

Representation of War in "Regeneration" and Wilfred Owens war poetry

- How both the writers explore emasculating effects of WW1 -techniques used by both writers
- Explore and Compare the ways both authors use language to create effects, in particular their use of imagery to convey the experience of war.

Both "Regeneration" and the poems of Wilfred Owen give a very poignant "representation of the war". In many ways the two pieces of work give the reader a clear insight into the lives of people caught up in the war, and the effect that the war had on people.

One effect of the War is the creation of a sense of emasculation, something which is discussed in both "Regeneration" and Wilfred Owens poetry. The characters in "Regeneration" express concern of emasculation whilst at Craiglockhart hospital. The emasculation which is discussed in "Regeneration" highlights how powerless the soldiers felt when faced with the harsh reality of what war is truly like. The fears of the men are clearly evident in their dreams, nightmares and relations with fellow characters. Anderson for one has a dream where he is tied down with "corsets" and Rivers and Sassoon talk about an "intermediate sex". Initially the men who enlist to become soldiers believe they are doing something which is quintessentially masculine. Despite them trying to do the "manly" things, they have been viewed in society to be somewhat unmanly, because of the breakdown that they suffered in the face of war. The methods of treatment used by Rivers can be described as unmanly, he encourages the men to release their emotions and to discuss their feelings something which is overtly feminine.

Emasculation is a real threat at war, but is also a real threat in a war hospital. In a war hospital the patients completely give all their power to the doctors and nurses whom are looking after them. Rivers becomes worried with the powerless nature of the treatment the men receive at Craiglockhart. Rivers can be seen as a very emasculating force, not only are the patients under his complete control but also his very methods as mentioned above are emasculating. Rivers recognises that his methods of treatment go completely against "the tenor of their upbringing" and also notes that through the course of their upbringing they "had been trained to identify emotional repression as the essence of manliness". It is for that reason why Prior resists Rivers treatment, as a soldier Rivers feels that he needs to act in an overtly manly manner. Prior though is fighting contrasting views, his mother gave him a tender upbringing which in turn has given him a fear of death in the war. Priors unwillingness to open up and share his feeling is shown in the fact he would rather subject himself to hypnosis than let out his emotions and feelings. Rivers is placed in a situation where he is fighting against two contrasting points of view; he had to decide if it was worth potentially curing the men, but doing so via emotional castration. In Rivers own words the war which was supposed to be for "manly" activity has actually created a great sense of female "passivity"

The way language is used to create imagery is very important in both "Regeneration" and Wilfred Owens poetry. Both pieces of work, via effective imagery are able to transmit to the reader the harrowing reality of what the soldiers faced on a day to day basis on the front line. Owens poetry is clearly very moving as it removes the misconception of "the glory of war".

Through the work of Owen and the vivid descriptions that he uses the reader is given a clear image of the horrible suffering caused to soldiers during the war. Barker too used imagery effectively in *Regeneration*. Here imagery is used to convey how the war has affected the man mentally. Barker's imagery helps the reader to emphasise with the suffering of the soldiers.

Wilfred Owen creates imagery for the purpose of transmitting emotions to the reader, in an attempt to make the reader feel as if they are situated in the trenches. His poem, *Dolce Et Decorum Est*, which attacks the glory of war, he dehumanises the soldiers who are leaving the trenches through his language and descriptions. He describes the supposed heroes as being "like, old beggars" & "coughing like hags". Imagery is also created very effectively in the 2nd stanza, which describes the events after a Gas attack in the trenches. Imagery is used so the reader can understand the suffering of the soldiers, the reader can hear the protagonist "yelling and stumbling", "like a man in fire or lime" this helps the reader visualise the pain the men are subjected to. A harrowing image is then created when the protagonist stays with the soldier until he suffocates to death, "drowning under a green sea". The reader is given a clear image of the "thick green light" covering the trench and is given a further sense of the men's suffering by hearing "guttering, chocking, drowning". Owen uses very blunt, harsh language to describe the war to give the reader a truly tormenting and distressing image of the war. The most effectively chilling metaphor used in this poem is "like devils sick of sin" meaning possibly that the suffering of the men is so immense that even the most evil of them all is getting tired of it.

"Anthem for domed youth" is another example of Owen's insistence to depict the war in the most truthful and excruciating way possible. The poem opens with a description of the battlefield, as a horrible image is created when the men are said to have died like "cattle". The battlefield is described as something more akin to a slaughterhouse. This right from the start of the poem gives the reader an image of the immense savageness of the war.

Whilst Owen uses imagery to describe the initial horrors of war, Barker in *Regeneration* exposes through imagery the long term consequences of the horrors of war. The imagery he uses symbolises the conflict which is running through the men's minds following their devastating experiences. To use an example, in Chapter 4 Anderson tells Rivers of his nightmare which includes a great deal of symbolism and imagery. Anderson was a surgeon but broke down because he developed a trauma towards blood. In the said dream Anderson is confronted by his father and law in a representation of society's pressure to confront reality. His father and law waves a stick with a snake wrapped around it towards him. The snake could be seen as a representation of the sin that Anderson believes he has committed, being a surgeon who has a fear of blood. The stick could be seen as a weapon, something which is going to strike him, could be a representation of the punishment he is likely to receive from members of society. Through the images created in the dream the reader is given a clear sense of how pathetic and weak Anderson feels as a surgeon who has a fear of blood. To further Anderson's embarrassment he is then confronted with an emasculating image of himself being tied down by corsets. Through the vast majority of the images created by Barker describe the physiological effects of the war; however there are passages which address the physical effects of the war. Sarah for one, sees a room full of people that have lost their limbs and are now being hidden from a society that does not want to address the atrocities that the war has caused.

Barker also Owen uses images to discuss and describe how men lost their lives in trenches. In chapter 4 symbolism is used to describe the harrowing effects the war has had on Burns. Burns has neurasthenia, as whilst on the front line, after an explosion he landed on the decaying body of another soldier. One afternoon Burns sneaks away from the hospital and goes to the forest, where he imagines a tree full of dead animals, which it could be said represent his dead fellow soldiers who died in the slaughter of the front line trenches.

Owen's language is used to create direct harrowing images of the immediate effect of the war. Whereas Barker also reflects the cruelty of the war, but describes through imagery and symbolism the mental affects that the war had on the men. Both writers are effective in transmitting different experiences of the war for people who had not lived through these horrors.