them go through the wounds all over again by some writings.

He believed that a poet writes for those people who love to read poetry and enjoy it. It is pointless to write about war for the sufferers who have already experienced the war. It would remind them about their old pain all over again. A poet should not talk about politicians as they have already 'meddled' in so many lives. Their false words cannot please 'a young girl' who cannot be pleased easily. Also their words can no more effect an old man, in a winter night, because he has already suffered from it. He knows the truth. It is just as same as he would feel the cold through his bones. Yeats simply means that it was way too much for the survivors. All

they could see was the bloodsheds. Thus he did not want to add any more pain with it through his writing. Yeats was completely against the First World War. At the very beginning of the poem when he says, 'A poet's mouth' should 'be silent' – he gave his opinion there. Here in these few lines, Yeats gave his opinion against the war. Here he described his emotion and feelings. He kept his feelings in front of the readers within these words. A poet has no write to give an opinion but to remain silent is what the politicians want. None other but them has the right to indulge in the political affairs even if they are wrong.

The second poem "*An Irish Airman foresees his Death*" is another poem which was also written during the time of World War I. Here an Irish airman talks about his fate and his feelings. He says that he knows that he would die fighting among the clouds means in the sky. He does not say nor he hates to fight neither he loves to guard his country. His refers his country as 'Kiltartan Cross' and his people are 'Kiltartan's poor'. He says that this war cannot bring any changes to their lives. They would live just as they are living now. He also further adds that the war he is fighting is not from his conscience of any law or duty or for any 'cheering crowds' of people for appreciation rather 'a lonely impulse of delight' has drove him to fight among the clouds. All these years now seems wastage of time to him. His future is uncertain. It seems like as if his death could only bring a balance to everything.

This is another poem which also clearly gives an idea of Yeats political stand during the time of war. The poem is a cynical poem. Here the airman rejects all the positivity's of his life. Death is the ultimate solution of everything to him. He is serving his country but this is not something he wanted. He knows that no matter how many lives are being sacrificed in this war yet it would not bring any good to his country or the citizens. They are meant to suffer and will suffer till the end. Here Yeats has shown that how hopeless people became during the war. It

caused them enormous pain and sufferings. It has tormented them for a lifetime still people had no other option left but to experience the horror of this mass killing. He has shown how this war has made everything seem meaningless to people. At what point a person can visualize his death and probably praying for it is being talked about here.

The poets who wrote during the World Wars have written about the experiences they encountered. The frustration, the disorientation, cynicism, anxiety everything occupied the moment as if it was never going to end. The survivors had a hard time getting over the trauma. The children had no future ahead them. Everyone's life became simply nothing but agenda. People were being politically forced to fight the war against their will. All of these traumatized experiences influenced the writers to come out from their shell and write about it, so, that people can be a bit relieved from all these negative issues.

## Chapter Three

### Lyrical Musings: W.H. Auden and Siegfried Sassoon

This chapter emphasizes on the writings of other two war poets W.H. Auden and Siegfried Sassoon. These two poets wrote from the point of view of their personal feelings regarding the war. Both of them expressed their anger on the political propaganda through their poems. Among them Siegfried Sassoon is a soldier poet and W.H. Auden though was related to the war but not a soldier poet. Both of them experienced the wars so closely that their writings clearly showed their experience of it.

W.H. Auden, also known as Wysten Hugh Auden, was a poet, creative writer, critic, brilliant librettist and a playwright. He was born in York, England, on February 21, 1907. He wrote not only poems and plays but also more than 400 non-fictional pieces and introduced librettos. Librettos are lyrics for longer and more traditional forms of music such as opera, masque or a musical.

In 1939, Auden moved to America and spent majority of his life there. He also travelled through Europe and had different cultural experiences, which helped him to mold his views about politics, philosophy etc. These themes are common in his poetry. He was also famous for his innovative and unique writing style and also for using intellect and wit in his writings.

Auden grew up in Birmingham. His father George Augustus Auden was a physician. In spite of being a physician, he had intensive knowledge about mythology and folklore whereas; his mother was a strict Anglican woman. It was his father's library from where Auden first became acquainted with Freud's psychoanalytic theory. Though he grew up in an Anglo-Catholic background but became aware of his homosexuality while he was enrolled in a boarding school. Due to his mother's disapproval he could not proceed further but his religious beliefs



faded away eventually. At St. Edmund's School in Surrey he found his companion' Christopher Isherwood. He became Auden's literary companion later in his life.

Auden got a scholarship in Oxford University due to his immense interest in science and engineering but later on he realized that his obsession was somewhere else and that was poetry. He then changed his field of study to English. Because of this background, scientific references are often found in his work. While he was in Oxford, he became acquainted with modernist poetry. Mostly he was influenced by T.S. Eliot. Later on in the same university, he became a member of a group which was known to be 'Oxford group' or the 'Auden generation'. It had important people like Stephen Spender, C. Day Lewis and Louis MacNeice. They believed in the ideas of Marxist, anti-fascist doctrines which addressed social, political and economic concerns. Once he could make his way among the most influential writers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, he started publishing his own work and started writing. This connection took him very far. Critics also say that Auden's early write ups are mostly influenced by Thomas Hardy, Wilfred Owen and Edward Thomas. This is because his poems were fragmented and written in colloquial language and also reflected the concrete images of his political and psychological views.

W.H. Auden's poetry contained the themes of modernism. It talked about alienation, integration, his work is a quest for wholeness, an escape from the isolated self, "where dwell/ our howling appetites," into a community where the essential goodness of life is acknowledged despite the presence of sin. Over the course of his career, Auden's quest takes many forms, but his goal never varies; from beginning to end, he seeks to discover how love, in all its manifestations, can fulfill mankind's social and personal needs.

Auden began in the 1930's as a critic of his society, an outsider looking in and finding little to admire in what he saw. His early work is essentially a record of social tribulations; love

is sought but rarely found. As he matures, however, Auden gradually becomes less of a diagnostician and more of a healer; he arrives eventually at a vision of love informed by human sympathy and, later, by religious belief. Once this vision is affirmed in his poetry, Auden again shifts direction, becoming more fully than before a comic poet, intent on celebrating the redemptive power of love and acknowledging the essential blessedness of life. These shifts in Auden's work are, of course, gradual and subtle rather than abrupt, but the division of his career into three phases provides a way to bring some sense of order to a body of work remarkable, above all else, for its diversity.

In 1928, after completing graduation, Auden left for Berlin with Isherwood. This trip was cited by Auden as the 'beginning of a concern for political and economic discord' – a concern that later on infused in his poetry. In Berlin, Auden began to write in German. He maintained his 'idiosyncratic' style despite of knowing proper German. Isherwood later received 'critical acclaim' for his novel "*The Berlin Stories*", which was included on TIME magazine's list of 100 best American novels since 1923.

In 1930, T.S. Eliot accepted Auden's manuscript. That was Auden's first published work, *Poems*. It included his first play, a comedy drama which referred to the Icelandic sagas as well as Auden's experience at his boarding school. The drama was named as *Paid on Both Sides*. From 1930 to 1935; Auden worked at some temporary positions at few boys' schools in England and continued writing. At that time, his works included writing media, such as mixed prose and poetry of *The Orators* or the drama and drama and poetry of *The Ascent of F6* and *The Dog Beneath*.

In 1935, Auden married Erika Mann, daughter of German novelist Thomas Mann. Erika Mann was an openly 'anti-Fascist German' who feared arrest from the Third Reich and was

looking for British citizenship. She had first asked Isherwood for help, and he had suggested she ask Auden. Auden replied to her proposal with a one-word telegram: “Delighted.” Mann and Auden, both homosexual, remained technically married until Mann’s death in 1969, but the two never actually lived together. This also shows that in spite of being homosexuals, they had to stay married so that the stereotypical societal norms were not broken. Auden dedicated his 1937 collection, *On This Island* (known as *Look, Stranger!* in the U.S.) to Mann.

Just before World War II broke out, Auden immigrated to the United States where he met the poet Chester Kallman who became his lifelong lover. Auden won the Pulitzer Prize in 1948 for *The Age of Anxiety*. Much of his poetry is concerned with moral issues and evidences a strong political, social, and psychological context. While the teachings of Marx and Freud weighed heavily in his early work, they later gave way to religious and spiritual influences. Some critics have called Auden an “anti-romantic”—a poet of analytical clarity who sought for order, for universal patterns of human existence. Auden’s poetry is considered versatile and inventive, ranging from the tersely epigrammatic to book-length verse, and incorporating a vast range of scientific knowledge. Throughout his career, he collaborated with Christopher Isherwood and Louise MacNeice and also frequently joined with Chester Kallman to create libretti for musical works by Benjamin Britten, Igor Stravinsky, and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

Auden left England in 1939 and became a citizen of the United States in 1946. He taught in American Universities from 1941 to 1945 and work as a visiting professor in 1950. At the end of his life, from 1958 he shifted to Austria. He died in 1973, 29<sup>th</sup> September in Vienna.

The opening lines of the poem, “September 1, 1939”, say that the speaker, that is the poet, is sitting in a bar in New York City. Auden complains that the recent events have consumed people’s lives in a way that everywhere there is an ‘odor of death’ in this night. It

feels like no matter what happens there will always be an essence of alienation and cruelty in everything. The date that is mentioned in the title is when the German army had invaded Poland. Thus eventually an act of aggression was growing among them which later on turned into World War II. “A low dishonest decade” refers to the slow buildup to this event filled up by the negotiations and treaties which were meant to prevent such attacks but in reality it meant something else. Rather it seemed that all these treaties and alliances were signed between the countries so that they could be destroyed. ‘Waves of anger and fear’ that circulate over the bright and darkened lands’ was an acknowledgement this invasion was happening at the time when the only source of transferring news all around was radio.

Then further they have mentioned about Martin Luther, a 16<sup>th</sup> century German monk and theologian who is always considered to be one of the most important thinker in the history. His writings challenged ‘basic tenants of Christianity’. Not only that but also his writings led to protestant reformation. Apparently 400million protestant Christian follow or practices the religious beliefs that are directly related to Luther’s theories. This poem blames Luther for starting an ‘offence’ that ‘has driven a culture mad’. Luther’s idea that the Jewish faith could be destroyed by converting all the Jewish to Christianity later turned in angry and dark. He in a way encouraged violence against Jews and also destruction of their properties. He started anti-Semitism, which is a hostility or discrimination against the Jews. It is a form of racism. His ideas basically were adopted by the Nazis and later on it went viral.

Linz was a place in Austria where Adolf Hitler was born. He considered Linz as his hometown and wanted it to be a major cultural center of the Third Reich. Hitler went to Linz to make the formal announcement to extend the Territory of German Empire by including Austria in it. However one of the major concentration camp of Nazis were built within few miles of Linz

in August 1938. At first, though it imprisoned only thieves and prostitutes but eventually it also took the political prisoners in it. 'Imago' means the final stage of development for an insect into its adulthood. Here Auden uses the term simply to imply that someday someone will go over all the German histories and stuffs and will probably have the idea that if some 'evil' is done to someone then he/she will get evil in return. No good can be done or begotten from there. Eventually it will create more fiasco, more violence, and more chaos for mankind.

Thucydides was a general of ancient Athens who was sent into exile after a military defeat in 411 BCE. He gave several famous speeches. His speeches praised the democracy and the people who died in favor of it. Auden here talks about how people are failing everyday by being unable to look beyond the 'rubbish' of Thucydides and he is angry because they are repeating the same mistakes as people made back then. This is because pain and grief are 'habit-forming'.

Day by day the places are taken up by the tall buildings. The skyscrapers are as if in some kind of competition with each other that who will beat whom. Auden did not see it as achievements rather he found it to be a failure. According to him, it shows a drive of imperialism. It shows how bigger and powerful countries are usurping the smaller ones. He found it to be aggression of Germany and noticeable signs of capitalism.

The poem, "*A Walk After The Dark*" is written after the Second World War. This poem is actually in a form of complaint from the poet. Here the poet complains about the sufferings of the people, the traumatized experiences the faced during the war. 'Clockwork spectacle' means the recollection of the events of the wars from time to time. The poet was said that even after a 'tiring' day which means after the war and blood shedding, people still 'urge' to or dream to

bring changes in the world. Their spirit is never lessened by any negativity. Yet they are somewhere bounded by the customs and societal rules.

He believes that someday someone will rise above everything and express his wish to stop these genocides. After that people will be at peace. But Auden could only shock the authority with what he did. And the authority will only try to cover up the rebellion, unless the people were dead. Auden was always involved in the politics through his writings. Yet he could not save the nation after all these efforts. Still he is assured that he was not the only one who would be blamed for it. There are political leaders who are considered to be stars of US. They portray themselves to be the greatest human being on earth, whereas, in real they did nothing but harmed the future generation. They were so corrupted and harmed the nation so much that it could never leave any positive aspect on people.

This poem basically reflects the thoughts and hopes by Auden. His hopes of doing well to the people, his hopes of someone idealistic to rise and fight against all the odds. He knows someone from the next generation will come forward to help the nation. He eagerly waits for that day. Because he believes that the future generation will not keep these facts aside and do nothing about it like his generation. All he hopes for is peace and unity. He believes some determined person someday would come forward to take the initiative to stop the war and save the country. But it is true that only 'rich' people and 'young' one has the power to talk about the warfare and loss of humanity. They can say that how we have lost young lives 'lacrimaererum' in the war and still losing. Amidst everything ordinary people are always suffering. However he is hopeless about the fact that war can ever be finished. This is because the young people who could bring peace are dead in the war already and the rich people are not young anymore. Also, the rich people do not aim to wish for any betterment of the nation.

Auden became angry at one point. He started comparing the decisions of both the wars. According to him in spite of knowing that the decisions of the wars are wrong and in the long run it would only harm everyone, the authority still went for it. They ignored the truth and tears of the people who seek peace. They made the whole world suffer again by the second war all over again. The first war had already traumatized the generation and another one added more disenchantment to it. A restlessness was sensed everywhere.

However, the next generation of this nation now probably has realized the reason that they have to live in the world like that. Even though all other countries have agreed on peace treaty but 'young' and 'rich' might not follow the laws set by the older authorities. That is because they think themselves to be superior and better than the others. Thus the older authority is unfit to educate the, about the right way to rule. Auden is unable to sleep or think properly thinking about the harms that the united States have done to people with the wars. He is worried about the future, the people, and the nation. The people who are dead have once ruled the nation, cared for it. But back then probably they also didn't know that someday the world would face something like today.

Another significant war poet, Siegfried Sassoon was born on 8 September 1886 in Kent. His father Alfred Ezra Sassoon belonged from a Jewish merchant family, originally from Iran and India, and his mother part of the artistic Thorneycroft family. Sassoon studied at Cambridge University but he left without a degree. He then lived the life of a country gentleman, hunting and playing cricket while also publishing small volumes of poetry. In May 1915, Sassoon was commissioned into the Royal Welsh Fusiliers and went to France. He impressed many with his bravery in the front line and was given the nickname 'Mad Jack' for his near-suicidal exploits. He

was decorated twice. His brother Hamo was killed in November 1915 at Gallipoli. It affected him deeply.

In the summer of 1916, Sassoon was sent to England to recover from fever. He went back to the front, but was wounded in April 1917 and returned home. Meetings with several prominent pacifists, including Bertrand Russell, had reinforced his growing disillusionment with the war and in June 1917 he wrote a letter that was published in the Times in which he said that the war was being deliberately and unnecessarily prolonged by the government. As a decorated war hero and published poet, this caused public outrage. It was only his friend and fellow poet, Robert Graves, who prevented him from being court-martialed by convincing the authorities that Sassoon had shell-shock. He was sent to Craiglockhart War Hospital in Edinburgh for treatment. Here he met, and greatly influenced, Wilfred Owen. Both men returned to the front where Owen was killed in 1918. Sassoon was posted to Palestine and then returned to France, where he was again wounded, spending the remainder of the war in England. Many of his war poems were published in 'The Old Huntsman' (1917) and 'Counter-Attack' (1918).

After the war Sassoon spent a brief period as literary editor of the Daily Herald before going to the United States, travelling the length and breadth of the country on a speaking tour. He then started writing the near-autobiographical novel *'Memoirs of a Fox-hunting Man'* (1928). It was an immediate success, and was followed by others including *'Memoirs of an Infantry Officer'* (1930) and *'Sherston's Progress'* (1936).

Siegfried Sassoon was born and grew up in a mansion. His father was disinherited from him family for marrying outside his 'faith'. Sassoon's mother also belonged from a very well-known sculptor family, who are known to be the best for some sculptures in London. He had two brothers, Michael and Hamo. When he was only four years old his parents were separated. Since



his father was disinherited from the fortune so somehow Siegfried managed to get a small private fortune which allowed him to live a peaceful life. He was into cricket so much that he even once gave his political view about the first war by comparing that with cricket. He said, "France was a lady, Russia was a bear, and performing in the county cricket team was much more important than either of them". Eventually he played cricket for Matfield and later for the Downside Abbey team. He was so moved with patriotism that he went onto joining the army. That time United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland had declared war Germany. However Sassoon met an accident and broke his arm badly. He was immediately sent out of the battle.

Eventually, Sassoon joined the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion in France, where he met Robert Graves and became good friends. This friendship benefitted them both and sometimes some conceptual ideas of Graves are often found in Sassoon's poetry. From graves he got the idea about 'gritty realism' which he used in his poems later. But the time Sassoon could sense the horror of the war, his style of writing changed. From the idealistic approach his poem then started talking about corpses, suicides, being crippled, and cowardice etc. His poems altogether had a significant effect on the modernist poetry. Sassoon's early poems were romantic but as soon as he got in touch with the harsh atrocities of the war, the tone of his poem drastically changed. Sweet and soft words soon turned into bitter and punitive words. His poems started conveying the message behind the ugly truths of the war. Readers were already blind by the misconceptions regarding the war. They were unable to see the real propaganda behind the war.

In May 1915, when he joined the French army, he was well known for his bravery. He was in the front line. He alone scattered sixty German soldiers in the German 'trench'. Those soldiers were armed with grenades and all yet he was so fearless that he handled everything all alone. There was a time when the other soldiers felt protected when they were around Sassoon.

He often went on to dangerous night raids as a leader. That's why he was named as "Mad jack" by his fellows.

In spite of such heroic performances in the battle ground, in 1917 he decided to stand against the war. This was because he lost one of his closest friends David Cuthbert Thomas in the war. It took years for Sassoon to get over the grief of losing his dear friend. After these entire incidents, Sassoon refused to join the front. He sent a letter to his officer saying that he was done with the war. On that letter he mentioned how the motive of the war changed since he joined the army at the beginning. According to him it seemed he joined for the liberation of the nation but slowly it changed its purpose and the war became more of an 'aggression and conquest'. He could not bear it anymore and soon after he was sent for treatment by his fellow officer. They declared him to be unfit to fight any more battle. Before refusing to serve in army's he threw the ribbons for his military cross in the river. He claimed in his book *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer* that it was not like he rejected the military values or something rather it was his refusal to perform anymore 'destructive act' that was disturbing him.

At Craig Lockhart, Sassoon met Wilfred Owen. Sassoon influenced Owen a lot. They shared a good bonding and Owen in his poem "*Anthem for Doomed Youth*" had Sassoon's written amendment as a testimony to show that to what extent Owen was influenced by him. Sassoon was "Keats and Christ and Elijah" to Owen and Owen apparently wrote about his love and admiration towards Sassoon again and again. Owen was killed at the age of twenty-five in 1918. In the war again when Sassoon was shot and was wounded again. After much complications, when he found his rank as a captain he at first tried grab the audiences by bringing back Owens poetry.

Sassoon had a number of homosexual affairs but in 1933 surprised many of his friends by marrying Hester Gatty. They had a son, George, but the marriage broke down after World War Two. He continued to write both prose and poetry. Sassoon's affairs with men was a result of his military service. He went on for emotional support from them and eventually got into relationship with William Park who was an architectural and figure painter, a draftsman and illustrator, Ivor Novello who was an actor; Glen Byam Shaw who was also an actor, Beverly Nichols who was a writer, the Hon. Stephen Tennant who was an aristocrat. Among all of them only Shaw remained till the end of his life. At the end of his life, Sassoon converted to Roman Catholicism.

In 1957, he was received into the Catholic Church. He died on 1 September 1967. He had hoped that Ronald Knox would instruct him in the faith who was a catholic priest and writer. But he was unable to do that due to his illness. However he was admitted in the faith at Downside Abbey which was close to his home. During that time he also became interested in ghost and supernatural things. Later on, the nuns that he regularly visited printed some of his poems. Sassoon was appointed as the Commander of the Order of the British Empire in the 1951 New Year Honours. He died one week before his 81<sup>st</sup> birthday. He had stomach cancer. He was buried at St Andrews Church, Mells, and Somerset.

His writings were influenced from his personal life experiences as a soldier. He could not bear the heart wrenching traumas of the First World War. The way people were losing everything was affecting him. So he chose poetry as a medium to express his emotions.

The poem "Aftermath" was written on March 1919, just after the First World War. Sassoon always tried to picturize the horrors of the First World War, the agonies that the entire world was facing due the wars. In the poem, a line has been repeated throughout. The line is

“have you forgotten yet?” This line highlights the fact that how the war was not some easy thing to forget. It had a great impact on people’s minds. "Like clouds in the lit heavens of life"- this line compares the consequences of the war with death. The war did not give any “life” rather it took away lives. It was a metaphorical representation of the trenches of the war.

In the second part of the poem, it talks about the reality, conditions and the surroundings of the war during the battle. "Do you remember the rats; and the stench of corpses rotting in front of the front-line trench." talks about how there were dead bodies everywhere and were stinking. The rats were feasting upon the bodies. The lines also talks about from a soldier’s emotional perspective. Even though the rotting smell of the bodies was unbearable but the bodies were rotting in front of the soldiers, which was heart wrenching. They wanted to save the country but were so helpless that had to undergo through these type of experiences. Poet also said, "and chill with a hopeless rain”, which again creates a dull, sad and hopelessness environment. This is because the circumstances that were there at that time so it was completely unimaginable to “chill” at that time period. Coincidentally or not, Sassoon wrote "Is it all going to happen again?" in the poem and soon after that, the Second World War started.

In the third stanza, "as you peered at the doomed and haggard faces of your men" this line foretells the consequence of the soldiers at the end of the war. This line basically says that eventually the soldiers are going to die. No matter how hard or how afford they have put into the war, yet they are going to die eventually. "Masks of the lads who were once keen and kind and gay" this line indicates how the war is not what people thought it to be. It was not only about fighting rather it was something more than that. The war did not need heroism rather it needed more and more people to sacrifice their lives for nothing. At the end of the poem, Sassoon emphasizes on the fact that people should not forget about the war ever rather they should

remember the tragic loss caused by the war. He urges that people should remember about the numerous lives that were lost in the First World War.

The second poem that would be discussed here is "*Does It Matter?*" It is a poem that comes in a form of complains from the poet. Here the poet talks about someone's feelings that how would someone feel if that person had lost his organs from the body all of a sudden. A person who is absolutely alright and went onto the war to fight for his country and eventually ended up losing a part of his body is not acceptable. The way people react to such incidents is, also, nonetheless shocking. People react normally as if being handicapped from a warfare or completely fine for a soldier. Yet no one try get into someone's heart to see and feel that how that person might feel if he loses his 'sight' or a 'leg' forever. When others will come to grab their 'muffins' and 'eggs' after 'hunting' no one will ever try walk into the wounded persons shoe. No one will ever come to 'know' how he might feel. When a soldier loses his eye sight and sits on the 'terrace remembering' about the old days that time people would be kind enough to show him their sympathy but in real they would hardly care about that fact. No one remembers soldiers once he loses his organs or anything in a war. People only look out for heroism in soldiers but to prove that a soldier has to encounter countless sacrifices which no one cares.

In the horror of the war it is more horrendous to see that no one really cares about the psychologically or physically damaged soldiers rather people become too busy to go with the fact that this is nothing serious. The poem also denotes death here. Even if Sassoon has not talked about death directly yet he has talked about how wars are killing a normal human beings dream, his normal life. People are being left over like living corpse, that too for a reason that actually has nothing to do about the real life. However living a life like that, does not hold any meaning. The young people who should be enjoying their lives are now fighting over death. The

reason is nothing but a mass crowd was joining so all the other people followed the crowd. The whole menace is nothing but a chance to make the future generation cripple. This poem totally justified the pointlessness of fighting the war. People are losing everything for no reason. The poet has ironically said that “and people will always be kind” which actually shows the helplessness regarding the permanent disability of the soldiers. The usage of tone here creates an empathetic tone among the readers, towards the soldier. When a person loses his eyesight, his surroundings become dark, no ‘light’ can be seen anymore. So it is similar to living in a ‘pit’ and dreaming from there.

In this poem, the way Sassoon has expressed his feelings that show how the poet has been haunted by his traumatized experience regarding the war. In the poem he has confronted the fact that not only a war is going to cause someone a permanent disability but also it is going to torment that person with an everlasting psychological effect till his death. This poem also compels the reader to think about the necessity of a war.

These two poets have shown their emotional state of mind through poetry. They have talked about their helplessness in the poems. Sometimes while embracing the wrong, people tend to forget to appreciate the right. Initially though the war seemed beneficial but in the long run it proved to be a hoax and reason for suffering. All these issues were portrayed in their poems. As Higham said, “war is not merely a matter of battles” (240)<sup>3</sup> this statement totally justified everything. A war is not only about fighting but also its more about losing. No one ever could achieve something from war rather they have experienced some unforgettable and painful memories for their lifetime.

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<sup>3</sup>Higham , Robin. “The Liberty Quaterly: Information, Community, Policy.”

## Chapter 1V

### Conclusion

World wars influenced many people to come out of their shells and write about their experiences, ongoing issues and societal circumstances. These wars never left any positive impact on any people. Rather, everyone was left traumatized forever. The horrors of the wars were unimaginable and impacted generation after generation. Yet despite all these negativities, these wars have gifted us with some prolific literary figures. There were many war poets who wrote about their experiences of the world. Names of some famous war poets were, T.S. Eliot, W.H. Auden, Yeats, Vernon Scannell, Wilfred Owen etc.

They wrote how brutal the world seemed to them. The poets and the writers also had criticized the societal and the political propaganda that was spread as a way to justify the wars. The idealistic approach of writing was abandoned and realism was introduced in literature.

The main themes that were reflected throughout in the wartime literature were disillusionment, disenchantment, unrest state of mind, trauma, alienation, cynicism etc. Writers and poets who emerged from this era wrote only about these. They thought their writings could bring a momentary peace among people. There was a sense of timelessness in their writings. It felt as if the cruelty and brutality of the wars were never ever going to end. Many soldiers also wrote to influence other people who also later on became war poets. After the Second World War, there was destruction everywhere. People were emotionally fragile and in search of meaning in life. Thus people showed interest in reading novels and poetry to forget about the fiasco momentarily. It influenced them greatly.

The wars had enormous effects on that generation. The entire generation lost their faith from God. They became cynic. They felt the world around them had stopped. So many people

became homeless. Numerous people lost their loved ones. They could never be benefitted from the warfare. The writings showed how hopelessness had captivate people all over. The poets, authors portrayed these facts in their writings. They tried to show the dilemma and the restlessness of peoples mind through poetry. The poets talked about the mental state of the people as they became very vulnerable and fragile about their life. They thought death was the only solution to get rid of everything probably.

Yeats started his career as a romantic writer and eventually evolved as a modern poet. He used to write romantic poems about love, nature etc. but later on the circumstances compelled him to move away from the traditional idealistic writing and to write from a realist's point of view. He used the images of chaos, disorders, wars etc. to portray what was in his mind. He always used politics as a strong base for his writing. Yeats's famous poem *The second coming* reflects his thoughts about good vs. evil, memories of the past, society and class, reality, warfare etc. he tried to picturize the fact that how in spite of seeing all the good side of anything we easily get tempted towards the negativity or the evil. Just like the dictators who decided about the war to start. Similarly Auden talked about suppression, death, bureaucracy, totalitarianism, and sufferings etc. as his poem's themes. He talked about how 'power' had captured the whole society and caused people to suffer. On the poem "*On Being Asked for A War*", W.H. Auden has talked about the political shifts and the war. Thus in all the war poets' poem more or less the same themes are visible. They tried to portray the social facts that led to the war. On the other hand T.S. Eliot wrote mostly about the damaged consciousness of humanity, the fragile mental condition of the people during the time of wars. Everyone's thoughts were fragmented. People became vulnerable. For example in the "*Wasteland*" Eliot has talked about death, rebirth, lust, love, history of the war etc. It shows how the wars that were going on for like eternity had



affected people. The war poets had the same themes reflected in their poems throughout. The poets have showed the anxiety, frustration, hatred, alienation through their poems. Soldiers, who had nothing but to show his patriotism, found hope through these poems. The real side of the society was shown to the readers through the poems. It was the only medium to take out ones emotions.

The poems are known to be war poems because the poems reflected the conditions during the war. The whole society and the citizens were going through the same problem. The survivor had a tough time to figure out about their existence. Identity crisis was all over and these issues were being portrayed in the war poems. Modernist writers tried to give the picture of the fragmented state of the society and inner state of humans so that the readers could get the idea about the horror of the wars after reading the war poems. The war poems were basically the poems which were written from a poet's experiences or his point of view. In the earlier times, the war poems used to glorify the wars. It used to portray the soldiers as heroes. Those ancient war poems used to appreciate the soldiers fighting in a war. But the poems that were written during the world wars show the sides of the war that does not glorify them. Rather it reflects on the individuals, communities, cultures and human values and how all of these were affected during the time of war. The trajectory of the poets' general perception about life and society changed from an idealistic view to a realistic perception which resulted in the poets to document the spiritual void which was present during the war, and also this tells us about the need of spirituality and humanity in human civilization, progression and development.

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