

With close reference
to three poems, show
how wilfred owen

[Literature](#), [Poetry](#)



In the anthology *Up the line to death*, the section "O Jesus, Make it Stop" is marked by the fascinatingly profound Poems of Wilfred Owen and of his friend and mentor, Siegfried Sassoon. Although they write the truth about the horrors of war and have very similar sentiments, Owen concentrates on his compassion and the message of the futility of war. To learn about the happenings and feelings of the time from Owen's perspective, it is interesting to take a closer look at the following poems; *Anthem for doomed youth*, *Strange Meeting* and *Dulce et decorum est*.

Unlike the many writers of the early war poetry Owen doesn't make a theme of the comradeship of soldiers fighting against an enemy, but chooses to picture a vast family instead. Unnaturally fighting against each other; one large mass of suffering men on both sides. The poem *Anthem for doomed youth* holds the question of what burial do the soldiers get and what they actually deserve; it is a dignified song of loyalty and a lamentation, nothing short of an "Anthem". Most of the soldiers are "doomed" to die far from home and to lie unrecognisable under No Man's Land earth.

The simile in the rhetorical question "What passing bells for those who die as cattle?" depicts a very striking image of the large numbers of deaths in the trenches and battle fields for whom the bells would never stop ringing, if indeed they would be rung. There are no individual feelings as they all die in the same way, like cattle going off to the slaughterhouse. He makes the readers understand that to attempt a proper funeral for every victim would be inadequate and hopeless through his juxtaposing line "No mockeries for them from prayers of bells".

Through recreation of conventional battle sounds and personification of their sources, he shows, with no exaggeration, just how dangerous and inhuman the War is, with its "monstrous anger of the guns" and "stuttering rifles rapid rattle". The sounds linger on through the onomatopoeic effect of constant rhyme structure in the first stanza (e. g. "bells", "choirs", "shells", "shires"), and are presented as dominant through the repetition of the word "Only", at the beginning of line 2 and 3.

The reader discovers that as the bells will never manage to produce a sound for every year of every fallen soldier's life, they are competently replaced by "the monstrous anger of the guns". Even the priests are replaced by rifles "patter[ing] out their hasty orisons". The second stanza is less rhythmic, because of Owen's usage of para rhymes. Its purpose is to mourn with the people who cherish the memory of the dead they knew; they are lovingly described as "patient minds" and there is also a particular reference to the sorrow and pain of the women with "pallor of girls' brows".

The poet's respect for the dead is shown through all his religious references such as candles (or their likeness, shining with "holly glimmers of goodbyes" in their eyes), flowers and the drawing down of blinds (of a four poster bed in a room where a dead person lies). The two stanzas form a Sonnet. The structure gives tribute to Shakespeare (one of Owen's favourite writers) and the limit of fourteen lines is just enough, to pass on the intended messages. Owen's preference to that structure is also noticeable in the poem *Dulce et decorum est*.

That poem has four unequal stanzas; the first and second in sonnet form, third and fourth of a looser structure. Horaces' celebrated quote as the title, " Dulce et decorum est [pro Patria Mori]" (meaning; it is sweet and fitting[to die for one's country]), is sarcastic as the themes of this poem are the burdens and hardships of war. The first stanza is a very credible description of ill equipped " like beggars under sacks", " drunk with fatigue", marching " asleep", muddy and " blood-shod" soldiers, heading back to some place safe unaware that they might still be in danger, " deaf even to the hoots".

Owen uses monosyllabic lines and regular rhymes to create verisimilitude (that is also the case in the second stanza); e. g. " Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge, Till on the haunting flares we turned our back, And towards our distant rest began to trudge. " Having attributed the adjective " softly" to " gas-shells dropping [...] behind", he creates a powerful juxtaposition that re-enforces the idea of a great lack of alertness among the men, making it an incredibly vulnerable situation. The second stanza is the actual Gaz attack.

Readers, having read the beginning, understand that these were not soldiers marching heroically into battle, they were not fighting to save their Nation just then. Yet they were attacked " Gas! Gas! " Gas was a new weapon in that time and it was a feared unknown by everyone. The soldiers would have probably not had any experience of it, consequently not very skilled at quickly placing the " clumsy helmets" provided. One unlucky soldier didn't make it; what happens to him is described by one of his comrades (probably

Owen himself) who sees the man's final suffering through his mask panes, "through the misty panes and thick green lime".

The gas is described as an overwhelming "green sea" in which the blameless comrade is drowning. By the vividness of the described images, it is a possible idea that Owen was present on the occasion. That idea can also be supported by the narrator's mentioned nightly torment; he sees the soldier in his dreams and seems to be unable to control the presence of the scene in his mind, as if haunted. He shows his disgust at the fact that it is he who is tormented, and not the Government and all the people who were involved in the initial propaganda.

The word "smothering" suggests that the culprits know what is out there on the front line and choose to suppress the thoughts rather than face up to their crimes. The last two stanzas are written as one gradual, well structured attack. Again Owen transmits picture and sound; a picture of the poisoned man "white eyes writhing in his [hanging] face" and the sound of "gargling [issuing] from the froth corrupted lungs"(re enforcing the latter through the means of comparisons).

The line "Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues" is hint that there is a culprit, and he or she is safe at home while innocent young men die for their mistakes. After making his point with the scene, he dares the reader to repeat to his own children (or to anyone for that matter) that it is sweet and fitting to die for one's country. Owen is likewise tormented by the individual losses of the men having to kill one another. The main messages in his poem

Strange meeting is that individual soldiers on both sides are victims of war and have more in common than the political ideology which divides them.

Strange meeting is a dreams sequence written down in Ballad form. Inspired by a real life situation, when Owen spent three days trapped in a shell hole under constant fire, it relates how he falls into hell and meets the German soldier that he killed. To conclude, Wilfred Owen writes with infinite variety of the unnecessary loses and " the pity of war". He shares his views, his experience of war and his nightmares. His poems are similar to confessions. His faith his experience and his encounters have enabled him to present the war for what it is with genuine regret and compassion.