

The Use of Metaphor in Wilfred Owen's

Anti-War Poetry

استخدام الاستعارة في شعر الحرب لويلفريد اوين

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Abstract

This study investigates the English Trench poet Wilfred Owen's distinctive use of metaphor to help him express his attitude towards war. In almost all his poetry, Owen attacks the idea of war showing the horrible effects of war on both parties taking part in military actions. He even mocks the traditional slogans of bravery and patriotism attributed to war. The poet uses all forms of metaphor, especially the extended metaphor, audio and visual, to transmit the hopelessness and absurdity of the idea of war to his readers. In order to transplant a feeling of irony within his readers, Owen uses the metaphor to describe the terrifying atmosphere of military actions stressing mass destruction resulting from that catastrophic phenomenon in the life of man in modern times.

Keywords: Trench Poets – Owen – War – Metaphor – Absurdity

المستخلص

تستقصي هذه الدراسة استخدام الشاعر الإنجليزي ويلفريد اوين للاستعارة في تصويره المناوئ لفكرة الحرب في شعره. و نظرا لكونه احد المشاركين في الحرب العالمية الاولى بل و قضي نحبه فيها فقد صور الشاعر حجم المعاناة التي كان يعيشها الجنود خلال مشاركتهم في الاعمال العسكرية الخاصة بالحرب. و لكي ينقل صورة حقيقية مؤلمة لهؤلاء الجنود الذين يواجهون الموت بين لحظة و اخرى في الميدان فقد استعان الشاعر بالصور الخيالية الكلية و الاستعارة بكافة الواثما ليحسن التعبير عن ويلات الحرب و احوالها. و من خلال تحليل استخدام المجاز في الكثير من قصائده المشهورة تحاول الدراسة الغوص في اعماق الشاعر لسبر اغوار استخدامه للاستعارة في تصوير الدمار البدني و النفسي الناجم عن خوض الحروب.

الكلمات المفتاحية: شعراء الخندق – اوين – الحرب – الاستعارة – العبثية

Introduction

Inspired by the Russian-Ukrainian war that has badly affected the whole world, the researcher is urged to deal with the idea of war, though it may be described as a topic repeatedly handled by lots of researchers worldwide in modern times. The horrible consequences of the current war reveal one important fact: the world is not yet convinced of the horrifying aspects associated with wars, chief among them are the economic problems the whole world has been suffering from as a direct result of this particular war. Poetry as a literary genre is traditionally considered the most effective

and condensed means of expression that can best reveal and expound explicitly the casualties of war. In the early years of the twentieth century, the First World War led the world to revolt against the conventional slogans associated with war as a field of bravery, courage, and patriotism. A group of English poets who took part in military actions and even lost their lives as a result could record the sufferings of soldiers, both physical and psychological, in impressive pieces of poetry. The English poet, Wilfred Owen [1893–1918] was one of the leading figures of the group who died in action symbolizing the unbearable catastrophic consequences of war. Together with his fellow “The Trench– Poets,” Wilfred Owen used his poetic talent to express his rejection of the idea of war. In his anti-war poems, he gives the reader the opportunity to imagine himself \ herself in the midst of that mass destruction resulting from war.

This study aims at investigating Wilfred Owen’s distinct use of metaphor as a basic poetic tool to convincingly express his objection to the idea of war in his poetry. Being a leading figure of the “Trench–Poets,” who took part in the military actions of World War I, Owen experienced the massive casualties of war finding out that all fighting parties are losers. His actual participation in war led him to record the meticulously physical as well as psychological pains resulting from participating in military actions. In his anti-war poems,

Owen uses his poetic talent using all technical devices, especially the metaphor in a masterful way to express his inner feelings while in action in an attempt to attract his readers' attention to the downfall of traditional slogans of war. In her paper "Wilfred Owen: Romanticized and Tender Poetry," Ivy Panda confirms the idea of Owen's uniqueness as an anti-war poet by asserting that "his works were unique from the works of other war poets because his literary narrations were very emotionally-charged and tender" (2). All kinds of metaphor have been applied by the poet creating a war-like atmosphere which the reader approaches as if he were a participant in war. In the following lines, the researcher investigates Owen's professional ability as a poet to use the metaphor in its various forms to help him transmit his real ideas and emotions towards the experience of war to his readers through highly associative and expressive poetic lines. In his poems, Owen stresses the ironical situation in which soldiers find themselves unfolding the deceptive truth of war. All the themes of suffering, traumas, and deception of war could be traced in his poetry. Owen's attitude towards war can be felt in his famous speech about his poetry: "My subject is war, and the pity of war..." (Lewis 31).

Metaphor

An Image is not only a means to create new knowledge of life and establish a more meaningful vision of reality, but also

to animate a vision motivating audiences to go beyond pragmatic reality (Ben Voth 127). It is the use of imagery that gives the power of affecting the mind, in William Cullen Bryant's words, "by pure suggestion" (*Poets on Poetry* 214). To Emerson's definition that a poet is a "Namer or Language-maker" (*Poets on Poetry* 260), therefore, I would rather add that he is also an image-maker. It is the mechanism wherewith he liberates language from its worn-out meanings and creates within the world another world, or other worlds.

One of the important tools the poet uses to insert an image in his poem to help him enlarge his ideas is metaphor. In fact, literature without metaphor "would become less imaginative and poetry would be so impaired as to become dull and perhaps even trite" (MacCormac 7). This means that metaphor seems to be most at home in poetry. Many think that it provides poetry's best and most distinctive furniture. Moreover, Lakoff and Johnson and many other scholars have argued in detail that "metaphors are pervasive in ordinary speech, and many of the ones that strike us in poetry are variants or extinctions of the basic ones we use all the time" (Ferber 195). Metaphor means all types of figures of speech including symbolism, metaphor, parable, allegory, and synecdoche. Even science, which is considered absolute knowledge, as Robert Frost puts it, is "only a metaphorical way of approaching reality" (*Selected Prose of Robert Frost*

36). Frost strongly believes in the suggestive power of metaphor because it relies on our sensitivity to the patterns that present themselves to us as well as on our ability to discriminate, and not on “our ability to construct rational arguments, absolute answers, or rigid systems of belief”(314). The assertions about metaphor are in fact assertions about poetry as well as about “all human acts of knowing” (Guy Rotella 18). Moreover, the insistence on the identity of metaphor is an insistence on the identity of poetry. A poem, then, is a triumph of association. It is itself “association—more or less metaphor.” (Cook 158).

Metaphor can be described as “one of many techniques, named and unnamed, for likening one thing to another by means of words and by mingling them together in one context we resort to rich and unpredictable effect (Stanford Encyclopedia Philosophy). Metaphors are comparisons between two objects, stating that they are one another, not just like one another. They are important in the use of language as they link abstract concepts to physical tools making them easier to understand. Within war poems, metaphors are used to give verbal representations of images, pictures, and symbols by comparing them to accustomed objects. They are also used to help the reader understand and feel the unfamiliar brutality of war by linking them to similar recognizable situations. Defined simply in Merriam-Webster

dictionary, metaphor is “a figure of speech in which a word or phrase literally denoting one kind of object or idea is used in place of another to suggest the likeness or analogy between them.” The metaphor, for rhetorical influence, directly refers to one thing by mentioning another. Thus, it suggests perhaps hidden or explicit similarities between two different ideas. The term itself is derived from the Greek word “*metaphoria*” which means “to transport.” Therefore, it is used to hold a comparison between dissimilar things. It is one of the poetic devices the poet may resort to in his trial to depict a picture through which he wants to communicate notions, feelings, or impressions to his reader. So long as poetry is basically dependent on imagination, it uses all kinds of imagery which go beyond the literal meanings of words. Metaphor is built on two basic elements: “the tenor” and “the vehicle.” “The tenor” is the thing or the object which the metaphor describes, whereas “the vehicle” is the thing or the object to which “the tenor” is compared with.

Metaphor is classified in different types, the effect of which is to impress the mind and heart of the reader. Nordquist differentiates between certain types of metaphor in English. He speaks of the following types: (1) Absolute Metaphor: In this type, the two elements, especially “the tenor” cannot be easily distinguished; the reader may be confused overlapping the two elements.

(2) Complex Metaphor: This type appears when the literal meanings are confused. The metaphor here is done through a combination of two primary metaphors included in figurative terms.

(3) Conceptual Metaphor: This kind of metaphor presents an idea (a concept) in terms of another.

(4) Conventional Metaphor: This is a familiar comparison between two objects, as a result of which the reader is not attracted to the analogy the writer finds between the “tenor” and the “vehicle.”

(5) Creative Metaphor: An original comparison that attracts attention to itself as a figurative language.

(6) Dead Metaphor: Due to its recurrent use, the reader here is familiarized to the imaginative effectiveness of the metaphor. The metaphor here loses its affectivity because of repetitive use.

(7) Extended Metaphor: The poet here expresses his idea or emotion through a comparison between two different things which is taken in a series of phrases or lines in the poem. The theme of the poem is expounded through that metaphor which is carried in some lines of the poem.

(8) Primary Metaphor: It is used by the poet to transmit an abstract idea; this helps the reader understand the

connotations of the idea. It shapes the reader's interpretation of reality and his\her perception of the world. This type is closely related to the culture of the poet and the reader's as well.

(9) Submerged Metaphor: This kind of metaphor is used by the poet to give an implicit analogy between two different things. The "tenor" and the "vehicle" are implicitly correlated here.

(10) Visual Metaphor: The metaphor here occurs when the poet represents a place, a person, or any object or idea by referring to a visual image that anticipates a certain association of suggested similarity between the "tenor" and the "vehicle."

Upon such survey of the different types of metaphor, Wilfred Owen's anti-war poetry can be approached in the light of these kinds, the objective of which is to unfold the sources of Owen's richness and uniqueness as a poet in his expression of the horrors of war. Of course, the poet resorts to all poetic devices to help him transmit his poetic experience effectively to the reader. However, each poet has a secret or a point of distinction which gives his poetry a special flavor. In his anti-war poems, Owen uses audio-visual imagery to express the devastation and catastrophic results of wars, no matter who is the winner. In the following pages, the researcher probes

deeply into some of Owen's anti-war poems to taste his distinctive use of metaphor leading to his unique approach as an anti-war poet.

The most recurrent kind of metaphor used in almost all Wilfred Owen's anti-war poems is the "extended metaphor." The reason why such a kind is repeatedly used is that it carries the theme all along the poem and to the core of the reader in a more persuasive and highly impressive way. In "Dulce Et Decorum Est," Owen uses a vivid extended metaphor to transmit to his reader the exact feeling he himself has. The metaphor used manipulates Owen's idea that war is horrible and catastrophic. The title itself is highly symbolic, completely different, and strongly ironic. The title is a line quoted from a Latin poem written by the Roman poet ,Horace: "Dulce Et Decorum Est Pro Patria Mori" which means "it is sweet and fitting to die for one's country." However, after reading the poem, the reader finds out that the poet condemns the idea of war and doesn't regard it as a manifestation of one's patriotism and love of one's country. The poet expresses his rejection of war simply because of the heavy price to be paid even by the winners at war.

Moreover, Owen uses the same title, "Dulce Et Decorum Est," in a sarcastic way to mock the notion of war in essence. Thus, "Owen's goal from such title is to attack the concept that sacrifice is sacred, and to destroy the glamorized decency

of the war” (Bloom 15). Throughout the poem, the poet picks out snapshots in a way reminiscent of T.S. Eliot’s technique in his masterpiece “The Waste Land.” Owen records the pains of the soldiers in action who are thoroughly fatigued because of night march, gas attack, and frightening neurosis. Being extremely exhausted, the soldiers retreat from frontlines into back lines to have a break from the severity of the experience and to rearrange themselves for future military actions. They are fully tired to the extent that they do not even realize the falling bombs, nor hear the horrible sound of explosive gas projectiles. To protect themselves, the soldiers quickly use their masks except one whose weak powers have not enabled him to wear his mask with the ultimate inevitable end of the soldier’s life. The poet expresses his sorrow and deep grief for the dying fellow-soldier. Owen writes:

Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots,
 But limped, bloodshed. All went lane, all blind;
 Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots.
 Of gas-shells drooping softly behind.

(*The Collected Poems* 55)

The whole poem is built on the extended metaphor in “Drunk with fatigue.” The “tenor” is “fatigue” and “wine” is the “vehicle.” The poet compares tiredness of the soldiers to

“wine,” that is drunk by soldiers making them drunkards, half conscious, and unaware of what is going on around them. Owen stresses the idea that “fatigue” has helplessly made soldiers almost like drunkards to deepen the idea of their inability to consider things properly because of their exhaustion. All other graphic images used in the poem highlight this extended metaphor. “March asleep,” “bloodshed,” “all blind,” “deaf even to hoots of gas,” and others are related to the metaphor enhancing the effect it creates within the readers’ minds, hearts, and imagination. A more effective image is that of “vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues.” The poet here compares these “sores” with the memories of the soldiers in their struggle to survive. Not only does the image show the reader how the troops will always remember the painful experience they had, but also how such a tale is so frightening that anyone will listen to can feel nothing but how terrible it is to be in a similar experience. Commenting on the extended metaphor Owen inserts in this poem, Stephen Benz writes in his article “The Poet as Rhetor,”

“While the poem (“Dulce”)’s intensely felt emotions and horrific imagery capture the reader’s attention, upon close examination it

is the use of metaphor that proves particularly compelling.” (1)

Thus, Owen’s most powerful and highly impressive poem “Dulce Et Decorum Est” strongly condemns the ideology of war being “a sweet and glorious way to die fighting for one's country.” Owen uses his poetic talent and power of versification to evoke an anti-war attitude encouraging readers to take an action or at least reject any flashes of violence anywhere in the world.

Another important poem in which Owen builds his rationale against war and has memorable extended metaphors is “Exposure.” In a way more like 17th century English Metaphysical Poets, Owen constructs the whole poem on “a metaphysical conceit,” or in his case “an extended metaphor.” The very title foreshadows the ideas tackled throughout the lines of the poem; the soldiers are exposed to different kinds of hostilities and counter actions for their main action, war. The first lines take the reader directly to the theme:

Our brains ache, in the merciless iced east winds that
knife us ...

Wearied we keep awake because the night is silent ...

Low drooping flares confuse our memory of the
salient ...

Worried by silence, sentries whisper, curious,
nervous,

But nothing happens

(*The Collected Poems* 15)

Not only do soldiers suffer from psychological agonies “brains ache,” but also they are physically suffering because of the hostility of nature exemplified by “the merciless iced east winds,” and “the night is silent.” Nature announces its rejection of man's brutality and mercilessness towards his fellow human beings. The metaphor in “that knife us” expresses the message explicitly. The “tenor” in this metaphor is the “winds” and the “vehicle” is the “knife.” Owen compares the severity of the “iced winds” to the sharpness of a cutting knife; both are used for cutting into the flesh of man. Audio-visual imagery here helps the poet describe the situation skillfully. The audio images represented by the “winds,” “flares,” “whisper” are mingled with the visual images of “iced” and “night.” In addition, silence that is sometimes needed for speculation and intuition changes to be a foe that attacks the soldiers making them nervous and cautious all the time. The poet uses the refrain “But nothing happens” throughout the poem to deepen the ironical feeling

of the situation; in spite of all the cautious measures taken by soldiers fearing of the outbreak of the military action all of a sudden, nothing happens and this agitates the soldiers' feelings and nerves. The poet assures the torture of waiting and that suffering at war is not all experienced just in military actions.

Later in the poem, the poet gives snapshots of the kinds of suffering soldiers are exposed to including the "gusts," "tugging on the wire," "flickering gunnery," "misery of dawn," "rain soaks," "flights of bullets," as well as the hostility of "snow," "sun," and even "the Blackbird fussing." By the end of the poem, the poet initiates a sense of hopelessness and despair where the soldiers see their death as something inevitable. The poet's tone is intentionally provoking. Moreover, emotive language is used with the intention of attracting the reader to be inextricably involved and then upset by the horrifying scenes of the dying soldiers at war.

"Exposure" is skillfully interwoven around an extended metaphor given in "all their eyes are ice." Owen writes:

Tonight, His frost will fasten on this mud
and us,

Shriveling many hands and puckering
foreheads crisp.

The burying-party, picks and shovels in their
shaking grasp,

Pause over half-known faces. All their
eyes are ice,

But nothing happens

(*The Collected Poems* 15)

In this extended metaphor, the “tenor” is the soldiers’ “eyes” and the “vehicle” is “ice.” Here, the poet compares between the exhausted eyes of the soldiers and the severity of ice. “Their eyes” can be interpreted in two different ways. It may refer to the burying-party who have witnessed a lot of misery that they no longer see what is going on before them and they have become indifferent and careless about “the half-known faces” of the soldiers. On the other hand, perhaps “the eyes” of the dead soldiers have become “ice” because of their death which happened from time to time throughout military actions. Despite all these sufferings, nothing happens adding an ironic touch to the whole experience. Coping with the mainstream sustaining life in Europe at that time that life in modern times has become absurd, Owen stresses the absurdity of the idea of war when he cries “What are we doing here?” This rhetorical question outspeaks a deliberate tone of absurdity that dominates the poet pushing him forward to transmit it to his reader.

The extended metaphor used in Owen's "Anthem for Doomed Youth" is pregnant with highly suggestive meanings. The anti-war bird hovering in many of Owen's war poems gives its melancholic song in this poem. The early lines of the poem echo the sustainable atmosphere of the tragic death of innocent soldiers whose future as youth would have been very different. Owen writes:

What passing-bells for these
who die as cattle?

Only the monstrous anger of
the guns.

Only the stuttering rifles' rapid
rattle

Can patter out their hasty
orisons.

(*The Collected Poems* 44)

In the first line above, "the passing-bells" carries an auditory image. It refers to ringing of the church bell upon the death of humans as an indication of mourning and prayers that announce the beginning of a funerary service. The very beginning declares a gloomy tone to be perceived in the following lines. Another auditory image is given in words like "rattle" and "stuttering" which suggest an image of

gunnery firing in rapid succession. The effect of the image is enhanced by the use of consonance in the repetition of \r\ sound in “rifles,” “rattle,” and \t\ sound in “rattle” and “stuttering.” The onomatopoeic effect of the consonants adds depth to the meanings intended. The metaphorical meaning inserted in the use of “monstrous anger of the guns” adds a frightening atmosphere to the image.

Another implied metaphor appears in the following lines of “Anthem for Doomed Youth”:

No mockeries now for them; no
prayers nor bells

Nor any voice of mourning save
the choirs,

The shrill, demented choirs of
wailing shells;

And bugles calling for them from
sad shires.

(*The Collected Poems* 44)

The word “shrill” shows that the bullets are more of high-pitched screams, whereas “demented” and “wailing” add an emotional weight to the image. Thus, the “wailing shells” come as a “choir” in the sense that the bullets are shot

without a stop in a successive way. The auditory image of “choir” confirms the idea that the bullets are thrown over the heads of the soldiers frightening them while being stuck in the trenches. All these metaphors are adopted to stress the sacrilegious nature of war. Thus, to describe the meaninglessness of war, Owen likens the soldiers’ deaths to the slaughter of cows. He also compares the intensity of bullets to a “shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells.” The word “bugles” in the last line above is employed by the poet as a trumpet-like instrument conventionally associated with the military “taps.” In the poem, the “bugles” are usually played at dusk denoting the close of the day which figuratively refers to the end of the soldiers’ lives. Towards the end of the poem, Owen comments on the mourning process for the dead soldiers by saying “The pallor of girls’ brows shall be their pall;\ Their flowers the tenderness of patient minds,\ And each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds” (*The Collected Poems* 44). Thus, the poet clarifies the way boys and girls will express their sadness for the deceased soldiers. The word “pall” echoes the cloth placed over the coffin during a funeral. The girls’ “palled brows” is used as a metaphor for the mourning veils worn over the girls’ faces as a manifestation of their grief and remorse. The line before the last above has a metaphor which compares the ritual of throwing flowers on a grave with the patience and “tenderness” of those waiting at home. It may also suggest

the idea that the compassion and empathy of others can be as necessary to the dying soldier as flowers on his grave. Owen's use of metaphor here allows the reader to imagine the terror of war in a way that could never be paralleled by others.

“Futility” is “the most successful poem in which extended metaphor takes the lead” (Norgate 215). The title's suggestive connotations can be easily perceived; it generally denotes the nonsensical and absurdist objective of warfare. The poem uses some important extended metaphors closely related to the themes propagated throughout the poem. The objective of such metaphors is to contemplate the issue of creation and the place of life on earth. In the beginning of the poem, Owen lays the main focus on the dead soldier's conditions showing the way the sun “awoke” him each morning. The poet compares “sunlight” (tenor) to “touch” and “whispers” (vehicle). However, as the poem goes on, the soldier's death inspires the poet to speculate life as a whole thinking back to the objective of creation. Owen writes,

Move him into the sun-
Gently its touch awoke him once,
At home, whispering of fields half-sown.
Always it woke him

(*The Collected Poems* 55)

The extended metaphor of the sun shows the reader the change that happened to the sun which used to be a source of life by its warmth and has become useless now. The next metaphor deepens the idea through another snapshot. The poet puts it as,

Think now it wakes the seeds-

Woke once the clays of a cold star.

Are limbs, so dear-achieved, are sides

Full-nerved, still warm, too hard to stir?

(*The Collected Poems* 55)

The poet compares the sprouting of seeds to the act of waking up. Moreover, the poet continues to refer to how the lifeless earth first “woke,” that is, first produced life. Here, the poet compares the earth to “a cold star.” Though the earth has never actually been “a star” (simply because stars are different from planets), the poet refers to a certain time when the earth was cold and lifeless, before the sun sent its rays on it. Owen chooses to use the phrase “cold star” and not “the earth” to suggest that “the earth” was never really “the earth” until it became warm enough by the sun to give life. In the final lines of the poem, Owen speaks of “the earth’s sleep” that is broken by “sunbeams,” by saying “O what made fatuous sunbeams toil \ To break earth's sleep at all?” This

represents a moment of creation. The metaphor of earth being “asleep” (without life) falls in line with the poet's recurrent descriptions of “waking” as the act of coming alive. This metaphor shows the extent to which the poet’s thoughts have been enlarged from the body of the dead soldier to refer to creation at large.

Another distinct poem which exemplifies Owen’s skillful use of metaphor in his anti-war poems is “Mental Cases.” The poem is written in three stanzas showing the horrible effect of war on its soldier-victims. The first stanza gives a detailed description of the psychological trauma of the soldiers who have taken part in military actions. Their outward appearance echoes what is going on inside their minds and hearts. In the second stanza, Owen focuses on those men's previous experience while at battle witnessing some frightening scenes of the death of their fellow-soldiers. The last stanza comments on the war-effects on victims showing how survived men's lives have been haunted by participating in such a tragic experience.

An extended metaphor which eloquently expresses Owen’s condemning feelings toward war is given in the early beginning of “Mental Cases.” Owen writes:

Who are these? Why sit they here in twilight?

Wherefore rock they, purgatorial shadows,

Drooping tongues from jaws that slob their
relish,

Baring teeth that leer like skulls' teeth wicked?

Stroke on stroke of pain, – but what slow panic,

Gouged these chasms round their fretted
sockets?

(*The Collected Poems* 60)

The poem can be approached in light of the extended metaphor of purgatory. According to Roman Catholic dogma, purgatory is deemed a state in which the souls who have died in grace should expiate their sins. In “purgatorial shadows,” the “tenor” is “the soldiers at war” and the “vehicle” is “the purgatorial shadows.” Such a comparison is used by Owen to emphasize the injustice of the soldiers’ suffering. He propagates the idea that those soldiers have done something good for their country and are being rewarded with the same handling of those souls in purgatory. Purgatory is the opportunity offered for sinners to expiate their sins and to rescue themselves from an infinity of suffering in Hell. Thus, the soldiers are caught in a state between life and death, heaven and hell, in purgatory. The metaphor assures their dehumanized appearance; they appear as if they were dead, “shadows.” Their suffering will go on

perhaps because of the killing they have been asked to commit on the front under the orders of their superiors. The further image of the “baring teeth that leer like skulls’ teeth wicked” takes the reader to the awkward situation the soldiers find themselves in. The use of “baring” and “skulls” adds the meaning that they have become ghosts and even animals because of their insistence on killing their fellow-human beings in spite of the excuse that they have been acting upon their superiors’ orders.

The third stanza of “Mental Cases” is heavily loaded with an extended metaphor closely related to the condemnation of the idea of war in essence:

Therefore still their eyeballs shrink tormented

Back into their brains, because on their sense

Sunlight seems a blood smear; night comes
blood-black;

Dawn breaks open like a wound that bleeds
afresh

Thus their heads wear this hilarious, hideous,

Awful falseness of set-smiling corpses.

(*The Collected Poems* 61)

Owen goes further deepening the feeling of devaluation of the idea of war through extended metaphors. In the lines mentioned above, he describes how men's "eyeballs" have shrunk into their brains, losing the ability to see sunlight. Owen compares "sunlight" to a mere "blood smear" that is small and unimportant. Such a comparison can be comprehended in two connotations: the eyes have become so useless and physically distorted that they cannot even see the sun clearly, though it appears overtly as the most apparent object in the sky; and the idea that the soldiers are so pessimistic and furious that they cannot see any light of hope for the future of the world. Then, the poet compares the darkness of the night to a "blood-black" color, one of a sky which bleeds because of the death of the sun. In other words, the death of the sun and light can be approached as the decline of God's support for these soldiers who have suffered but not died. Comparing the color of that God-abandoned sky to the darkness of "blood-black" can be approached as a consequence to the infinite deaths which finally create a black-blood clot. The wound is reopened every "dawn" regenerating the idea of perpetuality of suffering as a direct result to the continuity of warfare. The image of the wound depicts a horrible fault by humanity that could never be rectified. Humanity will forever suffer because of the insistence on making the same recurring mistakes.

In his poem “Disabled,” Owen uses extended metaphor to show another aspect of the horror and dreadful entity of war. He takes the reader into a world of soldiers whose lives have been ruined owing to taking part in military actions. In the poem, one of the soldiers comes back from the battlefield “disabled.” The soldier shares readers with his feelings in such a miserable state. Owen begins his poem:

He sat in a wheelchair, waiting for dark,
And shivered in his ghastly suit of grey,
Legless, sewn short at elbow, through the park
Voices of boys rang saddening like a hymn,
(*The Collected Poems* 65)

In the first line above, the “dark” is a metaphor for death; Owen refers to the idea that in such a miserable kind of life death could be the only means through which the disabled soldier can release and set himself free from the torture of being chained to a “wheelchair” all his life to come. The distorted soldier is so desperate because of his agony that he is eagerly awaiting his death as a means of salvation. Later in the poem, Owen shows the extent of psychological torment the soldier has when he compares his past days full of pleasure and activity to his current state of lifelessness. He writes:

Now he is old, his back will never brace;
 He's lost his color very far from here,
 Poured it down shell-holes till the veins ran dry,
 And half his lifetime lapsed in the hot race,
 And leap of purple spurted from his thigh
 (*The Collected Poems* 65)

Owen confirms the idea that the soldier's current state dehumanizes him to the extent that he no longer appreciates his past life the same way he used to go through. Now, everything has changed as a sorrowful consequence of war. The soldier finds out that "half his lifetime" has been wasted in war. A highly expressive metaphor is given in the line "leap of purple spurted from his thigh" in which Owen draws the picture of a sudden burst of blood dropping out of the soldier's "thigh" to indicate the amount and speed with which blood is spelt. Despite all these sufferings, the soldier does not have any feeling of dignity for fighting for the sake of the cause of his country.

Conclusion

Upon this bird's eye survey of some of Wilfred Owen's anti-war poems, his use of metaphor can be perceived as an endeavor by the poet to increase the effectiveness of the

messages propagated throughout his poems. He resorts to all forms of metaphor, visual and aural, in order to intensify the reader's perception and, then, empathy with those who have been victimized by war. Wilfred Owen uses all forms of metaphor to enhance the readers' perception of the ruination of the idea of war. The extended metaphor has been preferred by the poet as a major tool which suits the objective behind writing war poetry. It helps Owen to create a dynamic vision of the daily life of soldiers taking part in military actions. The suffering of soldiers either before or within actions is best described by the poet through his use of metaphor. The emotional load of the poems is enhanced by the poet's resort to the effective and rich realm of metaphor.

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