

# Dehumanization and Hideousness of War in Wilfred Owen's *Strange Meeting and Futility*

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## Abstract

This paper is an attempt to Dehumanization and Hideousness of war in Wilfred Owen's *Strange Meeting* and *Futility*. Owen depicted war as a horrifying. Wasteful and futile action of the poem was expressed through the plight soldiers. In a pessimistic tone Owen state that the war would destroy the landscape and erodes the natural solidarity between human beings and turning mind of the people friendly manner into mortal enemies and it also robs the lives of the soldiers who fight for their nation with their fullest capacity. The trauma of war lingers even after the battle is over. This paper delineates the hater of war only as a soldier who sacrifice their life and seen it brutality, futility and stupidity. Analyzing the lines of Wilfred Owen this paper tells the absurdity of war and also the terrible truths like loss of dives. Moreover, this paper relies on the respective studies and also his silent protest against war.

**Keywords:** Wilfred Owen, *Strange Meeting*, *Futility*, Soldier, Sun, Horrors of war, pity of war, Death, Meaningless.

Wilfred Edward Salter Owen (18 March 1893 – 4 November 1918) was a 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 heavily influenced by his mentor Siegfried Sassoon, because of this influence his poems majorly set in war and tragic death. His poetry can be understood in terms of warning and protesting against war. In general the aspects of social, political, emotional and imaginative scope are tackled in narrative, descriptive and didactic terms of Owen's war poetry.

This paper deals with the poems of Wilfred Owen's "Strange meeting" and "Futility" . From the tittle itself we can understand the pessimistic view of Owen. Owen's good number of poems were written between 1917 and 1918. The major ideas and themes in these poems are included in the subject of war itself, pity, tragic death, horrors and protest against war. He was talented in composing his war poems, for he added unique artistic method that his poems were characterized by Owen expresses a distinguished outlook in using his poetry as a testimony. He

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C. Vigneshwaran

Dehumanization and Hideousness of War in Wilfred Owen's *Strange Meeting* and *Futility* 358

utters the realities of the calamitous events of war, such narration seeks to give the real picture of evilness of war and warn people implicitly and sometimes explicitly against war.

The war experience launched his imagination and completely captivated his mind. His imagination is so active to respond and create a sense of responsibility towards various public categories all around the world. Owen's mind is highly inspired him to choose his subject of war. The imagination of Owen was saturated with horrors and bloody war pictures. It seems that the life, background and family, along side the military service have had largest impact on developing his imagination.

*“Think how it wakes the seeds  
Woke once the clay of a cold star.  
Are limbs, so dear-achieved, are sides  
Full-nerved, still warm, too hard to stir?  
Was it for this the clay grew tall?  
O what made fatuous sunbeams toil  
To break earth's sleep at all?”*

This paper explores Owen's anger towards the waste of life. This poem “Futility” powerful evokes the pity of war with its anger and simultaneously tenderness of those who suffer. Owen's passionate response to the inability of the sun to rouse the soldier spills over into questioning the meaning of life itself. The fact that the sun, gave the life and light is incapable of bringing life back to what was once a warm, strong body makes Owen question its power. The sun is personified as ‘Kind’, a human characteristic given to an inanimate object whose warmth brings benefit. In the further stanza Owen associated sun with the whole act of creation and generation. These are the positive diction seen in the first stanza of the poem. In the later stanzas Owen had used the negative dictions to express his feelings and ideas about the futile efforts of the sun. He finally he condemns the sun itself as ‘Fatuous’ a word not dissimilar to the ‘Futility’ of the poem's title as both means useless. The sun which brings warmth and a new life is perceived as helpless in the face of the destruction of humanity. Owen with a heavy heart . He stated that this precious life has been wasted by the war and nothing can regain the soul once it gone from the body. Finally he concludes with the poem in a mood of anger and despair.

*“Strange friend,” I said, “here is no cause to mourn.”  
“None,” said that other, “save the undone years,  
The hopelessness. Whatever hope is yours,*

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In the poem “Strange Meeting” the narrator starts with a note of imaginary journey to the underworld speaking with the spirits. The narrator meets a spirit of a soldier's whom he had killed in the battle field. They were enemies during battle life, but they have become friends in hell since they had no choice rather than being a killer and a killed one, they share the same destiny. Death has made them allies, and before they sleep forever. They can talk, and agree on the Horrors of war. Hopelessness is a prominent theme in both poems; Owen and the spirit mourn the hope that died with them. The whole poem is written in para rhyming couplets. Para rhyme or double consonance is a unique aspect of the poetry of Wilfred Owen.

The significance of these poems “Futility” and “Strange meeting” is the approaches to the theme of war, it's Hideousness, it's destructive consequences and the horrible thoughts it leaves in the minds of those who were involved in it directly or indirectly. The war is completely a meaningless, foolish, brutal, enterprise in which there can be no winners and it is not noble. Owen become a remarkable position among anti-war poets in the literature. This article sheds light on plight of soldiers in battlefield.

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