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TRENCH POETRY
(THE WAR POETRY)
Characteristics of Trench Poetry
(The War Poetry)

- Trench Poetry is also called as War Poetry. It refers to those poems which were written during the period of World War I (1914 – 1919). After the start of the WW I, a great number of young people died in the trenches. Most felt their duty to do so, they acted on an impulse, thinking it was an honorable thing to go and fight, even die for one’s country. War was glorified as a noble thing; it was the question of honor. That was the usual way in which poetry was written.

- Roughly 10 million soldiers lost their lives in World War I, along with seven million civilians. The horror of the war and its aftermath altered the world for decades, and poets responded to the brutalities and losses in new ways. Just months before his death in 1918, English poet Wilfred Owen famously wrote –

  “This book is not about heroes. English Poetry is not yet fit to speak of them. Nor is it about deeds, or lands, nor anything about glory, honor, might, majesty, dominion, or power, except War. Above all I am not concerned with Poetry. My subject is War, and the pity of War.”
Characteristics of Trench Poetry (The War Poetry)

- The well known poets of the period, such as Owen and Sassoon, were not the only soldiers writing verse during the First World War. A large amount of "trench poetry" and songs was also written by ordinary soldiers (or at least in the style of), often published in trench newsletters and the like.

- In poetry, war was usually depicted as an honorable, glorious affair. Thousands of young men left their homes with this conviction. However, those very few who survived the war, returned changed, wiser, more cynical, they experienced the horrors of the war first hand.

- Many turned to writing, became artists, trying to escape from the trauma of war. The name war poetry might be misleading somewhat, because it is actually the anti-war poetry, the poetry presented attack against the whole ideology of nobleness of war. They are not modernists, in terms of form or language they use. They are modern. It is a kind of modern poetry. Naturalistic and painfully realistic, with shocking images and language, intending to show what the war really like, the war poetry showed the mud, the trenches, death, and sometimes even compassion for soldiers.
The Trench Poetry question the very notion of war, heroism, patriotism, etc. They attacked the values of the pre-war society in general. The overall message through such poetry is that the war is brutal, vicious, meaningless, stupid, and barbarous; there was nothing honorable, glorious, or decorous about the war. The daily experience of soldiers on the front was of mental disorders, nervous breakdown, caused by constant fear and pressure.
MAJOR TRENCH POETS
He was an English poet and soldier. He was one of the leading poets of the First World War. His war poetry on the horrors of trenches and gas warfare was much influenced by his mentor Siegfried Sassoon and stood in contrast to the public perception of war at the time and to the confidently patriotic verse written by earlier war poets such as Rupert Brooke.

Among his best-known works – most of which were published posthumously – are "Dulce et Decorum est", "Insensibility", "Anthem for Doomed Youth", "Futility", "Spring Offensive" and "Strange Meeting".

Owen is regarded by many as the greatest poet of the First World War, known for his verse about the horrors of trench and gas warfare. The Romantic poets Keats and Shelley influenced much of his early writing and poetry. His great friend, the poet Siegfried Sassoon, later had a profound effect on his poetic voice, and Owen's most famous poems ("Dulce et Decorum est" and "Anthem for Doomed Youth") show direct results of Sassoon's influence.

He innovatively used pararhyme with heavy reliance on assonance and was one of the first to experiment with it extensively.
He was a British poet, historical novelist, critic, and classicist.

Graves produced more than 140 works in his lifetime. His poems, his translations and innovative analysis of the Greek myths, his memoir of his early life—including his role in World War I—Good-Bye to All That, and his speculative study of poetic inspiration, The White Goddess, have never been out of print.

He earned his living from writing, particularly popular historical novels such as I, Claudius; King Jesus; The Golden Fleece; and Count Belisarius. He also was a prominent translator of Classical Latin and Ancient Greek texts; his versions of The Twelve Caesars and The Golden Ass remain popular for their clarity and entertaining style.

Graves was awarded the 1934 James Tait Black Memorial Prize for both I, Claudius and Claudius the God.
Siegfried Sassoon  
(1886 – 1967)

- He was an English poet, writer, and soldier. Decorated for bravery on the Western Front, he became one of the leading poets of the First World War.

- His poetry both described the horrors of the trenches and satirised the patriotic pretensions of those who, in Sassoon's view, were responsible for a jingoism-fuelled war.

- Sassoon became a focal point for dissent within the armed forces when he made a lone protest against the continuation of the war in his "Soldier's Declaration" of 1917.

- Sassoon later won acclaim for his prose work, notably his three-volume fictionalised autobiography, collectively known as the "Sherston trilogy".

- His poetry collections include -The Daffodil Murderer (1913), The Old Huntsman (1917), The General (1917), Does it Matter? (1917), Counter-Attack and Other Poems (1918), The Hero.
Rupert Brooke  
(1887 – 1915)

- He was an English poet known for his idealistic war sonnets written during the First World War, especially "The Soldier".

- He was also known for his boyish good looks, which were said to have prompted the Irish poet W. B. Yeats to describe him as "the handsomest young man in England".

- Brooke made friends among the Bloomsbury group of writers.

- He also belonged to another literary group known as the Georgian Poets and was one of the most important of the Dymock poets.

- Brooke's accomplished poetry gained many enthusiasts and followers, and he was taken up by Edward Marsh, who brought him to the attention of Winston Churchill, then First Lord of the Admiralty.
CONCLUSION

- The war poetry is a negation of Georgian poetry.

- Georgian poets were considered as modern as one can be. They were very patriotic and regularly presented war as a noble affair, as an opportunity for the young Englishmen to ennoble their lives and turn from ordinary citizens to heroes.

- However, the war poets adopted quite opposite views of the war and of the Georgian society. Most prominent among them were Siegfried Sassoon, Wilfred Owen and Isaac Rosenberg.

- It differs from the poetry which preceded it, namely the Georgian poetry. So a clear break is made from the Georgian poetry. They communicate strong anti-war messages. For war poets the war in unnatural, meaningless, foolish, brutal, enterprise in which there can be no winners, it is not a noble, heroic enterprise.
In a 2020 article for the St Austin Review about American WWI poet John Allan Wyeth, Dana Gioia writes, "The First World War changed European literature forever. The horror of modern mechanized warfare and the slaughter of nineteen million young men and innocent civilians traumatized the European imagination. For poets, the unprecedented scale of violence annihilated the classic traditions of war literature -- individual heroism, military glory, and virtuous leadership. Writers struggled for a new idiom commensurate with their apocalyptic personal experience. European Modernism emerged from the trenches of the Western Front.

"British poetry especially was transformed by the trauma of trench warfare and indiscriminate massacre. The 'War Poets' constitute an imperative presence in modern British literature with significant writers such as Wilfred Owen, Robert Graves, Siegfried Sassoon, David Jones, Ivor Gurney, Rupert Brooke, Edward Thomas, and Isaac Rosenberg. Their work, which combined stark realism and bitter irony with a sense of tragic futility, altered the history of English literature."
"Similar cohorts of war poets occupy important positions in other European literature's. French literature has Charles Peguy, Guillaume Apollinaire, and Blaise Cendrars (who lost his right arm at the Second Battle of Champagne). Italian poetry has Eugenio Montale, Giuseppe Ungaretti, and Gabriele D'Annunzio. German poetry has Georg Trakl, August Stramm, and Gottfried Behn.

"These scarred survivors reshaped the sensibility of modern verse. The Great War also changed literature in another brutal way; it killed countless young writers."
THANK YOU