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MODERN POETRY: TRADITION AND EXPERIMENTATION

THE GEORGIAN POETS

Before the First World War poets were still influenced by the **Victorian romantic tradition**. They employed the conventions of **diction** and felt sympathy for English elements about countryside and **Idyllic places** while **rejecting the revolution in sensibility of the Symbolists**.

THE WAR POETS

Their poetry was **unconventional anti-rhetorical** and dealt with **the horrors of modern warfare**.

IMAGISM AND THE BEGINNIG OF MODERN POETRY

The movement placed between 1912 and 1917 and the name **“Imagiste”** was invented by **Ezra Pound**. It used **hard and precise images** and a **metrically regular rhythm**. The poems were short and without a moral comment

SYMBOLISM AND FREE VERSE

It started in France with **Charles Baudelaire's Les Fleurs du Mal (1857)** and was characterized by:

- **Indirect statements**
- **Allusive language and association of words**
- **Importance of the sound of words**
- **Use of quotations from other literatures, revealing Cosmopolitan interests**
- **The possibility for the readers to bring meaning to the poem**
- **free verses**

It was T. S. Eliot who expounded the new poetic theory and practices

THE WAR POETS

DIFFERENT ATTITUDES TO WAR

Initially **there was excitement for the war but it disappeared when it was seen the loss of human lives on the Western front and the unhuman conditions of soldiers in trenches. Soldiers often wrote verses about trenches that however didn't reach people at home.** However a group of poets who experienced the fighting **wrote realistically about the modern warfare , in an unconventionally way in order to awaken the conscience of the readers to the horrors of the war.**

WILFRED OWEN (1893-1918)

He was born in **1893**. He worked in **France** as an **English teacher** but returned **to England to go to war**. In **1917** he was **injured and the hospital met a poet** who introduced his poems to other literary figures. **He was killed in 1918 after he returned to war**. His **poems are brutal and real talking about men gone mad and destroyed**. He used assonance and alliteration and the preface of his book “Disabled and other poems” was essential for World War 1 poetry: “this book is not about heroes ... my subject is war and the pity of war ... all poet can do today is warn. That is why the true poets must be truthful”.

DULCE ET DECORUM EST (1920)

The following poem is **based on the poet's experience of the horrors of war in the trenches**, and it is an attempt to communicate **the “pity” of war to future generations**. The Latin title means “it is sweet and honourable”; it is a quotation from the Latin poet Horace who borrowed the line from the Greek poet Tyrtaeus.

A DEEP CULTURAL CRISIS

The **system of Victorian values**, decency faith in progress and morality, came to an end in the last decades of 19 century.

The First World War and its atrocities created a disillusioned and cynical mood, that created a **gap between youngs and adults** and **brought frustration about white superiority and imperial hegemony** as a result of the transformation of the empire into a commonwealth of nations.

Also science and religion were put in discussion, as **new theories** emerged especially with **Albert Einstein's** relativity.