

Throughout history poets have glorified and romanticised war. Portraying glory, bravery and honor throughout their writing. Disregarding the truth that lay beneath the surface. It was not until the First World War that a group of poets expressed the true horrors of war and sent a social warning to the people on the home front. One of these poets, Wilfred Owen, intrigued me to discover his story that he brings to life in his poetry. His most famous poem 'Dulce Et Decorum Est' illuminates ideas relating to the motives of men as well as the lack of morals within recruitment for the wars. Parallel to this Owen defaces the 'glory war' and describes the truth of young men being slaughtered for the wrong reasons. The poems 'Anthem For The Doomed Youth', 'Arms And The Boy' and 'The Unreturning' echo these ideas, expressed by a man experiencing the horrors of war. *However Owen's concern is not war. Instead how war corrupts the individual and the pressures placed on him by society to fight for war* (1).

The push towards war from society has been evident throughout history, with derogatory terms created for those who did not enlist. This has corrupted youths to fight for what they are told is right: honor and glory, for acceptance in society. Owen illuminates this idea through contrast in language. In 'Dulce Et Decorum Est' the use of the word children helps to identify this: *"to children ardent for some desperate glory"*. This forces the reader to see these young men with characteristics that we relate to children. Such as obedience and not know any better. Due to this Owen automatically creates a contrast in the mind of the reader when the following line reads, "the old lie", immediately indicating a difference between the ones fighting and those telling them to fight. The ones corrupting the youths are old and wise whilst Owen calls the men-children as they are obedient to the wishes of their elders. *This further highlights the idea of corruption of youth during wartime as the youth are told to fight and die for their country by the leaders of that country. Due to their obedience they do this and are killed for the wrong reasons.*(2)

This idea is mirrored in the text "Anthem For Doomed Youth" it is Owens description of the men that further amplifies this idea of children being sent to war. "Not in the hands of boys but in their eyes", the idea is shown here through the word 'boys' suggesting *immaturity and obedience* within the men. Owen further depicts children and adolescence in the poem. The line, *"The pallor girls' brows shall be their pall"*, *further echoes Owen's concern of the corruption of children within war* (8). It is through this constant repetition of children that the audience is able to understand the idea of children being corrupted better. As well as this repetition of children it is also the absence of terms such as 'men' and women' that create understanding of the corruption within the audience. *This is because it allows the audience to realize that it is the youths fighting and dying rather than the men promoting the war.* This is important as we, the audience, gain further understanding through the repetition of Owen's concerns towards youth in war.(3)

Owen continues this repetition in the text "Arms And The Boy", it is in this text *that Owen creates the idea that youths were not ready to fight the war. "There lurk no claws behind his fingers supple"*, it is here that *the audience see's Owen's doubt in the boys.* (4) It expresses the idea that they are not yet strong enough to fight. However it is the connection between the poems "Dulce Et Decorum Est" and "Anthem For The Doomed Youth" that help the audience to see Owen's idea of corruption of youth. It is the constant repetition of terms to describe children as well as whom Owen is talking to that allows the audience to understand this. "Let the boy try along this bayonet-blade", *it is in this the word 'boy' is used, immediately showing these common ideas of Obedience and not knowing better associated with children* (4). Although in "Arms and the Boy" Owen targets the people handing the boy the arms necessary to fight the war. It is through this that the over bearing theme of corruption is expressed. As the men supply the boys, who do not know any better, the means to fight a war. Forcing the boys into a false sense of security. Thus we the audience can identify Owen's concerns/ideas towards the corruption of youths within war.

The corruption of youths is throughout Owen's poems. However it is expressed in different ways. *The first way was how the old tell the young to fight for their country by glorifying the battlefield into a somewhat dream world. The other is the corruption of the soldiers within.* (5) Once in the line of battle it is the way in which their moral is lost and the way that they begin to accept death. Owen expresses this in the poems, "Dulce Et Decorum Est", "Anthem for the Doomed Youth" and "The Unreturning". *All three of these poems bring to life the acceptance of death within the boys and the way in which they have been corrupted by war to accept this fate.*(5) *War corrupts young men into thinking death should be accepted.* (6) It is this idea that Owen expresses in his poem "Dulce Et Decorum Est". We see this through the break down of morale within the soldiers that Owen indicates to us. "We cursed through sludge", this quote immediately allows the reader to understand the environment in which the soldiers find themselves. The word cursed draws attention as it suggests that the men have lost morale and are beginning to loathe their environment. However the way in which Owen portrays the idea of accepting death is in the line, "till on the haunting

flares we turned our backs". *This highlights to the audience the men's willingness to go into harms way, for their country* (6), as during the First World War flares would be used during charges at enemy positions to allow the attackers to see where they were going. *The audience understands this as a willingness of the men to die. (6) This creates the idea of corruption within the soldiers mind, as a healthy human mind does not go into everyday thinking it will be its last.* (8)

This idea of corruption within the soldier and his acceptance of death is echoed in the poem "Anthem For Doomed Youth". It is the title of the poem the firstly enables the audience to identify this idea. It immediately expresses to us that the soldiers involved are destined for death. *Shall shine the holy glimmers of goodbyes.*" (7) This further develops this idea of death as it describes the men saying goodbye to this world as well as them seeing death. *This brings the idea of corruption within the soldier to light as it shows their acceptance of death* (7), which is once again not something that we would relate to the healthy human mind. This is because death is something that for humans comes in the later stages of life. But through Owen's past ideas of the youths being the ones fighting *the audience are able to understand the corruption better. Because it is seen that the men have so much to live for, but are walking into death with an open mind to it. Thus they are corrupted by their inevitable fate that is drilled into them through the environment in which they are trapped.* (7) (8).

Mirroring this is the poem "The Unreturning". Owen writes in his own experience throughout this poem. He is calling upon the dead. "There I watched for the dead; but no ghost woke". This quote gives the idea of Owen searching for death. Thus being similar to accepting it. Because of this the audience is able to see the way in which even Owen himself is corrupted by war. It is also in this poem that the idea of broken morale is expressed. "The weak-limned hour when sick men's sighs are drained", this identifying the mindset in which the soldiers find themselves in. Because of this the reader is further shown to the theme of corruption as the men have been forced into a place in which is impossible to get out of. They feel as though there is nothing to live for. Thus making them corrupted, as it is not the healthy way in which the human mind should operate.

Throughout Wilfred Owen's poems corruption is evident. Whether it is through society and its effects on the individual or the individual and the war's effect on his mental well being. These ideas presented by Owen have become timeless, as human nature has been to fight. It is with this that the audience gains an understanding of war and societies effect on the individual and the innocence and obedience of young men. Thus Owen has created ideas that challenge all societies, past and present.