دراسات فنية
مخبر الفنون والدراسات الثقافية
جامعة أبو بكر بلقايد تلمسان

Volume:06/ N°: 02 (2022) p53/76

Rhetoric of *Cultural Memory* on the Onslaught of Global War: A Selective Study of Siegfried Sassoon's World War I Poetry

Bouali Amina[1]
[1] Senior lecturer at Oran 2 University, amy.bouali@gmail.com

Received: 30may 2022 Accepted: 06 may 2022

Abstract ;(not more than 10 Lines)

The First World War is not one scary myth in history which brought everything into cynicism, as much as a thawing "modernized experience" culminating into an intensified "literary" war. In the world of poetics, nonetheless, modernism's critics had often relegated WWI poets as paradoxically delinquent victims of war, considering their coeval tendency a way to shake human faith at the very sublime valorization of Western civilization and culture. From an austere counterpoint, the paper endeavours to resurrect the aesthetic potency of Great War poetry by stressing mainly on living metaphors of death and trauma as dexterously employed by the visionary leading Poet— Siegfried Sassoon. Substantially, Sassoon's reverberating imageries of war trauma and apocalypse are showcased as both; eloquent stylistic devices as well as a true vignette of existence that helps to commemorate the stone-dead scenes of brutality so far stifled in British historical memory.

Article info

Received
30./05../2022
Accepted
06./06./2022

Keyword:
- ✓ *Keyword: Culture*
- ✓ *Keyword: Historical Memory*
- ✓ *Keyword: Metaphor*
- ✓ *Keyword: War Trauma*
- ✓ *Keyword: WWI Poetry*

1. *Introduction*

The productiveness of literary heritage, culture, and arts had always been seen to thrive spectacularly in an extraordinary climate of crisis. From colonial imperialist expansion to the catastrophic global conflicts striking the geopolitical tectonics of power, to the world depression of the 1930s, followed by the subtle age of Civil war, there seems to be no narrative text in history that is purely self-sufficient in terms of style and context. As a matter of fact, most works of art are intricately linked whether in time or space to a particular shaping occasion that harks far back in time marking thus a watershed in the memory of the individual in conjunction with his societal milieu where monumental yet dramatic martial captures of an individualistic past are cautiously reckoned and commemorated. On the heels of the First World War, casting its bloodstained vaults over planetary proportions, men had awakened to a series of seismic shifts that touched varied

Correspondingauthor: Fullname,

modes of life and expression, say art, politics, science, history, and education. These interdisciplinary dynamics that activated palpably at the outset of the twentieth century had spawned an expressionistic literary movement, known as literature of crisis, which escaped the artists' solace in the beauty of nature and the utopian meditation on the world, insomuch as it broke down with all the peculiarities consisting in the nostalgia of gothic fiction. It was conspicuously a time of metamorphosis from Keats, Coleridge, and Byron's romantic ambience and that bleak atmosphere of Gothicism pervading Ann Radcliffe and Shelley's works into exotic anti-patriarchal models of writing ranging from Joyce and George Moore to Browning and T.S. Eliot.

For British poetry more sensibly considered, the traumatic events of the first Great War were no less atrocious and had also transformed the social landscape of the area into an extended metaphor for moral concerns and brooding apocalypse with which British poets felt totally absorbed. Noticeably, the terrible world battle had engaged some English poets, like Greenberg, Wilfred Owen, Isaac Rosenberg, and Siegfried Sassoon with uplifting and blighted action poetry written to lift up the spirits that had yet to endure the solemn, ruinous tensions of the warfare. Inside the battlefield, however, Siegfried Sassoon (1886-1967), both a soldier and a literary icon, is maybe the most eloquent tongue speaking for the war. Sassoon succeeded throughout a range of lyrics and sonnets of evocative spell and incontestably enduring value, such as "Enemies" (1917), "The Death Bed" (1917), "Memory" (1918), "Banishment" (1917-1919) and the "Dug-out" (1919), among others, to eternalize his harrowing experience of combat trauma which does not stop to appeal to the contemporary readerships to the present time. As eulogized by Campbell (2007), Sassoon canon is worthy to be stratified "among the most significant in the literature of modern warfare" (p. 3).

Nevertheless, in criticism parlance, Sassoon's artistic potential had been questioned. Often, his reputation as a skilful poet of a certain luminous rigour had dropped a few notches when he "came a poor second" to Owen with regard to their applications of trenches images that pander to the war politics (P. Campbell, 2007). On the same unfavourable note, Joseph Cohen (1957) contends that Sassoon's war poetry openly boasted in a strident pitch of his pivotal role as a prophet, rather than a real bard (as cited in Bloom, 2002). From another side, Sassoon's counter-monumental poems are deemed to suffer a relapse of reviving some sites of traumatic memory that assert some mental turmoil and unveil a wish to surmount his inner rupture by penetrating some past inaccessible memories, permeating them to acquiesce reluctantly the responsibility for actions which instigated human affliction (Sarnowski, 2018). However, Hemmings (2008) thought of Nostalgia and trauma memory as the central hub of Sassoon's poetry of compassion and survival, using some imaginary and realistic images from the past that forge unisons between the individual and the national culture astounded by two successive massive world wars. In fact, all those diffracted spectra of thoughts had herded the current study into a solemn discussion on soldier Siegfried Sassoon's poetry of war, both as a genuine poet and a typical embodiment of war. Along these lines, the paper will expose the niche which is hitherto persistent in the critical analysis of WWI poetry, by showing first the early poems of Sassoon as a bravura performance of a Collective, rather than Individualistic Memory. Correspondingly, the study will anchor on Nora's Realms of Memory (1996-8), along with a particular reference to the fertile theory of Maurice Halbwachs (1925, 1941) (drew impetus from his tutor Émile Durkheim) of collective memory, which provided much of the impulsion for the accomplishment of this work. So as moving from a shallow to an elusive level of depth in the stylistic fabrication of words, the arguments of this study are designed chiefly to explore the following research questions: (1) to what extent does Siegfried Sassoon's World War I Poetry signify a shared modern reality? And what is the link between the internalized conflicts that Sassoon addresses in his poems through symbolic materials (metaphors and imageries) with what Halbwachs calls (cultural) collective memory? In other words, what figurative images (rhetorical and metaphoric) does Siegfried Sassoon employ to depict the war as an overlapping cross-cultural phenomenon in relation to memory and trauma? To provide some healing answers thereto, the study will build upon some living metaphors (featured by subtle conceptual mappings) and traumatic images of war extracted from a selective gallery of poems in order to demonstrate their significance in informing the writer's collective memory.

2. *Poetry and the First Great War*

Poetry is a genre, a literary form among others such as prose and drama. It is one of the long-standing genres, and probably, it is as old as history itself. Its earliest traditions are deeply rooted in ancient Greek literature (the first story written in verse is Beowulf), and could with a high sense of self-preservation prosper vigorously through time. Historically speaking, however, poetry has ionized into different shapes since Old English period designated by its overemphasis on ancient forms like the ode (e.g., Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn" (1820)), and elegy (e.g. Walt Whitman's "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd" (1865–66)), to the Sonnet as the most overarching English literary form prevailing Elizabethan literature. In the light of previous accounts, however, most traditional endeavours to define poetry disambiguate it from prose, highlighting comprehensively its distinctive constituent elements such as Rhyme, Metre, and Rhythm (Klarer, 2013). The Concise Oxford Dictionary's first definition of "poetry' is 'Art or work of the poet with elevated expression of elevated thought or feeling in metrical or rhythmical form" (Coyle, Garside, Kelsall, & Peck, 1993, p. 164). In the same respect, Baldick (2001) noted that "Poetry is language sung, chanted, spoken, or written according to some pattern of recurrence that emphasizes the relationships between words on the basis of sound as well as sense," he also added that "this pattern is always a Rhythm or Metre, which may be supplemented by Rhyme or Alliteration or both" (p. 198).

Apart from contextualization, it is worthy to consider how poetry changed by history, not least in times of crisis. In fact, many climactic flows of change in human nature and lifestyles that had soared off the charts in the last two millenniums were mostly mirrored by a lengthy array of successive indexed crises, which impinged bravery on the world of poetry (Wright, 1984). As illuminated by DuPlessis (1986), the novel literary traditions ensuing the panic-stricken *fin de siècle* and the beginning of the 20th century "was born from the pressures of silence—'habits of privacy, camouflage, and indirection'—which resulted in 'linguistic compression' and 'juxtaposition'" (p. 7). As also depicted in the gripping preface to the book *Re-Imagining the First World War*, edited by Branach-Kallas and Strehlau (2015), the upheaval engendered by the bloody war has soon transformed into a political "war imagined" in others' memory (Hynes), a "rhetorical" war, and a "creative tradition" dramatized by illustrious War poetry (Fussell, 2013). From a brighter vantage point, this unique corporeal turmoil had certainly exerted a tremendous influence on modern poetry, which prospered with a generation of English-speaking bards airing their incandescent undertones of rage with a triumphant, anguish-laden tone that resonated from every quarter of the universe, with an ethereal, spiritual aesthetic loveliness that seemed to be hitherto etched in today's memory.

The bloody theatre of war had nudged many eye-witnessing British poets towards 'war writing' as a means to voice the irreparable tragedies of the battle so that to resume the hope and disenchantments of a forgone total generation. As portrayed in John Keats's incomplete *Hyperion*, the only man who could attain the highest degree of expertise which served to resurrect his artistic soul from the grave of oblivion was *he to whom the miseries of the world/ Are misery, and will not let them rest* (neoenglish, 2010). Prominently, before and during the Great War, Thomas Hardy entertained his disciples with approximately a thousand short poems, besides long dramatic verses labelled as *The Dynasts* (1904-1908), which boost people's hope to enjoy the quaint nature of life despite malaise and suffering. Not in the least optimistic, Rupert Brooke appeared with a great gift of prophecy in that he wrote some uplifting poems that envisage the glorious death of a soldier as divine salvation, and heavenly blessings: *if I should die, think only this for me/ that there's some corner of a foreign field*.

The proliferation of WWI poetry had continued to flourish with other soldier-poets like Wilfred Owen (1893-1918), whose name towered over the rest of his fellows, was probably the most influential figure of the time. Owen is best known for his patriotic poems best remembered by 'Futility', 'Arms and the Boy', 'Anthem for Doomed Youth' and 'Strange Meeting'. Those poems, among many others on war poetry list, depict not just the poignant images of woe and the jeopardizing portraits from the warfare, but also reveal the harmful physical and mental effects wrought by the hard-fought battle on the civilian population. A powerful instance in the case is the following bulk of verses picked from 'Mental Cases':

> *These are men whose minds the Dead have ravished.*
> *Memory fingers in their hair of murders,*
> *Multitudinous murders they once witnessed.*
> *Wading sloughs of flesh these helpless wander,*

No less influential than Owen was Siegfried Sassoon (1886-1967), who fought in French territories as a brave soldier, yet, most of his war writings disclosed his unshakable faith in the nullity and the despicable intentions of the war. In this account, many of his poems were set to rebuke the officers for being consciously ignorant of death and misery cost by the conspiratorial prolongation of meaningless unwaged battle. Conspicuously, the yearning to flee from the blood-curdling evil of war is figured prominently in his unpublished poem 'Testament' (1918), where he mourns the chill of guilt and despair stubbing those who fight deeply in the veins. (Campbell, 2007)

For the last time I say – War is not glorious
Though lads march out, superb and fall victorious,
- *Scrapping like demons, suffering like slaves,*
And crowned by peace, the sunlight on their graves.

In the very fact, Sassoon's revolutionary poems are not just revelatory bewailing about a lost glory after an exhausting war, bereft of any sense; jostling for nothing, like those who keep hunting the shadows of specters in the haze of the dark, but are also brimming over with poignant images of brutality. The intended tropes and metaphors implied in those poems are not based on hearsays or predictions but are real pictures in miniature of a collective fate, a shared *cultural memory.* They are images that are vigorous enough to rebuff one's *nothingness*.

3. *Collective Memory*

The conception of Collective Memory has reached a significant milestone in the last few decades by urging serious preoccupation with the field of social sciences and the humanities (Kansteiner, 2002). However, to look throughout the bustling prism of Collective Memory might be a desperately unidentifiable, slippery zone of interest, as the term itself is less intelligibly defined by its quintessence than its function (Bosch, 2016; Kansteiner, 2002). Uniquely, notwithstanding this subtlety of usage, researchers today see the terms 'culture and memory' as binomials which have been so far intermeshing within themselves in an intricate interdisciplinary bound, which entails a plurality of realms as sociology, art, media studies, theology, philosophy, psychology, and the neurosciences.

Conceptualised in its most traditional equivocal terms, however, Memory in the 19th century took on multifarious guises, like 'collective remembrance', 'social memory' and 'popular memory making', which had been often set against 'individual memory' and 'myth' (Erll & Astrid, 2008). The focal hub in this sociological study draws a circle on the symmetric confluence existing between individual and social memory (Pennebaker, Paez, Rim & Paez, 2013). For instance, according to Keightley and Pickering (2013), the diverse mediums of remembering perform as a homogeneous projection of the past, which deploy a large corpus of symbolic resources that are imbued with cultural authenticity, and historical identities, which foster therefore knowledge related to history, and stimulate openness to overshadowed minor 'otherness'.

By way of definition, the concept of Collective (also Social or Cultural) Memory, though firmly grounded in history, and though both terms are sometimes made of the same clay, the former is in a sense purged from historical pasture at all. Cultural Memory, as delineated by Kansteiner (2002), is rather "a collective phenomenon but only manifests itself in the actions and statements of individuals… it often privileges the interests of the contemporary" (p.180). In juxtaposition, Halbwachs considers history as a devalued cliché, a dead metaphor for passing memories which safeguard meaningless images with which we share "no 'organic' experiential relation" (Olick & Robbins, 1998). In this flash of illumination, Campbell, Labbe, & Shuttleworth (2002) exalt the essential role of memory, which helps "allowing the collective act of memorializing, encouraging and bolstering social progression and the transformation of the past into the future" (p. 1).

However, as far as the historical evolution of the term is concerned, the theory of vision was strongly indebted to Hugo Van Hofmannsthal, who was the precursor to coin the term Collective Memory in 1902, yet it is thanks to the French sociologist Halbwachs that this research becomes a fully enshrined theoretical canon, set fundamentally against the concept of history, which he considers obsolete and archaic (Halbwachs, 1976, 1997). According to Halbwachs, individuals are incapable of recalling something to memory outside the limbo of a social context, refuting- by this stance- the individual-psychological interpretation of memory. He also contends that memories are in essence a social phenomenon (what he refers to as *the cadres sociaux*) that is bequeathed as a dignified heritage from one generation to another (Halbwachs, 1976). Analogously, the theory of Collective Memory as an offspring theory of Memory studies had found a high echo of interest in many provocative studies sounded around first by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger's in their landmark The Invention of Tradition (1983), Jacques Le Goff's History and Memory (1992), Paul Ricœur's Memory, History and Forgetting (2004), and in the most piquant book of the French historian Pierre Nora Realms of Memory published in 1996. (Bosch, 2016)

Beyond description, the latter ambitious magnum opus by Nora (1996) had marked a luminous milestone over the Mitterrand era, and so much beyond. His advent of a fresh outlook on the different sites of memory has unleashed the path into a new understanding of symbols that are conceived basically as a sacred cultural phenomenon, which makes possible a re-visualization of national memory that is mirrored through the meaning that one associates to places; cities, towns, beaches, hills, and all geographical landmarks that define what Nora points at as 'the memory place'. Interestingly enough, in Pierre's contention discerning the encyclopedic meanings of places and events of a nation out of symbols would give rise to a genuine cultural identity; a process that ought eventually to construct our deepest sense of history (Nora, 1996; Nora & Kritzman, 1997). In the same vein, Ricoeur (2006) in his turn averred that "The duty of memory is the duty to do justice, through memories, to an other than the self" (p. 89). While, on his part, Garde-Hansen (2011) opined that "memory, remembering and recording are the very key to existence, becoming and belonging" (Garde-Hansen, 2011, p. 11).

After delineating some tempestuous attempts to define the term collective memory, it is noteworthy to veer one's attention to the poet under study.

4. *Siegfried Sassoon and the Collective Memory*

The catastrophic events from 1914-to 1918 engulfing the European horizon in flames had hastened the making of a Great War Poet, Siegfried Sassoon, who is ostensibly accredited as the most prominent memoirist of the First World War in Britain of all times. As for his upbringing, Sassoon was born in Brenchley, Kent, England in 1886 to a rich Jewish family, is the fruit of a hybrid marriage between a Jewish father and gentile mother. As being raised up through genteel traditions, he spent most of his childhood leading up to maturity enjoying a very lavishly idyllic lifestyle, taught law by private instructors, at home and Marlborough College, before making his mind to continue his education at the University of Cambridge where he found much more forte in history studies. However, Sassoon's love for poetry soon hatched into a grand passion while he had to drop education in pursuit of his artistic ardour. By and by the ambitious craving for writing, which Sassoon sucked from his companionship with Rupert Brooke, Edmund Gosse, and Edward Marsh, had metamorphosed into published poems featured by a romantic Pre-Raphaelite appetite. Unfortunately, Sassoon's early poems, appearing *ad hoc* in their prefatory construct, had not been taken too much earnestly by ninetieth-century critiques. (Hacht, 2009)

By the time that the First World War cut a swathe through Britain, the dreamy, delicate and inexperienced boy Siegfried *Sassoon,* had to kiss goodbye to his sprightly grins of youth riding his bike too rough to take a place in the armpit of the *front line*. Feeling the vanity of aspiration in the face of redemption and patriotism, Sassoon became known for his unflinching bravery to face death on the battlefield, which earned him the *nom de guerre* "Mad Jack" and a Military Cross well-deserved by a courageous soldier. While still in the army, under grisly assaults, Sassoon's soul of the poet ignited in those gloomy trenches there where he wrote *The Old Huntsman, and Other Poems* (1917), followed a year later by *Counter-Attack, and Other Poems* (1918). In those culled epigrammatic volumes, Sassoon wishes to enunciate his wrath against the viciousness and hideousness of the war, depicting throughout his sparkling words realistic memories of personal trauma experienced in combat and hospital.

In fact, most of Sassoon's graphically cruel and realistic captions of war, do not only echo the inner yelling bursting out from everlasting scars of suffering, both physical and psychosomatic, but they also recall a collective memory of people in the flesh forfeiting passively their souls to the wilderness. For Campbell (2007), Sassoon's works like "the Dream", offer some naturalist vista which stirs some smells that "jog the memory of thoughts, not of hunting, but of fifty hovels and men with sweaty, blistered feet behind the front lines" (p. 58). His poetry, though somehow overshadowed by later post-war prose, like *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man* (1928), *Memoirs of an Infantry Soldier* (1930), and *Sherston's Progress* (1936), stays reminiscently vibrant, yet, critical to the present time. In the eyes of some critics, Sassoon's poetry is besieged by maddening vagueness as most of his biting verses are shockingly ironic, explicitly unpatriotic, and worse of all, extremely realistic (Roberts, 2000; Thorpe, 1967). As Wilson (2014) argufied, Sassoon is the prototype of a naive writer whose violent stories of war resume "the improvisations of an impulsive, intolerant, immature young creature, under the extreme stress of experience" (p. 13). Analogously, to see through the eloquent statement of Middleton Murry, Sassoon's poetry is bereft of any aesthetic lure; it is merely a dearth of perfect artistry (Hacht, 2009).

To whatever stance, however, Sassoon's perplexing carving to gaze pensively at his enervating 'undefined heart-ache in association with 'a chord of ecstasy', is not for him just a part and parcel chapter of his life (Mallon, 1983), but shared historicity (memory) and the representation of common values that allow for Nora (1996) "the possibility of revelation" (p. I). In so many words, in *Chapter V of Siegfried's Journey,* Sassoon himself asserts that his stained experiences of 'shell-shock' and the 'spiritually-bewildering' torture of war had edified his mind by enhancing a shrewd "comprehensive memory of war in its intense and essential humanity" (as cited in Moeyes, 1997, p. 220). To say humanity in tandem with war memory, however, is to refer to an intertextual 'mythical event' shared by a social group or a human race, and is only remembered through a 'traumatic experience' conceived as an integral component of family history, and most essential, as element of political history (Niba, 2022).

In this sense, Sassoon's poetry in its very exotic literary demonstration of war memory uses narrative techniques and aesthetic methods that are apt to span the past with the present. So in what follows, we will be shedding light into some embodies conceptual metaphors and techniques, which are grounded in violent themes of 'horror', 'death', 'anguish', and 'trauma', among others. The aim is to demonstrate the way various models of remembering by Sassoon (delineated through individual psychologies) may function as a revival of (British) collective sites of memory that make history teem with contemporary contexts.

4.1 Metaphors of Trauma in Sassoon's Collective History

In a thought-provoking book by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) coming under the title *Metaphors We Live By,* the cognitive linguists amplify the cognitive currency of metaphors in one's natural reasoning and everyday social interactions. Interestingly enough, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) strongly avowed that metaphors are not ornamental tropes or rhetoric devices peripheral to the literal use of language in different mundane contexts, but they are rather extraordinary cognitive phenomena "pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action" (p. 4). *Stricto sensu*, some metaphors that are grounded in multifarious conceptual mappings, e.g., LOVE IS A HEAT, ARGUMENT IS WAR, TIME IS MONEY, pervade the way people think and interact, and thus, they are a *sine qua non* for the true perception of the self and the world surrounding. Most of the conceptual metaphors differ considerably in the way they disguise under distinct linguistic constructions, and this is by virtue of the subtleties of variations in language usage deeply ingrained in heterogeneous cultures. Admittedly, the cognitive theory of metaphor has recently constructed a firmly stable pedestal upon which stimulating studies in this area of research have rested.

In this framework of thoughts, metaphors are conceptualized as cross-cultural elements imbued with collective resonance, which contribute a great deal in raising self-awareness of one's own culture and open the door to *the otherness*. In this sense, Sassoon's symbolic devices embedded in his "Glory of Women", "How to die", and "The Hero", among others, are to be diagnosed as cultural "manifestations rather than reduplications of thoughts" (Berrada & Jahfa, 2011, p. 66). In other words, "war metaphors" marked by historical trauma and violence will be treated basically as a visual stimulus to memory, remembrance and forgetting, permeating a transcendental outlook to individualistic acts of memorializing, which serve to cut beyond the actual, and the particular, transmuting realistic experiences of war from the past into the future.

To these ends, it would be worthy to delve into the war poetry of Siegfried Sassoon, in which ferocious and moving metaphors of death and violence appear almost omnipresent in most of his poems, not least those crafted when the war is at its apogee. Most of those poems are at the end intended to jog the readers' memory of British history, so as to trigger their (re)visualization of the poet's own society in the contemporary. To fulfil this study, the analysis will cover five realms of memory underlined in different symbolic themes including death, trauma, horror, war and cultural identity, most of which are highlighted in relation to the *Collective Psyche.*

4.1.1 Images of 'Death'

When contemplating over Sassoon's War Poetry, namely the *Counter-Attack, and Other Poems,* appalling images of death hardly slip out from the eyes. Outspokenly, one of the overused metaphors in Sassoon's poems is 'WAR IS DEATH', of which endeavour is primarily to remind the audience of the ruthlessness of the Great War in Britain that drags soldiers from their beds to the dugouts and the battlefields, where they are more vulnerable to forfeit their lives than ever. Like many of his poems, for instance, 'Dreamers' is an ideal epitome in the case, where Sassoon launches his poetic piece with elegiac juxtaposing intonations of pity and pride, depicting compassionately his army comrades as *'citizens of death's gray land'/ Drawing no dividend from time's to-morrows.* In that picture, '*death's gray land'* refers implicitly to the imperialistic homeland 'Britain', which is not anymore a blissfully safe place for its citizens. Its greed to win the battle, symmetric with the desire to gain more sovereignty over the cosmopolitan sphere, soon made it a drowsy area shrouded in grey smoke; looking like a forsaken graveyard for the *collective memory* of soldiers taking part in the war. However, the final two lines of the octave, reveal the poet's voice of deception tinged with unexpected optimism, representing '*Soldiers are dreamers'* of a better site of memory; a place furnished with '*firelit homes', and* '*clean beds'* which they can call a sweet home.

'Death' is in fact pervading everywhere in Sassoon's mind mapping, but in his riveting verses from 'How to Die', dying sounds like a poison chalice, it is even sanctified by Christian religion as a holy act, rationalized painstakingly by the belief that 'Death' at war, defending your motherland, is a crowning 'glory' granted by God. Here are some precluding verses from the poem:

> *The dying soldier shifts his head*
> *To watch the glory that returns*
> *He lifts his fingers toward the skies*
> *Where holy brightness breaks in flame;*
> *Radiance reflected in his eyes,*
> *And on his lips a whispered name.*

As could be noticed in the underlined lines, Sassoon, though his uplifting words cannot hide an undertone of seamless uncertainties, yet, his fiction of memory illuminates a moment in history in which we are pled to revisit the Great War of Britain with a lot of reverence, not from a personal perspective, but as shared social 'glory'. In analogous imagery drawn in the "Memorial Tablet", joining the army to fight for the freedom of the mother county is according to Sassoon a '*glorious memory', and* as a native Briton, it is his *'own duty'.* 'Death' is also personified in the quality of sleeping ─'DEATH IS SLEEPING (FOREVER)'─that is not likely restful and innocuous for men, as it is supposed to make a person go through unbearable seams of pain before he falls asleep forever. For instance, in "The Death-Bed", a soldier is 'Soaring and quivering in the wings of sleep,

—'Lipped by the inward, moonless waves of death'. A similar symbolization is also offered in Sassoon's most famous poem 'The Dug-Out', where the poet employs a simple, and an almost plain style to talk to a wounded comrade, bewildering the readers whether the soldier, to whom he is speaking, is just sleeping, or he has already breathed his last. The closing lines of the poem are just extremely heartbreaking; since they awake more consciousness to the unmerciful criminality committed by the bloody hands of war; "*You are too young to fall asleep forever;/And when you sleep you remind me of the dead"*.

4.1.2 Images of Trauma Memory (The Collective Psyche)

style to talk to a As illuminated by Hemmings (2008), in his momentous preoccupation with *Siegfried Sassoon, Trauma and the Second World War,* nostalgia and trauma do not "only operate from the same luminal space between memory and forgetting" (p.3). What is much more strikingly enthralling in their intricately interwoven bound is that they are often correspondingly ingrained in the tedious experience of war, and more specifically, in the encounter of surviving war. Substantially, many researchers in the twentieth century distil the meaning of 'war memory' into two-sided aspects of the same coin; namely the retrieving of the intractable 'after-effects' of 'war trauma' on the human psyche (*memory*), and the 'fanciful nostalgic escapism' from the intense anxieties of war (*forgetting*). The act 'to forget', however, is notably empowered by a refracted experience of nostalgia which is also an interesting area in the study of war trauma. Interestingly, Lowenthal (1989) celebrates 'literary nostalgia' as an imagined past visualized from the depth of one individual's constant account of the chaotic subjectivity and imprecise nature of the modern era, and therefore, informing what is known as the *collective psyche (or social memory).* Nostalgia, in this essence, compels mediating yearningly over a pretraumatic past, and the uncanny assertion of genuineness in an earlier phase of harmony between the inward world of humans and their natural background. (Hemmings, 2008)

As related to the study of Sassoon's war poetry, in relation to *trauma memory* and the pathology of nostalgia, the poet seems to play with all the luminaries of artistry to translate all psychological vexations engraved in his deepest memory as a result of the subjugation of a woeful war experience. So, despite his fervent abhorrence of war, Sassoon himself confesses that most of his poems, if not all, unveil his deep-seated impulse to depict his own traumatic memories of combat that still hold "an awful attraction' over his mind" (Stewart, 1972, p. 67), and are indubitably the bane of his life. Visibly then, most of Sassoon's verses written during the WWI are characterized by a plenitude of richness and a variety of metaphoric styles, which are used to cater for a testament to the fragmentary continuity between disturbing memories triggered by the war and their lasting effect on native culture, that is saturated with all the pent-up perplexities that international crisis had helped hitherto to engender. Trauma metaphors in Sassoon's historical poems, as elicited by Niba (2022), "construct political history, and shed light on British self-image, the way her patriotism and national identity were textually represented beginning from the 19th century" (p. 308).

In this flash of illumination, trauma memory is identified by a number of conceptual metaphors that enliven Sassoon's narratives, viz., 1/ 'WAR IS A GHOST', 2/ 'FORGETTING IS A BLESS', 3/

TRAUMA IS A SHOCK, 4/ HOPE IS LIGHT, 5/ DESPAIR IS DARKNESS, and 6/ TORTURE IS HELL.

With an ever pathetic nostalgic pitch, in connection with the first metaphor 'WAR IS A GHOST', Sassoon, in his short poem "Wirers" extracted from his collection, *Counter-Attack and Other Poems* in 1918, evokes the feelings of 'horror' in the readers by personalizing the brutality of war in a ghost. For instance, in his symbolic image; *then darkness, and the clumsy [ghosts]/ Stride hither and thither, whispering, tripped by clutching snare/ of snags and tangles*, the poet realistically intends to recreate the dark atmosphere of war by portraying the German enemies among soldiers as foolish (ghosts). In a different case, following a deadly accident in the dugouts where the poet-soldier was exposed to death in Edinburgh military hospital in 1917, Sassoon suffered from 'a psychological breakdown' ("Shellshock" trauma), which inspired him to write 'Break of Day.' In this poem, Sassoon desires to invoke the sympathy of the public audience towards the nightmares of war, with such an exasperated soliloquy of despair, and rage against all with all those bleeding wounds he could never heal. Accordingly, the haunting image of war embodied in *the [ghost] of autumn in that smell*, launching unpleasant din that shouts louder in his inner psyche, is not only a revival of personal memories that cast a destructive impact on his inner psyche. The metaphor is also a way to promote "the negative perception/remembrance of World War I as it became permanently engraved in the psyche of the British collective public" (Niba, 2022, p. 309)

By being badly affected by the horrifying life in the trenches, Sassoon inevitably thinks that 'FORGETTING IS A BLESSING', AND TRAUMA IS A SHOCK. For instance, in one of his ever-heartrending poems, entitled "Does it Matter?" Sassoon delineates the touching, sombre signs of trauma on many soldiers who lost their eyes, legs, and minds in the British war. *Does it matter?* The poet sarcastically wonders, *losing your legs?* for the nation does not care about you, and *(people will always be kind)*. With the same ironic temper, the poet doubts whether soldiers themselves can reconcile with their mental turmoil, forget and live cheerfully ever after. The horror of the past will haunt them, and they will never find the boon in forgetting past injuries, for they can never (…*drink and forget and be glad).*

Considerable to note, in other war poems, Sassoon also uses some simple, yet impressive images to show that HOPE IS LIGHT, and DESPAIR IS DARKNESS. Still miles away far from the disquiet and agitations of wartime, the ecstatic tone in "Before the Battle" poem is intermingled with nostalgic memories of Sassoon, who is recalling the picturesque and verdant landscape of Britain before he goes to war. Through a beautifully weaved paradoxes, Sassoon showcases "the yellow lilies", symbolizing hope in the poem, as a source of 'light'; a conceptual mapping built against the opposing image of war and hopelessness as a metaphor for 'darkness,' is perfectly epitomized in his verses (*O bear me safe through [dark]),* and *(O river of stars and shadows, lead me through [the night])*. A similar image is evidenced in his poem "Two Hundred Years After" which offers a graphic and pleasant account of the state of his nation Britain many years after the war. His anticipatory vision is plainly repellent with hope and aspiration, as all the trench-lines would be "*digged two hundred years ago/ Then darkness hid them with a rainy scud*), and lately the beacon of hope will light up as soon as England (*saw the village [lights below]*). Admittedly, those images of bright expectations disclose not only the poet's sincere love for his honoured nation 'Britain', but it is also a patriotic collective feeling that is shared by all the members of his social community.

In some other remembered poems, like "Died of Wounds", "Banishment" and the "Glory of Women", Sassoon captures more sympathy from the readers as he continues to concuss their heads with horrific and bloody scenes sketched from the common memory of World War I. However, what largely renders his works a collective memory engraved in the national psyche of Britain is his temerity to render the fictional realistic, and the forgotten remembered through moving historiography that helps to recreate a national cultural memory. In many cases, however, Sassoon accentuates the image of TORTURE as HELL, and many of his metaphors seem to reside in this theme. In '"Banishment", for example, though the poet looks repentant to leave his comrades in a brutal and very dangerous status quo, yet, this has not impeded him, as it appears in "*Love drove me to rebel. / Love drives me back to grope with them through hell; / And in their tortured eyes I stand forgiven*", from bemoaning the torture of war by depicting 'hell' as a literal chasm between a tranquil citizen's life and that of a soldier.

A similar conceptual metaphor is overemphasized in "Glory of Women", which introduces the reader to all the grimness of life, depression and disgraceful scenarios of brutalities, which pull Britain's politics to sink deeply into the mire of collective trauma. In this context, the following quoted lines (*And mourn our laurelled memories when we're killed, When hell's last horror breaks them, and they run, Trampling the terrible corpses—blind with blood,* show how the poet embraces a plosive diction (e.g., breaks, killed, blind), and thrilling words (hell, horror, terrible corpse, blood) o introduce the receivers to the intricacies of the subject of horror in association with war with all its spitefulness and depressing outcome. In this sense, 'hell' is synonymous with 'war torture', which have both defined what the collective memory of war in Britain, and quite so in the West, looks quintessentially.

5. *CONCLUSION*

Unsurprisingly, many of those eye-witnessing poets of the war, led by Siegfried Sassoon, Greenberg, and Wilfred Owen, are the unique paragons of artistic virtues, who have been wallowing in despair and hope to generate literature of crisis that is inclined to spin out the horrifying scourge of a living collective memory born in the trenches of the war. Intricately though it seems, the present work connotes recurring meditative turn into the possibilities of a new 'revelation' of Great War Poetry as a true site of collective memory. Retrospectively, the present study has enlightened Siegfried Sassoon's poetry, namely that written amidst the first Great War, as an insightful paradigm of British social memory, which often dovetails with psychological trauma and reinvigorating individualistic memory. To reach these ends, the analysis has rested upon the rhetorical potency of the Great crisis in relation to cultural history, namely by shedding light on living 'conceptual metaphors' grounded in images of death, trauma, and bereavements, which are dexterously prevailing Siegfried Sassoon's poetry. Through deliberate and painstaking scrutiny of the symbolic images used by Sassoon, the study reveals that most of his pre and in-war writings might be probed as a vignette of social psychological trauma, rather than a mono-sided vision of the brutality of the war. Sassoon's poems are in fact rich in idiosyncratic language that is marked by a lot of conceptual mappings of war memory, including sinister images of death (‘WAR IS DEATH’/ DEATH IS SLEEPING (FOREVER), and some thrilling images of trauma memory (like TORTURE IS HELL/ WAR IS A GHOST’). By revising his eccentric and strong symbolic style, we could come to infer that all the horrible and fraught experiences of war that Sassoon had bitterly gone through had not just managed to leave him with several stitch scars on his inward memory, but also a passion to involve others, through memorizing, forgetting, and important of all, roving in nostalgic spaces that could bridge his past experiences with British *historical memory*. It was as if he was badly in need to expunge his mentally-weary trauma, to finally come across the comforting sight of the be-spectacled modernized nation, and the consolation of religious faith which he was yet to relish in his later religious poetry “Sequences” (1956).

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