

«Dulce et Decorum Est»

Wilfred Owen



Wilfred Owen (1893-1918)



- Studies at a vicarage
- Disillusioned by the Church of England
- Spent some years in France
- October 1915 enlisted in the Artists' rifle
- Hospitalized for a brain concussion in March 1917
- Diagnosed shell shock syndrome
- Owen edited the hospital journal, the Hydra
- Met Sassoon, who became his mentor and close friend
- He was killed in action at the age of 25, one week before the Armistice.



From the Battlefield

- They marched three miles over a **shelled road** and three more along a **flooded trench**, where those who got **stuck** in the **heavy mud** had to leave their waders, as well as some clothing and equipment, and move ahead on bleeding and freezing feet.
- They were under machine-gun fire, shelled by heavy explosives throughout the cold march, **and were almost unconscious from fatigue** when the poison-gas attack occurred.



The Trenches



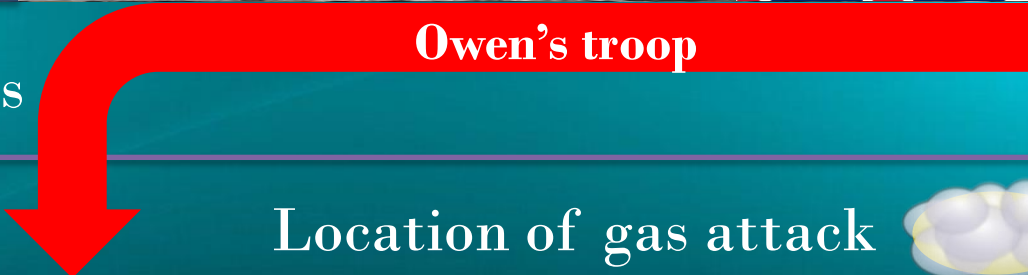
German Trenches



British Trenches



Bombs Range of 5.9's



Owen's troop

Location of gas attack

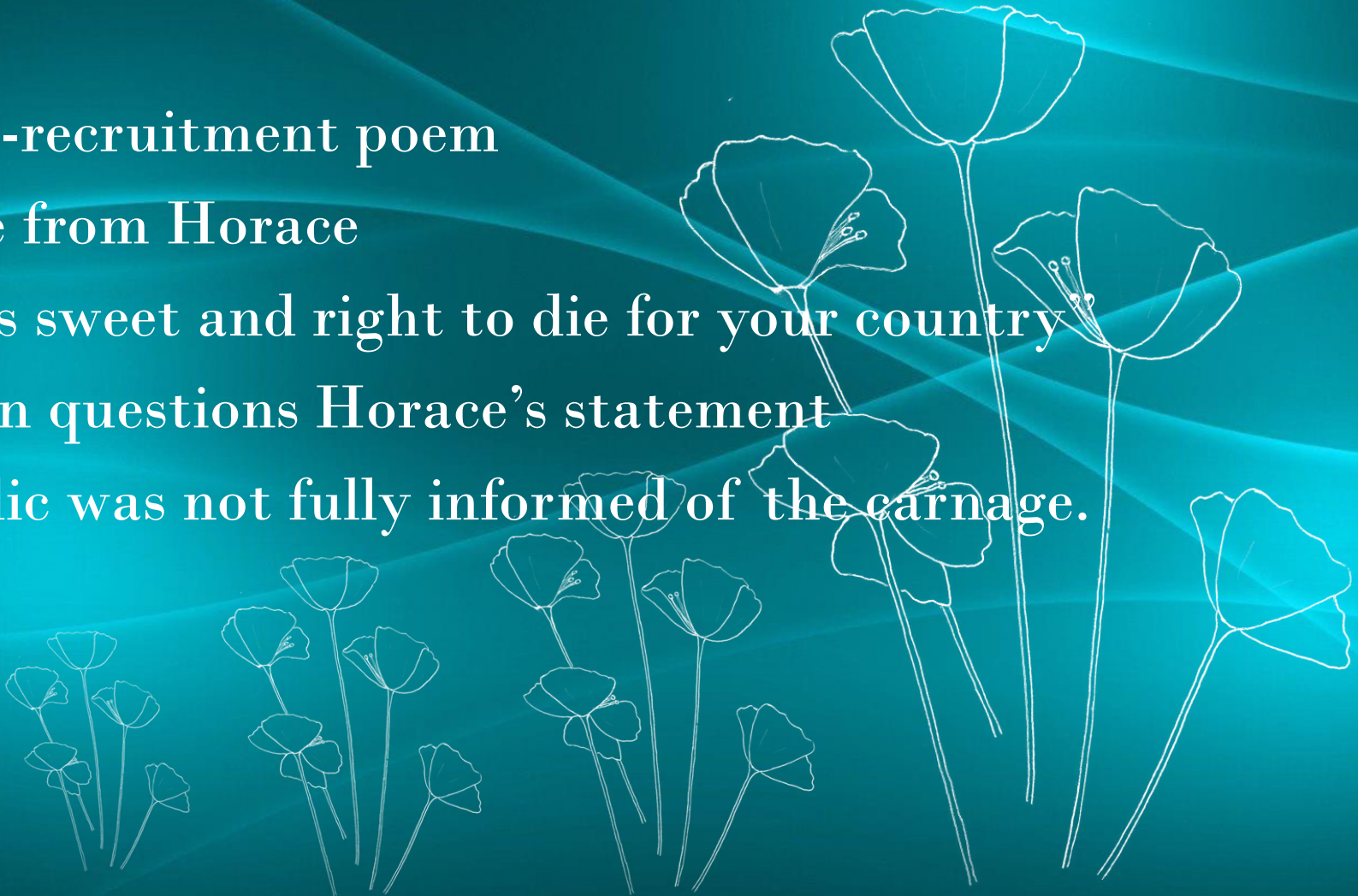


Place of distant rest



What Kind of Poem is it?

- Anti-recruitment poem
- Title from Horace
- “It is sweet and right to die for your country”
- Owen questions Horace’s statement
- Public was not fully informed of the carnage.



A First Glimpse of Warfare

- In the opening lines Owen and his men are:
 1. walking away from the front lines,
 2. walking away from no man's land,
 3. trudging to get their “distant rest”.
 - **According to Propaganda**
- English soldier were :
 1. clean-limbed, young, Adonis
 2. Happy to march off to war for the king and country ,**BUT.....**



First Stanza

- *Bent double(1), like old beggars under sacks,*
- *Knock-kneed(2), coughing like hags(3), we cursed through sludge,*
- *Till on the haunting flares(4) we turned our backs,*
- *And towards our distant rest began to trudge.*
- *Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots,*
- *But limped on, blood-shod(5). All went lame(6); all blind(7);*
- *Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots*
- *Of gas-shells dropping softly behind(8).*
- (1) men aren't upright
- (2) they cannot walk properly
- (3) witches
- (4) the lights of «No man's land»
- (5) hardened coagulated blood(protective coating)
- (6) soldiers=horses=animals
- (7) exhausted
- (8) they are not away from from gas bomb attack



The Unspeakable Truth

- Soldiers were shattered by fear and fatigue.
- The young Adonis are like hugs.
- The piece of foreign land to die on is not England, but a «cursed» piece of land.
- Exhausted soldiers moved through this cursed land.
- War is a dirty business, there is blood and mud everywhere.



Second Stanza

- *Gas! GAS! Quick, boys!—An **ecstasy of fumbling**(1)*
- *Fitting the **clumsy** helmets just in time,*
- *But someone still was yelling out and stumbling*
- *And **flound'ring**(3) like a man in fire or lime*
- *Dim through the misty panes and thick **green**(4) light,*
- *As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.*
- *In all my dreams before my helpless sight,*
- *He **plunges** (5) at me, **guttering** (6), choking, drowning*
- (1) Adrenaline rush invigorates the exhausted soldiers
- (2) He is having trouble in fitting the helmet
- (3) like a fish
- (4) Mustard gas is yellow but through the panes, it is seen as green
- (5) falls, dives
- (6) The sound of the candle putting out



The Gas Attack

- Soldiers were unprepared to tackle gas attacks.
- They were often unable to fit their helmets in time.
- Mustard gas, could kill by blistering the lungs and throat if inhaled in large quantities.
- On masked soldiers:
 1. it soaked into their woollen uniforms.
 2. produced terrible blisters all over the body.



The Third Stanza

- *If in some **smothering** (1) dreams, **you** (2) too could pace*
- *Behind the wagon that we **flung** (3) him in,*
- *And watch the white eyes **writhing** (4) in his face,*
- *His hanging face, like a **devil's sick of sin**(5);*
- *If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood*
- *Come **gargling** (6) from the froth-corrupted lungs,*
- *Obscene as cancer, bitter as the **cud** (7)*
- *Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,—*
- *My friend, you would not tell with such high **zest** (8)*
- *To children ardent for some desperate glory,*
- *The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est*
- *Pro patria mori.*
- (1) suffocating
- (2) Jessie Pope
- (3) Picked up the soldier and put on the wooden wagon, but he is not dead yet
- (4) in agony
- (5) The devil who is responsible of the evil of the world says: “ I am sick of it”
- (6) At every jolt the blood comes gargling
- (7) what cows chew
- (8) ardour



The Epilogue

- The poet regurgitates the image of his mate dying.
- He cannot forget it.
- Propaganda is responsible for this carnage of innocent young man.
- Thousands of soldiers were affected by shell shock syndrome.
Symptoms:
 1. Fatigue
 2. Tremor
 3. Confusion
 4. Nightmares
 5. Impaired sights or hearing
- **CONCLUSION:** there is nothing sweet or glorious to die for your country.



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