**CULTURAS DE DESMOVILIZACIÓN. LA CONSTRUCCIÓN DEL EXCOMBATIENTE**
Volumen 10, Número 1, Enero-Marzo, 2025, pp. 41-77
Tiempo Devorado. Revista de Historia Actual
ISSN 2385-5452
DOI: 10.5565/rev/tdevorado.246

# Owen and Sassoon Reconsidered

## WWI Trauma, Memory and Contemporary Anti-War Poetry in the Post-Everything Era[1]

CRISTINA PIVIDORI
Professor, Department of English and German, UAB



ABSTRACT

Poetry, alongside other artistic and scholarly work, has played an invaluable role in preserving the traumatic memory of the First World War, especially after the passing of the last known veteran marked the end of the era of living witnesses to the conflict.
The centenary of the Great War (2014-2018) has sparked a renewed poetic output, leading to the publication of anthologies like Poet Laureate Carol Ann Duffy's *1914: Poetry Remembers* (2013). This edited collection includes two poems by the canonical British soldier-poets Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon: "The Send-Off" and "Survivors." Contemporary poets Carol Ann Duffy and Jackie Kay have selected these poems and have contributed their own pieces in response. Based on two theoretical frameworks, Jan and Aleida Assmann's notion of "cultural memory" developed in the 1980s and 1990s and Marianne Hirsch's concept of "postmemory" (2008), I will explore the intertextual references, thematic parallels, allusions and motifs that link the contemporary poems with those of Owen and Sassoon to study how memories, post-memories and aesthetic recreations of conflict interact and transform one another, highlighting the complexity and contingency of historical knowledge. I claim that the First World War has served as a foundational narrative that has been reinterpreted to address contemporary concerns and sensibilities and that the interaction between contemporary and World War One poetry reveals not only the enduring impact of transgenerational trauma and cultural

[1] This article is part of the research project *Beyond Postmemory: English Literary Perspectives on War and Memory in the (Post)Postmodern Era* (POSTLIT), funded by the Spanish Ministry of Education (PID2023-147481NB-I00).

memory on the disruption and transformation of individual and collective identities, but also the idea that the interpretation of conflict through post-lenses transcends specific historical backgrounds.

Keywords: Poetry Remembers, contemporary Great War poetry, postmemory, cultural memory, history

RESUMEN

La poesía, junto con otras obras artísticas y académicas, ha desempeñado un papel inestimable en la preservación de la memoria traumática de la Primera Guerra Mundial, especialmente después de que el fallecimiento del último veterano conocido marcó el final de la era de los testigos vivos del conflicto. El centenario de la Gran Guerra (2014-2018) ha desencadenado una producción poética renovada, que ha llevado a la publicación de antologías como 1914: Poetry Remembers (2013), de la poeta laureada Carol Ann Duffy. Esta colección editada incluye dos poemas de los canónicos soldados-poetas británicos Wilfred Owen y Siegfried Sassoon: "The Send-Off" y "Survivors". Los poetas contemporáneos Carol Ann Duffy y Jackie Kay han seleccionado estos poemas y han contribuido con sus propias piezas en respuesta. Basado en dos marcos teóricos, la noción de "memoria cultural" de Jan y Aleida Assmann desarrollada en los años 1980 y 1990 y el concepto de "postmemoria" de Marianne Hirsch (2008), exploraré las referencias intertextuales, los paralelos temáticos, las alusiones y los motivos que vincular los poemas contemporáneos con los de Owen y Sassoon para estudiar cómo los recuerdos, los post-recuerdos y las recreaciones estéticas del conflicto interactúan y se transforman entre sí. destacando la complejidad y contingencia del conocimiento histórico. Sostengo que la Primera Guerra Mundial ha servido como una narrativa fundacional que ha sido reinterpretada para abordar las preocupaciones y sensibilidades contemporáneas y que la interacción entre la poesía contemporánea y la de la Primera Guerra Mundial revela no sólo el impacto duradero del trauma transgeneracional y la memoria cultural en la disrupción y transformación de identidades individuales y colectivas, pero también la idea de que la interpretación del conflicto a través de lentes posteriores trasciende contextos históricos específicos.

Palabras clave: Poetry Remembers, poesía contemporánea de la Gran Guerra, posmemoria, memoria cultural, historia.

RESUM

La poesia, juntament amb altres treballs artístics i erudits, ha tingut un paper inestimable en la preservació del record traumàtic de la Primera Guerra Mundial, sobretot després que la mort de l'últim veterà conegut va marcar la fi de l'era dels testimonis vius del conflicte.
El centenari de la Gran Guerra (2014-2018) ha provocat una renovada producció poètica, que ha portat a la publicació d'antologies com 1914: Poetry Remembers (2013) de la poeta laureada Carol Ann Duffy. Aquesta col·lecció editada inclou dos poemes dels canònics poetes soldats britànics Wilfred Owen i Siegfried Sassoon: "The Send-Off" i "Survivors". Les poetes contemporànies Carol Ann Duffy i Jackie Kay han seleccionat aquests poemes i han contribuït amb les seves pròpies peces com a resposta. A partir de dos marcs teòrics, la noció de "memòria cultural" de Jan i Aleida Assmann desenvolupada als anys 80 i 90 i el concepte de "postmemòria" de Marianne Hirsch (2008), exploraré les referències intertextuals, els paral·lelismes temàtics, les al·lusions i els motius que enllaçar els poemes contemporanis amb els d'Owen i Sassoon per estudiar com els records, les postmemòries i l'estètica les recreacions del conflicte interactuen i es transformen mútuament, posant de manifest la complexitat i la contingència del coneixement històric. Afirmo que la Primera Guerra Mundial ha servit com a

narrativa fonamental que s'ha reinterpretat per abordar les preocupacions i sensibilitats contemporànies i que la interacció entre la poesia contemporània i la Primera Guerra Mundial revela no només l'impacte durador del trauma transgeneracional i la memòria cultural en la interrupció i la transformació de les identitats individuals i col·lectives, però també la idea que la interpretació del conflicte a través de les lents posteriors transcendeix fons històrics específics.

Paraules clau: Poetry Remembers, poesia contemporània de la Gran Guerra, postmemòria, memòria cultural, història

## Introduction

When Paul Fussell states that "there seems to be one dominating form of modern understanding; that it is essentially ironic; and that it originates largely in the application of mind and memory to the events of the Great War"[2], he not only highlights the centrality of 'irony' in post-war literary and cultural expressions but also suggests that a new collective consciousness emerged in response to what was regarded as "the war to end all wars."[3] Because of its scale and effects, World War One fundamentally altered the worldview of its generation and left a profound imprint on how subsequent conflicts were remembered and represented in popular culture. Described as "global," "total," and "modern"[4], the war disrupted a wide range of assumptions underpinning both art, especially literature, and civilization. As A.J.P. Taylor observes, the Great War "cut deep into the consciousness of modern man"[5], profoundly shaping sociopolitical and cultural landscapes for decades. In Britain, the conflict had a particularly strong impact on public life and the popular imagination. Public rituals, such as the two-minute silence and the annual ceremonies on Remembrance Sunday and Armistice Day, have kept its official commemoration alive since 1919.



The 'ironic' consciousness that emerged in the trenches of the Great War has evolved into what Samuel Hynes describes as "the story of war that has come to be accepted as true"[6]. While its origins lie in the poetry written by a group of men now regarded as the "Great War poets"—notably Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon—[7]this narrative

[2] Fussell (1975): pp. 35.
[3] The phrase "the war to end all wars," popularised by H.G. Wells in 1914, reflected his belief that the Great War would also be "the last war." However, viewed through the lens of the Second World War and the many conflicts that followed, both expressions now seem semantically paradoxical.
[4] Strachan (1998): pp. 1.
[5] Taylor (1963): pp. 11.
[6] Hynes (1990), Introduction: pp. ix.
[7] The canonical Great War poets—Richard Aldington, Edmund Blunden, Robert Graves, Ivor Gurney, David Jones, Wilfred Owen, Herbert Read, Isaac Rosenberg, Siegfried Sassoon, Charles Sorley, and

has evolved over time, retaining what was meaningful to its core message and discarding what was not, and ultimately becoming, as Andrew Motion observes, "a sacred national text"[8]. Although the story formally entered the British educational system in the 1960s, it continues to shape British perceptions of the Great War well into the twenty-first century. Some of the terms used to describe this narrative include: "liberal experience of war"[9], "the great casualty myth"[10], the "Myth of the War" [11], "modern memory"[12], and the "loss, anger and futility myth"[13]. Hynes defines the "Myth of the War" as follows:

> A generation of innocent young men, their heads full of high abstractions like Honour, Glory, and England, went off to war to make the world safe for democracy. They were slaughtered in stupid battles planned by stupid generals. Those who survived were shocked, disillusioned and embittered by their war experiences, and saw that their real enemies were not the Germans, but the old men at home who had lied to them. They rejected the values of the society that had sent them to war, and in doing so separated their own generation from the past and from their cultural inheritance [14].

In capturing the reality of the trenches, the "Myth of the War" rejects not only "the generals and the plumes, the high abstractions, the images of heroism and glory that made war itself a value-term"[15] but also centres on the ethos of Owen's *Dulce Et Decorum Est* and "the pity of War"[16]. This narrative is built upon the idea of a shift from "naïve enthusiasm for war" to "disillusion, anger and pity" after the shock of battle,



Edward Thomas—are grouped together because they explore similar themes and contribute to a broader anti-war narrative. However, it is Owen and Sassoon who stand out as the most influential voices in shaping the enduring anti-war sentiment.

[8] Motion (2004): pp. xi.

[9] Leed (1979): pp. 25. Leed emphasizes the "loss of youth, the death, horror, and pollution of war".

[10] Terraine (1980): pp. 35. Terraine refers to the Great War as "the deadliest experience in human history".

[11] Hynes (1990): pp. ix.

[12] Winter (1995): pp. 2. Winter highlights the "new language of truth-telling" and the "aesthetics of direct experience" that enabled soldiers to convey the war's reality, far removed from the "lies" or "Big Words" of the older generations.

[13] Galer (2004): pp. 180. Galer's perspective aligns with Hynes' approach.

[14] Hynes (1990): pp. x. While Hynes depicts the British experience, which is the one I address in this paper, some elements of the narrative may also be traced in German and French works, such as Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1929) and Henri Barbusse's *Under Fire* (1916), which shows that the same story was told from different points of view and different war fronts.

[15] Hynes (1990): pp. 166.

[16] Owen (1920), Preface: pp. ix.

leading to "pacifism and protest" [17]. What had once been seen as a display of virtues like courage and self-sacrifice in Victorian and Edwardian literature is often portrayed, after World War One, as futile and senseless.

This gap between past and present, between the experiences of combatants and civilians, between older generations and the youth who fought the war reopened debates on how war should be represented. Although this anti-war viewpoint took many forms, including letters, journalistic accounts, plays, diaries, memoirs, novels, paintings and films, poetry emerged as the most suitable means for the transmission of the war experience. The voices of the men speaking directly from the trenches, from the experience of war itself, challenged and destabilised the dominant 'heroic' discourse, acting "as a counter-model" and a "centrifugal force"[18].

In this article, I draw on the "Myth of the War" in the poetry of Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon—the two defining voices of this generation of anti-war poets—as a starting point to analyse contemporary commemorative poetry. Owen and Sassoon are renowned for their depictions of the Great War as a hopeless, futile waste of life. Both served as officers, which not only deepened their sense of responsibility but gave them a vantage point on the horrors faced by their men. Sassoon, initially enthusiastic about the war, became a vocal critic of its continuation, writing "A Soldier's Declaration" in 1917, in which he condemned the prolongation of the conflict. Owen, influenced by Sassoon during their time at Craiglockhart War Hospital, would ultimately surpass his mentor, developing a unique voice that exposed 'the truth' behind the romanticised war narratives and patriotic propaganda. Owen was killed in action on November 4, 1918. Sassoon survived the war and became known for his biting satire and criticism of the establishment that prolonged the conflict.[19]



The enduring fascination with the First World War and its poets is evident in British schools, universities, academic research and the substantial body of poetry produced long after the conflict. This process of remembrance and interpretation mirrors what Maurice Halbwachs terms "collective memory" (1950-1992): the complex social mechanisms through which a society constructs and reproduces its relationship to the past. As Halbwachs explains, "the past is not preserved but is reconstructed on the basis of

[17] Rutherford (1978): pp. 65.
[18] Cooper and Hurcombe (2009): pp. 103.
[19] In truth, many voices wrote about the Great War, and while officer poets like Owen and Sassoon were a small minority, their work ultimately came to symbolise the perceived truth of the conflict.

the present". These shared frameworks of memory are "precisely the instruments used by the collective memory to reconstruct an image of the past which is in accord, in each epoch, with the predominant thoughts of the society"[20]. Given the vast array of poems, novels, plays, films, and TV series on the topic, together with commemorative events, it might be argued that the memory of the Great War has moved beyond the individual act of recall to become a collective narrative embedded within the social and cultural fabric of Britain, continuously evolving to reflect contemporary perspectives and sustain its presence across generations.

In line with this process remembrance and reinterpretation, the centenary of the First World War led to the release of new editions of First World War poetry, including collections by consecutive Poet Laureates: Andrew Motion's *First World War Poems* (2004) and Carol Ann Duffy's *1914: Poetry Remembers* (2013). These collections not only honour those who served at the Front and reflect the immense national grief of that time but strive to connect past experiences with contemporary reflections.[21] They also broaden the scope of First World War poetry by incorporating voices historically marginalized or overlooked—such as women, LGBTQ+ poets, and working-class and regional writers.[22]



Despite this broader inclusion of voices, the lasting appeal of poets like Owen, Sassoon, and their contemporaries remains strong, even a century later, drawing in new generations of readers, writers and scholars.[23] This sustained interest highlights the impact

[20] Halbwachs (1992): pp. 40.

[21] In addition to the collections from the Laureate poets, several notable anthologies were released around the centenary of the First World War: David Goldie and Roderick Watson's *From the Line: Scottish War Poetry 1914-1945* (2014), Ruth Golding's *First World War Centenary Poetry Collection* (2014), G.H. Clarke's *A Treasury of War Poetry: British and American Poems of the World War 1914-1917* (2016), Marcus Clapham's *Poetry of the First World War* (2017), Tim Kendall's *Poetry of the First World War: An Anthology* (2017), Karen McCarthy Woolf's *Unwritten: Caribbean Poems After the First World War* (2018), and *The Folio Book of War Poetry*, curated by Andrew Motion (2021).

[22] This more inclusive trend in First World War poetry began in the 1980s with the publication of several anthologies that challenged the traditional male-oriented and direct experience focus. Among these are Katherine Reilly's *Scars Upon my Heart* (1981), Dominic Hibberd and John Onions' *Poetry of the Great War* (1986), Martin Stephen's *Never Such Innocence Again* (1988), Nosheen Khan's *Women's Poetry of the First World War* (1988) and Jon Silkin's *The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry* (2006).

[23] Anti-war sentiment began resurfacing well before the centenary of the First World War and has reappeared at key moments since the conflict ended. In the 1960s and 1970s, a renewed interest in the Great War Poets, along with the publication of seminal works like Bernard Bergonzi's *Heroes' Twilight* (1965) and Paul Fussell's *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975), paralleled the anti-establishment, peace-movement atmosphere of the era. This period, which also marked the 50th

these poets have had in shaping Britain's understanding of the human cost of conflict and reflects how much of the Great War poetry continues to be associated with themes of loss, anger, and futility in the public imagination. In her introduction to *1914: Poetry Remembers*, Carol Ann Duffy acknowledges the persistence of these themes, writing that "we hear the proper note of outrage which all remembrance of the carnage of this War should contain, which the brave dead of all nations deserve, and which we hear clearly, still, in Siegfried Sassoon's declaration against 'the sufferings'" [24]. Although Sassoon faced institutionalisation and social backlash for his outspoken condemnation of the continuation of the conflict,[25] Duffy invites her contemporaries to channel a similar sense of 'rage' in their contributions to the anthology, placing their voices alongside writings from World War One to explore how their personal experiences and contemporary realities intersect with the broader narrative.

Contemporary poetry on the Great War, however, is no longer rooted in what Joan Scott calls "the authority of experience" [26], but instead draws from an interplay between the generational memory and institutionalised remembrance that have preserved the legacy of the Great War and continued to shape family histories and broader social consciousness. Written by second, third, and subsequent generations, contemporary poetry reflects on World War One from a temporal and emotional distance, engaging either with the legacy of the original war poets or addressing more recent conflicts while drawing upon the framework of the Great War. In this way, poetry becomes what Pierre Nora terms *lieu de mémoire*: a site where memories are reshaped, reinterpreted and perpetuated, "a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community"[27].



In her commission of a selection of poems for *The Guardian* on the ongoing war in Afghanistan and the Iraq inquiry, Carol Ann Duffy asserts that the duty of today's war poet is "to bear witness"[28]. This responsibility, she suggests, involves critically

anniversary of the war, sparked a cultural re-evaluation of its events. In the 1990s, the passing of the last surviving veterans and the approach of the new millennium brought another wave of anti-war reflection and academic interest in these modes of writing.

[24] Duffy (2013). Introduction: pp. 1.

[25] Officially known as "Finished with the War: A Soldier's Declaration," Sassoon's anti-war stance was written in July 1917 and later read aloud in the British House of Commons. In it, Sassoon condemned the continuation of the war, which he had initially supported as a soldier but came to see as senseless and unnecessarily prolonged for political gain rather than for any just cause.

[26] Scott (1991): pp. 780.

[27] Nora (1996-98), Preface: pp. xii.

[28] Duffy (2009), "Exit Wounds".

examining how war is mediated and represented by those removed from its direct impact. This article focuses on two poems by women who "bear witness" to the Great War, the two featured in *1914: Poetry Remembers* (2014), published during Carol Ann Duffy's tenure as Poet Laureate. The poems Carol Ann Duffy's "An Unseen," which echoes Wilfred Owen's "The Send-Off" and Jackie Kay's "Bantam," engaging with Siegfried Sassoon's "Survivors." Though these two poets did not experience the First World War firsthand, they skilfully draw on its legacy to craft retrospectively inspired poems that highlight female perspectives, showing that civilian poetry is as rich and varied as that of soldiers, and encompassing a broader range of forms, experiences, and attitudes.

While the relationship between the Great War and our contemporary age remains widely debated, with several scholars challenging Paul Fussell's idea of a distinctly ironic modern consciousness arising from the war, Duffy and Kay engage in what Fussell describes as "irony-assisted recall"[29], drawing on the fragmented, experimental forms of the Great War poets. Like their predecessors, they seek to give voice to the profound losses of World War One, addressing the historical suffering of the soldiers and the lasting impact of "the 'rats, gas, mud and blood' image of the war" on subsequent generations [30]. However, they also draw attention to voices and perspectives that have often been overlooked, marginalised, or silenced to expand our understanding of the impact of the Great War. This approach further humanises the "Myth of the War" and scrutinises the completeness and ethical implications of the "Myth of the War." By bridging past and present, Duffy and Kay engage contemporary readers through what Barbara Korte calls "sedimented images of the Great War" [31] –images that are layered, accumulated over time and continually revisited— and turn to the legacy of Owen and Sassoon, as well as real events, to craft their poems.



My contention is that Duffy and Kay transcend individual recollection to fulfil a broader social and cultural function. The poems can be read as vehicles of collective memory and examined through two theoretical frameworks: Jan and Aleida Assmann's notion of "cultural memory" (1980-1990) and Marianne Hirsch's concept of "postmemory" (2008). These frameworks highlight how memory operates as something shared, interpreted, and continuously re-evaluated. By engaging with the anti-war sentiments

[29] Fussell (1975): pp. 32.
[30] Wilson (2014): pp. 43.
[31] Korte (2001): pp. 122.

of Owen and Sassoon, Duffy and Kay prioritise the act of remembrance over the re-counting of specific wartime events. What is more, by resisting what McLoughlin calls the "emplotment" of war [32], that is the tendency to assign war a beginning and an ending, they portray the Great War as an ongoing phenomenon, one that embodies all that is negative about conflict and its aftermath and continually evokes shock, grief, and suffering.

The poems under study frame the memory of the Great War as a collective narrative embodying what Randall Stevenson calls "the perfect paradigm [...] to resist war in general" [33]. In "An Unseen," Duffy evokes Owen's unseen yet palpable grief to convey a traumatic aftermath of war that lingers long after the guns have fallen silent, not only on the Western Front but across all battlefields. Her use of the word 'unseen' highlights the truncated futures of the victims and the grief of women and civilians whose experiences are often overshadowed by dominant, male-centred narratives. Through a postmemorial lens, Jackie Kay follows in the footsteps of both Sassoon and her own grandfather to the battlefields of the Somme in "Bantam," exploring the scars borne by thousands of ordinary soldiers who survived yet remained forever haunted by their experiences, often without public acknowledgment. Together, these poets not only pay homage to Owen and Sassoon but also engage with the "Myth of the War" they helped create, one that interprets the conflict through its "open-endedness"[34]. Duffy and Kay's approach extends the impact of war beyond the battlefield and sheds light on its often overlooked and enduring legacy.



Both "An Unseen" and "Bantam" were written during what Paul Herman calls "the age of the post," a time when societies began to see themselves as moving beyond outdated frameworks that no longer met contemporary needs [35]. Yet rather than marking a clear departure from the past, Duffy and Kay reveal a connection to World War One that reflects a similar epochal mood, a comparable sense of historical continuity, likely because, as Dan Todman suggests, the Great War anticipated "many of the archetypal tensions of the modern world" [36]. Acknowledging this continuity, I will analyse "An Unseen" and "Bantam" in light of the defining features of Owen and Sassoon's anti-war poetry. The poems will be studied in direct comparison, with frequent reference back

[32] McLoughlin (2011): pp. 107.
[33] Stevenson (2013): pp. 195.
[34] McLoughlin (2011): pp. 107.
[35] Herman (2021): pp. 4.
[36] Todman (2005): pp. 223.

to Owen and Sassoon's works, as Duffy and Kay's engagement with "the Myth of the War" and its iconic imagery remains central to contemporary acts of commemoration.

## 'Has forever been then?' The Trope of 'the Unseen' and Cultural Memory in Owen and Duffy

Wilfred Owen published only five poems before his death on 4 November 1918, just one week before the Armistice.[37] "The Send-Off" was written earlier that year and included in *Poems by Wilfred Owen*, a larger selection of his work published two years later thanks to the efforts of Edith Sitwell and Siegfried Sassoon. This selection was carefully curated to portray Owen as "a tragic, selfless, talented young man whose humanism in the face of wartime atrocity spoke out from every poem" [38]. The Preface reinforces this image, asserting that Owen's concern lies more with "pity" than with "poetry" and underlining the realism at the heart of his work. Though initially not a commercial success, the 1931 edition by Edmund Blunden expanded Owen's reputation, cementing him "as the best of the British war poets, and the model to whom later poets turned when war was their subject" [39]. Later, C. Day Lewis' comprehensive edition, *The Collected Poems of Wilfred Owen* (1963), reinforced Owen's legacy as "neither a hero nor a coward, but a sacrifice" [40].



The term *shell shock* originated during the war to describe trauma initially believed to result from the shock waves of shell explosions. Wilfred Owen was admitted to Craiglockhart War Hospital in June 1917 to recover from this condition and was discharged in November of the same year. As Marzena Sokołowska-Paryż suggests, "Owen's hospitalization at Craiglockhart hospital for 'shell-shocked' officers rendered him the perfect sacrificial 'anti-hero' of the Great War" [41]. These experiences, both on the battlefield and during his recovery, shaped Owen's perspective and poetic voice. Martin Gilbert recounts his ordeal at Savy Wood in 1917 where he "led his platoon through an artillery barrage to the German trenches" and was "severely shaken by this bombardment." So much so that "he fell asleep on a railway embankment and was

[37] Wilfred Owen published "Song of Songs" and "The Next Year" in 1917 in *The Hydra*, a magazine produced by patients of Craiglockhart War Hospital, where he was being treated for shell shock. In 1918, he published "Miners," "Hospital Barge," and "Futility" in *The Nation*. Owen died in service on November 4, 1918—just one day before his promotion to full Lieutenant and seven days before the war's end.
[38] Walter (2006): pp. xxv.
[39] Hynes (1990): pp. 437
[40] Hynes (1990): pp. 437.
[41] Sokołowska-Paryż (2016): pp. 391.

blown into the air by a shell" [42]. Gilbert further adds that after "sheltering helplessly, close to the dismembered remains of another officer," Owen returned to base, where "people noticed that he was trembling, confused, and stammering" [43].

While shell shock was associated with cowardice at the time, seen as a failure to meet the ideals of bravery and resilience expected of soldiers, the evolving labels for combat stress—soldier's heart, battle fatigue, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, and Gulf War syndrome, among others—have since revealed that these disorders stem primarily from the psychological stress of battle.[44] PTSD essentially results from the unavoidable imposition on the mind of horrific events that the mind cannot control. As Allan Young explains, the syndrome is "based on the idea that intensely frightening or disturbing experiences could produce memories that are concealed in automatic behaviours, repetitive acts [hallucinations, flashbacks and other intrusive phenomena] over which the affected person exercise[s] no conscious control" [45]. The number of men diagnosed and treated as suffering from shell shock, some 80,000 during war itself, amounted to one-third of the army discharges during the war [46].



However, the term has transcended its time to shape contemporary perceptions and attitudes toward war trauma. Elaine Showalter argues that shell shock embodies "the body language of masculine complaint," a covert protest against war and the rigid ideals of masculinity [47], while Jay Winter regards it as a "metaphor" that raises "fundamental questions about the linkage between memory and identity"[48]. Either way, shell shock symbolises more than a psychological condition: it embodies the pressures of conformity, the fragility of constructed identities, and the enduring impact of trauma on personal and collective memory. Owen's war trauma made him a reliable

[42] Gilbert (1995): pp. 317.
[43] Gilbert (1995): pp. 318.
[44] Those affected by shell shock were frequently stigmatized, seen as lacking the mental fortitude required for combat, and often court-martialled as deserters or cowards, facing severe punishments for what was, in reality, a psychological injury beyond their control. For the High Command, soldiers' executions served a twofold purpose: punishing deserters and deterring similar behavior in their comrades. Typically, Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig would confirm the sentences of those condemned to death on the evening following their court-martial. A chaplain would spend the night in the cell with the condemned man, and the execution took place at dawn the next morning.
[45] Young (1996): pp. 4.
[46] Bourke (1996): pp. 109.
[47] Showalter (2009): pp. 172.
[48] Winter (2006): pp. 60-61.

spokesman for "men, whose minds the Dead have ravished," as Owen himself describes in his poem "Mental Cases."

After his release from Craiglockhart, Owen was deemed 'fit' for light duty and was stationed in Scarborough and later in Ripon. It was in Ripon—"an awful camp—huts—dirty blankets" [49]—that he rented a room near the training camp to create a space where he could write about the war. Following Siegfried Sassoon's advice, he drew upon the traumatic events that led to his shell shock and composed several poems, including "The Send-Off."[50] I addition to writing, Owen retrained as an officer and worked to rebuild his fragile mental health. On Sept 1, 1918, he began his return journey to the front, where he served until his death in combat during the final week of the war. "The Send-Off," like much of Owen's work, reflects his commitment to portraying the emotional and physical toll of war with firsthand insight, as well as his own struggles with mental health. As Guy Cuthbertson suggests: "There was a sense that the 'Send-Off' was indeed autobiographical, and Owen was already on a train journey with a final destination across the Channel"[51].



In this poem, Owen steps back from the scene, adopting what Sokołowska-Paryż describes as "the role of a compassionate observer" [52]. He depicts the departure by train of a freshly trained unit—anonymous individuals prepared for war but unrecognisable as people. The poet, and by extension the speaker, acts as a witness, embodying what Rawlinson identifies as a shift in twentieth-century war literature from heroism to bearing witness [53]. However, the speaker in "The Send-Off" struggles to fully convey the traumatic complexity of the scene, revealing the challenges involved in bridging the gap between reality and its representation. The title itself is ironic: while a "send-off" suggests celebration, it instead refers to men being sent to their deaths. Owen captures the sense of loss and uncertainty that permeates the soldiers' journey to the front, by hinting at the underlying fissures in what is intended to be a joyous farewell.

[49] Owen (1967): pp. 315.
[50] Sassoon was fundamental to Owen's recovery from shell shock and to his return to war; his friendship served the protective role that compensated for Owen's negative war experiences. Owen returned to service with a renewed confidence in his role as a communicator of the grim war realities, producing some of his most memorable poems, including "Dulce Et Decorum Est," "Insensibility," and "Strange Meeting." In 1917, he wrote to his mother, expressing satisfaction with the past year, remarking, "I go out of this year a Poet, […] as which I did not enter it" (306). For a detailed discussion of Sassoon's literary influence on Owen's poetry, see Patrick Campbell's *Siegfried Sassoon* (70-73).
[51] Cuthberston (2014): pp. 271-72.
[52] Sokołowska-Paryż (2016): pp. 390.
[53] Rawlinson (2000): pp. 11.

The soldier's faces are depicted as "grimly gay" as they march through the rural landscape, an oxymoron that conveys both their excitement and fear. The "darkening lanes" they cross likely foreshadow their sombre fate, while the personification of the "signals" and the "lamp" adds an eerie, almost conspiratorial efficiency to their deployment, hinting at the indifference of a society that quietly sends them to war.

The speaker watches as the men board the train, departing toward an unknown future with chests adorned in "white wreaths and spray," pinned by the cheering girlfriends, wives and female relatives who bid them farewell. The imagery combines flowers given for good fortune with those of a funeral wreath. Although these men strive to present themselves as a "happy battalion," an unspoken sense of mourning underlies the understated tone and sombre imagery.[54] This *ésprit de corps* has in fact become a paradox as it entails, in Eric Leed's words, "a sense of sharing, in common, the status and powerlessness of victims" [55]. The possibility of death thus casts a looming sense of grief over their departure.

Aside from the women giving flowers to the soldiers, the men's departure is observed by the railway "porters"—described as "dull" from witnessing too many farewells—and by "a casual tramp" who briefly appears, "staring hard" from the fringes. These figures serve as silent witnesses to the momentous occasion, their very ordinariness amplifying the futility of the sacrifice. The tramp's silent stare suggests impotence, incomprehension, or perhaps regret. He does not assume the role of 'victim' or 'perpetrator' but instead appears as a passive 'bystander,' unable to intervene or protest what he witnesses as an inevitable reality. In her research on the Holocaust, Kristen Monroe observes that, compared to perpetrators, bystanders tend to have low self-esteem and see themselves as passive individuals with little control over their circumstances, also perceiving themselves as low in efficacy [56]. The tramp in the poem similarly becomes a passive observer of an event portrayed as a fatalistic force beyond



[54] The term "happy battalion," as used by Liddell Hart in his Foreword to Sidney Rogerson's *Twelve Days*, highlights the prioritisation of collective identity over individualism. Hart writes, "the war, at any rate on the Western Front, was waged by Battalions, not by individuals, by bands of men who, if the spirit were right, lived in such intimacy that they became part of one another." This phrase, he explains, "has a deep meaning, for it symbolises that fellowship of the trenches—a unique and unforgettable experience for all who shared in it, redeeming the sordidness and stupidity of war by a quickening of the sense of interdependence and sympathy" (Hart, 1916: pp. xx).
[55] Leed (1979): pp. 210.
[56] Monroe (2008): pp. 712.

control, suggesting that humanity itself has lost the power to resist the blind, irrational machinery of war.

In contrast, the speaker bears a moral weight in witnessing the soldiers' departure and denouncing the fate that lies ahead and the disposability of these men, even though he remains detached from their identities—"They are not ours"—and their destination: "We never heard to which front these were sent." The soldiers are depicted as faceless figures in the crowd, their unknown identities and destination emphasising the overwhelming scale of lives sacrificed to the front lines. They appear as mere cogs, swallowed up by the war machine. In a letter to Sassoon written from France in September 1918, Owen describes his life on the anonymous front line: "And now I am among the herds again, a Herdsman; and a Shepherd of sheep that do not know my voice" [57]. The tension between being acknowledged as individuals and being submerged into the group probably holds the key to understanding the dehumanising impact of war and the anonymity felt by soldiers.

Possibly due to the devastating losses, already widely known by 1918, new reinforcements are dispatched in secrecy—"like wrongs hushed-up, they went"—and hidden in an "upland camp." The simile of the "wrongs" being "hushed-up" conveys a layered irony: the soldiers are victims of an injustice they remain unaware of, and their departure becomes a symbol of this very wrongdoing. Their concealment is not to mislead the enemy but to avoid public scrutiny, as though society itself feels shame for perpetuating the endless cycle of sacrifice. In this context, the initial enthusiasm of the soldiers becomes meaningless amid the futility that has overtaken the Western Front, especially since the devastating losses at the Battle of Somme. Fought from July to November 1916, the Somme had a profound impact on British morale and dramatically shifted public perception of the war. On the first day of the battle, July 1, 1916, approximately 57,000 British soldiers were wounded or killed, marking it as the single bloodiest day in British military history. The battle continued until November 1916, resulting in over 1 million casualties on both sides by the end. As Hynes observes, "it was the middle year of the war, and at the exact middle of the year the crucial battle began that changed British fortunes—it's almost too symmetrical" [58].



[57] Owen (1967): pp. 342.
[58] Hynes (1990): pp. 99.

The question at the end stresses the overwhelming scale of the slaughter: "Shall they return to beating of great bells/In wild train-loads?" No one knows; the future of these soldiers remains unforeseen, as they are mere replacements for those who have already been lost, destined to take their place on the front lines without much recognition or ceremony. When the speaker ominously repeats, "A few, a few, too few for drums and yells," a sense of resignation emerges, as the hope of return is eclipsed by the anticipation of the men's deaths, perhaps even Owen's own. Resignation turns to silence and solitude in the concluding lines: "May creep back, silent, to village wells,/Up half-known roads." None of these soldiers will return triumphant. They have departed in secrecy, and the "too few" survivors will likewise return in secrecy. The choice of the verb "creep" conveys an underlying sense of guilt and fear, and a profound loss of innocence.

Why do these broken men return to the "village wells"? Likely, they seek to reconnect with their former selves, the wells possibly embodying a "pre-industrial England" that, in this context, emerges as "the only repository of criteria for measuring fully the otherwise unspeakable grossness of the war" [59]. Yet the roads to this idealised past, now only "half-known" to them, reflect the disconnection that the trauma of war has placed between them and their previous lives. The simplicity of life they once knew appears irretrievably lost. In this loss, the psychological wounds inflicted by warfare reflect how an epic, heroic return, akin to Ulysses', becomes inconceivable and unattainable. As Hynes suggests, "the idea of heroic action is denied, the whole conception of the hero, and of narratives that shape the actions of such figures, is called into question. The anti-hero, the victim, the passive man—these become conventions of post-war English writing" [60]. Owen challenges "the ideas of atonement and peace that had often been associated with the homecoming tale and place(s) war trauma as the dominant literary construction" [61]. The shell-shocked war-worn return of the survivors echoes Philip Larkin's poignant statement "Never such innocence again" and reminds readers of the fragmented figures of the soldiers, and of the poem as an attempt to bear witness to a loss of innocence that can never be fully reclaimed.



Born in 1955 and active as a poet since the 1970s, Carol Ann Duffy is likely the most widely recognised British poet of our time. Serving as Poet Laureate from 2009 to

[59] Fussell (1981): pp. 268.
[60] Hynes (1990): pp. 306.
[61] Pividori (2010): pp. 90.

2019, Duffy took on the vital task of bringing back into public consciousness the war reality Owen and Sassoon had once exposed: the grim fate awaiting soldiers, the horrors endured on the Western front, the often-overlooked emotional and psychological impact of war, and the untold stories of sacrifice left unrecognised. In "Exit Wounds," she reflects: "When we think of 'war poetry,' the names of Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon come first to our lips," noting how they were "injected during schooldays like a vaccine" [62]Yet her literary strength lies in skilfully adapting this traditionally male-centred myth and history through a female perspective, one that, as Sharon Ouditt describes, would have been regarded in Owen and Sassoon's time as "war's 'other'" [63].

Unlike past Laureates, however, Duffy was anything but a "court poet"; her cultural engagement was far broader and more impactful: "her characteristically conversational style— 'democratic' to some, 'simplistic' to others—has made her work accessible to an admirably broad range of readers" [64]. She embodied, in her own words, "the music of being human, to call into question what needs to be called into question and to praise what needs to be praised" [65]. In this way, she stands alongside public intellectuals like Edward Said, who was similarly committed to truth-telling and exposing realities that often remain unseen or unspoken, embracing "the public role of the intellectual as outsider, 'amateur,' and disturber of the status quo" [66].



Duffy's poetry further supports the idea that memory is actively constructed, echoing Aleida Assmann's view that "living memory thus gives way to a cultural memory" where "new forms of memory are reconstructed within a transgenerational framework, and on an institutional level, within a deliberate policy of remembering or forgetting" [67]. By endorsing Owen and Sassoon's portrayal of the war and treating it as a "perpetual present" [68], Duffy challenges the sanitised Great War narrative, which has long relied on established tropes of heroism and gallant sacrifice while avoiding the bleak realities of the conflict. Furthermore, although Owen and Sassoon focused on the Great War, Duffy interprets their poems as representations not of a single

[62] Duffy (2009), "Exit Wounds".
[63] Ouditt (1994): pp. 217.
[64] Tolan (2010): pp. 133.
[65] Duffy qtd in Lawson (2011).
[66] Said (2012): pp. x.
[67] Assmann (2011): pp. 6.
[68] McLoughlin (2011): pp. 108.

historical event but of the universal nature of all wars. As Philip Larkin observes in regard to Owen's poetry: "in the end Owen's war is not Sassoon's war but all war; not particular suffering but all suffering; not particular waste but all waste. If his verse did not cease to be valid in 1918, it is because these things continued, and the necessity for compassion with them" [69]. Duffy's approach aligns with Jan Assmann's ideas, which build on Halbwachs' concept of collective memory, emphasising that "every individual memory constitutes itself in communication with others […] who conceive their unity and peculiarity through a common image of their past" [70].

Building on these concepts, "An Unseen" weaves a complex fabric of imagery, allusions and symbols that deliberately connect with Owen's "The Send-off," particularly in its realistic depiction of the horror and futility of war. In doing so, Duffy facilitates the transmission of a set of values and emotions that are typically associated with the "Myth of the War" onto the contemporary text, thereby adding new literary, cultural, and social meanings to Owen's poem. The two poems engage in a 'transmedial' dialogue, illustrating how the memory of war transcends time and form, and reflecting the evolving nature of cultural memory [71].



Like Owen, Duffy depicts a soldier heading off to war through vivid action verbs; however, she does so from the perspective of someone left behind—likely a wife, lover, or close family member—who, like the speaker in Owen's poem, also bears witness to the scene: "I watched love leave, turn, wave, want not to go, / depart, return." This shift in point of view brings the focus to the experience of waiting and loss and highlights the emotional turmoil that those at home endure as they watch their loved ones depart, uncertain of their return. That way, as Mary Favret suggests in connection to wartime Romantic literature, Duffy "explores an alternative but no less risky grounding for wartime: the everyday", which she associates with "a structure of feeling akin to trauma, conveying in its gaps and silences an unrecoverable, absent sense of suffering" [72].

In the poem, those who go to war embody universal emotions—love, loss, unspoken grief—rather than specific identities tied to any conflict or nation. They become symbols of the sorrow of those who stay, a grief that recurs throughout time, both "old"

[69] Larkin (1983): pp. 163.
[70] Assmann (1995): pp. 127.
[71] Erll (2011): pp. 122.
[72] Favret (2010): pp. 145.

and "new." While Duffy, like Owen, views war through the lens of futility, she brings the experiences of the non-combatants into the open, emphasising the fleeting, fragmented nature of love amid the cycles of departure and absence that war imposes—"Love was here; not; missing, love was there; each look, first, last." In doing so, she tells "a negative history of wartime" [73], exploring how those at home, how those experiencing war 'at a distance,' must hold onto these fragmented memories, aware that each moment could be both the "first" and "last" encounter with the loved one.

What the speaker describes as the soldier's journey "towards the dying time" evokes both the potential death of the soldier and the emotional "dying" endured by the loved ones left behind. While Owen portrays soldiers and battlefield experiences, Duffy acknowledges the voices of women, children and other civilians who grieve, remember, and bear the invisible scars of war without public acknowledgment. The melancholic repetition—"away, away"—intensifies the inevitability of the separation and the dislocation between home and the frontline, present and past. Wartime creates, "a more unsettled and unsettling temporality"[74], introducing a sense of time and space that is disordered and ambiguous, lacking firm boundaries.



The choice of the word "brave" to describe the soldier—a term traditionally linked with the 'Big Words'—here carries an ironic, bittersweet tone instead, as bravery becomes entangled with separation and loss.[75] This sentiment is intensified by images of "the song dwindling" and the soldier walking "to the edge of absence," which highlight love's losing battle and the void created by departure. Yet Duffy's rhetorical approach introduces a paradox: She makes it possible to separate individual valour from institutional failure and finds a way to critique the war without undermining the cultural and moral significance of personal sacrifice. As Todman observes when discussing pacifist writing, "it was almost a prerequisite for criticism of the war's management to emphasise the bravery and dignity of those who had died; their sacrifice could not be robbed of meaning" [76]. By framing the soldier as "brave," Duffy is able to maintain a narrative

[73] Favret (2010): pp. 145.
[74] Favret (2010): pp. 5.
[75] The term "Big Words" refers to the title of a poem by Robert Graves included in *The Muse in Arms* (1917), edited by E.B. Osborn, where the poet, speaking as a soldier required to "go over the top," reflects that abstract pre-war ideals like Valour, Honour, and Glory have lost their meaning as tangible ideals. In this moment, "waiting to attack," the soldier "cursed, he prayed, sweated, wished the proud words back". Robert Darby suggests that the "big words" questioned by Graves represent what Paul Fussell describes as "high diction." See Darby (2002): pp. 317-318.
[76] Todman (2005): pp. 134.

of dignity and purpose, ensuring that the sacrifices of these men—including Owen's—retain inherent worth and preventing them from being perceived merely as casualties of futility or waste. Thus, the traditional heroic narrative serves both as a shield and a lens, allowing for a dialogue between remembrance and critique.

The notion that each moment slips away into "all moments going, gone" suggests the relentless progression of time and echoes Favret's idea that "a mediated war sets in motion various and conflicting senses of time, and unsettled times, unleash unsettled feelings" [77]. When the Great War is experienced indirectly—through reports, letters, or poetry, as in Duffy's case—the perception of time becomes fractured and emotionally charged, intensifying feelings of impermanence as the usual continuity of time is disrupted. This aligns with the idea that war "remains both strange and familiar" to those who experience it at a distance [78]. Duffy's mediation of the Great War blurs historical and present-day experiences; her culturally inherited views carry echoes of unresolved past tensions, intertwining the familiar with the unfamiliar and connecting past conflicts with present reflections.



The shift to a solemn memorial at the end of the poem, where rain symbolises persistent, almost ritualistic mourning, embodies the enduring grief of both combatants and civilians and perhaps echoes Duffy's own sentiments: "For me, the loss of Owen as a poet during the First World War is a continuing poetic bereavement each time I read him" [79]. The speaker seems to seek solace in "the carved names of the lost," yearning for consolation in a space where loss is openly acknowledged. The "carved names" convey a sense of permanence, with identities and sacrifices etched into collective memory.

For those like Duffy, who are culturally or historically linked to the Great War without direct involvement, elements of reconciliation and commemoration[80] often blend with commodification[81]. Reconciliation suggests that memory serves to transcend conflicts and foster social coexistence by reconciling with the past. However, Andreas Huyssen critiques this "monumental seduction" in contemporary aesthetics, arguing that an excess of monuments commemorating traumatic events might ironically render them

[77] Favret (2010): pp. 11-12.
[78] Favret (2010): pp. 5.
[79] Duffy (2013), "Poems on War".
[80] Huyssen (1999): pp. 191-207.
[81] Landsberg (2004): pp.143-47.

invisible, ultimately counteracting their intended purpose [82], perhaps a subtle point Duffy conveys through this line.

There is a permeating sense of regret when the speaker acknowledges "love's child uttered, unborn, only by rain, then and now, all future past," which might suggest the presence of unfulfilled potential: the life and future that could have been if not for the war. This unborn child, "uttered only by rain," mirrors the intangible, ghostly presences of loved ones who might have existed if the war had not taken them. The idea that "all future (is) past, an unseen" suggests the invisibility of individual lives lost to war, as well as the cyclical nature of conflict. Duffy suggests that the future is being already consumed by the past, as if the fates of soldiers are predetermined by the endless repetitions of history.

The final lines—"Has forever been then? Yes, forever has been"—echo a profound melancholic state in which those who experience war, whether as combatants or non-combatants, find themselves immersed in its aftermath. These lines imply that, as Cathy Caruth argues, "the story of trauma… far from telling of an escape from reality—the escape from a death, or from its referential force—rather attests to its endless impact on a life" [83]. Trauma and grief persist across generations, and the impact of war seeps into both present experiences and imagined futures, blurring the boundaries between "then and now." As Caruth adds, "the shape of individual lives, the history of the traumatized individual, is nothing other than the determined repetition of the event of destruction"[84]. War trauma thus is not confined to a single moment in time but reverberates indefinitely, shaping identities and narratives long after the actual events have passed.



The trope of "the unseen" represents not only the literal invisibility of individual sacrifices and their metaphorical fading from memory—as if these stories were destined to remain untold and unacknowledged, except through the poet's ethical act of justice and respect in giving them voice—but also speaks to the position of Duffy, and also of the speaker, as witnesses in the poem. The speaker, assumed to be a woman mourning the loss of her loved one, embodies the memory that preserves the voice of those who cannot speak. She remains on the periphery of the wartime narrative, her sacrifices

[82] Huyssen (1999): pp.193.
[83] Caruth (1996): pp. 7.
[84] Caruth (1996): pp. 63.

unnoticed and her experiences hidden from collective memory. Yet Duffy's imagination overcomes the obstacles of mediation, creating a sense of immediacy that accounts for the unseen impact of war on individuals, especially those denied the status of heroes or victims. Duffy's reinterpretation of Owen's work can be read as an act of resistance, seeking to give voice to the silent and silenced, and to bring those who have been marked permanently by the invisible scars of war back into the space of representation.

## Boys like the Bantams: Postmemory and the Overlooked Legacies of War in Sassoon and Kay

Born into a wealthy Anglo-Jewish family, Siegfried Sassoon enjoyed a privileged upbringing in Kent, leading a life of comfort and affluence. He embodied the lifestyle of a traditional English gentleman, spending his days foxhunting, playing cricket and golf, and writing verse. After attending Marlborough College, he went on to study history at Cambridge. Reflecting on his school days, he describes Marlborough as an idealised world where he saw himself as a hero: "I had felt a hero when I was lying awake on the floor of the Town Hall on the first night of the war" [85]. This early sense of heroism motivated him to enlist the day World War One broke out. Shortly afterward, he was commissioned as an officer and quickly earned a reputation for bravery on the battlefield, eventually being awarded the Military Cross. Known for his fierce determination on the front lines, Sassoon earned the nickname "Mad Jack" for his audacious, near-suicidal assaults against enemy positions, once even storming a German trench single-handedly.



While fighting on the front lines, Sassoon was confronted with the bitter realities of trench warfare, which fostered his anti-war sentiments and ultimately transformed him into a conscientious objector. In 1917, he issued a public statement condemning the war, which he believed was being prolonged for political interests rather than out

[85] Sassoon (1928): pp. 235. Sassoon wrote a memoir trilogy that blends autobiography with fiction, chronicling his journey from rural life to the front lines and beyond. The first volume, *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man*, published anonymously in 1928, introduces the character of George Sherston and ends with his arrival at the front. The second volume, *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer* (1930), details Sherston's wartime experiences up to his bold act of defiance against military authority. The final volume, *Sherston's Progress* (1936), follows Sherston to Craiglockhart, where he meets Dr. W.H.R. Rivers. Sassoon's identity as a poet is left out of the trilogy, leading Paul Fussell to argue that these works should be regarded as fiction. However, it is clear that Sassoon's own experiences shape the narrative, making his personal journey the central focus throughout the trilogy.

of military necessity.[86] The account of George Sherston's "wilful defiance of military authority" in *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer* closely mirrors Sassoon's own actions in May 1917, when he publicly voiced his anti-war stance, encouraged by Bertrand Russell. In this protest, Sherston (Sassoon's fictional counterpart) criticises the political motives behind the war, which he views as a conflict driven by "aggression and conquest;" he argues that the suffering of soldiers is being "deliberately prolonged" for "evil and unjust" ends [87]. For his dissent, Sherston—like Sassoon— faced a court-martial, but his friend "David Cromlech" (a fictionalised Robert Graves), intervened, arranging for a medical board to attribute Sherston's defiance to "shell-shock."[88]

While *The Old Huntsman* (1917) introduced Siegfried Sassoon as a powerful new voice in poetry, celebrated for its originality and authenticity, it was with *Counter-Attack and Other Poems* (1918) that his satirical edge fully emerged. As Daniel Hipp notes, Sassoon's war poetry is often analysed "by focusing upon its satiric and ironic strategies" [89]. His poem "Survivors," featured in *Counter-Attack*, is an example of the bitterness and disillusionment of his later style. It was his own wartime experiences that transformed Sassoon's perspective and style; his early idealistic romanticism gave way to a stark, satirical critique of the horrors of war and the complacency of those who supported it from a distance. This transformation is evident in the tonal shift between his earlier and later works: from the hopeful assertion that "war has made us wise" in "Absolution" (*The Old Huntsman*) to the desperate cry, "O Jesus, make it stop!" in "Attack" (*Counter-Attack*).



"Survivors" was written during Sassoon's stay at Craiglockhart and was directly inspired by his experiences there.[90] As Patrick Campbell notes, it "is the only

[86] The loss of his brother Hamo and his friend David Thomas, as well as his involvement with the Bloomsbury group—Lady Ottoline Morrell, and the pacifists—may have also contributed to his anti-war declaration. Sassoon describes the encounter with Lady Ottoline in *Siegfried's Journey* (pp.7-11) and Rupert Hart-Davis includes Lady Ottoline's diary entry in Sassoon's *Diaries* (pp.103).

[87] Sassoon (1930): pp. 224-25.

[88] Refer to Chapter 24 of Robert Graves' *Goodbye to All That* for his perspective on this episode. Graves admired Sassoon as one of the bravest men he knew, yet he also recognised Sassoon's deep disillusionment with war, observing that Sassoon "varied between happy warrior and bitter pacifist" (pp. 286). This duality captures the internal conflict that defined Sassoon's experience—his courage on the battlefield coexisting with a fierce rejection of the brutality and injustice of the war.

[89] Hipp (2005): pp. 153.

[90] Owen's "Mental Cases" also depicts shell-shocked victims of battle, and while he may have had "Survivors" in mind when writing it that spring, no direct borrowings are evident. See Patrick Campbell (2007): pp. 72-73).

Craiglockhart poem to be prompted, not by Sassoon's 'anti-war complex' or his memories of the trenches, but by life among the inmates of 'Dottyville'" [91]. At Craiglockhart, Sassoon was treated by Dr. W.H.R. Rivers, a pioneering Freudian psychologist who encouraged him to confront rather than repress his trauma. Rivers met with Sassoon for hour-long sessions every other evening[92]. Given Sassoon's stable condition, he was granted considerable freedom, and spent time socialising, writing, and bonding with fellow patients, especially Wilfred Owen [93]. This friendship proved transformative, deeply influencing the work and legacy of both poets.

Sassoon's empathy for Owen was hard-won, as he initially struggled to connect with the other patients at Craiglockhart, whom he called his "fellow breakdowns" [94]. He found it difficult to reconcile his own experience with those he perceived as weaker and more vulnerable: "After all, I haven't broken down; I've only broken out" [95]. As a decorated soldier, Sassoon viewed the patients' struggles as cowardice or psychological weakness: "My fellow-patients are 160 more or less dotty officers. A great many of them are degenerate-looking. A few are genuine cases of shell-shock etc." [96]. Nevertheless, he hoped to find "some splendid details for future use" [97], which he would later incorporate into "Survivors."



By the time he wrote "Survivors," Sassoon's perspective had significantly softened, shaped by his interactions with Rivers, Owen and others at Craiglockhart, as well as his own emerging mental struggles.[98] Just before his release in November 1917, he was

[91] Campbell (2007): pp. 165. "Dottyville" was Siegfried Sassoon's nickname for Craiglockhart War Hospital in Edinburgh. Sassoon used this term to reflect his critical view of the atmosphere of the hospital and the treatment of war neuroses. For more information, consult Thomas E. F. Webb's article, "'Dottyville'—Craiglockhart War Hospital and Shell-Shock Treatment in the First World War," published in the *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine,* in July 2006.
[92] Hipp (2005): pp. 168.
[93] Hipp (2005): pp. 168.
[94] Sassoon (1936): pp. 523.
[95] Sassoon (1936): pp. 523.
[96] Sassoon (1983): pp. 183.
[97] Sassoon (1983): pp. 183.
[98] Sassoon developed a deep admiration for Dr. Rivers, and the two became close friends. As Ben Shephard notes, "their relationship [was] coloured by Rivers' repressed homosexuality and Sassoon's increasingly confident avowal of his own". See Shepard (2001): pp. 89. Although initially reluctant to be treated by Rivers, Sassoon's later memories of the doctor often verge on hero-worship. He was profoundly grateful for Rivers' influence, as the doctor not only helped him reconcile his crisis over the war but also deepened his self-awareness as both a war poet and a homosexual. With his "gentle assurance of helpfulness," Rivers became Sassoon's "father-confessor" See Sassoon (1936): pp. 35. Although Rivers ultimately persuaded Sassoon to return to war despite his anti-war stance, it was also

still haunted by recurring nightmares, envisioning himself back at the front: "The War is still going on and I have got to return to the front. I complain bitterly to myself because it hasn't stopped yet. I am worried because I can't find my active-service kit" [99]. Despite this new awareness, Sassoon's critique of social and institutional misconceptions about war trauma remains steeped in irony. His anger is evident in the poem's title: though the soldiers in the poem have physically 'survived,' they are psychologically shattered, struggling to 'live' in any meaningful sense. Burdened by survivor's guilt, many see themselves, in Winter's words, as "survivors perched on a mountain of corpses"[100], inhabiting a liminal space between life and death. Far from triumph, their survival has left them hollow, disconnected from society and haunted by their memories.

The opening line of the poem— "No doubt they'll soon get well"— is also laced with irony, reflecting not only Sassoon's scepticism toward the idea that psychological wounds simply heal with time, but also exposing the tension between military demands and the well-being of the soldiers. Peter Leese describes this tension as a "confrontation between discipline and welfare" [101], where the urgent need for manpower often took precedence over medical concerns for the soldiers' mental health. War trauma is a complex condition that cannot be easily overcome or 'cured,' yet the psychological treatments of the time prioritised the control of the symptoms over genuine healing, aiming to return soldiers to combat quickly. This emphasis on superficial recovery is sharpened by the line "Of course they're longing to go out again," which mocks both the assumption that soldiers wanted to return, and the romanticised ideals promoted by public schools, with their focus on classics and cadet activities [102]. Such education often sent young men to the front with unrealistic expectations, only to be shattered by the horrors they faced.



Sassoon felt a compelling urge to rejoin his comrades, driven not by romantic notions of battle but by a deep sense of loyalty. At Craiglockhart, he was able to truly relate to the soldiers at the front, writing, "Those men, so strangely isolated from ordinary

Rivers who later guided him away from it: "I knew then that I had been very lonely while I was at the War; I knew that I had a lot to learn, and that he was the only man who could help me" See Sassoon (1936): pp. 149.

[99] Sassoon (1936): pp. 69.

[100] Winter (1985): pp. 17.

[101] Leese (2002): pp. 36

[102] Paris (2000): pp. 76.

comforts in the dark desolation of murderously-disputed trench-sectors, were more to me than all the despairing and war-weary civilians"[103]. This bond intensifies his guilt for leaving them: "And still the memory of the Company haunts me and wrings my heart, and I hear them saying, 'When's the Captain coming back?' It seems as if there's nothing to go back to in England as long as the War goes on"[104]. The shared experience of combat creates a unique, almost secret bond among soldiers, described by Leed as "a sense of having a collective, 'clandestine' self, which could not be made visible to those 'outside' the war" [105]. Speaking of "the survivors," Sassoon claims that those who fought together, carry "something in our heads that belongs to us alone, and to those we left behind in battle"[106]. This 'conspiracy of silence' among soldiers bearing incommunicable knowledge is echoed in Owen's "truth untold" and Sassoon's "proud-surging melodies of joy."[107]

Sassoon's depiction of shell shock symptoms in the poem—"stammering, disconnected talk"—shows how trauma can manifest physically, disrupting both speech and mental coherence. Unlike "these boys with old, scared faces" who are "learning to walk," Sassoon does not suffer from such impairments. The contrast between "boys" with "old" stresses the unnatural transformation war imposes, leaving these men in a fragile, vulnerable state that requires both physical and mental rehabilitation. Yet, Sassoon does share their "haunted nights," enduring flashbacks, night terrors, and the persistent intrusion of wartime horrors into sleep. Together, they also bear "the subjection to the ghosts of friends who died," forming a 'community of the dead' haunted by "dreams that drip with murder."



Sassoon dismantles the notion of "glorious war," portraying it as a force that "shatter'd" men rather than uplifted them. This "shattering" is profound, fracturing not only their pride but also their spirits and sense of self. Far from a source of honour, war leaves them damaged and disillusioned. In the final lines, Sassoon shows how war destroys human beings—"men who went out to battle, grim and glad"—reducing them

[103] Sassoon (1936): pp. 21
[104] Sassoon (1936): pp. 146.
[105] Leed (1979): pp. 113
[106] Sassoon (1930): pp. 175.
[107] See Owen's "Strange Meeting" and Sassoon's "Secret Music." The existence of this secret bond in Great War poetry may also be connected with the jealous secrecy maintained by Uranian poets. As Martin Taylor observes, they used "a special vocabulary of words like 'exquisite,' 'secret,' 'strange,' 'sin,' 'smile' and 'mystery,' which helped to produce and aura of exclusivity and the concept of a secret knowledge only to be understood by the initiated". See Taylor (1998): pp. 49.

to shadows of their former selves. By describing them as "children, with eyes that hate you, broken and mad," he underscores both their vulnerability and the way combat has left them shattered and childlike, bearing not only physical scars but also a deep, haunting bitterness.

Influenced by Rivers and possibly driven by a need to validate the principles behind his conscientious objection and his poetry, Sassoon felt obliged to share in the sufferings of those for whom he had spoken out: "going back to the War as soon as possible was my only chance of peace" [108]. He rejoined the Royal Welch Fusiliers in December 1917 and spent March and April in the Middle East with the 25th Battalion. Although he continued to view "the futility of war as much as ever," it was "the patience and simple decency" of the ordinary soldier that compelled him to stay at the front [109]. His friend Julian Dadd observes that "[he] had a bit of a Bertrand Russell in [him] as well as a V.C", which captures the unique blend of intellectual dissent and courage that defined Sassoon's character.

Neither Sassoon nor Owen considered themselves radical pacifists—they were both decorated soldiers—yet they condemned the psychological and physical devastation experienced by the ordinary men at the front.[110] By doing so, they made history more accessible, breaking it down into more diverse voices. Stoughton Lynd argues that this approach not only reveals unseen stories of the poor and the oppressed but also challenges conventional historical narratives [111]. Viewing history as "histories from below" or as "people's histories" opens new ways of understanding the past, attempting to move away from history and memory and offering 'histories' that depart from traditional accounts.[112]



[108] Sassoon (1936): pp. 35.
[109] Sassoon (1936): pp. 98.
[110] Owen writes to his mother, "I hate washy pacifists as temperamentally as I hate whiskied prussianists. Therefore I feel that I must first get some reputation of gallantry before I could successfully and usefully declare my principles" See Owen (1967): pp. 282. This reflects his understanding that a soldier who has shown courage in combat is more likely to be taken seriously when critiquing the war.
[111] Lynd (2014): pp. xi
[112] The approach was heavily influenced by historians like E.P. Thompson, whose seminal work, *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963), highlighted the experiences of working-class individuals and communities, and demonstrated their agency and cultural development during the Industrial Revolution. Eric Hobsbawm and the Annales School (notably Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre) also contributed to this trend by emphasising economic, social, and cultural factors over traditional political narratives.

Sassoon's focus on amplifying marginalised voices and challenging dominant narratives finds a parallel in Jackie Kay's work. Like Carol Ann Duffy, Kay is a celebrated Scottish poet—she was the Makar, the poet laureate of Scotland, from 2016 to 2021—known for her deeply personal approach, often exploring themes of identity, family, and heritage. Born in Edinburgh to a Scottish mother and Nigerian father, Kay was adopted at birth by a white Scottish couple and raised in Glasgow—a background that has profoundly shaped her literary voice. Deeply interested in overlooked or forgotten stories, Kay draws on her family's history in *Bantam*, a collection of poems "bound together by a generous, humane spirit which encompasses childbirth, loving memories of her parents and grandparents, gratitude to the generations which fell in two world wars and the vision of an open, welcoming Scotland" [113]. Her grandfather's traumatic experiences during World War One, in particular, has allowed her to explore the lasting impact of war across generations.

Her work is imbued with what Marianne Hirsch defines as "postmemory" and its ethical and aesthetic implications. Hirsch defines "postmemory" as the indirect, second-hand knowledge of historical or collective traumas by subsequent generations, such as children and grandchildren of survivors. According to Hirsch, these events are indirectly "remembered" through "haunting post-memories" like "stories, images, and behaviours among which they grew up"[114]. Hirsch notes that "postmemory" is less about actual recall and more about imaginative creation [115], extending the idea beyond familial connections to "affiliative" identification. This includes not only trauma passed down within families but also its "horizontal transmission" to those seeking an emotional link with past events [116]. Dorian Stuber highlights that the "post" in "postmemory" is not merely a weak imitation of the original experience, but rather a significant experience in its own right, adding layers of meaning like a post-it note on a document [117]. Hirsch's form of memory, transmitted through family stories and inherited emotions, allows Kay to connect intimately with events she did not personally experience but feels profoundly.



One of the poems in *Bantam*, also titled "Bantam," was also included in Duffy's *1914: Poetry Remembers* as a response to Sassoon's "Survivors," probably due to Kay's long-

[113] Mabbott (2017), "Paperback Reviews"
[114] Hirsch (2008): pp. 106-107.
[115] Hirsch (2008): pp. 114.
[116] Hirsch (2008): pp. 114-15.
[117] Stuber (2013): pp.1.

held admiration for "Sassoon's poetry [as] among the most powerful of the war poets" [118]. Crafting "Bantam," Kay engages in what she describes "as a kind of handshake to the past, and to the survival of war poetry itself"[119], blending her personal family history with the broader cultural memory of the Great War. Her deliberate choice to write in a form reminiscent of Sassoon's poetry, with an approximate rhyme that connects the battle-scarred Somme with the Scots word "airm" (meaning arm), further emphasizes this intergenerational link. Discussing Scottish poets and multiplicity, Nancy Gish highlights Kay's use of oral form and "self-conscious play on voices, dialects and discourses" that "destabilizes any notion of a consistent unified self" [120]. This thematic layering is closely tied to the oral tradition, which, as Harry Cochrane points out, is "at the heart of *Bantam*: with an abundance of whole poems, words and snatches of speech in Scots, and with a shortage of tight forms and elaborate sentence construction, it seems a book written for the ear" [121]. "Bantam" exemplifies Kay's playful engagement with oral traditions and the complexities of Scottish identity, creating an intimate, almost audible experience that feels both personal and immediate.

The subheading "My father at 87 remembers his father at 17" works as a paratextual element that grounds the poem in Kay's personal life. Postmemory shapes Kay's portrayal of her grandfather, Joseph Kay, a survivor of the Great War like Sassoon, linking the poem to her family history and reflecting on generational memory and relationships within her lineage: A son looking back at his father's experience of the war, or perhaps a daughter observing her father's reflections on her grandfather's war experiences years later. As Jackie Kay puts it: "My grandfather, my father's father, Joseph Kay was sent to war at the age of 17. He was wounded in the Somme and a prisoner of war for nearly a year. He fought with the Highland Light Infantry" [122]. The poem recounts Joseph Kay's weight loss as a prisoner of war—"as a prisoner, my faither's weight fell"—suggesting a loss beyond the physical, a depletion of spirit and resilience. Kay speaks to an inner erosion, the kind that neither food nor rest can restore. The idea of weight loss here transcends the merely physical.



The repeated use of diminutive imagery—"small," "wee men," "small chickens"—suggests that war is reducing the men, chipping away at their humanity and individuality.

[118] Kay (2013), "Poems on War."
[119] Kay (2013), "Poems on War."
[120] Gish (2003): pp. 268.
[121] Cochrane (2018), "War Words".
[122] Kay (2013), "Poems on War."

This erosion makes the title, "Bantam," all the more striking, as it brings attention the impact of war in stripping away selfhood. A bantam is a small, feisty breed of chicken, tiny yet fierce. When the speaker states, "it wisnae men they sent tae war" but "boys like the Bantams," they may be referring to how soldiers were seen—small, insignificant, mere cogs in the war machine—or perhaps emphasising their fighting spirit. It is likely both; these young, underestimated men harbour a deep resilience, fighting for survival with fierce inner strength.

Like Sassoon, Kay condemns the hypocrisy of war, where young boys are prematurely aged into "these boys with their old, scared faces." She imagines Sassoon himself "would have been haunted by the Bantams too, wee boys picked to fight, sent to battle 'grim and glad'"[123]. Yet, her use of Scots introduces a cultural jolt, creating a distinctive local voice that challenges readers who have internalised RP (Received Pronunciation) as the dominant form and pushes them to engage with a different cultural framework.[124] Kay emphasises the deep ties between language, place, identity, and belonging, while her use of Scots reflects her complex positioning within the Scottish landscape: "If you are brought up in a place, you get that identity very, very fixedly. […] So although I was steeped in Scottish culture, of which I'm very appreciative, I never had any sense of Black culture at all, until I went about finding that and creating that for myself"[125]. Through her deliberate and thoughtful manipulation of various ways of speaking and modes of expression, Kay asserts affiliation and belonging while presenting a fluid, multifaceted sense of self. The quest for a space of identification is central to Kay's poetry; her sense of in-betweenness or liminality, along with her choice of Scots over English, reflects not only her focus on the fluidity of identity but also her generic versatility.[126]



[123] Kay (2013), "Poems on War."

[124] RP, or Received Pronunciation, is a standard British English accent historically linked to the upper class and commonly used by broadcasters and in formal settings. Often called "BBC English" or "the Queen's English," RP is not associated with any particular region but has long been viewed as a prestigious or "neutral" British accent. However, it is less prevalent today, as regional accents and dialects have become more widely accepted and represented in British media and culture. Jackie Kay seeks to reflect this shift, embracing a regional voice that resonates with a broader, more diverse readership.

[125] Wilson and Sommerville-Arjat (2001): pp. 122.

[126] "Bantam" is not the only poem in which Kay reclaims forgotten identities and experiences. In the six special poems honouring Arthur Roberts, the first known Black Scottish soldier to serve in World War One, Kay engages with themes of postmemory, Scottish identity, and remembrance. Roberts's story had remained unacknowledged until Kay uncovered documents in a house in Glasgow confirming his existence and military service, bringing his contributions into the light. By reclaiming his place in history, Kay vindicates the role of poetry in bridging personal and collective memory, intertwining the layered experiences of race, heritage, and belonging within Scotland's cultural landscape. Through her

The final lines connect the theme of war to Kay's family history— "And years later, the shrapnel fray the Somme/Shot oot, a wee jewel hidden in his left airm"— highlighting the lasting impact of war, with the shrapnel in Kay's grandfather's arm symbolising the enduring, painful memories of conflict. Kay notes that only "after the second world war, in 1946" did her "grandfather's arm suddenly swelled, and the shrapnel was lifted clean out of that old wound" [127]. The "wee jewel" suggests something small yet significant, a physical reminder of the past, a symbol of how war clings long after the fighting ends. This unwanted 'souvenir' embodies both physical and emotional scars; years later, the war is still a part of Joseph Kay, a haunting reminder that the wounds of war, both visible and invisible, never truly fade.

Departing from Freud's concept of "repetition compulsion," Cathy Caruth argues that traumatic experiences are displaced and compulsively repeated in the present because they cannot be fully mastered or located in time. The "belatedness" or "latency" of the traumatic experience suggests that trauma holds the present captive to an unrepresentable past, moving from the trauma itself to survival, and then to the different forms of representation [128]. The ongoing nature of the Great War makes it necessary to find new ways to acknowledge its inherent latency, and the shrapnel serves as a metaphor for this latency, a visceral reality that fuels Jackie Kay's poetic response. Inspired by war poetry, especially that of Siegfried Sassoon, Kay envisions the shrapnel as a symbol of the enduring wounds of war, transcending time and place to impact descendants who, like herself, feel a deep, almost haunted connection to ancestral struggles. Through a postmemorial approach, Kay not only pays tribute to her grandfather's resilience but also highlights the role of poetry as a vehicle for survival, inclusivity and remembrance.



## Conclusions

"All wars are fought twice, the first time on the battlefield, the second time in memory," writes Pulitzer Prize-winning author and refugee Viet Thanh Nguyen. As the world witnesses the war in Ukraine and the genocide in Gaza, the nature of modern warfare appears fundamentally transformed: war has never felt so close, visceral, and

tribute to Roberts, and to her own grandfather, Kay emphasises the importance of recognising marginalised histories within the broader narrative of Scottish identity (See Jackie Kay's documentary *A Scottish Soldier* on BBC Four).

[127] Kay (2013), "Poems on War."

[128] Caruth (1995): pp. 7-8.

pervasive. Similarly, the ways conflicts are reported, remembered, and represented have transformed. Today, two wars unfold simultaneously: one fought with tanks, drones, and artillery on the ground, and another waged in the realm of words. Increasingly, it is this 'second war'—the battle of words, memory and meaning—that may have the most enduring impact. This 'fight' unfolds as societies, survivors, and future generations attempt to make sense of the meaning of war, reshaping its legacy through journalism, literature, and cultural narratives.

In this context of memory and meaning making, this article has examined Carol Ann Duffy and Jackie Kay's reimagining of the Great War through the poetry of Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sasson, drawing on Jan and Aleida Assmann's "cultural memory" and Marianne Hirsch's "postmemory" as theoretical frameworks. Both poets have actively engaged in this 'second war' of memory by endorsing and extending Owen and Sassoon's portrayal of the Great War and treating it as a "perpetual present." They reinterpret what Samuel Hynes calls the "Myth of the War," a narrative that critiques the glorification of conflict, depicting war as futile, tragic, and deeply traumatic. This approach marks a clear departure from earlier views of war as a source of honour, heroism or adventure. By framing war as an ongoing process, Duffy and Kay bridge historical and contemporary anti-war perspectives, exploring how the remembrance and representation of war can shape the perceptions of generations far removed from the events themselves.



This article has argued that Duffy and Kay use thematic parallels, recurring motifs and intertextual references to Owen and Sassoon's poetry to challenge readers to confront the complex legacy of war and the role of poetry as a vehicle for collective memory. Through these strategies, the poets critique, memorialise, and preserve the layered, intergenerational experiences of conflict. In doing so, they reaffirm the enduring power of poetry to bear witness to war, promote a more complex understanding of its historical and emotional dimensions, and resist reductive or sanitised narratives.

## Works Cited

Assmann, Aleida (2011), *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization: Functions, Media, Archives*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Assmann, Jan (1995), "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," *New German Critique*, no. 65, Durham: Duke University Press, pp. 125–133.

Bourke, Joanna (1996), *Dismembering the Male: Men's Bodies, Britain and the Great War*, London: Reaktion Books.

Campbell, Patrick (2007), *Siegfried Sassoon: A Study of the War Poetry*, Jefferson: McFarland.

Caruth, Cathy (1996), *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

— (1995) "Trauma and Experience", *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* Edited by Cathy Caruth. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Cochrane, Harry (2018), "War Words: Review of *Bantam*" *TLS,* 6 July. < https://www.the-tls.co.uk/literature/poetry-literature/war-words> Accessed 30 Oct, 2024.

Cooper, Nicola, and Martin Hurcombe (2009), "Introduction. The Figure of the Soldier," *Journal of War and Culture Studies*, vol. 2, no. 2, pp. 103–104.

Cuthbertson, Guy (2014), *Wilfred Owen*, New Haven: Yale University Press, pp. 271 272.

Darby, Robert (2002), "Oscillations on the Hotspur-Falstaff Spectrum: Paul Fussell and the Ironies of War," *War in History*, vol. 9, no. 3, pp. 307–331.

Duffy, Carol Ann, Editor (2013), 1914: *Poetry Remembers*, London: Faber & Faber.

— (2009), "Exit Wounds," *The Guardian*, 25 July, <www.theguardian.com/books/2009/jul/25/war-poetry-carol-ann-duffy>, Accessed 26 Oct, 2024.

— (2013) "Poems on war: Carol Ann Duffy is inspired by Wilfred Owen" *The Guardian*, 26 October, < https://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/oct/26/carol-ann-duffy-wilfred-owen-war-poem> Accessed 26 Oct, 2024.

Erll, Astrid (2011), *Memory in Culture*, Translated by Sara B. Young, London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Favret, Mary A. (2010), *War at a Distance: Romanticism and the Making of Modern Wartime*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Fussell, Paul (1974), *The Great War and Modern Memory*, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1981.

Galer, Graham (2004), "Myths of the Western Front," *Global Society*, vol. 18, no. 2, pp. 175–195.

Gilbert, Martin (1995), *The First World War*, London: HarperCollins Publishers.

Gish, Nancy (2003), "Complexities of Subjectivity", *Assembling Alternatives: Reading Postmodern Poetries Transnationally*. Edited by Romana Huk, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press.

Halbwachs, Maurice (1992), *On Collective Memory*, Edited and translated by Lewis A. Coser, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Hart, B.H. Liddell (1988), Foreword. *Twelve Days on the Somme: A Memoir of the Trenches,* 1916, by Sydney Rogerson, Barnsley: Gliddon.

Hibberd, Dominic, and John Onion (1986), *Poetry of the Great War: An Anthology*, London: Macmillan.

Hipp, Daniel (2005), *The Poetry of Shell Shock: Wartime Trauma and Healing* in Wilfred Owen, Ivor Gurney and Siegfried Sassoon, Jefferson: McFarland.

Huyssen, Andreas (1999), "Monumental Seduction," *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present*, edited by Mieke Bal, Jonathan Crewe, and Leo Spitzer, Hanover: University Press of New England, pp. 191–207.

Hynes, Samuel (1990), *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture*, London: Pimlico, 1992.

Kay, Jackie (2017), *Bantam.* London, Pan Macmillan.

— (2013) "Poems on war: Jackie Kay is inspired Siegfried Sassoon" *The Guardian*, 26 October 2013, < https://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/oct/26/jackie-kay-siegfried-sassoon-war-poem> Accessed 26 Oct, 2024.

Korte, Barbara (2001), "The Grandfathers' War: Re-imagining World War I in British Novels and Films of the 1990s," *Retrovisions: Reinventing the Past in Film and Fiction*, edited by Deborah Cartmell, I.Q. Hunter, and Imelda Whelehan, London: Pluto Press, pp. 120–134.

Landsberg, Alison (2004), *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture*, New York: Columbia University Press.

Larkin, Philip (1983), *Required Writing: Miscellaneous Pieces 1955–1982*, London: Faber and Faber.
Lawson, Mark (2011), "Poet Laureate Carol Ann Duffy," *Interview, Front Row*, BBC Radio 4, 30 Sept.
Leed, Eric J. (1979), *No Man's Land: Combat and Identity in World War I*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP.
Leese, Peter (2002), *Shell Shock: Traumatic Neurosis and the British Soldiers of the First World War*, London: Palgrave Macmillan.
Limon, John (1994), *Writing After War: American War Fiction from Realism to Postmodernism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lynd, Staughton (2014), *Doing History from the Bottom Up: On E.P. Thompson, Howard Zinn, and Rebuilding the Labor Movement from Below*, Chicago: Haymarket Books.
Mabbott, Alastair (2017), "Paperback Reviews: Bantam by Jackie Kay; Black Robe by Brian Moore; Soldiers Don't Go Mad by Andy Owen." *The Herald Scotland*, 18 Nov. 2017, <www.heraldscotland.com/life_style/arts_ents/15670120.paperback-reviews-bantam jackie-kay-black-robe-brian-moore-soldiers-run-away-andy-owen> Accessed Nov 7, 2024.

McLoughlin, Kate (2011), *Authoring War: The Literary Representation of War from the Iliad to Iraq*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Monroe, Kristen Renwick (2008), "Cracking the Code of Genocide: The Moral Psychology of Rescuers, Bystanders, and Nazis during the Holocaust," *Political Psychology*, vol. 29, no. 5, pp. 699–736.

Motion, Andrew (2004), Introduction. *First World War Poems*, edited by Andrew Motion, London: Faber & Faber.

Nora, Pierre (1996–1998), Preface. *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past*, Translated by Arthur Goldhammer, 3 vols., New York: Columbia University Press.

Osborn, E. B., Editor (1917), *The Muse in Arms*, New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1918. Internet Archive. Web. 22 Oct. 2024.

Ouditt, Sharon (1994), *Fighting Forces, Writing Women: Identity and Ideology in the First World War*, London: Routledge.

Owen, Wilfred (1920), Preface. *Poems*, by Owen, London: Chatto & Windus, 1921. Internet Archive. Web. 18 April 2010.

— (1967), *Selected Letters*, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1985.

Paris, Michael (2000), *Warrior Nation: Images of Battle 1850-1900*, London: Reaktion Books.

Pividori, Cristina (2010), "Eros and Thanatos Revisited: The Poetics of Trauma in Rebecca West's *The Return of the Soldier*," *Atlantis: Journal of the Spanish Association of Anglo-American Studies*, vol. 32, no. 2, pp. 89–104. JSTOR, https://www.jstor.org/stable/41055401, Accessed 26 Oct, 2024.

Paul, Herman, and Adriaan van Veldhuizen, Editors (2021), *Post-everything: An Intellectual History of Post-Concepts*, Manchester: Manchester University Press.

"Poems on War: Carol Ann Duffy Is Inspired by Wilfred Owen" (2013), *The Guardian*, 26 Oct. <www.theguardian.com/books/2013/oct/26/carol-ann-duffy-wilfred-owen-war-poem>, Accessed 26 Oct, 2024.

Rawlinson, Mark (2000), *British Writing of the Second World War*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Rutherford, Andrew (1978), *The Literature of War: Five Studies in Heroic Virtue*, London: Macmillan Press.

Said, Edward W. (2012), *Representations of the Intellectual*, New York: Vintage.

Sassoon, Siegfried (1928), *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man*, London: W.E.J. Mackay, 1973.

—(1930), *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer*, London: Faber and Faber, 2000.

— (1936), *Sherston's Progress*, London: Faber and Faber, 1983.

— (1983), *Diaries, 1915-1918*, Editor Rupert Hart-Davis, London: Faber and Faber

Scott, Joan W. (1991), "The Evidence of Experience," *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 17, no. 4, pp. 773–797.

Shephard, Ben (2001), *A War of Nerves: Soldiers and Psychiatrists in the Twentieth Century*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Showalter, Elaine (1987), *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830-1980*, London: Virago, 2009.

Sokołowska-Paryż, Marzena (2016), "Wilfred Owen, War Poetry," *Handbook of British Literature and Culture of the First World War*, edited by Ralf Schneider and Jane Potter, Berlin: De Gruyter, pp. 380–393.

Stevenson, Randall (2013), *Literature and the Great War 1914–1918*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Strachan, Hew (1998), *The Oxford Illustrated History of the First World War*, Oxford: Oxford UP.



Taylor, A.J.P. (1963), *The First World War: An Illustrated History*, London: Penguin.

Taylor, Martin (1998), *Lads: Love Poetry of the Trenches.* 1989. London: Duckworth.

Terraine, John (1980), *The Smoke and the Fire: Myths and Anti-Myths of War 1861–1945*, London: Sidgwick and Jackson.

Todman, Dan (2005), *The Great War: Myth and Memory*, London: Hambledon and London.

Tolan, Fiona (2010), *New Directions: Writing Post 1990*, London: Pearson Education Limited.

Walter, George (2006), *Introduction. The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry*, London: Penguin Books, pp. xix–xxvi.

Wilson, Ross (2014), "It Still Goes On: Trauma and the Memory of the First World War," *The Great War in Post-Memory Literature and Film*, edited by Martin Löschnigg and Marzena Sokołowska-Paryż, Berlin: De Gruyter, pp. 43.

Wilson, Rebecca and Gillean Sommerville-Arjat Editors (2001), *Sleeping with Monsters: Conversations with Scottish and Irish Women Poets,* Edinburgh: Polygon.

Winter, Jay (1995), *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998.

— (2006), *Remembering War: The Great War between Memory and History in the Twentieth Century*, New Haven: Yale UP.

— (1985), *The Great War and the British People*, 2nd ed., London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.
Young, Allan (1996), *The Harmony of Illusions: Inventing Post-traumatic Stress Disorder,* Princeton: Princeton UP.