

From Patriotism to Disillusionment: Mapping shifting tone in British War Poetry

By

Humaira Maisha Mahmud

ID: 17103027

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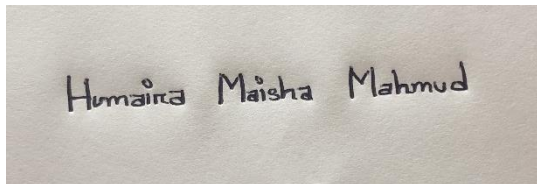
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Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my own original work while completing degree at Brac University.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

Student's Full Name & Signature:

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17103027

Approval

The thesis titled “From Patriotism to Disillusionment: Mapping shifting tone in British War Poetry” submitted by Humaira Maisha Mahmud, ID: 17103027 of Fall, 2020 has been accepted as satisfactory in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in English.

Examining Committee:

Supervisor:
(Member)

Anika Saba
Lecturer, Department of English and Humanities
BRAC University

Departmental Head:
(Chair)

Professor Firdous Azim
Chairperson, Department of English and Humanities
BRAC University

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Abstract

First World War, also known as Great War, had an emphatic impact in shaping the literary genre called War Poetry that sketched veracious picture of the modern technological warfare to the world. The war poems written by the soldiers themselves during the Great War were not a piece of writing but this was a medium through which they expurgated their feelings and emotions. Their emotions became a message to convey the truth to the ordinary people or the civilians back at home. This dissertation aims to mainly shed light on the British soldier poets whose war poems are less studied or addressed outside of England like- Rupert Brooke (1887-1915), Ivor Gurney (1890-1937), Robert Graves (1895-1985) and Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936). Walking through the lives of these poets, this paper targets to analyze the selected works that are highly influenced by their personal experiences in the war. This further demonstrates and maps the gradational change in the tone of their verses starting from the outbreak of the war to the end of World War I.

Table of Contents

Declaration.....	2
Approval.....	3
Acknowledgement.....	4
Abstract.....	5
Table of Contents.....	6
Chapter One: Introduction	7
1.1 First World War & British Poetry	8
1.2 Wilfred Owen & the war poets	11
1.3 Methodology	14
Chapter Two: Literature Review	15
Chapter Three: Patriotism and chauvinism in verses of Rupert Brooke	22
Chapter Four: Traumatic experiences of the soldier boys in poems of Ivor Gurney	28
Chapter Five: Futile nature of the Great War in verses of Robert Graves	35
Chapter Six: Portrayal of valiant sacrifice in works of Rudyard Kipling	42
Chapter Seven: Conclusion	50
Works Cited	54

Chapter One

Introduction

The Great War established poetry as the threshold for the country's values. During the First World War, the amount of patriotism shown and sacrifices made by the soldiers and civilians alike were incomparable and immeasurable. Likewise, their patriotism was instilled with pride in the country's literary achievements. Eventually the Great War, as an important event in human history, led to a new genre of poetry in the form of War poetry. As Professor Tim Kendall mentions in the book *Poetry of the First World War: an anthology* that with World War I, the "civilization" evolved, so did the "poetic heritage" and the origin of war poetry is closely connected with the belief that it was an action of patriotism as it celebrated the love for the country and its tradition (18). War poetry is a form of art which is dedicated to the efforts of war. It is embedded with devotion from the love of country. A devotion to a cause which is so genuine as if it's an ideal. A devotion that had remained even after the devastation of the Great War, even in the darkest of times. Love for country is the noblest emotion or devotion and war poetry is one of the major forms of expression of such emotion like a chronicle of life. It worked as an inspiration like our anthems. Most of the war poetry evolved from their own experiences of war. The Great War touched upon this form of art that the war history could be understood from these works. War Poets like- Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon, Rupert Brooke, Ivor Gurney, Robert Graves, Isaac Rosenberg, Rudyard Kipling, Edward Thomas, John McCrae, Thomas Hardy etc. started gaining popularity for their extraordinary writings of the Great War. According to Kendall "a new generation of poets" called "the Georgians" were highlighted in this period and they started reflecting the horrors of the conflict and the altered outlook it brought with it in their writings (19). The horrors of war had such unimaginable brutalities that it was criticized by many Georgian writers. On the other hand, trench poets gave another spectrum of literary response to the First World War. In other words, they could be

called trench soldier poets who experienced the radical innovations and highly advanced technological war. The massive shift from the old forms and norms of war which was massively different from the traditional beliefs. Through the poems, they wrote about their first-hand, very personal and subjective experience. It was an interpretation and philosophy of life who saw the Great War as a change in time and history. Where some wrote from their own experience from the battlefield, some wrote as survivors and some as a griever who were scarred by the mass technological warfare. Hence, to understand their works we need to analyse it through the lens of Biographical Criticism as Mario Klarer stated it “establishes a direct link between the literary text and the biography of the author” which helps us to comprehend their pieces of literature better based on the circumstances they produced their works (90). Through this approach, we can draw a connection between the life of the author and his produced works as writer’s experiences from his own life immensely influences the works he generates which can truly be interpreted by the inspection of his biography. So, my thesis paper will be analyzing the war poems by the British war poets from World War I specifically those whose works are not read or acknowledged much beyond England through the framework of Biographical approach. It will also show the raw images of the war via their works and portray the ultimate changes in the tone of these war poems starting from the patriotic beliefs of the war to the outrageous and shocking truth of the Great War.

1.1 First World War & British poetry

The Great War or World War I from 1914 to 1918, had a great impact on human civilization. The war was mainly between the central powers like- Germany, Austria-Hungary, The Ottoman Empire and the allied powers like-Great Britain, Russia & France. It is not only one of the largest wars in history but also one of the deadliest. With the advancement of technology, the war took a different shape at that time. The warriors used the newly developed equipment like- machine guns, artillery, tanks, poisonous gas, grenades etc. which contributed

heavily to a massive destruction. For the first time in human history, airplanes were used for bombarding and explosions during the Great War. As stated by Professor John Mueller who is famous for his different ideas on wars that the population was about 430 million in Europe in 1914 among which 17,860,000 died in the war consisting of 11,867,000 military soldiers & 5,993,000 civilians (4) making it one of the deadliest conflicts in history. It killed a colossal amount of people in Europe and the population and infrastructure had to suffer so significantly from the ruins and destruction as a result of the war that it is often mentioned till date. Mueller mentions an observation by another scholar Roland Stromberg where he talks about the Great War to demolish the heroic picture of the war as it turned to be all about immense devastation and massacre (10). The kind of image people had in their mind regarding wars took a different turn after witnessing the devastating nature of the World War I. During that time, a new kind of tactic against the opposition were used where they used trenches to face the machineries and guns used in World War I. The trench soldiers had to suffer immensely due to their living condition in trenches which was a defense mechanism used by them to protect themselves from the enemies. As the famous literary historian Paul Fussell who is well-known for his works on war mentioned in his book *The Great War and Modern Memory* that the “British Trenches were wet, cold, smelly and thoroughly squalid” (46). Such state of the trenches badly affected the health of the soldiers and caused them to suffer from various diseases. Many times they could not eat properly either due to the scarcity of food or due to the unpleasant condition they were living in. Fussell also stated how these fighters had to protect themselves staying under the ground creating “holes” and “ditches” where almost “7000 British men and officers were killed and wounded daily” (44). Moreover, they had to fight through the gas and chemical attacks which affected different organs of their body. Those poisonous gases not only had an impact on the physical condition of the soldiers but also on the environment or surroundings they were living in. The poisonous gases took a more deadly and scarier form in the following

World War II. Henceforth, the historian Bernadotte E. Schmitt in his article “The First World War, 1914-1918” states the Great War to be “the most terrible conflict the modern world had witnessed” (331).

This period gave birth to many soldier poets who inked their emotions and patriotic feelings into lyrics or poetry. World War I gave a new voice to this literary genre called War Poetry as it was the most popular means for the soldiers taking part in the Great War to express their internal feelings or portray their actual experiences or opinions. Being a part of the war, the soldier poets could feel the intensity of the war which was far different from the scenario shown or explained to them before they joined the war. They could see the true picture of the war and the real horrors of it in the age of technology. The reality was no longer mystified. It was far more grievous and different from the earlier wars where the soldiers fought not only with man power but also with the new inventions or machineries which made them suffer both physically and mentally. The existing courageous or the valiant image of the war in the minds of the soldiers was replaced by the true horrendous image of the war. There was no sense of heroism left in the war rather it was all about technological slaughter where people were killing each other in an inhumane manner with no mercy in the name of technological advancements or weaponry. In those circumstances, their only way of expression in the absence of compassion and companions was poetry where the soldiers could give voice to their agony, condition of living, scenario of demolitions and all the realities of the battlefield. The relentless war spanning over four years took a toll on them both mentally and physically. The “great war” being great in its true and literal sense in terms of both length of war and number of casualties. The soldiers being away from family and friends for so long without any certainty of going back to the closed ones. They were very lonely and the severity of the war engulfed their minds. Their only means or recourse in otherwise sorrow state was poetry. They wrote about their experiences in the warfare in the form of poetry which changed the public perception of the

war. These poetries acted as messages from the war mostly stating the truth, sometimes a personal message to and for the loved ones or coated with harsh reality consisting of their enormous feelings and emotions.

1.2 Wilfred Owen & the war poets

More than two thousand poems were written during the World War I where the soldiers shared their views and experiences regarding the Great War. The two most famous names of the soldier poets from World War I that resonates all over the world are- Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon. Owen's war poems are widely popular all over the world due to its simple and touching tone which are still read in schools and colleges especially at the former colonies where the students are taught his poems in their classes. Sassoon's war poems are also read frequently as he is renowned for his protest in 1917 which was against the threatening nature of the war where he made a "declaration against the conduct of the war as an act of wilful defiance of military authority" (Kendall 175). Both of them were the leading war poets who started depicting the raw image of the Great War in their poems and graphically described the reality so that people could get the true sense of the modern war. They were diagnosed with shell-shock which is a kind of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) due to their horrific experience of the war. The author Daniel Hipp stated in his book *The poetry of shell shock: Wartime trauma and healing in Wilfred Owen, Ivor Gurney and Siegfried Sassoon* that they were the first ones to show the "reality of life in the trenches of the Great War" in their poetries and became the "public voice" for those soldiers who could not speak up for themselves despite suffering immensely in the war (43). Through their verses, they overturned the image of the war which was being showcased by the state and the media to the people in a very different way sometimes the purpose being misrepresented as for achieving peace or harmony without disclosing the huge opportunity cost of lives or trauma of warriors in the false pretense of peace or harmony. Peace could only be achieved by the end of war. The soldiers and the civilians

were being only shown the glorious and the chauvinistic notion of the war unbeknown the horrendous truth of the war keeping aside the dreadful trauma resulting in the psychiatric illness. The state presented only the heroic essence of the war to them by hiding the brutal reality so that they come forward to join the war igniting the fire of patriotism in the hearts of the soldiers. Their feelings for the country or patriotism was being played by the state. The deception they faced could be found in their poems. They discovered the truth and the truth was reflected through the poems. But Owen and Sassoon were against such viciousness and cruelty of the war and started to depict their emotion through their poems which changed the public perception of the war.

Apart from Owen and Sassoon, there are many other war poets like- Rupert Brooke, Ivor Gurney, Robert Graves, Isaac Rosenberg, Edward Thomas, John McCrae etc. whose poems are not read much outside England. Among them, Rupert Brooke is one of the leading poets like Owen and Sassoon but he had a different tone in his poems than that of the other war poets of WW1 as his poems rather inspired people to join the war as opposed to the depiction of the cruel nature of the war by other war poets which might have acted as a deterrent or discouragement to join war. He glorified the whole idea of the war and encouraged others to be a part of this noble affair. His poems consisted of the sense of chivalry and bravery in the battleground and motivated people to participate in the war. Two other soldier poets who are hardly read beyond England are-Ivor Gurney & Robert Graves who illustrated their first-hand experience of the war through lyrics and poems. They took part in the First World War and shared their experience as a soldier by putting down their thoughts and emotions in their poetries. They took inspirations from the leading or the previous war poets and started portraying their distinctive experiences in the war. With the advancement of time, new technologies and machineries being used as weapons of the war transformed the whole atmosphere of the battlefield. It altered the tone of the poems written by the war poets. From

the poems having the sense of heroism in the wars, we saw a change in the poems which started showing the violence and destruction caused by the war. The whole idea of the war being noble or heroic or for peace and harmony changed with the representation of the agony and struggle of these soldiers in the battleground. They started depicting the raw image of the Great War through their poems and portray the true horrors of it. Another English poet named Rudyard Kipling through his verses took an active part in recalling and memorializing the warriors who fought for their countries in the Great War. Even though he himself was not directly a part of the war as a soldier but he could feel the catastrophic nature of WW1 as he lost his only son in the war. He might not have perceived or witnessed the war as the above soldier poets, he might not be a warrior himself but he suffered the consequences of the war no less than a warrior. This is another devastating effect of war. We do not only lose soldiers or warriors in the aftermath of wars. Sometimes an entire family or several families suffer because of the war. The loss of one warrior or soldier might empty the heart or lap of a mother or parents which is an irreparable loss and injury. A wound likely to scar the family for life. Likewise Kipling could feel the intensity of the war where the soldiers had to sacrifice or forfeit their own lives which affected the family members directly or indirectly. His poems brought the sacrifices of the family members and civilians before our eyes which might have remained unknown to us.

Hence, my thesis paper will focus on some of the selected poems of these war poets from World War I like- Rupert Brooke, Ivor Gurney, Robert Graves & Rudyard Kipling whose war poems are commonly referred within England but hardly read beyond it. My paper will mainly exhibit the true and raw picture of the Great War through the war poems by these uncherished voices who are barely recognized worldwide besides England. It will also show the gradual development of war poetry and the gradual change in the tone of these war poems starting from the glorious and chauvinistic notion of the war to the brutal reality of the Great War through the frame of biographical approach.

1.3 Methodology

My research methodology will mainly be qualitative as well as theoretical since I will be looking at the selected poems of the above mentioned war poets through the lens of biographical approach. I will be examining the verses of these soldier poets by peeking into their life stories as it will help me to conduct a better analysis of their produced works which were highly influenced by their experiences in the Great War. My paper will also be inspecting the reason behind the gradual shift in the tone of the poets starting from the formative years of the war to the end of the World War I. The primary resource for this paper will be the book *Poetry of the First World War: an anthology* by Tim Kendall from which I will be selecting specific poems to conduct my research. Besides, I will be using many secondary resources like-scholarly articles, journals and books which would help me to do a rigorous research on my topic and facilitate to back up my claims and ideas.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Many scholars portrayed their views on First World War and its impact on British poetry as the soldier poets pour out their internal feelings through the form of lyrics or verses during the war period which helped them to purge their trapped emotions inside them and kept them motivated to face the challenges of the deadliest warfare in the history. As the famous historian Paul Fussell described The Great War in his book *The Great War and modern memory* to be a distinctive one due to its destructive nature where different new techniques or tactics were used by the soldiers to fight against their opponents. He referred to the horrific living condition of the warriors in the “British trenches” during the battle and mentioned what Major P.H. Pilditch said a month before the war ended that they “spent some time in the old No Man’s land of four years’ duration...It was a morbid but interesting occupation tracing the various battles amongst the hundreds of skulls, bones and remains scattered thickly about” (54). They used to fight in such horrendous state for days and nights where these fossils and corpses of the fallen comrades reminded the other troopers of the sacrifice they made in such trying situation. Such frightful notion of the Great War acted as a “catalyst” for highlighting the voices of the “moralists” and promoted the growth of the “Anti-war movements” who believed the wars in twentieth century to be “repulsive, immoral, uncivilized & futile” which is exactly the opposite of the beliefs or ideals of the enlightened nations (Mueller 12).

Now, when we bring the scenario of The Great War in literature, the most pertinent topic which comes with it is the formation of a new literary genre called War poetry that derived prominently during the First World War because the soldiers used to write lyrical songs or verses as their mode of expression at that time. Professor Tim Kendall stated in the book *Poetry of the First World War: an anthology* that the war poets deliberately chose poetry as a medium

to express themselves because it was seen as an “art in which Britain could confidently claim supremacy over its enemy” (9). He also added how these lyrical verses were viewed as a “patriotic act” which “celebrated and enhanced the nation’s cultural ascendancy” that is it showcased their nationalistic spirit and depicted how the culture of Britain is superior than that of their oppositions (9). It worked as an inspiration for the British warriors which encouraged them to take an active part in the war for the sake of their own nation.

Moreover, Professor Stuart Sillars in his book *Fields of Agony: British Poetry of the First World War* said that one of the reasons war poetry became popular at that time is due to its “informative role” as from the beginning of the war the state or the media was heavily censoring and concealing the actual facts which was creating a “barrier” between the fighters and the civilians at “home” (12). He also added how these war poems became a powerful media for the soldier poets to create awareness regarding the “sufferings of young men” in the battlefield where they refused to support the “prevailing systems of social order” regarding the notion of war as well as the destruction of the “beauty of the countryside” which this technological warfare was causing (11). In addition to this, Sillars mentioned how the “the process of writing” of these war poems, where the soldiers could portray their shocking experience of the war, worked as a therapy to heal their mental state especially for them who were suffering from “shell-shock or neurasthenia” whereas some depicted the “rightness of the cause” in their poems which inspired more comrades or civilians to join the war (12).

Now moving to the emerging war poets and their poems written based on the World War I, we can see their distinctive experiences being reflected in their writings. To understand or interpret their works fully, we need to look at their poems through the Biographical approach which focuses on the “lives of the author” as stated by Guerin et al. in his book *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to literature* (52). We need to look at their produced works through examining the biography of the poets which would help us to comprehend their poems better.

As Guerin quoted Richard D. Altick in his book who said “ almost every literary work is attended by a host of outside circumstances which, once we expose and explore them, suffuse it with additional meaning” (54). The more we focus on the essence of the poets’ lives, the more we can understand their creation of art better as the experiences of their lives are directly incorporated in their works. This literary approach emphasizes on the personal lives of the writers which gives the readers better insights in finding the inspiration behind their works and getting hold of the actual meaning of their works.

Again, peeping into the lives of the war poets of the Great War, their produced lyrics and verses during that time were so unique that the “practitioners” started categorizing them by new terms like- “Soldier poets” or “Trench poets” due to their unornamented or unembellished “poetic language” by which they encapsulated “the reality of life in uniform” and “the realities of modern warfare” (Walter 19). Rupert Brooke being one of the leading Soldier poets is being labeled as “the naïve voice of 1914, patriotic and innocent” due to his poems which glorified the existing notion of war and worked as an inspiration for the soldier boys to take part in the war (Kendall 201). As Jones mentioned in his journal article that Brooke’s most famous sonnet “The soldiers” had been proclaimed as the “enthusiasm of a pure and elevated patriotism” which “never found a nobler expression” (113-114). According to Walter, his verses which were popularly known as his “War sonnets” were able to encourage the “young poets” to be capable of rising “to the challenge of the war” (15). He also quoted how his “sonnets are personal...and yet the very blood and youth of England seem to find expression in them. They speak not for one heart only, but for all to whom her call has come in the hour of need and found instantly ready” (15). His poems jogged the minds of the young soldiers and broadcasted the jingoistic propaganda of the Great War. The British Historian Nigel Jones in his book *Rupert Brooke: Life, Death and Myth* talked about Brooke’s war poems where he gave “expression to the spirit of stern resolution” and claimed the young boys or soldiers from the

period of Great War to be proud of themselves as God chose them to be a part of this noble affair (200). Author Edwin Essex described Brooke as a poet whose “appealing personality” reflected in each and every work he produced and it is his poems through which he “immortalized” himself (89).

However, Kendall mentioned in his book that “Not all civilian poets spent the War writing stirring verse about God and England and the glorious justice of the cause” (27). When we look at the work of the war poets like- Ivor Gurney and Robert Graves, we can see a drastic change in the tone of their war poems where they showed the brutal image of the war rather than its chauvinistic nature. As Kilgore-Caradec quoted Gurney in her paper who wrote a letter to his friend Marion Scott regarding his sonnets which were consciously written as a “counterblast” of Brooke’s sonnets to portray “the protest of the physical against the exalted spiritual” and he believed his poems to work as an informed piece of literature that would “fill a place” to notify the “uninformed” that is the “soldiers or civilians” regarding “what a young fresh war means” who are barely aware of the vicious reality of the war (34). Gurney through his poems like-“The Silent One” rejects the notion of the military organization which leads to “the mythical order of heroism” and shows how these unsung soldiers gave away their “individuality to a collective myth and acted according to its dictates” as they were forced to take part in the war by the presentation of false essence of heroism (King 148). King also added in the article that the reason behind Gurney’s rejection of such conception of the war is that “heroic status is not worth the physical suffering involved” in this technological warfare where the soldiers are racked with constant pain and “the reward is uncertain” (149). As Kendall mentioned Gurney telling his friend Scott that “he is not a soldier but a dirty civilian” presents him as a normal human being who also has the fear of losing his own life in the battlefield despite being a soldier of the Great War with heavy nationalistic spirit instilled within him (221). The heroic or patriotic visions of the war delineated to the young soldiers by the state

were rejected by Gurney as he could see the real image of the war and could feel the severity and intensity of the war which is far different from the way it is exhibited to the warriors.

A corresponding tone can be seen in the poems of Robert Graves who as a soldier felt so tormented and anguished by the nature of the Great War that his collection of poems in 1920 revealed how badly he wanted an escape from the evocative or haunting memories from the war and “forget” about that whole experience through his writing (Kendall 340). As Carter mentioned in his book that Graves as a poet believed in “Cathartic, therapeutic & oyster nature of poetry” through which he “informs himself about, and to that extent resolves, the painful problems of his own inner life” that is it either portrays the “practical answer” to the issues related to the life of the poet or is just a “statement” regarding it which might go “half way to solution” (6). The book also depicted how his poem “Rocky Acres” even after so many years of the war showed the traumatic mental condition Graves was in after being “shell shocked” in the battlefield which left him to suffer immensely in his life thereafter (Carter 27). Moreover, Wilson illustrated in his book *Robert Graves: From Great War Poet to Good-bye to All that (1895-1929)* about the “opening lines” of Graves’s famous war poem “It’s a queer time” which he believes the poet wrote at the atrocious or dreadful condition of the trenches during the war as the verse begins showing the excruciating state of a warrior who is unable to feel if he is “alive” or “dead” amongst the war hazards by the advanced technologies used in the Great War (124). He also added how Graves exhibited “the grim reality of the war” through his poems where he portrayed the “shocking experiences” he faced in the war including the “ugliness of the trenches” (Wilson 138). According to Simon, Graves’s “experiences in the trenches had made him acutely conscious of the discrepancy between reality and public sentiment” and as a poet he believed in the demonstration of the truth which lacked due to the existence of “paid spokesmen for the conventional pieties” who only focused on displaying the war as a medium of showing “loyalty to God and country” (59). Hence, the famous soldier poet Siegfried

Sassoon elucidated him as the one who challenges the protocol that is a “defier of conventions” (Wilson 159).

Now focusing on the civilian poet Rudyard Kipling whose “imaginative writings about the War” are considered to be remarkable and exceptional as his works represented not only the scenario of “sudden violent death, shell shock, trauma, grief” in the war zone but also the illustration of the “sea warfare” which was hardly found in the works of other noteworthy poets (Kendall 83). The book *War stories and poems* stated “Kipling’s writings on the War, shot through with anger at the Germans for their assault on the values of European civilization, are from this point on pervaded also by suppressed grief at his own loss and the losses suffered by so many hundred thousands more” (Kipling 13). Despite supporting the war from the beginning, his personal agony of losing his only son in the Great War changed his views towards the war which turned out to be “even more terrible than he had prophesied” (Kipling 12). As professor Bilsing quoted the famous verse of Kipling’s *Ephitaphs* that says “if any question why we died,/ Tell them, because our fathers lied” to portray the deceptive or distorted perception of the war which were being given to the young soldiers to “create a strong national propaganda” that compelled them to join the war (74). She also added how the death of his son made him realise that “through his pamphlet writing, speechmaking, and recruiting he had manipulated the idea of war into a glorious crusade against the German” (Bilsing 74). His poetic visualisation of the war took a different turn that unfolded his blindness towards the nationalistic and jingoistic aspect of the war and instigated him to look at the devastating nature of the Great War.

Therefore, the focal point of my thesis paper will be revisiting the British war poetry of World War I specifically through the selected poems of war poets like- Rupert Brooke, Ivor Gurney, Robert Graves and Rudyard Kipling whose works are only celebrated or acknowledged within England and hardly read or recognized beyond it. This is where my work

will intervene and try to add to the gap by analyzing their selective poems through the lens of Biographical Criticism. My paper will also sketch the brutal reality of the Great War through their war poems and show the gradual change in the tone of these soldier poets from patriotic or nationalistic ideals of the war to the horrendous state of the technological warfare and the horrific realization. I believe, such raw images of the modern wars are much needed to be addressed even in the present time as the fear for another world war still persists whenever the relationship between two countries with nuclear power deteriorates to such a point raising an imminent threat of going into war.

Chapter Three

Patriotism and chauvinism in verses of Rupert Brooke

The British poet Rupert Brooke was born on 3rd August, 1887 in England at the town called Rugby in Warwickshire. He completed his schooling at Rugby and made his way to King's College, Cambridge where he studied Classics and later got a fellowship award at college due to his extraordinary study on Jacobean Dramatist John Webster and eagerness in British Literature. Brooke started writing poetry from a very early age and the first volume of his work got published in 1911 although he gained deserved popularity after the publication of his collection of sonnets on First World War called *1914 & Other Poems* which he wrote during the early period of the war. Due to his failures in romantic relationships throughout his life, he went through a cognitive crisis which led him to look for a diversion in his life and hence he joined the Royal Naval Division through his connection with the British army officer and writer Winston Churchill which made him participate directly in the war. His experience in the early stage of the war as a representative of the British military made him realise the essential requirement of British soldiers to take active part in the Great War. Being a soldier from the formative years of the war, he focused on the jingoistic aspects of the war which he desired to be instilled within each and every warrior so that these warriors come forward for their motherland. He died on 23rd April, 1915 due to Septicaemia in an island of Greece named Skyros.

Brooke's famous war sonnets "Peace", "The Dead" & "The Soldier" were written during his involvement with the war as a soldier who would go to any extent to safeguard his country and its heritage. With the outbreak of the war, he could slightly feel the destructive nature of the technological warfare which was hammering the beauty of his loving countryside. He emerged as a patriotic fighter to encounter the opponent attacking his motherland and found glory in taking part in the war to protect his country. He wrote the sonnet "Peace" to inspire

the young men and soldiers to join the War and work as a shield to preserve the beauty of their homeland and fight bravely against all the odds to prevent any breach of the peace. He believed their participation in the war to make a drastic change in the distressful condition of their landscape by making it free from the unscrupulous enemies attacking their native land. He started the poem by thanking God for allowing the youths to serve their country by making them capable of fighting against their rivals. He himself being a representative of the young generation took pride in being able to take a stand for and serve his nation and be a significant part of this noble affair. As the poet says in the poem,

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)

Brooke in this poem talked about all the young soldiers to be fortunate enough to be present in the time of the Great War and be blessed with the opportunity to perform their duties for the nation. He as a reflection of the state and its people, romanticised the idea of the war as an honorable act where the creator chose them as a tool to defend their loving motherland. He believed that their participation in the war would awaken them from “sleeping” and help them to fulfill their goal in life as God distinctively gave them the “power” to serve their native land and refine it from the enemies. Brooke thought it to be the designed plan of the Supreme Being for them which would help them to elucidate their worldly sins and recompense them with a placid life. Even the death which might ensue from the war was seen as a glorious one by the

poet as it would be brought by the war into their lives through the path of their virtuous act of serving the state. He also believed the war to transfigure the “cold and weary” England full of destructions and demolitions to a newly changed nation for its people to lead a peaceful life. Brooke wanted all his fellow soldiers to be courageous enough to take part in this battle and live up to the duty of safeguarding their own land. To him the war has also given people an opportunity to advance towards life so that they can fill the “little emptiness” which exists in their lives by working for the welfare of their nation and making sacrifices for it. He tried convincing the young generation soldiers to take a step ahead in the battlefield keeping their mind strong and to fearlessly embrace “Death” for the sake of their country as it would only lead to the everlasting tranquility they were looking for. It would provide true meaning to their lives as they would die for a noble cause while fighting as a hero for their nation.

Moving to the sonnet “The Dead”, we can see the poetic persona to talk about the brave young soldiers who left all their worldly happiness and took part in the war for defending their homeland from the opponents. He depicted the demise of these warriors as “rich Dead” due to the sacrifice they made for the prosperity of their motherland and its people. The poet being a fighter himself believes such self-sacrifice to be more valuable and precious than “gold” as they are happily taking up all the pain and agony of the battlefield to unbind the nation from all the hostilities. Few verses of this sonnet were found in Brooke’s letters to his friends asking them to join the battle for the well-being of their native land. His sonnet persuaded the soldier boys to take an active part in the war as it would make them heroic figures who are there to bring the glory back to the nation. As Brooke writes in the poem,

Blow, bugles, blow! They brought us, for our dearth,

Holiness, lacked so long, and Love, and Pain.

Honour has come back, as a king, to earth,

And paid his subjects with a royal wage;

And Nobleness walks in our ways again;

And we have come into our heritage. (9-14)

He mentions to the readers how the young soldiers brought the “Honour” and “Holiness” back by compassionately standing firm by their motherland and fighting bravely against the opposition. He believes it to be equivalent to bringing back a “king” on “earth” with new aspirations and hopes for the country while giving a “royal” tribute to the military officers for their noble service in the war. The noteworthy sacrifice they chose to make for the nation would eternally stay within the people reminding them about their valorous act in the battleground to protect their state. He exhibits the contribution of the soldiers in the battleground as a divine act which was needed for restoring the peace and harmony of the empire. Being a patriotic soldier poet, his poems reflect the sense of heroism in fighting for a noble cause in the war. By sacrificing his life as a comrade he believed in earning a prestigious death which would lead the way to perpetual happiness that lacked in his personal life due to his failed relationships.

Moreover, Brooke’s famous sonnet “The Soldier” brings out his true chauvinistic frame of mind towards his land which dragged him to be a part of this devastating war despite being aware of the uncertainty in the battlefield. He glorified the whole idea of the war which gave the young men of England like the poet himself a chance to be in service of the country that “shaped” and raised them to the person they are today and gifted them with the ability to live freely as a veteran. He endorsed the notion of death as a warrior as their existence would be immortalized amidst their ravishing and entrancing homeland. He felt privileged to be a part of this noble affair since he owes a lot to his motherland for everything the Mother Nature and its land had showered upon him. He believed such debt could never be repaid and no amount of sacrifice shall repay it but participating in the war could be a mere attempt to give back what he owes towards his homeland that nourished him as a living soul. As the poet says in the beginning of the poem,

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

He mentioned that should he die as a fighter in the poem and he showed that he could not care less or be strained thinking about his own death as he takes immense pride in having his country's name in his heart while dying in a "foreign field". His life would become more valuable at that point as the world would remember him as a valiant and fearless fighter who died in an unknown territory while carrying a portion of England with his body. His death would enrich that piece of land to a better place through the touch of his country in it. Brooke as a soldier proudly wishes his dead remains to be dissolved as the rich "dust" of his land which produced him as the courageous and valorous individual he is today. He invited all the young soldiers to join him in this journey which would lead them to die like a hero while fighting for their motherland and make them immortal in the pages of history. He could only think of the demise of the soldiers in the Great War as a symbol of noble or patriotic act which shows how they were there to stand by their homeland and sacrifice their lives for the welfare of the country. As Brooke ends the poem by saying, "In hearts at peace, under and English heaven" that is even after their death they would rest at peace under safe English heaven thinking about their dauntless action to free their state into the safe haven. He portrayed his jingoistic ideals of the war in the poem to encourage the young guns of the country to be a part of this battle as the pure "English air" which kept them alive were being tainted by the arrival of the opponents on their territory.

Hence, Rupert Brooke, being a soldier poet from the early formative years of the war, saw the Great War as a platform to show ones nationalistic spirit and patriotism. He focused on the jingoistic aspects of the war and wanted to instill the desire in every young person to

participate in the war since he regarded the war as a noble affair. He thanked the God for allowing the youths to serve their country and as a representative of the young generation, he took pride in being able to serve his nation. He saw the opportunity to be a soldier and a veteran of the Great War as a blessing and the young generations fortunate enough to be born during the era of the Great War to perform their duties for the nation. He romanticised the idea of the war as an honorable act where the creator chose the young generation as a tool to defend their loving motherland. By sacrificing his life as a comrade he believed in earning a prestigious death which would lead the way to perpetual happiness that lacked in his personal life due to his failed relationships. He saw the war as the god's purpose of life for young generation and encouraged them to embrace death fearlessly for their country saying it would lead to the everlasting tranquility. He regarded the death as an honor which would ensure English safe haven in which they would be able to rest in peace.

Chapter Four

Traumatic experiences of the soldier boys in poems of Ivor Gurney

The great English poet Ivor Gurney was born on 28th August, 1890 in the city of Gloucester in England. He studied at the King's School being selected as a chorister in the Gloucester Cathedral and made his way to the Royal College of Music in 1911 achieving a big scholarship with his talent of composing music. From a very early age, he was into composing and writing music and was deeply attached with his root, his city. His deep connection to his root brought him back to his home while he was diagnosed with manic depression in 1913. His life took a different turn when he was signed up as a private soldier from his area in 1915 after being rejected initially to be a part of the Great War. Gurney as a serviceman at the beginning and was pleased to join the soldier boys and to perform his duties towards his nation. He believed his dispirited life to get a new meaning through his participation in the war as it would lead him to fulfill his duties towards his homeland. Like all other soldiers he started his journey as a warrior with jingoistic aspirations within himself and was filled with chauvinistic ideals of the war that would lead him to have a heroic expiration. However, as the time passed by, he could feel the intensity of this technological warfare which was only initiating horrific destructions and sufferings. He could see the horrid condition of the warriors in the trenches during the battle which was far different from the eulogized vision of the war demonstrated by the state or the government to the young patriots. After Gurney's traumatic experience in the war, he died in the year 1937 due to tuberculosis in the city of London.

Ivor Gurney as a soldier poet portrayed the real image of the war in his poems where the fighters had to go through so much pain and sufferings that it made them question the real purpose of this hazardous warfare. The representation of the glorious image of the war in the mind of these young soldiers started to shatter when they started experiencing the true horrors

of the Great War where different new methods were being used to protect the country from this advanced technology based war that were never used before in the history of human civilization. One of the most popular strategies or tactics they used to defend themselves from the opponent was the use of trenches in the ground where the officers or the privates even had to stay for days to save themselves from the attack and bombings of the enemies. Gurney in his poems sketched the dreadful situation of the soldiers during the war which left them with unimaginable agony and pain in the name of honor and glory. His poem “Strange Hells” portrayed the mental trauma he and his fellow officers had to go through during the war. More than the physical pain, he showed how badly they had to suffer due to the psychological torments of the battlefields as well as the trenches. As he started the poem by saying,

There are strange Hells within the minds War made
 Not so often, not so humiliatingly afraid
 As one would have expected—the racket
 and fear guns made. (1-3)

Gurney demonstrated the hellish nature of the war which affected the minds of the soldiers to the extent that it was hard for them to come back to their regular life or state of mind again. The way they had to live in the midst of mud and smelly trenches for uncountable days and nights that it started having a deleterious effect on the mental and physical condition of the warriors. The soldiers had to stay in those narrow and confined trenches deep under the ground filled with dead bodies and remains of the fellow officers killed in action. Such insanitary living condition during the war was making them demented and delirious day by day that they started feeling dead from inside. Gurney stated how terrifying the whole situation of “bombardment” and shelling during the war was for the soldiers that they no more had the guts to embrace the heroic death that the battle had to offer. Being an average human being, they were also scared of the “guns” and artilleries which were leading to mass destruction making their surrounding

uninhabitable. The soldiers did not want to live on their gutsy uniform anymore which spoke about their bravery or fearlessness rather desired to have the mental peace which was snatched by this horrific war. Even when Gurney was writing this poem after his battles in the trenches, he was still suffering from the mental shock or trauma that made his life a living “Hell” as he was not being able to get out of this traumatic event which kept tormenting him with nightmares causing his mental state to deteriorate. He was suffering from Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) due to his atrocious experience in the war which kept haunting him constantly with fearful thoughts and recollections of the war. He witnessed with his own eyes and perceptions the real horror of this destructive warfare which contrary to the public perception of the war where it is shown as a noble affair to earn respect and honor whereas it leads to nothing but massive destruction and killings. Its catastrophic nature prevailed even after the war as it not only damaged the physical health of the soldiers during the war but also deteriorated their psychological condition to such an extent they suffer from psychosis. He also pointed out how their sacrifice for the nation were ignored as he says “Après la guerre fini till Hell all had come down” that is after the end of the war they were just disregarded and forgotten by the state or the government despite promising them with the remuneration they deserved for their fortitudinous action in the war.

Furthermore, his poem “The Silent One” illustrated the tragic endings of the lives of the warriors during the war. It portrayed the image of the horrific deaths of the soldiers within the trenches covered with barbed wires to prevent the enemies from entering their territories. The poetic persona could see a dead body of his fellow comrade swaying on the wire who was alive even few hours ago conversing with his mates. He showed how fragile was the whole idea of power and mightiness of the soldiers in a war which was full of technological slaughters and mass killings. It was all about pointless and fruitless bloodshed that resulted in huge destruction and demolition. As the poem says,

A noble fool, faithful to his stripes—and ended.
 But I weak, hungry, and willing only for the chance
 Of line—to fight in the line, lay down under unbroken
 Wires, and saw the flashes, and kept unshaken.
 Till the politest voice—a finicking accent, said:
 ‘Do you think you might crawl through, there; there’s a hole;’ In the afraid
 Darkness, shot at; I smiled, as politely replied—
 ‘I’m afraid not, Sir.’ There was no hole, no way to be seen. (5-12)

Here, the poet referred the soldiers including himself as “noble fool” who were deceived by their own perception of the war being honorable and virtuous that they voluntarily chose to be a part of it. They were so fascinated by the heroic notion of the war that they failed to sense the futility of this technological warfare. They were instigated and blinded by the patriotic vision of the earlier wars that they failed to appreciate that the reality of the Great War was totally different and severely brutal owing to the scientifically advanced weapons and techniques. The poetic persona could see the helplessness of these warriors within the trenches while they were being viciously killed by the opponents. He saw his fellow mate to die in front of him while striving to live through the barbed wires over the trench. Regardless of viewing such tragic death of his fellow comrade upfront, he was yet waiting for his “chance of line” as it was his only hope to come out of the dreadful ditch. Even though he was scared of the ultimate consequence of it, he had no other option left other than risking his life through this courageous attempt. When the officer asked him if he would be able to “crawl” through the wires, all he knew that he had to bravely accept death in spite of being aware of the brutal reality waiting ahead. Through this poem, Gurney tried to show the harsh truth of the trench battles to the people so that they could see the true image of the pain and sufferings of the

soldiers in the trench wars which were overshadowed under the glorified and eulogized portrayal of the war by the state.

In addition to this, a raw portrayal of the war can be seen through Gurney's poem "The Target" where he spoke about the harsh decisions they had to take while fighting as a soldier. During the battles, they had to kill their enemies to protect themselves and their nation. Being a warrior he could feel how the soldiers from both sides were fighting only for the sake of their country and its honor. They were the representatives of their country and had no other motive than safeguarding their motherland. They were obliged to choose such reckless path of killing someone just to ensure the safety of their territory. As the poetic persona says,

I shot him, and it had to be

One of us "Twas him or me.

'Couldn't be helped' and none can blame

Me, for you would do the same. (1-4)

Here, the poetic persona had "shot" a soldier from the opposition just to save himself from getting killed. He was feeling guilty for such wicked action but he had no other choice than taking his life as otherwise he would have done the "same" to him. He was grief-stricken for his immoral action yet had to continue fighting for the sake of his motherland. He had to bear the mental torture of killing someone in his mind as it was his only way to show his love for the country. He also mentioned how angry he was on "God" who was yet "still" after watching such horrific condition of the soldiers and their nation. He felt his nation was renounced by the creator as there was no sign of mercy or hope sent towards them in such dreadful situation. The poetic persona even believed his death to be more peaceful than living in such gruesome condition as it would at least let his "mother" sleep at night who was always in fear of losing his son at any moment. He wanted to die as being alive in the midst of the war would make him snatch away more sons from their mothers who are eagerly waiting for their

children to return from the battle just like his own mother. This poem depicted the psyche of the soldiers who were in immense pain and agony during the war yet had to continue fighting for the sake of their “job” to protect their homeland.

Hence, Ivor Gurney being a soldier from the mid war years, perceived and witnessed with his own eyes the real horror and violence of the Great War. He wanted to turn over a new leaf as he believed in the honor and pride of serving for the country so that he could fulfill his duties towards his homeland by participating in the war oblivious of the fact that the war could take such a devastating and pernicious effect due to the technological advancement where the warriors are inhumanly killed in the battleground. He was one of the trench poets who showed the hellish nature of the war especially the way they had to live in the midst of mud and smelly trenches for uncountable days and nights without knowing about their fate. Such miserable condition coupled with the constant fear of attack, bombing and death and having to see their fellow comrades die right before their eyes while striving to live through the barbed wires over the trench. He showed such plight made them wish for their death than living in such gruesome condition as it would free them and give them peace and they do not have to snatch away another son of a mother who is eagerly waiting for their children to return from the battle just like his own mother. All this nightmarish experience left a lasting image in their minds which had a deleterious effect on the mental and physical condition of the warriors. They were not only suffering physically but also mentally as this atrocious war affected their psychological condition to the extent that most of the soldiers even after the war had to spend their lives in mental hospitals being diagnosed with different mental disorders making it almost impossible for them to get back to their regular life. All this in the name of honor and glory did not seem to be true anymore after his realization that the warriors are forgotten after the award of a medal and all the promises of reward and remuneration of being treated like a hero are all empty

promises since the war tore them apart as well as the mass destruction they brought upon the motherland.

Chapter Five

Futile nature of the Great War in verses of Robert Graves

The British war poet Robert Graves was born in Wimbledon on 24th July, 1895. He was into writing poetry from an early age and was offered a scholarship at St John's College in Oxford after his school days in Charterhouse. However, after the war started in 1914, Graves chose to serve his nation rather than attending his college and immediately joined the unit of Royal Welch Fusiliers as a soldier of the Great War. He was selected as a captain to serve in the western front in 1915 where he became friends with the famous poet Siegfried Sassoon and took part in the Battle of Loos. His first book *Over the Brazier* was published in 1916 which consisted of his collection of poems related to the war. He wrote huge number of poems from his first-hand experience of the war which depicted the real horror of this technological warfare. He gave vivid description of the lives of the soldiers in trenches and portrayed the desolating nature of this war through his poems. During the Battle of the Somme, the news of his death was published as he was believed to be dead when a shrapnel entered his thigh and passed through his chest and shoulder injuring him severely. Fortunately, he survived the severe wound at that time but later was diagnosed with neurasthenia and shell-shock which hampered his mental condition. The horrific experience of the war affected his nervous system badly and tormented him for a long time even after the war. He died at the age of ninety in the year 1985 at Deià, Spain.

Contrary to popular belief, Graves drew a true picture of the aftermath of the Great War through his poem. He portrayed the real image of the war to the ordinary people who were blinded by the notions of the idea of the war being oblivious to the devastating nature of the war. He showed how people praised this war as a noble affair having high regards without knowing the disastrous nature of this conflict. He exhibited the different side or face of the war

which was unknown to many. Such a face or side of the coin which was so different and unpleasant that it would strike fear about the effects of the war. The war did not seem so glorious from his poems as it showed how different the war was from its glorious insights which pushed the young patriots to be a part of that brutal reality. He claimed that if the people knew about the actual horror of these battles in trenches, then they would have never allowed their young ones to join the war. They would have never extoled or praised this warfare if they could only imagine the excruciating agony of the soldiers fighting in the battleground. As he started his poem "*A Dead Boche*" by saying,

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,
 To-day I found in Mametz Wood (1-5)

The poet mentioned how the war was not just about "blood and fame" as shown to the people. It was not about the heroic deaths or valiant acts as everyone claimed it to be. The real scenario was totally opposite of the glorious image of the war which attracted the young soldiers to be a part of it. It turned out to be an infernal experience for the soldiers who fought for the sake of their nation. Graves narrated a real incident from his life in this poem which he encountered while fighting in the "Mametz Wood" in Battle of the Somme. He saw a "dead boche" that is a dead German soldier on the ground who got killed viciously in the war. He described the horrendous sight of the corpse being "sodden green" due to the effect of the poisonous gasses and his body being partly rotten giving off a foul, pungent smell. He also showed how "black blood" was rolling down from his "nose" and "beard" making it look more terrifying. Such horrid and dreadful vision of that dead soldier portrayed how the innocent soldiers from both sides were mercilessly assassinated at the battleground whose only intention

was to stand by their homeland. That German man was also a patriotic soldier like the poet himself who was bravely fighting for his own country. He got ruthlessly killed just for trying to protect his own state. By looking at the dreadful condition of the dead body, the poet could feel the tremendous pain he had to go through. Graves deliberately sketched an explicit image of the fallen soldier so that the world could see the horrific truth of the Great War which had nothing to do with pride and honor that fascinated the soldiers to join the war. Such fallen soldiers are forgotten in the pages of history but nobody could ever feel what they had to go through. Nobody could feel or explain the unbearable pain of the bravery to get hit by a bombshell except the person who went through such a crucifying experience. Graves could relate as he himself was grievously wounded during the war which almost took his life. The picture drawn by him not only depicted the sight of the corpse devoured by the technological shells but also show the state of the fellow comrade who perceived the events of the dying soldier or its aftermath with his own unaided senses. They suffered through an immediate sudden impact on their senses. The shock was so sudden and emphatic that any person of reasonable fortitude would have been scarred for life.

Moreover, the poet himself had a close call from death. He was even thought to be dead but he miraculously survived. He was so close to death during Battle of the Somme that he could feel the sufferings and pains of his fellow comrades whom he watched dying in front of him. He did not even finish his studies to join the noble cause of serving the nation unbeknown to the technological ruthless affair lying ahead. He no longer found valid reasons for war but regarded the violence and massive destruction around him to be pointless due to the technological advancement which left more deleterious effect on the nation than it did any good. In Grave's poem "Recalling War", a veracious depiction of the First World War can be seen where the poet even after "twenty years" of the war was still being haunted by his shocking experiences of the battlefield. To him it was a meaningless act of brutality and atrocity which

only brought enormous amount of misery and distress. The state or the government was only concerned about the outcome of the war forgetting about the ravaging nature of it that the young patriots had to go through. He started the poem by saying,

Entrance and exit wounds are silvered clean,
 The track aches only when the rain reminds.
 The one-legged man forgets his leg of wood,
 The one-armed man his jointed wooden arm. (1-4)

Here the poet wanted to show how the world eventually forgot the hazardous and dreadful truth of the war after the accomplishment of the mission. Even the old soldiers who were severely injured during their young age in the battlefield, accepted their fate and moved on with their lives forgetting the tragic incidents they encountered in the battleground. He mentioned about a “one-legged man” and “one-armed man” in his poem who successfully escaped their terrible memories of the war damaging their body and started leading their lives normally with the course of time. However, the poetic persona was still recalling the horrendous nature of the Great War even after so many years of the war as it was something the world should be made aware of. The destructive nature of this warfare was not as minor as it seemed to the world. It was not as insignificant as it was shown to the people at home to encourage them to join the war. It was a tragic event in the history of human civilization which could never be healed with time. Graves showed how dreadful the situation was for the “young” soldiers who were left all “alone” to die amidst the relentless attacks of bombs and shells in the war. He had a near death experience as he himself was attacked by a shrapnel in the battleground which pushed him almost towards the deathbed which is why he could sense the severity of this technological warfare. He exhibited how all the young patriots started with “boastful tongue”, “clenched fist” and “valiant yard” but ended up becoming “all-flesh” while defending and guarding their honor and homeland. Such harrowing scenario of the war made

the poet question the very purpose or objective of the war and whether the conflict was worth the sacrifice that these young chauvinists made as all they experienced was terrifying mental and physical torture through it. All he could see was aimless and meaningless destructions leading to technological slaughters and mass killings. He even accused “God” for not being there to help mankind from such horrendous situation where the fighters were looking up to His mercy and leniency to rescue them from such state of agony and anguish. As Graves wrote in his poem,

Extinction of each happy art and faith
 By which the world had still kept head in air,
 Protesting logic or protesting love,
 Until the unendurable moment struck—
 The inward scream, the duty to run mad. (33-37)

The world was surrounded by so much of cruelty and inhumanity that people started to lose their happy state of mind and “faith”. All that could be seen at that time was the immense amount of pain and suffering that the nation was going through in such hostile situation. Even the “happy art” started to extinct as the poets or the writers could only talk about the depressing or melancholic circumstances around them. Yet at the end of the day, people forgot the ferocity of this technological warfare which took away hundreds of lives as they were still romanticising the war as a noble affair. They were still recalling the war as a glorious act which gave the jingoistic soldiers a chance to showcase their braveness and courageousness. They were boasting about the heroic and fearless actions of the warriors that led to the victory overlooking the outrageous and violent deaths of the soldiers. Graves being a warrior himself saw the real horrors of the war in the battlefield and against such idealized notion of the war. His poem portrayed how futile and unnecessary this war was as it only caused massive destruction and innocent bloodshed. It gave nothing but enormous pain and sorrow that the soldiers found their

death to be more peaceful than living through such direful condition. Even while Grave wrote this poem after twenty years of the war, he was tormented by the tragic memories of the Great War which left him with great emotional distress for the rest of his life.

Hence, Robert Graves used to be a believer and idolized the notion of war just like every lay person which convinced him to join war foregoing his studies. The idea of the war was fame and honor. War heroes as they call it was a symbol of patriotism. An act of bravery to save the pride of motherland. Death by bloodshed or sacrificing one's life for the country was regarded as an honor at that time. This encouraged young guns to join the war and convinced the ordinary citizen to send their young ones for war. They were only convinced with the idea of war being clueless of the actual reality of the war. Nobody shed light on the effects of war. Graves's near death experience when a shrapnel entered his thigh and passed through his chest and shoulder injuring him severely but his fortunate escape from the hands of death made him realize the futile nature of the war. He realized that the destructive nature of this warfare was not as minor as it seemed to the world. It was not as insignificant as it was shown to the people at home to encourage them to join the war. It was a tragic event in the history of human civilization which could never be healed with time. He drew a vivid description of the loss of a fellow comrade in the war. He witnessed it first hand and he wanted to convey the message to the readers about how harrowing experience it was. Such a haunting experience scarred the lives of the soldiers forever. Proximity to the event or the immediate aftermath of the war was so close in terms of time and space that a reasonable man with normal fortitude would have suffered nervous shock leading to an identifiable illness. The causative event has been of a dramatic and horrifying nature that Graves and many others were diagnosed with shell-shock which hampered their mental condition. Graves was also diagnosed with neurasthenia and even after twenty years of his war experience, he could not forget it. There were many veterans who accepted their fate and moved on with their lives, sometimes even with their long lasting

injuries. But the poet thought it to be unfair how the world eventually forgot the hazardous and dreadful truth of the war after the accomplishment of the mission. He showed that the war gave nothing but enormous pain and sorrow that the soldiers found their death to be more peaceful than living through such dreadful condition in trenches and amidst the relentless attacks and bombings. He came to the conclusion that the war was meaningless and stole the peace of mind as it only caused massive destruction and innocent bloodshed which becomes so hopeless for a soldier to the point where the fighters were looking up to God's mercy and leniency to rescue them from such state of agony and anguish.

Chapter Six

Portrayal of valiant sacrifice in works of Rudyard Kipling

Rudyard Kipling, the popular journalist and writer of England was born on 30th December, 1865 in Bombay. He was sent to Britain by his parents when he was only five years old for his studies. He finished his schooling from the United Services College in the village of Westward Ho! at Devon that emphasized more on preparing fit young armies for the British military service. But young Kipling, being more into arts and literature, focused more on his writing career rather than concentrating on his military education. Afterwards he returned to India to his family and started working as a journalist at the *Civil and Military Gazette*. He soon started to gain popularity in India for his writings and eventually became a well-renowned writer as well as a poet after returning to England through the publication of his extra-ordinary pieces of literature like- *Barrack-Room Ballad*, *Stalky & Co.* etc. Kipling, being a patriotic person, supported the Great War from the beginning and tried to inspire the soldiers to join for the noble cause as he believed it to be their duty to stand by their country. He even encouraged his son John Kipling to be a part of this warfare who could not be traced anymore after the Battle of Loos at Belgium in the year 1915. The death of his only son devastated Kipling and made him realise the horrific effect of the war. The guilt he had inside him for making his son join the military made him suffer immensely for the rest of his life. This tragic incident in his life changed his vision of the war and showed him the brutal nature of the war which instigated him to talk about the sacrifices made by the soldiers for their homelands in his war poems. The long lasting effect of war for him was losing his son forever who went to the land of no return for his country as a direct result of the war. The sacrifices of the family members and civilians are brought before our eyes which remained unknown to many since one cannot put themselves into the grievors' shoes unless they lose someone to the war. We were unaware of the sufferings of the civilians. The number of civilian deaths was huge too. Only the writer and similarly who

had lost a close one in the war could feel the war tearing their heart out at such a loss. His war poems started to portray the sorrowful and devastating nature of the war which was very different from his encouraging nationalistic and patriotic writings to sign up young soldiers for the war. Kipling died in the year 1936 and was buried at Westminster Abbey in London.

Even though Kipling was not directly a part of the war but being a reporter of the Great War, he went to many places like- France, Italy etc. during the battles and observed closely the real picture of the lives of the warriors in the warzone which contradicted his imaginative writings of the war to recruit soldiers from the state. We readers can see a drastic change in the tone of his verses after he himself viewed the tragic incidents of the war. His poem “For All We Have and Are” was written in 1914 during the outbreak of the Great War when the poet was still unknown to the real horrors of the battlefield. He was already a prominent figure at that time who worked relentlessly to motivate and vitalize the British soldiers and civilians to join this glorious journey of safeguarding their motherland. He asked the British people to join the war claiming it to be their only chance to protect their country from the enemies who were trying to invade their territory as he said in the poem “Stand up and take the war,/ The Hun is at the gate!”. He invited the soldiers to fearlessly stand by their homeland as he believed its future to depend on the hand of these fighters. He stated it to be their moral duty to prevent their nation from collapsing and emboldened them to fight for this noble cause embracing all the dangers to come on their way. Being unaware of the terrific reality of this technological warfare, he supported the jingoistic ideals of the war and its urgency for saving the country from getting torn apart. He tried boosting the morale of the soldiers so that they could prepare themselves for giving up their lives for the welfare of the nation. He believed such sacrifice to be needed to achieve the “goal” they were aiming for because it was not only for the sake of their motherland but also for their forthcoming generation to live peacefully in their homeland. He believed it to be people’s civic responsibility and obligation to fight for their country and

keep it guarded from all imminent dangers. As Kipling said in his poem “Who stands if Freedom fall?/ Who dies if England live?” to call the soldiers out to be a part of this battle as their lives would mean nothing if the “freedom” is snatched away from their nation by the enemies rather they would be celebrated forever for sacrificing their lives to protect “England” from demolishing. They would eternally stay as the part of the nation through their valorous and courageous step to defend their native land.

However, as time passed by, Kipling started viewing the tragic notions of the war which was far beyond people’s imagination. It was also exactly the opposite of his earlier ideals and aspirations. The war was all about mass destruction and slaughter with the invention of newly mechanized weapons that the world had never encountered before. It was no more about heroism or chivalry rather it was all about gruesome and excruciating deaths of hundreds of soldiers and civilians who were being deluded through the censored sight of the Great War by the government. The poet himself being blind to the glorifying vision of the war made his only son, John take part in the war as a service officer despite his visual problems. The body of his son was never found after the Battle of Loos which shattered Kipling completely for the rest of his lifetime making him realise the devastating truth of the First World War. The ruinous loss of his son filled his heart with great grief and guilt. He blamed himself for sending his son to his death/disappearance. He was so filled with remorse and guilt that his poem “My Boy Jack” portrayed how badly he was suffering as a helpless father of a young soldier who went missing during the war. He wrote this poem for all the young patriots who were pushed to the unknown by their nation with the empty promises of fame and prestige. This poem was not only about his son John but also about thousands of other young boys who were sent to the battleground by their parents for defending their motherland. Little did they knew about the horrendous truth of the Great War at that time which took their sons far away to the land of no return. As Kipling wrote in his poem,

‘Oh, dear, what comfort can I find?’

None this tide,

Nor any tide,

Except he did not shame his kind—(9-12)

The poem depicted an image of a distressed father who is eagerly waiting for his son to arrive from the battleground in spite of knowing his least chances of making it through this terrific warfare. He had been asking another speaker repeatedly if his son was going to be back to him or not with a heart full of grief and despair. The story is that of hope or faith albeit a fading one. A tale from hope to despair. It sketched an image of all those parents who had been suffering the loss of their soldier sons who had been ruthlessly killed during the war. The poet himself being a heartbroken father showed the pain and anguish of the helpless parents who let their children join the warfare regardless of the risk of losing their young ones. The only thing that gave them the “comfort” was the selfless sacrifice of their patriotic children for the sake of their motherland. Kipling asked all the parents to be proud of their children who stood strictly beside their country with the nationalistic spirit instilled in them. They were brave and courageous enough to come forward to fight for the nation that reared them up. Even though the huge oblation of giving away his loving son was tearing Kipling apart with misery, the thought of his heroic demise was providing him with the strength to deal with such a great loss. He even requested all the grief-stricken fathers and mothers to “hold” their “head up” as their son is no less than a hero who had the determination and willpower to fearlessly fight against the opponents regardless of being surrounded by the deadliest machineries used in the Great War. He could feel the pain these young soldiers had to go through but all he could do now was to think about their jingoistic intent to safeguard their nation that made them legends to be living in the pages of history of England.

Moreover, Kipling's verses from later days started paying tribute to all the soldiers and the civilians who gave up their lives to save their homeland from falling apart. His poems no more idolized the war as a noble affair rather started memorializing the harsh sacrifices made by the warriors in the battlefield. His epitaphs regarding the war which were published in the year 1919 contained the sorrowful tones of the dead soldiers who were killed mercilessly during the conflict. These short verses also voiced the loved ones of these brave fighters who lost them in this brutal warfare. Even though Kipling never went against his jingoistic vision of the war directly, but he stopped painting rosy pictures of the war in his verses and started unveiling the shocking truth of the war that was misrepresented by the government towards the public. His epitaph called "THE BEGINNER" was written indicating a warrior who stepped into the battlefield a while ago to fight for his loving country. He was totally unaware of the cruel reality of the battle zone that mercilessly took his life away within the "front trench" in the blink of an eye. The whole scenario for this young soldier was like a part of a "play" that he loved to "watch" in his childhood days. He had to face such vicious death just for his innocent desire of saving his nation. This verse revealed the story of many unfortunate soldiers who were naïve before embarking on their dream to participate in the war. But this was not like a dream come true for them because the reality was mystified to them. The unravelling of the mystery of the catastrophic consequences of the war proved to be very unfortunate for many. The dream became a nightmare for them and their loved ones. .Again, the epitaph "AN ONLY SON" presented the pain of all the mothers of the soldiers who were waiting to see their son returning home safely. It talked about a young fighter who knew how his mother was dying inside every day worrying about her only son in the battle front. He knew how his death would "slain" none but his "mother" out of "grief" as she would not be able to bear the news of the horrific demise of his loving son in the warzone. Another epitaph called "BOMBED IN LONDON" described the dreadful nature of this warfare where the soldiers could not escape

the terrific bombings and poisonous gas attacks that made them choke and suffocate to death. It was not only the deadly machineries but also the toxic gases and fumes from bombs and shells that made it difficult for the soldiers to survive in such obnoxious environment. As it said, "On land and sea I strove with anxious care/ To escape conscription. It was in the air!" to show how the warrior could not "escape" the terror which existed in the "air" despite his endless endeavor to withstand through this horrible battle. Furthermore, "THE FAVOUR" showed the contentment of a serviceman being killed instantaneously in the war as he no more had the courage to handle the pain or agony they were subjected to. His death gave him a permanent relief from the continuous mental and physical torment he had to go through in the battleground. He was left with no more prowess or gallantry after seeing the horrendous reality of the Great War full of meaningless destructions and demolitions. He was happy to expire before the world could see him petrified or scared to "endure" to die bravely for his nation. Also, Kipling's famous epitaph "COMMON FORM" conveyed how the authority was at fault for hiding the truth to the young souls who did not think twice to sacrifice their lives for the nation. They were sent to the war portraying it to be a mere fight without being properly informed regarding this catastrophic warfare. His verse said, "If any question why we died, / Tell them, because our fathers lied." to depict how the state misstated the image of the war to the public that it provoked them to send their young ones to face such horrendous death. They were blind to the glorious vision of the war without realising the real horrors of this technological warfare. These young boys were inspired to join the Great War by demonstrating the image of chivalry and heroism in the battleground. They were promised to gain fame and prestige through their bravery but ended up being racked with immense pain and suffering. The poet knew that the "fathers" like he himself were responsible for the unfortunate demise of their children who "lied" to them about the war being a noble affair.

Hence, we could see how Kipling's encounter to the brutal reality of the war made him exhibit the real image of the war which had been misrepresented and hidden by the state to encourage young patriots to join the army and fight for their country. His verses eventually started portraying the harsh sacrifice of the soldiers as well as the civilians for the sake of their nation. His early writings were a shout out to soldiers inviting them to fearlessly embrace the war as their moral duty in order to stand by their homeland as he believed its future and freedom rested in their hands. He idolized war as a noble cause without being directly part of the war. Being unaware of the dangers of this technological warfare, he supported the jingoistic ideals of the war. He believed the fighters have to sacrifice to attain peace for the next generation. In fact he believed in the naivety of bravery and honor in the name of war. This belief changed greatly as his eyes were opened to the truth in the harshest possible way when he lost his own son to the war. Thereafter, he wrote a tale of hope fading away to become despair. Even though the loss and guilt of sending his loving son to his death bed was tearing Kipling apart with misery, his heroic demise provided strength and control to deal with such a great loss. He even requested all the grief-stricken parents of the martyrs to be proud of their sons and hold their heads high. The sacrifices of the family members and civilians are brought before our eyes. He gave a tribute to the irreparable loss of the loved ones of these brave fighters. In his tribute, he depicted the pain of all the mothers of the soldiers who were waiting to see their son returning home from the war. There is no consolation which could give peace to those mothers' hearts or stop them from keeping them waiting at the door for their sons' return even if it is inevitable that their sons will never come home. The image drawn by Kipling about the physical and mental sufferings of the warriors who went for glory but got trapped in the endless terrorizing battle which took such a toll on them that they even wished for their death to be relieved from this endurance of war before the world could see them petrified to die bravely for their nation. He showed how the state misrepresented the image of the war to the public which induced them

to send their young ones to face such horrendous death. They were blinded by the state with the glorious vision of the war by false and empty promises of fame and prestige without disclosing the real horrors of this technological warfare which leave them with immense pain and suffering for the rest of their life even if they manage to survive the relentless bombings and obnoxious battlefield somehow.

Chapter Seven

Conclusion

World War I was not only one of the largest and deadliest wars in history but also one of the most important events in human history because of its contribution towards literary achievements. The Great War had a great impact on the language and poetry. A new genre of poetry, war poetry emerged and evolved from World War I. The origin of war poetry is closely connected with patriotism as it is a form of art which is dedicated to the efforts of war. War poetry is the noblest emotion like anthems as it is attached with the experiences of war. Hence, war history could be understood from war poetry. The war soldiers were very lonely without any certainty of going back to the family and friends. They wrote about their raw first hand emotions, personal and subjective experiences and the severity of the war which engulfed their minds in the form of poetry. It was like a personal message for their loved ones.

When we look at the early war poems, we see it to present only the heroic essence of the war days. Joining the war was portrayed as noble and righteous. Early verses regarded participation in the war as an act of patriotism. The tone of the verses voiced the statement of the state which encouraged the young soldiers to join the war to fight for the freedom of the country. The war was portrayed as a means to achieve peace and harmony. However, subsequent war poets overturned the image of the war which was being showcased by the state. They discovered and disclosed the reality of the loss of lives or the trauma of warriors who were deceived by the false pretense of peace or harmony. They realized peace could only be achieved by the end of war. The truth was reflected through the poems. The horrendous truth of the war resulted in the soldiers suffering from psychiatric illness. The inhumane deaths and bloodshed left such a lasting effect that it scarred them for life. Such traumatic experiences were a reminder of the harsh truth and changed the tone of the verses.

Hence, my paper explored the selected works of the poets whose war poems are not much read outside of England like- Rupert Brooke, Ivor Gurney, Robert Graves and Rudyard Kipling through biographical approach and portrayed how the tone of their works gradually shifted from a patriotic poet of early formative years to modern practical poets who were not afraid to reveal the shocking truth. The verses and approach differed so did their thoughts and opinions about Great War. Initially, Rupert Brooke being a soldier from the early formative years of the war, viewed the war as a platform for bravery, honor and pride for the nation. He considered the young generations to be lucky as the young generations are god's gifts whose very purpose of life was to participate in the noble affair to defend their motherland for which he is thankful to God. He wanted to encourage them and instill the desire to join the war. He believed the death during war as prestigious which would give them eternal peace and tranquility. He was unaware of the destruction of the war. Eventually with the course of time, soldier poets like-Ivor Gurney & Robert Graves from mid war years started to witness the true horror of the Great War. Their works represented their perceptions with their own unaided senses the real horror and violence of the Great War. Gurney was one of the trench poets who depicted the dirty miserable conditions of mud and smelly trenches where the soldiers had to spend uncountable days in the constant fear of death. Fear engulfed them every day in such a way that death sometimes seemed easier to them. Likewise, Robert Graves idolized the notion of war until he had a near death experience when a shrapnel entered his thigh and passed through his chest and shoulder injuring him severely. He realized the destructive significant nature of this warfare Proximity to the horrific event or its immediate aftermath was so close in terms of time and space that any reasonable man with normal fortitude would have suffered nervous shock like the soldiers and poets who were diagnosed with shell-shock which hampered their mental condition. The poet vented its frustration on the unfairness of the empty promises of reward and felicitation after the accomplishment of the mission. They showed that

the war gave nothing but enormous pain and sorrow. They came to the conclusion that the war was meaningless and futile. Besides, Rudyard Kipling's poetry was different from others as his poems showed the most drastic shift of tone since he was initially an advocate of the Great War inviting and encouraging the soldiers to embrace the war until he lost his son to a battle which made him realize the devastating nature of the war which prompted him to write a tale of hope fading away where he gave a tribute to the irreparable loss of closed ones during war. He requested all grief-stricken parents of the martyrs to be proud of their sons even though the pain of all the mothers of the soldiers who were hopelessly waiting to see their son return was immeasurable. He showed how the state blinded and induced them to send their young ones to face such horrendous death with false and empty promises of fame and prestige without doing anything for the immense pain and sufferings of the survivors.

Therefore, the eyes were no longer fixed at the glory of war as the truth and the finer details of the war were revealed with time to the nation and ordinary people. The works of the war poets portrayed raw unseen and unknown image of the war and showed how the glory overshadowed the mental and physical sufferings of the soldiers during war. The changing nature of the war was soon revealed to the utter horror of ordinary citizens as the modern war took the shape of great evil and destruction in the name of technological powers. The war was no longer about chivalry or bravery but about unnecessary and pointless massacre and bloodshed in the quickest possible time with the help of the modern arms, ammunitions, poisonous gas, bombshells, missiles etc. Henceforth, we can see how such conflicts lead to nothing but fruitless destructions in the name of pride, power and money overlooking the fact such a damage cannot be taken back. Reconnoitering journey to the past through the words of the above British soldier poets brought back the vicious and brutal scenarios from the history of the Great War. Such real flashbacks through war poetry acted as awareness and a reality check for the world. This awareness made the world and its people realize the technological

advancements achieved by the people but also warned the people to be aware of the adverse effects and opportunity cost of such technological warfare. It could still be seen as a warning for the world even in present-time as the scientific advancements and nuclear power may give a country the power and influence and may also help the country emerge victorious in battles but it cannot compensate for the loss of lives and empty lap of a mother. Neither can it relieve or free the soldiers from their continuous mental and physical sufferings and cognitive diseases such as PTSD, neurasthenia, shell-shock etc. nor can it return their old life back.

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