

War Poetry of the 20th century was a catalysing agent in hastening the process of division and compounding. According to Bullough it fostered experiment. The turmoil which ensued after 1918 produced "a heightened awareness of social needs, a clash of principles, a struggle for stability whether by return to an older order or by creation of new". The two tendencies - (i) a revulsion from the drabness of urban life and (ii) an attempt to transmute the common place by impressionism which the romanticism of the Georgian era engendered and fastened continued during the war. The love of the English soil and humanitarian sympathies gave dignity to the war poems of Rupert Brooke. It inspired patriotic verses of John Freeman, W. N. Hogson, Herbert Asquith, Julian Grenfell, J. E. Flecker and Lawrence Binyon. Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen

were the only soldier poets who reached their full stature during war. The early poems of Sassoon were Georgian in character with lyrical qualities. They show his love of children, old English songs and the pastoral setting. But his predominant mood is not lyrical but satirical, he is not an escapist as the Georgians were but is rebellious. Sometimes the soldier appeared to him transfixed, a Christ in suffering and for most of the times a decent chap who did his work and had not much to say.

Sassoon held that the belief that "chivalry redeems the war's disgrace" that the wounded were "longing to go out again" and that all was well with the uncomplaining heroes was a deception and worse than military blunders. In his long books of the war, he has told us so how the

public forgets the dead heroes,
 how the departed great-souls
 pass into oblivion. Such pieces
 do not find much favour with
 the popular anthologists. They
 like radiant poems like
 'Everyone Sang', which is about
 the joy of freedom which had
 pervaded the whole atmosphere.
 Of course, the implicit
 criticism of war is there with
 the poet's dislike of the same.
 See how the following lines
 show his and the people's
 joy and his dislike of war
 simultaneously :-

Everyone suddenly burst
 out-singing,
 And I was filled with
 such delight
 As prisoned bird must
 find in freedom
 winging wildly across
 the white
 orchards and dark green
 fields, on, on and out
 of sight.

These are Sassoon's gifts to

modern poetry. They reveal the turning of a Georgian from the lyrical moment to the socially significant under compulsion of disillusionment. After the war his technique changed. Tedious mock pedantry and excessive alliteration went hand in hand. The best of his later poems have light Byronic influence. Wilfred Owen was a disciple of Keats who composed poems of emotional suggestion with metrical experiment. Pieces like 'The Unreturning', 'Music', 'To Eros' are superb, but the mood is immature. It is after his first experience in 1917 in France and his friendship with Sassoon that he wrote after Sassoon's manner. For example 'The Parable of the Old and the Young', 'The Dead Beat', 'The Chances', and 'Dulce et Decorum'. He is not as successful as Mr. Sassoon. Owen wrote in a preface to

a volume he hoped to publish.

"Above all, I am not concerned with Poetry, my subject is War and the poetry of War. The poetry is in the Pity --- All the poet can do today is to weep. That is why the true poets must be truthful!"

He found truth and harsh way of putting it in Sassoon. In 'Futility' Owen's speculations struck deeper than the military or the social system. Mr. Sassoon's pity turns into indignation, ~~to~~ his turns to the beauty of reconciliation in 'Anthem for Doomed Youth'. He reaches the fullness of his imaginative stature with Dante-like vision of the dead in 'Strange Meeting'. Owen brought a new dignity to war poetry and to familiar measures considered by many to be outworn.

Traditional rhyme, which

Wartime disintegration of the 'cadence' forced a return to, and the use of 'vers libre' as a loose cloak for prosaic comments can be traced in the work of Osbert Sitwell. The best of his wartime satires were composed in regular metre under the influence of Gassoon. He drew more from current fashions. Here we find him turning from Gassoon to advocating the gospel of T. E. Hulme.

Let us prune the tree of
language
of its dead fruit
Let us curb this eternal
humour

And become witty...

Wit is absent from the earlier satires of Sitwell. It is from 1919 that we find a new intellectual intensity at work in his satire as in 'War Horses'. In his most original satires we find the treatment of imagery determined by pre-

dominant emotion as in English Gothic. Robert Sitwell has another significance in the history of Satires. He is one of the leaders in the revival of heroic couplet. When the war broke out, the first experiment done in Satire by Mr. Gassoon was closer to Elizabethan epigram or to Byron. It was Sitwell who tried to bring back Dryden and Pope to the fore.

Rupert Brooke is another poet of considerable fame whose 'The Soldier' is charged with the patriotic feelings of a soldier who is fighting in a distant land and fears death in a foreign land. It is true that there have been poets who have glorified the dead heroes of war but then this much is sure that they were seized with the horrors and aftermath of war. Laurence Binyon has definitely glorified the dead heroes in 'For the Fallen'.

as Lord Tennyson has done in 'The Charge of the Light Brigade' but the sadness of tone is there and the atmosphere of the poem heavy though the poet is proud of their patriotism.

There is music in the midst
of desolation

And a glory that shines
upon our tears.

They sit no more at
familiar tables of home,
They have no lot in our
labour of the day time,
They sleep beyond Eng-
land's foam.

But-

To the end, to the end
they remain.

Other poets of the period are
Richard Aldington, John Freeman,
W. H. Hodgson, Herbert
Asquith and Julian Grenfell.

The end.

Munee Bhusam Sirta
Deptt. of English
S. S. College, Ichanabad