CHAPTER – III

SIEGFRIED LORRAINE SASSOON

(1886- 1967)
Siegfried Lorraine Sassoon was born on 8 September 1886 in Kent. He received his education at Marlborough and Clare College Cambridge. Sassoon, a poet, novelist, autobiographer and editor wrote also under the pseudonyms Saul Kain, Pinchbeck Lyre and S.S. He is one of the eminent war poets who wrote about their experiences as combating poets in the World War I. After joining the war he became a trooper in C Squadron, 1st Battalion, Sussex Yeomanry, and the Royal Sussex Regiment. He was sent to France. Soon he made a distinguished place as a courageous and adventurous soldier. Although he is best known for his war poems, he has also written poems on the subjects like English countryside as a source of contemplating human spirituality and existence. Due to his courage and fighting spirit on the trenches he was nicknamed “Mad Jack” by fellow combatants. He was awarded the Military Cross for his frontline achievements as well. Sassoon was wounded many a time during fighting. While
spending the days of recuperating in England he came to know active anti-war individuals of the time. This sort of contacts ignited a sense of protest in him against the continuation of the going on War. He threw away his Military Cross and wrote a letter to his Military establishment that was, as he put it, a “willful defiance of military authority”.¹

Though Sassoon’s name is synonymous with protest against the catastrophe on the trenches during the First World War. His war poems deal with acquiescence and resentment as a whole. Sassoon presents a world view of patriotism and vivid and harsh realities of the frontline life. He became a spokesperson dutifully speaking of the meaninglessness of the war. At the advent of the war he was a young man of about 28 years of age. When the war was declared on 4 August 1914 he went off to war without being aware of the consequences which lay ahead. He headed for a cause he did not know its nature consciously or unconsciously. But the existing situations at the initial stages led him onto a belief that he was fighting for a just and noble cause for the nation. At the same time he was also under the spell of fear and fascination. Being a very sensitive man he could very soon anticipated the unpleasant situation likely to happen at the beginning of the
war. And it is this sense of confusion and intellectual disillusionment which shaped the rest of his war poems. There is no denying the fact that his war poems could not find immediate acceptance among the literary circles, perhaps because of the bitter tone and the whirlpool of his emotional outbursts. Despite the brutal and vivid sense of reality, however, the present study will look into his war poems as the chronicles of the time.

His early poetry is known for its Georgian touch emphasizing Romantic elements over reason and realism. The collection entitled “The Old Huntsman and Other Poems” was published in 1917 (during the World War I). The title poem and a number of other poems of this series reflect pastoral life and temper in pre-war England. Like other Georgians Sassoon celebrates the natural beauty of the countryside in this phase of his poetic works. His most accomplished piece of work of this period is “The Daffodil Murderer”, a long blank-verse monologue that parodies John Masefield’s “The Everlasting Mercy”.

In his “The Old Huntsman and Other Poems” Sassoon deals with a variety of subjects from autobiographical aspect, superannuation and disheartened huntsman to the naked realities of war. Here he also included many of his pastoral
compositions and early lyrics about his youthful experience. This collection of poems is progressive in its nature and content; starting from a ‘happy warrior’, to the confused soldier and angry young poet of 1916’. The poems of this collection impresses the readers by the sense of his poetic maturity. Here he is very sharp and perceptive in his tone and approach. There is a recognition of authenticity of the war poems which, he expressed; “I wrote in a period of rapt afflatus”.

His second comprehensive collection “Counter Attack and Other Poems” is in the similar tone and approach. The title poem of this series is the most graphic account of the war’s catastrophe. As Bernard Bergonzi states in Heroes Twilight, Sassoon presents the dreadful aspects of the war and its effects “as a means of forcibly impressing on the civilian world some notion of the realities of front-line life”. Sassoon stated in similar terms that his war poems are “deliberately written to disturb complacency”. The undertones of the same ethical principle could be traced in his later volumes such as- “Satirical Poems”, “The Road to Ruin” although his target of criticism here include politicians and the media in addition to the continued materialistic approach of the European nations
in the 1920s and 1930s. Sassoon’s philosophical tone is evident in the collection *The Heart’s Journey*. Where he raises questions about the meaning of life and the passage of time. Though by nature a man of firm determination, Sassoon at the advent of the war believed in the rightness of the cause for the nation. But this sense of patriotic exhilaration juxtaposes fear of death within his conscience.

Sassoon’s war poetry is binary in its vision and approach depending on his experiences about war. It may be described as a phase of *acquiescence* and *resentment*. At the initial stage of his newly found adventure he earned a reputation as a courageous and brave fighter. In this regard a few poems in *The Old Huntsman* present the conventional heroic view of the battle with Sassoon advocating the righteous cause of his country. These poems deal with the glorious vision and optimistic exhilaration. Here we find Sassoon as a young enthusiast, full of patriotic feeling about his country. As in the first war poem “*Absolution*”:

“The anguish of the earth absolves our eyes
Till beauty shines in all that we can see.
War is our scourge; yet war has made us wise,
And, fighting for our freedom, we are free.
Horror of wounds and anger at the foe,
And loss of things desired; all these must pass.

We are the happy legion, for we know
Time’s but a golden wind that shakes the grass.”

(C P,ll. 1-8)

The poet talks about his idealistic approach to war. The sentiments here portray him as a heroic warrior, self-forgetting laden with patriotic outlook and chivalric vision. He describes himself as the ‘happy legion’. This early phase of his war attitude downplays the horror of war. At this juncture he is ready to accept all troubles and sufferings for a just and noble cause for the nation. This should be noted here that these sorts of patriotic sentiments were practised by a certain section of the society of the time, so Sassoon also became a part of this phenomenon. This poem is actually in Brookean style, celebrating the moral transformation brought about by the war as if he was waiting for this moment for years. He says, “fighting for our freedom, we are free”. Sassoon here is of the view that war brings peace and ‘freedom’ from the monotony and the upheavals of common life. He wants a change because of failure on the other fronts of life so far. And that can be achieved, in his opinion, through war by sacrifice.
One thing that should be noted here is that “Absolution” was admittedly influenced by Brooke’s famous sonnet sequence. As John H. Johnston has rightly pointed out that Sassoon in this poem “celebrates the moral transformation brought about by the war”.\(^5\)

What the poet experiences is a mixed bag of joy and confusion. He is found celebrating with his new found adventure on the one hand while on the other hand he is in a dilemma. Though he seems to be ‘the happy legion’ but the crux of the matter is ‘Horror of wounds and anger at foe’. He is in a state of vacillation. In a footnote of this poem, written in later years, Sassoon says: ‘People used to feel like this when they joined up in 1914 and 1915’.\(^6\) The community which Sassoon comes from and a particular level of society voiced these sorts of attitude and sentiments. The heroic warrior, self-forgetting, attains the vision of the ‘happy legion’. It was a powerful myth and a ‘costly ideal’. This glorious vision of the soldier-poet is ready to absolve all the sufferings and pains that he goes through for the just and noble cause. But ‘Horror of wounds’, and ‘anger at the foe’ do take the poet in the state of dilemma. Nevertheless this makes him ‘the happy legion’. At this stage of the war Sassoon visualizes the temper as traditional, and
the idealistic image of combat as a glorious and just undertaking.

Sassoon was very deeply affected by a phrase spoken by Major Campbell. It shook his inner self. About the enemy Major Campbell said: ‘If you don’t kill him he’ll kill you...’ Hence war became an aggressive revenge for him at this juncture. As in “The kiss”-

“To these I turn, in these trust-
Brother Lead and Sister Steel.

To his blind power I make appeal,
I guard her beauty clean from rust,

...Sweet Sister, grant your soldier this:

That in good fury he may feel
The body where he sets his heel

Quail from your downward darting kiss.”

(C P, ll. 1-4, & 9-12)

This poem represents attitude of optimism and bravery. He is making loud voice in favour of the war. He wants an aggressive revenge on the enemy. He seems to be evocative at tonal level. He seems to be fully determined to guard the beauty and sanctity of his nation at any cost. He makes himself ready to foil any aggression to harm his country. The image provided in
the final line of the poem is worthy of consideration. His inner instinct is inciting and motivating. He tries to present himself as a loyal and respectful to the nation. This tone and mood is interesting in terms of its technicality. But in his later phase he is awfully away from this attitude and vision of his approach to War. This poem is very simple in its tone and approach but the undertones are full of energy. This attitude and approach authenticate his heroic outlook at the beginning. “The Kiss” devoted to the qualities of “Brother Lead Sister Steel”, reflects the combative instincts of the aggressive young infantry officer…”

The difference between the romantic view of war and the war he actually experienced on the Somme is a testimony of his progressive poetic attitude. When Sassoon began to write this sort of poems he had yet to come across the whirlpool of the terrible experience ahead. Within a year he would know that ‘ecstasies changed to an ugly cry’. The lists of casualties told their own grim story. The prolonging and destructive condition of the war was taking him into a world of gloom and despair that he hitherto didn’t know.
In “To Victory” he says:

‘I am not sad; only I long for lustre.
I am tired of the greys and browns and the leafless ash.
I would have hours that move like a glitter of dancers
Far from the angry guns that boom and flash”.

(CP, ll. 9-12)

These utterances could be linked to his beginning of the annoyance with war. The poet here is exuberant and chivalric, disclosing the sentiments he longs for. He is in need of a new sort of things which could give him solace in these hours of moral and emotional crises. This moral crisis could also be seen in another stanza:

Return, musical, gay with blossom and fleetness,
Days when my sight shall be clear and my heart rejoice;
Come from the sea with breadth of approaching
brightness,
When the blithe wind laughs on the hills with uplifted
voice.”

(CP, ll.13-16)

He is waiting for a new hope which could give him a new lease of life. He is fed up with the monotony of the existing life and circumstances. He wants a new beginning which could take
him out of pain and sufferings. We can also see radiance of modern and mechanical life being negated here. This modernism and mechanical life have well been done away by T.S. Eliot and other poets and literati of the modern time.

‘To Victory’ is an exuberant expression of the need Sassoon was feeling for the resurgence of full colours and luster of spring. ‘I’m tired of greys and browns and the leafless ash’. The spring will bring the victory of colour over the monochrome world of War. Much of the power of his idealistic voice is a composition of his periodic temper. He puts a stamp of approval on the war because he is overflowing with enthusiasm of heroic temper. He is fed up with the routine and monotonous life. He wants a change of schedule. He communicates his attitudes and emotions to accomplish unfulfilled desires. The poet’s expression is in the character of building blocks of a warrior. The literary scholars are of the view that such poems of righteousness were written at the initial stages of the war. Most of these scholars are of the view that these poems must have been composed before Sassoon witnessed any real fighting. This valuable source of insight of glorification was gained from the early attitude to war taken up by him. He did not believe in any formal religion, however,
at this juncture he states, “My only religion was my vocation as a poet, and my resolve to do my duty bravely”.

This early outlook focuses over a glorious range of personal associations about the War. At the same time this poem also represents a complex sample of the society he belongs to. These lines are worthwhile to be read of a man’s plain and innocent attitude in its wholeness. The poet is enchanted with the newly found uncertain human little world. He wants to come out of the monotony of life and takes this uphill adventure as a matter of excitement, hence a fight for the just cause. At this stage the poet is away from the broad view of vision which he later held. He is ‘in the field where men must fight’. Here he deals with the conventional attitude of patriotism, loyalty to the nation in the on going situation. He senses loyalties – to country, self respect and morality that provided the cause to fight.

In “Secret Music” the poet says:-

“I keep such music in my brain
No din this side of death can quell;
Glory exulting over pain,
And beauty, garlanded in hell.”

(CP,II. 1-4)
He believes in England’s cause and the sense of fighting for freedom. These lines convey the message of finding solace in pain and suffering. In spite of the fact that he is not afraid of death, the undertone is that of fear and confusion. In his early poems he releases image after image making a serial use of optimistic exhilaration, to make his point stronger:

“I have no need to pray
That fear may pass away;
I scorn the growl and rumble of the fight
That summons me from cool
Silence of marsh and pool
And yellow lilies islanded in light.”

(\textit{CP}, ll. 7-12)

The poet longs for securing and image of an infinite beauty illuminating his heart and mind. Although he does not have the peace and security within, what gives him solace is the temptation to satisfy his emotions of patriotism and glory. Through this type of poems we get a perception of his yearning for grace and glorification but fear of death embedded within.

Sassoon could not shake off the sentiment that he had felt as a man dedicated to death .... but the reality of war was a long
way off. The reality came closer when, in April 1915, he heard of the death of Rupert Brooke. His first thoughts were for Edward Marsh: ‘I won’t write anything about Rupert Brooke except that I know how much his loss means to you, (as indeed to us all)’.  

This emerging trend receives a blow soon after the gruesome battle of Somme. The bitter truth of the prolonging War defeats his glorious outlook. For the first fifteen months of the going on War Sassoon wrote in Brookean spirit and tone and then found his own voice. ‘The Easter of 1915 the death of Brooke became for Sassoon one of those things deeply felt’. On 5 December 1915 the Battalion was moved from Bethune and exchanged the field of Flanders for Picardy, Amiens and the valley of Somme. At this state of affair he was crossing the whirlpool of his emotions. The deteriorating condition of war was forcing him to take stock of the prevailing situation. At this juncture a change in his writings portrays a kind of attitudinal metamorphosis. He became morose, sullen and unfriendly to his own outlook. Thinks were beginning to shape themselves. A few days before leaving Bethune he writes: “my inner life is far more real than the hideous realism of this land of war-zone”. His experience of the front-line trenches and
the catastrophic effects of the war were still limited; but he was close enough to understand the depth of anguish, bravery and selflessness. As is clear from the following extract of his diary:

“Men marching by, from after four, hideous, brutal faces, sullen, wretched... strange to see, among those hundreds of face I scanned, suddenly a vivid red haired youth with green eyes looking far away, sidelong- one clean face, among all the others brutalized... The last month have unsealed my eyes. I have lived well and truly since the war began, and has made my sacrifices: now I ask that the price be required for me...”

His diary entries betray a distempered mind which engendered recklessness and bravado more than cool courage and bravery. He thought of tireless living on a knife-edge knowing that, despite all the sacrifice, the war was getting nowhere.

The battle of Somme and the heavy bombardment on the first day of the German lines resulted in the loss of almost 58,000 human casualties. In November, over 600,000 soldiers of the Allied troops were either dead or injured. They had forced the Germans to retreat five miles. Sassoon captured the trip of Carnoy in a poem entitled “At Carnoy”: 
“Dawn in the hollow there’s the whole brigade
Camped in four groups: through twilight falling slow
I hear a sound of mouth organs, ill played,
And murmur of voices, gruff, confused, and low.
Crouched among thistle-tufts I’ve watched the glow
Of a blurred orange sunset flare and fade;
And I’m content. To-morrow we must go
To take some cursed Wood. O world God made!”

(CP,ll.1-8)

He was not involving in morbidity but affirming his acceptance of death at the price of believing that ‘dying for one’s native land was the most glorious thing one could possibly do’. Sassoon thought that the best way to forget war was to be at the heart of it.

Sassoon was a good observer of the world around. He was consumed with a sense of futility. Whenever he thought of the future it deepened his depression. The constant chain of soldiers for dispatch to the frontline and men in uniform ready to fill the gaps in line fed his death-haunted memory. What he felt is that nothing was permanent than the need for more and more personnel as the news of losses came in. This situation takes Sassoon into the world of anti-climax. A suspicion got
rooted in his mind that their idealistic approach to war was not related to the front line reality. The increasing human loss War exacted became unsustainable to him. This suspicion of reality is one of the most powerful themes in his war poems. In ‘Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man” Sassoon tells the story of troops lined up on the squares ready to set out and Padre’s final words to them: ‘And now may God go with you; I will go with you as far as the station’.16

The loss of human lives was so great, that any gains made appeared insignificant. The next year in the month of October, in a failed offensive, 15000 British soldiers were butchered. This slaughter was unbearable to a man of Sassoon’s temperament. Rupert Hart-Davis states, ‘the war changed Sassoon from a versifier into a poet’.17 A conqueror has had to obey the command of a situation that arose. A person who joined the trench affair with the view of freedom and righteousness is now ready to accept the dictates of the bitter truth faced by the human beings at the time. The cruel situation of the trenches provided no escape from reality. Life behind the trenches was bad enough; in the trenches it was still worse. The stench of dead bodies was everywhere. The
change was quick and instantaneous. Sassoon speaks of it very seriously in his first front-line poem, “The Redeemer”:

“Darkness: the rain sluiced down; the mire was deep;

It was past twelve on a mid-winter night,

When peaceful folk in beds lay snug asleep;

There, with much work to do before the light,

We lugged our clay-sucked boots as best we might

Along the trench; sometimes a bullet sang,

And droning shells burst with a hollow bang;

We were soaked, chilled and wretched, every one;

Darkness; the distant wink of a huge gun.”

(CP, ll. 1-9)

And he further says in the same poem:

“He faced me, reeling in his weariness,

Shouldering his load of planks, so hard to bear.

I say that He was Christ, who wrought to bless

All groping things with freedom bright as air,

And with His mercy washed and made them fair.

Then the flame sank, and all grew black as pitch,

While we began to struggle along the ditch;

And someone flung his burden in the muck,

Mumbling: ‘O Christ Almighty, now I’m stuck!’

(CP, ll. 28-36)
His poem “The Redeemer” is directed towards a party working with planks. These images of the trenches give the resemblance of one of his men. This man’s both arms are supporting his heavy planks, to Christ at Golgotha. This powerful imagery of the real condition could be felt in the following lines “What I have written”, he once recalled, “is what I have experienced”.  

This realistic approach of Sassoon is often combined with biting satire as well. It is the war that polished his poetic career. Here he met Robert Graves. As the war prolonged, however, he came up as an awfully outspoken pacifist and the executive of some of the most violently satirical anti-war poems up to his time. Sassoon, during his period of service was wounded several times. For his courage and firm determination he was awarded Military Cross, which he later realised of no use and therefore he threw it away. He got inspired and motivated by Bertrand Russell and protested in “A soldier’s Declaration” (July 1917). He thought that the war was ‘being deliberately prolonged by those who have the power to end it’. This outspoken attitude brought about an issue of disciplinary action against him. But Robert Graves, a friend of Sassoon, made the Military Office believe not to take the
matter as a violation of the discipline. Hence this case was treated as a result of shell shock. The medical board therefore sent him to W.H.R. Rivers (A Military Hospital). Here at Craig Lockhart Hospital he met Wilfred Owen. Sassoon also edited Owens’s poems in 1920. Sassoon’s own anti-war poems were published in *The Old Huntsman* (1917) and *Counter Attack* (1918).

The war seemed to him less and less purposeful and he believed that it would go on for ever. As the devastation resulted in large losses of human lives, his anger triggered off in his psyche. The intensity of his resistance is not only realistic but also retaliates with greater poetic force. The grotesque reality of the frontline set in motion a reasonable opposition of intolerable coercion. The description of actual events exposed that ugly side of the war which the general public was ignorant. His aim was to enlighten them with the harsh and painful realities of the front-line. The catastrophic consequences of the war affected the conscience of the poet so much that an explosive poetic voice ultimately emerged. When the War prolonged and the state of victims of War further deteriorated, his poems voiced resistance. His sentimental
response to the inexorable forces of war provided tool to nourish his response.

After experiencing the naked truth of the ongoing war his attitude and outlook to war abruptly got changed. His poetry therefore, feature the minute and often grotesque details of the cruel trench conditions. Sassoon felt heartache and hence tries to portray the realistic photographic image of the actual conditions of the impact. His poems attack the brutality and destruction of war. Sassoon’s description of the war and the soldier’s lot achieve their effect by the block building horrors of their details, as in the poem “Counter Attack”:

“A yawning soldier knelt against the bank,
Staring across the morning blear with fog;
He wondered when the Allemandes would get busy.
And then, of course, they started with five-nines
Traversing, such as fate, and never a deed.
Mute in the clamor of shells he watched them
Spouting dark earth and wire with gusts from hell,
While posturing giants dissolved in drifts of smoke.
He crouched and flinched, dizzy with galloping fear,
Sick for escape – loathing the strangled horror
And butchered, frantic gestures of the dead.”

(CP, ll. 14-24)
The poems of this phase show an aspect of dreariness and inhumanity of the war. This poem exhibit war settings to communicate a powerful sense of horror. He places the scene of war within the context of horrific situation of the contemporary world. The ripening harvest under the August sun, the occasional wave from some stranger, as the train went by, even the familiar hoardings all came upon him ‘With an irresistible delight’ as he describes in “Stretcher Case”:

“He woke; the clank and racket of the train
Kept time with angry throbings in his brain.
Then for a while he lapsed and drowsed again.
At last he lifted his bewildered eyes
And blinked, and rolled them sidelong; hills and skies…”

(CP, ll. 1-5)

Further in the same poem he says:

“There shone the blue serene, the prosperous land,
Trees, cows and hedged; skipping these, he scanned
Large, friendly names, that change not with the year,
Lung Tonic, Mustard, Liver Pills and Beer.”

(CP, ll. 21-24)

These lines are diagnostic in nature. The poet is conscious about the ills of the prevailing situations. He is apprehensive
and concerned with the sense of disaster that has overtaken. The idea here, is that a horrific effect of war is enormous. There is waste all around. These lines clearly convey the poet’s state of mind to the reader.

Using the realistic details of the soldier’s condition his poems express the sufferings and troubles faced by the common soldiers at the battlefield which is a gruesome reality. The poet is in the state of dilemma. He is stuck in a very difficult situation. Sassoon’s strong feelings and minute observation of the War are because of a War that could be, in his opinion, brought to an end. He is of the view that both sides should realize the fact that they would gain nothing by prolonging this disaster. This demoralizing but brutal acts led him to the cross roads of total moral crisis. In this moment of psychological and moral crisis, he prepared the following statement:

“I am making this statement as an act of willful defiance of military authority because I believe that the war is deliberately prolonged by those who have the power to end it. I am a soldier convinced that I am acting on behalf of soldiers. I believe that this war, upon which I entered as a war of defence and liberation, has now become a war of aggression and conquest. . . . I have seen and endured the sufferings of the
troops, and I can no longer be a party to prolong those sufferings for ends which I believe to be evil and unjust....(July 1917. S. Sassoon, Statement to Commanding Officer). 19

This brave and defiant gesture is a testimony of the gruesome reality that he witnessed. He was content that his deepest feelings had so succinctly expressed. This statement was also for those with whom he had served and were dead.

In his poem “To Any Dead Officer”, the last verse almost seems to echo this statement:

“Good-bye, old lad! Remember me to God,
And tell Him that our politicians swear
They won’t give in till Prussian Rule’s been trod
Under the heel of England... Are you there?...
Yes...and the War won’t end for at least two years;
But we’ve got stacks of men... I’m blind with tears,
    Staring into the dark. Cheero!
I wish they’d killed you in a decent show.”

(CP, ll. 33-40)

The poet here criticizes the vanity of the political establishment. He is angry with the people who are responsible for this disaster. He is moved with the soldiers’
condition at the front. The undertone is full of anger and disillusionment.

In the poem “Attack” he offers a prayer to stop the ongoing conflict:

“Lines of grey, muttering faces, masked with fear,

They leave their trenches, going over the top,

While time ticks blank and busy on their wrists,

And hope, with furtive eyes and grappling fists,

Flounders in mud. O Jesus, make it stop!”

(\textit{CP}, ll. 9-13)

The poet is extremely disappointed by the condition of the horrifying damage done over there. He seems to be helpless and seeks help from Heaven. He is a helpless lot. The sensitive soul and mind of the poet is restless. In such a condition no human being could have remained unmoved. Certain details of the war and imagery presented in the poem deepen our understanding of the tragedy. Though such realistic details in poetry are objectionable but the purpose of the poet has been to familiarize us with the critical situation of human beings during the War. This bears universal dimensions in terms of time and spirituality. The device used reinforces the human predicament.
In spite of the realistic presentation of the scenario the
significance of the human aspects can not be overlooked. As in
“Dreamers” the predicament of the soldier’s condition has been
put pathetically on the grey land of death:

“Soldiers are citizens of death’s grey land,
Drawing no dividend from time’s to-morrows.
In the great hour of destiny they stand,
Each with his fends, and jealousies and sorrows.
Soldiers are sworn to action; they must win
Some flaming, fatal climax with their lives.”

(CP, ll. 1-6)

Here Sassoon presents one of the most graphic accounts of the
war’s catastrophe. In these photographic accounts we are left
with no option but to acknowledge the significance of the
human concerns in its content and intent. These graphic
accounts are the brilliant juxtaposition of realism and satire.
They are mocking in their manners and attitude ‘no dividend
from time’s to-morrows’ signify human sufferings. That is to
say even after risking their lives they are at the receiving ends.
Hence in return they are going to get troubles and pains at the
end of the day.
It is an attempt to place on record and bring closer to our times how these soldiers were being coped with their sufferings. The uncertainty of the war further aggravated their sufferings. At the same time it reminds us of existentialist view of living as suffering. The poet is disheartened and tense about the shadowy conditions of the soldiers. The desire to narrate this sort of reality of the trenches reinforces the grotesque essentials of the struggle:

“He pushed another bag along the top,
Craning his body outward; then a flare
Gave one white glimpse of No Man’s Land and wire;
And as he dropped his head the instant split
His startled life with lead, and all went out.”

(*CP*, ll. 45-49)

It elaborates the human sufferings with factual descriptions. Certainly the soldiers are being thought of as the scapegoats. In a sense they are being mocked and taunted ironically as they have no chance to escape. The poet has excellently tried to reflect on the basic situation of their condition. They are in the awful situation and are being used as mechanical items. They face the incapacity to make sense of their lives:
“He was a young man with a meager wife
And two small children in a Midland town;
He showed their photographs to all his mates,
And they considered him a decent chap
Who did his work and hadn’t much to say,
And always laughed at other people’s jokes
Because he hadn’t any of his own.”

(CP, ll. 30-36)

This realism got overshadowed as the war prolonged. Increasing disaster of the trenches forced Sassoon to look back in anger in order to reinforce his point of view. The battle of Somme forced him to write satiric and ironic poems. Sassoon’s new found satirical voice constituted elements of provoking opposition. He hated the war. He was unable to be tolerant about it. He became disgusted with those who accepted it with civilian bellicosity and self-defensive evasion of its realities. His conscience was falling him apart. It was taking him apart slowly and steadily. It was a tearing process. He could see no end to the slaughter. He shouted as loud as he could. His loathing of those who desired and conspired for the war to continue became the object of further satire. Now he took a position of an angry young poet railing against the
war in a satirical tone and approach. Now with the realities so crude and raw, the poet entered an unprecedented poetic phase. This phase of his poetry represent better satire. The poet could not digest the reality so cruel and therefore, spoke out against it satirically.

In his poem “They” he lampoons a bishop who praises the glorious mission which the soldiers were undertaking while ignoring the ugly wounds inflicted upon them by on going War. “They” is an awfully satirical poem in which Sassoon underpins the whirlpool of his disillusionment and anger:

“The Bishop tells us: when the boys come back
‘They will not be the same; for they’ll have fought
‘In a just cause: they lead the last attack
‘On Anti-Christ; their comrade’s blood has bought
‘New right to breed an honorable race,
They have challenged Death and dared him face to face.”

(CP, ll. 1-6)

In this regard the next stanza of the poem is equally relevant:

“We’re none of us the same!’ The boys reply.
‘For George lost both his legs; and Bill’s stone blind;
‘Poor Jim’s shot through the lungs and like to die;
‘And Bert’s gone syphilitic: you will not find

‘A chap who’s served that hasn’t found some change.

And the Bishop said: The ways of God are strange.”

(CP, ll. 7-12)

This poem represents a biting satire. Here he lampoons the Bishop who praises the glorious mission of the soldiers. The details in these lines are satiric and ironic in their tone and approach. The satirical approach of the poet directs and deepens the absurd conditions of human lives on the war front. At the same time Sassoon’s war poems awfully represent varied combinations of his attitude.

In “Stand-To-Good Friday Morning”, Sassoon presents a soldier’s predicament who prays that should be wounded so that he can escape the war. The awful situation of the war forces the soldier to wish to depart from the scene of war in any way possible. So as to get a sense of satisfaction. One can visualize the imagery of a soldier brooding over hopes and despair regarding life’s and death’s uncertainties:

“They seemed happy; but I felt ill.

Deep in water I splashed my way

Up the trench to our bogged front line.

Rain had fallen the whole damned night.
O Jesus, send me a wound to-day
And I'll believe in your bread and wine,
And get my bloody old sins washed white!"

(CP, ll. 7-13)

In these lines a soldier tries to escape. The uncertainties are prevailing in his heart and mind regarding life’s direction. He thinks that there is nothing certain in a soldier’s life. He is disgusted and disturbed about his place in life. These uncertainties take him to the direction of wishing an interval between the two unsure aspects of his life. He wishes a wound which will bring at least temporary relief to his disturbances. He is fed up with the long and dreadful period of gloom and despair. He complains to the eternity and calls upon Jesus to rescue him from the existing painful condition.

This poem also presents a purely satirical situation. He is consciously unconscious of the nature of the war. So he shouts for help. He visualizes the future ahead. The poet satirizes the blindness and silence on part of the authority concerned who were paying no heed to the predicament of the soldiers. It’s a satirical cry of the poet over tormented men and soldiers and innocent lives. It’s a satire on the mute spectators in the corridors of power and establishment. His real crime
was that he was human being in ‘that zone of inhuman havoc’.
The common soldiers in his eyes had become the real hero of
the war. As in, “The General”, the following lines are about one
of the ‘droves of victims’ sacrificed by incompetent leaders:

‘Good morning; good-morning! The General said
When we met him last week on our way to the line.
Now the soldiers he smiled at are most of'em dead,
And we're cursing his staff for incompetent swine.
‘He’s a cheery old card,’ grunted Harry to Jack
As they slogged up to Arras with riffle and pack.”

(Cp, ll. 1-6 )

In this poem innocent soldiers are the victims not of the
enemy, but of the ‘incompetent swine’ who organize and plan
the battles. The colloquial tone, direct speech and everyday
language enhance the poem’s sense of reality. By naming
Harry and Jack and using first person narrative, Sassoon
individualizes the soldiers. While he distances us from
authority with the use of the impersonal title “The General”.
His use of the inclusive ‘we’ reinforces our sense of distance
between the troops and their officers. The poem is a damning
indictment of a system that professes to value its soldiers
while making no more than token gestures towards them. The
air of transience which permeated the depot strengthened human attachments and deepened their intensity. This intensified feeling and shared danger; the mutual involvement created bonds and released emotions which under other circumstances would have remained otherwise. This super realism unfolds the fundamental questions confronting freedom struggle and ultimate meaninglessness and triviality of the war at the cost of innumerable human lives and property as well. The paradoxical nature of the human condition explains the highest and extreme truth satirically.

Sassoon understood now that his commitment was no longer to the war but to those whom he regarded as its living victims. They became his concern and a source of motivation.

In another poem “Does It Matter?” Sassoon once again downplays the physical damage done to the soldiers:

“Do they matter? Those dreams from the pit?

You can drink and forget and be glad,
And people won’t say that you’re mad;
For they’ll know you’ve fought for your country
And no one will worry a bit.”

(CP, ll. 11-15)
These lines explain the absurdity of the prevailing situation. The ironic approach to a soldier’s life is justified rhetorically. This approach and tonal explanation throw light on the plight of a soldier’s life. These poor fellows have been sand-witched between life and death. They have been trapped within. It is a kind of metaphysical anguish against the war. Everything in this context appears as a metaphor for the hope scarcely possible. Hope has been intercepted by despair and gloom.

The prolonging war provided a valuable source of insight to Sassoon in respect of satirical and ironic tone. In “Prelude: The Troops” he says:

“O my brave brown companions, when your souls
Flock silently away and the eyeless dead
Shame the wild beast of battle on the ridge,
Death will stand grieving in that field of war
Since your unvanquished hardihood is spent,
And through some moved Valhalla there will pass
Battalions and battalions, scarred from hell;
The unreturning army that was youth;
The legions who have suffered and are dust”.

(CP, ll. 18-26)
After witnessing the dislocated and disjointed condition of the front life the poet is ironically disgusted. He projects a testimony of the disjointed real irony: ‘shame the wild beast of battle on the ridge’, and the legions who have suffered and are dust’. This poetic attitude portrays the temper of the mood which anguished and depressed the poet. This could be said an awfully powerful imagery juxtaposing the human sufferings.

Sassoon’s poem “Counter Attack” presents the same ironic and satirical situation:

“The place was rotten with the dead…,

High-booted, sprawled and groveled along the saps,

And trunks, face downward, in the sucking mud,

Wallowed like trodden sand-bags loosely filled,

... And the rain began-The jolly old rain!”

(CP, ll. 7-13)

These lines portray the human lives thrown into a diseased world questioning the human values in general. The irony of the situation clearly suggests the state of human lives and the breakdown of human endeavour. The poet is only left with the option of transforming gruesome realities of trenches, for the
generations to come. The recurrent images of the front life and the dead bodies of the fellow soldiers knock at the gate of the senses and sensibilities of the poet indicating an increasing flow of anguish transformed into satire and irony. This anguish in its extreme form can also be seen in the following lines:

“The house is crammed: tier beyond tier they grin

And cackle at the show, while prancing ranks

Of hariots shrill the chorus, drunk with din;

‘We’re sure the Kaiser loves our dear old Tanks!’

(CP, ll. 1-4)

The poet satirizes the inhuman concerns of the Kaiser. It’s a typical Sassoonian Satire making us realize the aristocratic mannerism, giving precedence to the things of interest and benefit. As we see here precedence is given to tanks over human beings. The lifeless objects are more important and matter of concern than a human being. Sassoon’s accounts of life on the front must be taken in the larger context of the situation. He satirizes people having power of self interest. His disillusionment and repeated anguish assert his concerns. In “Base Details” he wrote about the professional Officer class who were safe from the real conflict, their self-indulgent
lifestyle lived out in the dinning-room of the hotel and commanding from there careless of their younger colleagues:

“If I were fierce, and bald, and short of breath,

I’d live with scarlet Majors at the Base,

And speed glum heroes up the line to death.

You’d see me with my puffy petulant face,

Guzzling and gulping in the best hotel,

Reading the Roll of Honor.’ poor young chaps”,

I’d say --- ‘I used to know his father well;

Yes, we’ve lost heavily in this last scrap’.

And when the war is done and youth stone dead,

I’d toddle safely home and die in bed.”

(CP, ll. 1-10)

This true account of the life on front increases the poet’s interest relating to the larger issues concerned. The implied aim of the poet is to convey the hardships and problems faced by the soldiers in general. The miserable plight of the soldiers is not at all an issue in the eyes of the powerful and the people sitting in the flowery chair so far. Like Byron’s Don Juan, Sassoon in “Base Details” anticipates the life of the front-line soldier and the “life at the base’:
“Also the General Markow, Brigadier,

...All common fellows who might writhe and wince,

...His sympathy for rank, by the same token,

To teach him greater had his own leg broken”.20

This assumption extends to the issue of inequality and social disparities existing in the society. According to the poet the soldiers are destined to suffer because they mortgage their destiny after they enlist to the profession. They have to obey the masters of their destiny. There is a clear distinction between the general masses and the people who enjoy power. One incident at the base is painfully recorded in a poem entitled “Lamentations”:

“And, all because his brother had gone west,

Raved at the bleeding war; his rampant grief

Moaned, shouted, and choked, while he was kneeling

Half-naked on the floor. In my belief

Such men have lost all patriotic feeling”.

\[(CP, \text{ll. 6-10})\]

He is satirical due to the pitiable condition of the soldiers in general and disillusionment because of the continuation of the deadly war in particular. His satiric tone further exposes the
situation which is evident in the words like- ‘Half-naked on the floor’, ‘Moaned’, ‘Shouted’, ‘Kneeling’ etc. In a subtle and imperceptible manner his cogent attitude has outwitted his rhetoric. He further adds like a rhetorician a bizarre situation of the soldiers and the satiric reality of the frontline affairs.

The analysis of the War scenario with a glance at Sassoon’s concern of the soldiers sufferings are transformed into a pure Sassonian critique of the complexities of the war. As we see in the “Suicide in The Trenches”:

“You smug-faced crowds with kindling eye
Who cheer when soldier lads march by,
Sneak home and pray you’ll never know
The hell where youth and laughter go.”

(CP, ll. 9-12)

The realities of the trenches have so intensified the anguish according to the poet that it has become a monster threat to human lives. The life of soldiers was uncertain that no body knew what might happen to him the next moment. Soldiers’ life is compared to the sufferings in the hell. There is no laughter, only pain and sufferings. This threat of sufferings states his human concerns. He interrogates the nature of the
war in ironic mode. This ironic and satirical dimension provides the evidence of the tragedy involved. Though the satire is related with the predicament of the soldiers fighting on the front but its under-currents are visible in the society of the time as a whole.

A reading of Sassoon’s War poetry suggests a multi-dimensional approach in which a variety of his attitude and experience supplement a definite meaning to conditions of human lives in general. The cry and attitude of resentment is so deep seated in his poems that it acquires pitiable and pathetic dimension. The continuing war is vital in the evolution of his deeper concerns and outbursts relating to human lives. All these reactions share dislike against the war. To Sassoon War is O.K., it is a means of human liberation and peace in the world. But when this adventure becomes aggression and suppression, it is intolerable and must be criticize.

Sassoon’s war poems voice a discontentment with the existing affair as they were. The world of war seems to be a barren waste. He attempts to incite the reader into an awareness of moral and spiritual drought. Over all appeal of his war poems is to awake the barren heart and mind. His utterances are not
only subjective but also intellectually demanding in the sense that it speaks of the condition of human catastrophe. The insecurity, hardships, the vision that encompasses vast vistas of human endeavor. In fact Sassoon’s war poems go beyond its time and age. His satirical and ironic attitudes are a kind of direct display of distrust with the existing society. His poems are the reminiscences of his experience of the accounts of a bleak period. The gist of his thrust is on the absurdity of the entire situation in the surroundings. The horror and disillusionment connect the meaninglessness and hollowness of the continuing war. His anger, satire and irony are rooted in the reality of the front life. What Sassoon felt is that the world, particularly England had gone mad in an orgy of inverted values.

He used similar approach in the volumes after war. Such as “Satirical Poems” and ‘The Road to Ruin” as well. His target includes political personalities and the media in these volumes. But at the same time a calm and quieter philosophical tone is evident in his poems. Another aspect of these volumes of the 1920s collections such as “The Heart’s Journey “ is the voice of his questions about the usefulness of being and the course of time so far. These metaphysical
aspects are generally co-related with his observations of nature and unfold the truth of his bond with the rural English landscape. In “Sequence” there is an approach to religious conviction; it mirrors the spiritual conversion that he undergoes in the 1950s.

In relation to his war poems Sassoon received mixed reactions from different literary quarters. The literary critic like H.W. Massingham says, Sassoon’s poems are “epigrams- modern epigrams, thrown deliberately into the harsh, peremptory, colloquial kind of versification which we have so often mistaken for poetry...”

But one of his great friends of the time, Wilfred Owen rightly approves Sassoon’s treatment of combat, claiming that Sassoon’s poems not only deal with war’s immediate and startling aspects, they also exhibit a greater artistic approach. Wilfred Owen claims:

“... I have just been reading Siegfried Sassoon and am feeling at a very high pitch of emotion. Nothing like his trench life sketches has ever been written or ever will be written. Shakespeare reads vapid after these. Not of course because Sassoon is a greater artist, but because of
the subjects, I mean. I think if I had the choice of making friends with Tennyson or with Sassoon, I should go to Sassoon...”\(^{22}\)

In spite if its great human concerns Sassoon’s anger in his War poems, invalidates his work aesthetically. His descriptions appeal to the senses instead of imagination. Sassoon’s poems do not expand and intensify the horror of war into a greater human context. But rather enjoin the reader to react to the moment. In this context John Middleton Murry has correctly pointed out that:

“... Mr Sassoon’s verses- they are not poetry – are such cry.\(\textit{Counter Attack and Other Poems}\) They touch not our imagination, but our sense. Reading them, we feel, not as we do with true art, which is the evidence of a man’s triumph over his experience...”\(^{23}\)

Virginia Woolf is says that- “Mr Sassoon’s poems are too much in the key of the gramophone at present, too fiercely suspicious of any comfort or compromise, to be read as poetry; but his contempt for palliative or subterfuge gives us the raw stuff of poetry...”\(^{24}\) Virginia Woolf is of the opinion that Sassoon “deserted art in a compulsion to express the intolerable”.

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But there are critics who have found enough poetic merits in Sassoon’s War poems. They are of the opinion that:

“... The bitterness of Sassoon is the rage of disenchantment...He may not always have thought correctly, nor have recorded his impressions with proper circumspection, but his honesty must be respectfully acknowledged...”

Sassoon’s poems have also been appreciated as a chronicle of the time and age so far. It has been praised as a depiction of a generation’s transformation from the pastoral simplicities of the past to the violent uncertainties of the age he lived in.

In recording the war atrocities and front life his satiric and ironic approach have been taken as an influential model for the artist in the later period of the twentieth century. As the fighting deepened Sassoon’s highly sensitive nature began to feel the truth about soldier’s life. Whatever sort of death and sufferings he witnessed around, he thought, it must to be recorded. In spite of the fact that he was a brave soldier his personal bravery did not stop him to let everyone know the continuing catastrophe, horror and tragedy of the war. The battle of Somme brought about a metamorphosis in his tone
and attitude. After that he began to write poems of bitter and satirical nature. C.E. Maguire in an essay “Harmony Unheard” (Published in Renascence, 1959) provided an overview of Sassoon’s poetry, discussing major themes such as his musings on life and death, the absurdity of war and the course of time.

Notwithstanding Sassoon’s use of realism, satire and straightforward outspoken language in his efforts to wake the rusted soul up in favor of human endeavor is noteworthy. He made his intentions public to put the devastating and catastrophic effects of the inarticulate into words. He is of the view that it is the poet’s duty to make leaders aware of the contemporary situation. In reply to John Gambil Nicholson’s doubt about the war poems, Sassoon defended his war poems but also expressed his preferences for the “Death Bed”, “The Last Meetings” and “A Letter Home”, saying that “they have the best part of me in them, the quest for beauty and compassion and friendship”. These are lyrical war poems not satirical of the kind of which he is most generally known for. Undoubtedly some critics have criticized the war poems of Sassoon.
It should also be taken into account that these poems of War are not only the psychic “raw materials” but valuable ingredients of his poetry and also a well-cooked literary recipe. There is no denying of the fact that these poems are different sort of recipe cooked from the same range of ingredients. Sassoon talks about varied forms of destruction ranging from anthropocentric problems, environmental disaster and so on. He gets bitter and bitter as the war prolonged. According to him the war splits and dislocates the different phases and aspects of life. He has been burdened with a sense of disruptive waste of the on going war. He unfolds vividly the damage and disappearance of human lives on the trenches. And ‘of nature red in tooth and claw’. His poems are based on human pathos.

Unlike Romanticists Sassoon places the greatest emphasis on the objective dimension of human experiences. By analogy his are the Platonic view of a mirror which faithfully reflects the existing reality. Precisely Keats also affirms the importance of the role of the imagination in the production of art. To Keats imagination is a surer guide to truth and reality than reason, and comprehends truth in the form of beauty. In a letter of Benjamin Baily Keats writes:
“I am certain of nothing but the holiness of heart’s affections and the truth of imagination. What the imagination seizes as beauty must be truth... the imagination may be compared to Adam’s dream – he woke and found it truth”.27

That is to say that in Sassoon’s also, imagination and truth may well be associated with him. He too reflects the holiness of his heart’s journey and documents the truth of his experiences of War. As John Silkin has aptly pointed out about Sassoon’s attitude to War:

“...We are inclined to forget the ferocity of attack in the war poems of Sassoon ... he felt a sense of betrayal that could in no way justify the loss of one life. What is remarkable in Sassoon’s poems is the cool way in which the dead in the state of decaying, are represented. The ‘sodden buttocks’ and ‘clotted heads’ are abruptly, and brilliantly, contrasted with the human living perception of something (ironically) non-human ... But the perception comes it is given an ironic turn-‘the jolly old rain...”28
“Sassoon’s contribution is his brilliant juxtaposition of savage, raw experience with elderly bewilderment. “The Old Huntsman and Other Poems” are also Sassoon’s true utterance and they are supposed to be superior to the verse in the volume concerning England before the World War I. According to Mr. Heinemann who reviewed the poem in “The Republic” (dated 1918) “The Old Huntsman“ is a boyish attempt to secure a quavering sporting reminiscence. “Haunted”, “Goblin Revel” and “Night piece” show the kind of crow’s nest of fantasy to which English poets were compelled to climb so long as they had no full community with the life about them and so passionate experiences of their own. “October” and “Morning Land” and “Arcady Unheeding” exhibit what a man with Mr. Sassoon’s gift could do with classic opportunity.

These kinds of approach seem to be lovely but they are only forerunner of the true and realistic utterances which he finds in France. The war that he tries to portray his poetry is not an occasion for pomp and chivalry. The world of England is implicit in his singing without any doubt.

It is not the diplomatic war that motivates the poet but war that the human being really experienced, war the horrific means to a very politically ambitious end. The idea here is that
if he had remained in England he might have become a propagandist, a hate artist. His engagement with the army establishment carried his body and soul at the crossroads of his life. The poet is of the opinion that war opened the avenues towards death and destruction. Keeping in view this sort of death and destruction, he has not felt it necessary to apologize for his thoughts and approaches. He framed his experiences as they came to him. They are the bold and natural expressions of a person who has grabbed the right of freedom of speech through the poetic medium. The war has tested and tried his patience and emotions. This war provided him an opportunity to get himself lifted out of the traditional and old concerns, and landed him up with the associates not known to him. This war provided food and energy to Sassoon’s eyes and ears. His senses have been taken into custody round the clock. His senses got imprisoned day and night, winter and summer. The wounded comrade, the Golgotha of the sentry, the harsh imperative at dawn, the music-hall banality, about the tanks, the blunt casualness of death—all these are building blocks for Sassoon to give way to a touch of immortality. And his liveliness, his salty wit polished his reception of realism without giving any artificial flavor. Nevertheless Sassoon
mastered the inner and outer life around him and breasted the war. The war showed him the monstrous and evil side. The flood of anger and disillusionment brought about relief to his hypersensitive soul and spirit. His loyalty, laughter, hatred—all are the outcome of this disillusionment.

It is primarily the destructive effects of war which enabled Sassoon to find his own way of anguish and anger to convey his message. He is like Prufrock (in Eliot’s Alfred Song of John Prufrock) “to tell all” the image of the futility of war. He shows anger on the “buried human lives” which could have been saved to smile. His vision of unrest and dissatisfaction is well evident in his war poems. His exploitation of the panorama of war reality is impressive in the nature of the subject. The attempt to expose a panorama of human history as far as his conscience can reach, compels him to face the ultimate question about cause and effect of this dreadful human catastrophe. He could see, recognize and understand the darkness and futility resulting out of the confrontation.

The decayed body of the dying soldiers and its subsequent result is uncalled for. The dying soldiers on the front is combined with an allusion to Claudius’ speech to Isabella about his approaching death in *Measure for Measure* by
William Shakespeare. Sassoon imagines soldiers’ soul ‘imprisoned in the viewless winds / And blown with restless violence round about / The pendent world (Act iii, sc.i)

Sassoon is anguished by the present catastrophic situation. The limitations of his perspective, however, have been criticized at various stages. His reliance with anger is the outcome of an emotion which telescoped the tragic and grotesque happenings on the trenches. It is Wordsworthian ‘emotions recollected’, evoked through the scenes of the trench tragedy. He is broken hearted because his speculations have been shattered. Due to reversal of his expectations, he takes up an attitude of anger and speaks of the plight corresponding to the existing conditions. Sassoon goes on adventure but shipwrecked and thrown up on the whirlpool of gloom and anger. This adventure to the trenches shows him the naked reality of the war and could not manage to withhold his confidence. His anger and bewilderment is a telescopic association with the human predicament. There is an implied disgust exposed in his war poems.

In his war poems the satire depends upon the absurdity of the gross condition of the soldiers’ front life and human dimensions in general. What he reveals and strongly
persuades, is to fulfill moral and spiritual duties expressing his deep concerns for the human welfare. He is exhibiting a kind of protestant non-violence attitude. The significance of irony and satire in his poems should also be seen on the wider screen of moral and spiritual relevance. Christ represents, in Bible, as a sacrificial lamb whose blood cleans the sins of mankind. But here the blood bath is done only on the material ground. Hence this war is nothing to do with the salvation of humanity. His feelings are out of disgust and disillusionment, nevertheless, noteworthy. His response is sardonic:

He’d never seen so many dead before.’
They sprawled in yellow daylight while he swore
And gasped and lugged his everlasting load
Of bombs along what once had been a road.
How peaceful are the dead.”

(CP, ll. 4-8)

His ironic subversion of anger and satire mourns the passing of young soldiers. This suggests human skeletal’ between dry ribs’(whispers of immortality by Eliot). The words like ‘dark clouds’, ‘morning burns’, bullet through his brain’ ... evoke powerful feelings of both terror and anguish.
In his approach there is an association between the mental and physical condition. He ridicules the polarization of meaningless war of attrition. The themes and motifs flow together and recur with a powerful sensitivity of his psyche. His powerful sensitive elements juxtapose a variety of human perspectives. His texts are the texts of reality.

Sassoon’s method to apply experience and imaginative limitations of experience is noteworthy. It is this limitation of imagination which provides an opportunity of articulation of the plight of the whole uniformed warriors. He does not want this crude joke to be continued in the name of saviors. The anger and disgust imply the political, social, moral and other obvious factors which brought about this sense of attitude. Its an account of a brief survey of the political and moral spheres manufacturing hatred and effective divide among the haves and have-nots, powerful and general masses, rich and poor, right and might, the unrest culminated in the minds of the soldiers and so on and so forth. The poet has given masterly pictures of hate, disdain, revenge, remorse, despair, awe, mockery of the existing situations. His voices are Shellyean in nature and content. The satire and irony showered by him suggest that tyranny and sufferings should be condemned.
This perilous war of attrition has caused enough destruction. Enough is enough.

Sassoon’s war poems express the trauma of the sufferings. He challenges patriotic and military humbug coloring the sensibility of an entire age in his War poems at the later phase of his poetic career. He witnessed the war as organized and motivated insanity. His War poems are a witness of the ugly truth that has ever seen. His war poems encourage a direct, colloquial vigor to reinforce the image of anger and disgust. He used realistic picture to shock readers. To a greater extent, after the war, his poems acquired ironic and satirical quality through an unsettled juxtaposition of the viewpoints. In general the destructive effect of the war not only brought about a great change in his attitude and outlook but also made red and blue to other combatants and non-combatants as well. Sassoon lacked in the variety of method and poetic imagination but excelled by exposing the naked reality.

Notwithstanding the poetic laxities, Sassoon’s War poems should be acknowledged as a portrait of an age and a war torn generation plagued by unholy adventure. Hence these poems deserve a serious consideration. The portrayal of a war torn society and the sufferings of the uniformed provide a
comprehensive view of the period. Hopefully his war poems are certainly going to fascinate the readers of the English literature in all times to come. His war experiences are to be understood at its thematic level. It speaks about realistic and universal dimensions. The under current of these war poems are to bring about social, historical and moral changes in the outlook of the human society. These poems are suggesting important questions about the limitations placed upon common people by customary and institutional control.

The volume “The Old Huntsman and Other Poems” as a whole underscores his remarks, “My real biography is my poetry. All the sequence of my development is there”\textsuperscript{29}

Sassoon’s biting satirical commentaries are the realities of officialdom, physical conditions and patriotism. His poems are vivid and brutal in their sense of reality. Though his poetry could not find an immediately accepting audience but the bitter tone and the depth of feeling at the heart of Sassoon’s poems are certainly going to make a place of its own in the minds of the literary readers.
References


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