

Wilfred Owen, Selected Poems

d)i Sonnets

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<p>1914</p> <p>War broke: and now the Winter of the world With perishing great darkness closes in. The foul tornado, centred at Berlin, Is over all the width of Europe whirled, Rending the sails of progress. Rent or furled (5) Are all Art's ensigns. Verse wails. Now begin Famines of thought and feeling. Love's wine's thin. The grain of human Autumn rots, down-hurled.</p> <p>For after Spring had bloomed in early Greece, And Summer blazed her glory out with Rome, (10) An Autumn softly fell, a harvest home, A slow grand age, and rich with all increase. But now, for us, wild Winter, and the need Of sowings for new Spring, and blood for seed.</p>	<p><i>Anthem for Doomed Youth</i></p> <p>What passing-bells for these who die as cattle? ---Only the monstrous anger of the guns. Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle Can patter out their hasty orisons. No mockeries now for them; no prayers nor bells; (5) Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs,--- The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells; And bugles calling for them from sad shires. What candles may be held to speed them all? Not in the hands of boys but in their eyes (10) Shall shine the holy glimmers of goodbyes. The pallor of girls' brows shall be their pall; Their flowers the tenderness of patient minds, And each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds.</p>
<p><i>Hospital Barge</i></p> <p>Budging the sluggard ripples of the Somme, A barge round old Cerisy slowly slewed. Softly her engines down the current screwed, And chuckled softly with contented hum, Till fairy tinklings struck their croonings dumb. (5) The waters rumpling at the stern subdued; The lock-gate took her bulging amplitude; Gently from out the gurgling lock she swum.</p> <p>One reading by that calm bank shaded eyes To watch her lessening westward quietly. (10) Then, as she neared the bend, her funnel screamed. And that long lamentation made him wise How unto Avalon, in agony, Kings passed in the dark barge which Merlin dreamed.</p>	<p><i>Sonnet On Seeing a Piece of Our Heavy Artillery Brought into Action</i></p> <p>Be slowly lifted up, thou long black arm, Great Gun towering towards Heaven, about to curse; Sway steep against them, and for years rehearse Huge imprecations like a blasting charm! Reach at that Arrogance which needs thy harm, (5) And beat it down before its sins grow worse. Spend our resentment, cannon,---yea, disburse Our gold in shapes of flame, our breaths in storm.</p> <p>Yet, for men's sakes whom thy vast malison Must wither innocent of enmity, (10) Be not withdrawn, dark arm, thy spoilure done, Safe to the bosom of our prosperity. But when thy spell be cast complete and whole, May God curse thee, and cut thee from our soul!</p>