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دراسة مثال اللغوي ينظر لغات وويو

Wilfred Owen's Demolishing of the Romantic Image of Soldier: A New Historicist Analysis of "Dolce Et Decorum Est" and "Exposure".

إعداد

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المستخلص العربي

هذا البحث هو دراسة تحليلية لقصيدتين من شعر الحرب للشاعر الأيرلندي ولفرد أون باستخدام الأسلوب التحليلي لمدرسة التاريخانية الجديد. تعد قصائد لفرد أون عن الحرب العالمية الأولى من أهم ما أنتجته القريحة الأدبية البريطانية في كتابة شعر الحرب الواقعي استنادا للتجربة والمعاشة وبعيدا عن شعارات الشوفينية والقومية المتضخمة. بالإضافة لذلك فقد عمد أون في شعره المصور للحرب على الاستناد للواقعية الشديدة والتي أدت لتحطيم الصورة الرومانسية الأسطورية للجندي. فقبل الحرب العالمية الأولى كانت القصائد تصور الجندي على إنه أسطورة نبيلة، يمثل قيم التضحية والفداء فهو المخلص والفادي و يشبه انصاف الآلهة الإغريق الذين يقودون أوطانهم للتححر ويموتون من أجل مهمة عظيمة ولا تبدر منهم أى بادرة شكوى أو امتعاض ولا تظهر عليهم علامات التأثر بأهوال الحرب ولا امتعاض من حصاد الموت لأرواحهم. وكرست الآلة الإعلامية للحرب لخلق صورة للجندي تشبه صورة المسيح المخلص والفادي. فمثلا رضي المسيح بالعذاب على الصليب من أجل خلاص شعبه يرضي الجندي بعذابه من أجل وطنه .

لكن أون والذي كان ضابطا في الجيش البريطاني وأحد شعراء الخنادق كان له رأيا آخر وتصويرا مختلفا للجندي. فقد صُدم أون بصورة الحرب في القرن العشرين: الأسلحة والدبابات، والمدافع ، والخنادق القذرة ، وبشاعة الحياة فيها بلا مياه ولا استحمام ولا طعام ساخن ولا نظافة، والقصف المستمر والخطر الداهم وحالة العجز التي يعيشها الجنود في ظل هذه الظروف وهشاشة الجسد البشري في مواجهة القذائف والرصاص والشظايا والغازات السامة .

تعتمد الدراسة على تكنيكات التاريخانية الجديدة في تحليل النصوص لذلك يقدم البحث تحليلا لملصقات الدعاية الحكومية، ولحكايات الجنود الناجين من الحرب، ومذكرات الشاعر، ومقالات من الجرائد والمجلات.

Abstract:

In this paper, I am analyzing selected poems by Wilfred Owen's war poetry which represent The Great War according to the tenets of New Historicism. Before the WWI, there was a Mythic romantic image of war and soldier. The soldier was considered a sort of knight. He was represented as noble, semi-god and savior. War used to be waged for the good of the society and nation, so it was represented as a noble mission. History was in the background of the analysis of the poetry that was produced during the massive events. On the contrary, New Historicism used to use the texts of history in analyzing the literary texts and study the interaction between them to reach a better understanding of the text. Wilfred Owen, as one of the poets of the trenches, represented in his poems the dark side of the war, its reality. Owen derives his importance from his devotion to the subject of war poetry and his death few days before the end of the war. He was an officer in the British army During WWI and wrote some of the finest war poetry of the twentieth century. The analysis of the Selected poems depends on anecdotes, autobiography entries for other soldiers who wrote/talked about their experience during the war in documentary television and radio programs, magazine and journal articles, propaganda posters and books.

Key Words: Wilfred Owen; Image of soldier; New Historicist; "Dolce et Decorum Est;" "Exposure;" .

Introduction:

The analysis of these two poems depends on the New Historicist techniques of approaching texts. Choosing New Historicism is not an arbitrary. For New Historicism has special interest in analyzing the texts which were produced during huge historical events. The special matter is that New Historicism does not consider the historical event a mere background for the literary text but a co-text which deserves an equal reading. The literary text, in the New historicist views, is the production of the interaction between the historical aspects, the cultural aspects, the religious aspects, and the dynamics of the power relations between all these elements. Besides, New Historicism approaches the informal versions of history which can be found in the scattered anecdotes. The anecdotes are the minimal stories that do not undergo any sort of modification. It is a raw historical material neglected by historians because it is unfit for the grand historical narrative they present. The anecdote might be a poster, a journal or newspaper article, an entry from autobiography, a medical report, part of political pamphlet, a letter, or a part of any literary or non-literary text.

"Dolce et Decorum Est" and "Exposure" are two poetic representations of Wilfred Owen's anti-narrative of the formal image of war and soldier. The tow poems are a sort of poetic denouncement and revolution against the propaganda campaigns' romantic portrayal of war and soldier. "Dolce et Decorum Est" is a quoted line from the Roman poet Horace's Odes. The original Latin line says: "Dolce et decorum est pro patria mori" which means "it is sweet to die for fatherland". According to Janice CampBell, this line is considered the preferable quote in "requiems and memoriam throughout history" (Excellence-in-literature.com). In 1882, it was translated as follows: "What a joy, for fatherland to die!" and, according to CampBell's illustration, "it is inscribed over the rear entrance to Memorial Amphitheatre at Arlington national cemetery in Virginia" (Excellence-in-literature.com). Owen used this line as a title to his poem and as

the ending line of it and described that this allegation is a lie. He used the quote to mock the propaganda and to unleash a bitter anti-war poem. "Exposure", on the other hand, presents a true image of the soldier under different tough conditions in the western front to utterly demolish the romantic image of the soldier in the minds of the people.

The British government employed a huge propaganda campaign through posters. According to Catronia Pennel, propaganda can be defined as a "spectacular advertising campaign whose inclination is "justifying war. It has its intended audience and response (42). The British propaganda was assigned to push the masculine to go to war. The advertising posters of the war covering the walls were full of different techniques calling men for enlistment: "with the slogan 'Your Country Needs You'



Lord Kitchener assigned as Minister of Propaganda Convinced two million to enlist in the first months of the war" (Costenoble 5). Lord Kitchener's propaganda posters were directed to all the unmarried young men between the ages of 18 and 35. The posters carried messages of guilt to those who would think to neglect the calls for recruitment like that poster bearing the question from a child to her father: "Daddy what did you do in the Great War?".

Men were pushed through messages bearing shame and humiliation in the posters of the propaganda campaign to enlist in the army and join the lines lest they would be described as cowards. Soldiers went to the war with visions either romanticized or vague. They realized in the trenches that they were fooled.



In one of 1915 important posters, which was issued from the Parliamentary recruitment committee, was one representing St. George slaying a dragon with the slogan "Britain needs you at once". St. George in the poster was dressed like a medieval knight. He appeared strong and capable of performing his mission (slaying the dragon). The knight on the horseback represents Britain while the dragon represented the evil in the past and is considered a symbol for the vicious Germany.



On the contrary of this shiny image for the British soldier in the propaganda poster was the image in Owen's famous poem "Dolce et Decorum Est". In this poem, Owen depicted the miserable reality of the British soldier in this hellish war:

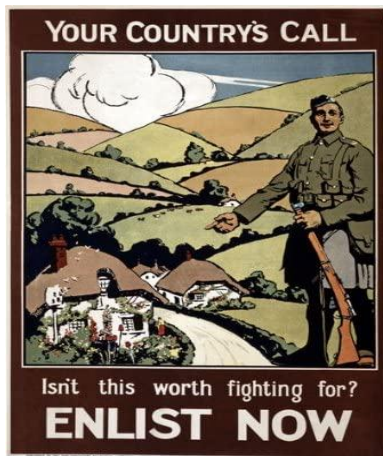
Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,
Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through
sludge,
Till on the haunting flares we turned our backs,
And towards our distant rest began to trudge.
Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots,
But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame; all blind;
Drunk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

Unlike the image of the dominant knight controlling the horse and slaying a dragon, the soldiers in Owen's poem appeared wretched and cringing as a reaction against the horrors. The opening of the poem subverts the stereotype of soldier as a romantic hero. Unlike the image of the mighty knight over the horse, the soldiers here grew slim "beggars under sacks" (Dolce 1). They walk with difficulty "knock-kneed". The battle consumed their energy and ability to walk properly: "Drunk with fatigue", "All went lame; all blind" (Dolce 6-7). They cough while they walk through the mire. They wait for their time of rest. Some of them walk with a bloody bare-feet as they lost their boots. They looked helpless in front of the weapons of the modern war. The soldiers' exhaustion delays their realization of the gas shells that drops behind their backs. In this sense, Owen confronts the childish image of the reality of warfare and the blind jingoism of the home front.

There is nothing military about the soldiers in the poem. They are not like the knight of the previous poster nor do they look similar to the soldier in the poster entitled "Your Country Needs You". In this poster the soldier looked fit and healthy. He represents the strength of masculinity with his glorious, great

mustaches. He has upright stature, broad shoulders and sharp look. The soldier in Owen's "Dolce et Decorum Est" represents the opposite to this imaginary propaganda representation. The soldiers in the first stanza are stumbling in their walk. The first word in the first stanza "double-bent" draws a visual image of men walking with great difficulty due to the pain (Wordpress.com). They keep walking without having any idea of what they do. They appear like flock of cattle driven to the butcher. The soldiers are degraded and demoralized by the horrors of the war (wordpress.com). In "coughing like hags", Owen tears out the strong masculine image of the soldiers in the posters by representing the real image. In this real image the young men were emasculated by the horrors of the war. Thus, Owen Compares men to sick women showing how they are unrecognisable; they have lost their masculinity, youth, health and are now outcasts to society.

The soldier in the propaganda poster appears in a healthy weight as it appears in the poster holding the slogan: "Your Country's Call: Isn't this Worth Fighting for? Enlist Now":



However, the soldiers in "Dolce et Decorum Est" appear very slim suffering from malnutrition dystrophy: "old beggars under sacks" (1). They are not clean and tidy like the image of the soldier in the above poster. They are depicted as filthy, underweight weak shadowy creatures. The soldiers in the front lost their weight due to poor nutrition. According to Adrian Lee the soldier needed

about four thousand calories a day, but the condition was very appalling as soldiers' ratio of food consisted of 250 ml of canned beef or the "hated" Maconochi. The diet of the soldiers contained biscuits which was very bad and tough unless it is soaked in tea or water and the soldiers called it dogs' biscuits. They were deprived of hot meals and they used to make tea on the fire of candles. It was a challenge for the British government to feed two million soldiers in the dawn of nutrition science. The British soldiers did not suffer starvation. No British soldier died out of hunger, but they suffered from unbalanced nutrition due to the poor variety of food. Besides, soldiers suffer the lack of clean, drinking water. Consequently, they suffered from vitamin deficiency and intestinal upsets.

Consequently, in "Dolce et Decorum Est" produces the opposite to the myth of the sweetness or romanticism of dying for one's country. The soldiers in this poem can be classified into three types or three main representations: the exhausted degenerated, the gas victim, and the absorbed in the sense of guilt and helplessness. According to eyewitnesstohistory.com, an American volunteer in the British army survived the trench experience and the German gas attacks narrated his own memories of the war. Arthur Empey was a living in New Jersey and was enraged by German's drowning of American ships during the First World War. He expected a war declaration from the side of his own country, but this declaration was delayed because of America's attachment to neutrality. So, he decided to travel to England and enlist for the British army. In the trenches he experienced gas attacks and described it as follows: " We had a new man at the periscope, on this afternoon in question; I was sitting on the fire step, cleaning my rifle, when he called out to me: "There's a sort of greenish, yellow cloud rolling along the ground out in front, it's coming " (eyewitnisstohistory.com). According to Empey's account, the soldier must be on the alert to wear his gas helmet before twenty seconds because case spread very quickly leaving no room for any delay. Any delay would result in the soldiers' death as Empey explained:

A company man on our right was too slow in getting on his helmet; he sank to the ground, clutching at his throat, and after a few spasmodic twistings, went West (died). It was horrible to see him die, but we were powerless to help him. In the corner of a traverse, a little, muddy cur dog, one of the company's pets, was lying dead, with his two paws over his nose. (eyewitnesstohistory.com)

According to Mark Pruszewicz , the first gas attack in history was on 31 January 1915. The invention of gas shells passed through two stages: the first type was used on the Russian Front; it was an early form of "tear gas" which had no fatal results. However, in April of the same year, a German chemist invented a progressive form of gas-shells which depended on "releasing chlorine gas from pressurized cylinders". This sort of gas shells produced "ghostly green cloud" which resulted in killing soldiers out of the "agonies of suffocation".

Britain described the German new weapon in the Daily Mail as devilish device. They considered using science in this manner to kill the soldiers in this manner a nasty attitude and a murder with cold blood. Pruszewicz adds that the British leaders described this weapon As barbaric and degenerate, Commanders of both sides were uncomfortable regarding this weapon. They considered it a scandal that Characterized the war as lacking chivalry, German and British commanders saw the gas shells "a cowardly form of warfare". However, four months later, the British developed their version of gas shells and used them. The development of the weapons in the WWI, the mass killing of the heavy guns, artillery, and the gas shells deprived the war of its romantic vision and deprived the soldiers and leaders of the nobility of chivalry. Pruszewicz maintains the witnesses' presentation of the doctors' experience after using the gas bombs who affirmed that the gas weapon terrified the soldiers and drew them into panic. This horror appears in *Dolce et Decorum Est's* second stanza while the symptoms appear in the fourth stanza:

Gas! GAS! Quick, boys!—An ecstasy of fumbling
Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time,
But someone still was yelling out and stumbling
And flound'ring like a man in fire or lime.—
Dim through the misty panes and thick green light,
As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.
In all my dreams before my helpless sight,
He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning. (Dolce
et Decorum Est 9-16)

The previous stanza gives a glimpse of the soldiers' horror of the newly devised Gas attacks. Horrified, they tried to wear their helmets quickly before breathing in the gas. But there was a miserable soldier who failed to put the helmet in suitable time; consequently, he stumbled as if burning. Through the "thick green light" the speaker saw the soldier dying. The dead soldier haunts the speaker's dreams. The survivors suffer emotionally and psychologically due to the burden of the atrocities of the war.

The word "dreams" is mentioned twice: in the first time as the speaker refers to a recurrent vision of the dying soldier in the gas attack, while the second takes place as the speech is directed to the reader: the speaker addresses the reader and suggests that if any such vision or nightmare of the suffering soldiers in the trenches has visited his/her dreams, the reader should have rejected the claims that it is sweet to die for your country. The vision which the speaker describes is nightmarish and the soldier appears pathetic and miserable and far from the classical depiction of the soldier as a superhero who dies pleasantly for his country. The speaker's invitation for the reader's imagination depicts the last moments in the life of a soldier dying of gas suffocation:

If in some smothering dreams, you too could pace
Behind the wagon that we flung him in,
And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,
His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin;

If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud. (*Dolce et Decorum*
Est 17-22).

By addressing the reader, Owen is trying to share the civilian citizen the hard feelings of soldiers' helplessness and inability to save his fellow brother. This share is for the sake of enlightening the civilians with information about war and with the true picture of war and deconstruct the romantic one in his imagination. On the other side, the speaker tries to share his psychological burden and sense of guilt and helplessness with the complacent civilian who knows very little about what is going on in the war front.

Therefore, in the last four lines of the poem, Owen manages to reject and collate the classical image of the soldiers depicted by the Latin poet Horace. He condemns the wrong and fake representations of wars in the literature and children's curricula that delude them and lead them to think that war is chivalry and noble:

My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
To children ardent for some desperate glory,
The old Lie: *Dulce et decorum est*
Pro patria mori". (*Dolce et Decorum Est* 25-28)

It is noteworthy that this poem was written in 1917 after the Somme's battle and during Owen's stay in the hospital. The Somme, the bloodiest battle in the bloodiest war in the planet, had its effect on Owen and the soldiers as the British army lost about 19.240 soldiers in its very first day. Although the results of the Somme battle were auspicious with military achievement on the ground, it had tangible effect on the home according to the Imperial War Museum. The Independent Labour Party was against the conscription while the British Social Party organized number of Strikes. A wave of strikes across Britain was due to the discovery of the real condition on the war front, the long casualty lists and the rise in the prices. By 1918, several distinguished

people were imprisoned for their opposition to conscription and the continuation of the war. The Marxists and the Socialists saw the war as an absurd event as it pushes workers to kill each other in the interest of their bosses (imw.org).

The Independent Labour Party was against the war from the beginning because they believed that the fighting between countries was not in the favor of the working class. However, the national zeal was beyond any calls for rationality in the early months of the war. In 1916, the illusion of the war myth faded away and there was an opportunity in front of the "dissent propaganda" and the anti-conscription calls (Millan 7,97). After the Somme battle the home front was ready for accepting the truth that there would be no absolute victory without consideration for the heavy cost that would destroy that victory: "given the hideous cost of the war and the fact that, in the aftermath of the Somme, victory no longer appeared easy or near. People were inclined to listen to Ramsey MacDonald and the others [dissenters]" (Milan 98).

"Dolce et Decorum Est" is very "polemic". The original draft of this poem was subtitled by "to a certain poetess" as it was a reaction against a poem written by a propagandist named Jessie pop. The removal of the subtitle expanded the attack to include the effect of the propaganda machinery in fostering civilian indifference by propagating the ideology of the soldierly death as a Christ-like sacrifice (Knowles14). To achieve this awareness in the civilians, the poem did not present any kind of solace or relief or exit from the horror. It slides from one sort of misery to another and from shock to another. Although the poem is viewed from the perspective of anonymous soldier acting as a member of a group of soldiers and an observer Owen then surprises the reader by emerging directly as a part of the group. This engagement force the reader to be captivated in "the legacy of the horror described" as he/she is haunted with the recurrent dream of the dying soldier: "the stanza's two opening conditional clause ...press the audience into imagining how they might feel if this dying figure ... were to

invade their dreams" (Knowles 14,15). The end of the poem unleashes the angry condemnation of the "old lie" to show the indifferent civilians the fate of their "ardent" children (Knowles 15).

In the previous poster "Your Country's call", a beautiful green meadow is depicted behind the image of the happy, healthy soldier. These representations have misled the British young men badly. According to the private Leo Clifford Lane, the British young men were certain of their victory and any idea that they would suffer from huge casualties by the Germans was ruled out. Lane refers to a state of "euphoria" and excitement between the people which was the result of ignorance of the consequences and the millions that would fall in this war: "we marched along fairly happily for a time [as they] had a naïve conception of what war was like" (Arthur 46). This happiness was only in the beginning as they started suffering the frozen winter of France as Lane described:

It was getting quite hard work. We'd gone all two or three weeks without any real sleep, we hadn't had our boots off for three weeks and we had no proper food, nothing hot anyway...men began falling out...the regimental sergeant came along with his stick and he gave them a wallop till they got up and started marching again as you couldn't possibly leave them there, they would have frozen to death. (Arthur 46).

In "Exposure", the soldier is represented in a struggle and agony, not from the German attacks, but from the cruel winter in the French front:

Our brains ache, in the merciless iced east winds that
knive 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. (1-5)

"Exposure" was written approximately in the winter of 1917. After the Somme and Verdun Battles which continued from February to December 1916. Winter's attack forced the armed forces to stay still in the trenches. The weather in France was the worst as the French people noted that they haven't had such a frost for over twenty years. According to a letter written in Neuve Chapelle sector in Feb 1917, "The cold weather is very trying for the troops. When we are in the trenches it is not possible to keep warm because it is impossible to move about very much, and it is not always possible to have much of a fire because the smoke might attract the unpleasant attractions of the enemy over the way. So we have been very cold in the line" (qtd in Sarah). The private Ramond P. Rojers mentioned a little bit harder image of soldiers' situations during the winter. He told us of the continuous unrecoverable flu of himself and many other soldiers. The severe cold did not give them the opportunity to recover: "after I arrived in France, it was winter and I came down with flu...I lay I a loft with one blanket. There was an opening in the roof. I remember waking in the morning and realizing that it had snowed through the night. The snow had filtered through cracks in the roof and I was covered with amount of snow on top of my blanket" (Egglestone 36)

Owen described his and his soldiers' suffering from the weather in his letters to his mother. He depicted their experience during the winter as a life between ice and fire. He said that in one of their retreats they had no trenches to keep themselves in it from the fires of the Germans and the harsh weather of the western front. So they

had to lie in the snow under the deadly wind. By day it was impossible to stand up or even crawl about because we were behind only a little ridge screening us from the Bosches' periscope. We had 5 Tommy's cookers between the Platoon, but they did not suffice to melt the

ice in the watercans. So we suffered cruelly from thirst... only one of my party actually froze to death before he could be got back, but I am not able to tell how many have ended in hospital (qtd. In Stalworthy 148).

In the second line of the first stanza, Owen describes the soldiers' difficulties during the night time. They cannot sleep well because of fatigue and the harsh snowy weather in which they stay without any shelter. The noise of the dropping shells terrifies them and distracts their minds from contemplating their old happy times. They are suffering from the nature and overwhelmed by the sense of helplessness and complete alienation. Moreover, the soldiers suffer continuous threat and dangers. The trenches are shelled occasionally with "bangs", "German 77 mm" and "field guns. This continuous shelling threatens the front support lines (Costenoble 7).

The tough weather can be one of the hardships for the soldier. The representation of the soldiers' life in this weather in the trench helps in creating a dull image of the war scene away from the popular romantic representation of the war which is used as a method for tricking the young men to join this meaningless war. The first three words of the poem show the suffering of the soldiers as their brains ache due to the merciless iced winds which knife them:

Our brains ache, in the merciless iced east winds that
knife us
Watching, we hear the mad gusts tugging on the wire,
Like twitching agonies of men among its brambles.
We only know war lasts, rain soaks, and clouds sag
stormy. ((Exposure 1,6,7,12)

They are tired, suffering insomnia due to the sounds of the harsh weather and the frightening silence of the trenches. Although "nothing happens", they are "nervous" (Exposure 4,5). The power

of nature is a parallel enemy army attacking the soldiers in the trenches and increasing their suffering and misery: "sudden flights of bullets less deadly than the air that shudders black with snow/ We watch them wandering up and down the winds nonchalance" (Exposure 17, 19).

Although the poem portrays the condition of the soldiers away from the battle fights, the silence of night is terrifying and the snipers kill any moving shadow in the no-man's land or in the front lines of the trenches. In Owen's letter to his mother, he described the difficulty of withdrawing the wounded soldiers from the no man's land because of the continuous shelling attacks:

We were all half-crazed by the buffeting of the High Explosives. I think the most unpleasant reflection that weighed on me was the impossibility of getting back any wounded, a total impossibility all day, and frightfully difficult by night. We were marooned on a frozen desert. (qtd.in Stallworthy 149).

soldiers were killed during bringing water or any movement outside the trenches and their fellows were forced to leave them laid on the ground until finding a chance to bring them in. The dead-locked position of the armies and the inescapable sense of waiting put the soldiers under the agony of waiting represented in "Exposure". The repetition of the phrase "but nothing happens" all over the poem expresses the stress of waiting upon the soldiers' psyche (Bitesize). This prolonged waiting in the face of that merciless weather condition led the soldiers to contemplate in the feasibility of their existence inside this conflict:

Northward, incessantly, the flickering gunnery rumbles,
Far off, like a dull rumour of some other war.

What are we doing here? (Exposure 23-25)

This speculation leaves the soldiers in a sense of despair. They see their death is inevitable and they are doomed. The noise of the war in the background of the poem keeps reminding them of their fate.

The "sudden successive flights of bullets streak the silence" remind the soldiers that they may die at any moment while the weather is against them and can kill them just like the bullets. The sense of despair leads the soldiers to lose their faith in the cause of the war and in God:

Since we believe not otherwise can kind fires burn;
Now ever suns smile true on child, or field, or fruit.
For God's invincible spring our love is made afraid;
Therefore, not loath, we lie out here; therefore were
born,

For love of God seems dying. (Exposure 31-35)

In the line "we cringe in holes, back on forgotten dreams " (Exposure 22), Owen depicts the soldiers like frightened animals who think of a place to hide themselves in from the inevitable death which hunt them (Bitesize). The soldier tries to escape their physical and mental pain by daydreaming of their warm houses where they can feel safe and where they can shut the winter off. However, even these daydreams cannot relieve their burden as they think that they wouldn't be able to go back to their homes because they are certain of their death in the battle:

Slowly our ghosts drag home: glimpsing the sunk fires,
glozed
With crusted dark-red jewels; crickets jingle there;
For hours the innocent mice rejoice: the house is theirs;
Shutters and doors, all closed: on us the doors are
closed,—

We turn back to our dying. (Exposure 26-30)

The soldier in "Exposure" finds out that his misery and suffering are far more expensive than the cause of the war and the naïve notions of patriotism and the defense of father lands. He is not hero anymore but a victim for complicated political plots and imperial greedy ambitions that lead to this disastrous war. The soldier in this poem contemplates in the reasons of his existence in this hellish situation: "What are we doing here?" (Exposure 10).

His faith in the whole cause of war vanishes as he finds himself exposed to the fire of the enemy that shatters his body apart and the ice of the weather that freezes his body into death: "is it that we are dying? " (Exposure 25). The soldier in this poem cannot see himself a warrior, but a helpless victim who suffers for incomprehensible reasons.

The poem ends with a very painful description of soldiers burying their fellow soldiers who died because of the shelling or because of the cold weather. The nature of the trench life forced the soldiers to exist with the bodies of their dead fellow soldiers around them in the no man's land as they could not get them back or bury them for fear of getting attacked with the enemy's fires. In one of Owen's letters he described the front to his mother as:

Hideous landscapes, vile noises, foul language and nothing but foul, even from one's own mouth... everything unnatural, broken, blasted; the distortion of the dead, whose unburiable bodies sit outside the dugouts all day, all night, the most execrable sights on earth. In poetry we call them the most glorious. But we sit with them all day, all night...and a week later to come back and find them still sitting there. (qtd.in Stallworthy 149).

Thus, the soldier in "Exposure" is torn between the horrors of the shelling that devastate his body and the horrors of the weather that kill him and ravish their souls mercilessly. He went to the war with absent-minded and without true understanding of the meaning of the modern war and its dangers. The reality of the war and the circumstances of the life in the trench beside the large number of casualties in the battles lead to a sense of doubt in the very cause of war and even in God. The soldier is doomed. Soldiers in the last stanza of "Exposure" are not heroes, but just undertakers for their fellows. Their fellows whose hands, foreheads, and their eyes were exsiccated and frozen by the snowy weather:

Tonight, this frost will fasten on this mud and us,
Shrivelling many hands, and puckering foreheads crisp.
The burying-party, picks and shovels in shaking grasp,
Pause over half-known faces. All their eyes are ice.
(Exposure 35-39)

Therefore, "Exposure" came as an expression of the feelings of the soldiers as they face a different type of suffering in the front other than the death and physical distortion.

Conclusion:

To conclude, Wilfred Owen defied the romantic image of the war and the romantic myth the warrior. His representation of war reality and the real feelings and conditions of the soldiers in this conflict aimed at demolishing the myth and illusions that nurture the trumpeter of propaganda. Owen wanted to illustrate that the propaganda campaign used in the mobilization of young men to join the troops was built on lies and created images full of sham illusions.

Approaching the two selected poems from the perspective of New Historicism gave scope for studying the interaction between the literary and non-literary narratives. In this way analyzing the two selected poems of Owen using documentary films of WWI's veterans, stories of real people war traumas, articles from newspapers, alongside with the political and social organized efforts inside the British street at that time give us a meticulous image of the soldier and his real suffering during the war.

As a poet, Owen's representation of the soldiers' miseries and devastation aroused from his keen interest in demolishing the romantic myth of war and warrior. This might disillusion the whole society and consequently the society press the politicians to find a political solution for the crisis and stop the war. Although he did not achieve this goal, he gave the future poets a lesson in writing a realistic anti-war poem.

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