

# Factors Affecting Military Recruitment in Selected War Poems: A Socio-economic and Political Reading

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## ABSTRACT

Since the beginning of the twentieth century many poets, novelists and critics have written about war due to the First World War and the Second World War and their aftermaths, along with the wars that the British Empire was involved in in the colonized territories. Thus, much research has been conducted on war in English literature; however, little research has been done from a socio-economic and political perspective to point out core reasons behind enlistment in literary texts. To fill this gap, this paper selects several war poems, and critically analyses four pre-1914 and post-1914 war poems to explore the main reasons behind military recruitment in those times. The selected poems include: "Glory of Women" by Siegfried Sassoon, "Disabled" by Wilfred Owen, "The Man He Killed" by Thomas Hardy, and "The Soldier" by Rupert Brooke. The anti-war poems ("The Man He Killed", "Disabled", and "Glory of Woman") are juxtaposed to the pro-war poem ("The Soldier") to present a full image of war and examine all the factors that entice citizens to make such an irreversible and unwise decision to join the army. Analyzing these literary works help understanding the reality of war and the factors that push people into enlistment, and hence open a door for those academicians whose objectives are to participate in eradicating war and eliminating its push factors.

**KEYWORDS:** Recruitment Drives, Anti-War Poetry, Pro-War Poetry, Political Stimuli, Socio-Economic Drives

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Whether members of society tend to be directly involved in politics or apolitical, they will be negatively dragged into the world of war. Thus, war impacts every individual directly or indirectly and can lead to physical and/or psychological damage. In the current age of technology, wars are more dangerous as more people are affected by war compared to the past, as wars are streamed live through social media, affecting not only those living in the war zone, but also those around the globe, since images of violence and war are spread in just a second and viewed by millions of people all over the world. As Sugden (cited in Untsman Mental Health Institute, University of Utah, 2022), a colonel in the US Army Reserves and a psychiatrist at Huntsman Mental

Health Institute, rightly states, individuals, including civilians and military personnel, along with those observing the war via social media, can exhibit the common psychological characteristics associated with trauma. Apart from serious health problems, war can also have immense economic, social, and humanitarian costs leading to poverty, immigration, an increased crime rate, the spread of diseases, hindering education, ruining infrastructure, and unemployment, and all of these problems will consequently result in the destruction of society as a whole.

Being so dangerous to global societies, war must be illuminated with its push factors, and this can be done through raising awareness among the enlistees, especially the youth. Some ways to do so are by counter-recruitment activities such as doing research, writing and producing anti-war literary texts, and using the media to present people with the unbearable harsh realities of war and hence turn their interest away from recruitment.

In the field of literature, an effective attempt to fulfill this goal is to analyze the war literature from such perspectives. Unfortunately, literary critics have not explored the factors behind military enlistment from a

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socio-political perspective. This paper aims to fill in this gap by selecting a number of pre-1914 and post-1914 war poems and critically analyzing them to explore the main reasons behind military recruitment and to show how literature represents society's engagement in war. There are numerous pro- and anti-war poems in English literature; however, only four are chosen to be examined in this paper. They include "Glory of Women" by Siegfried Sassoon, "Disabled" by Wilfred Owen, and "The Man He Killed" by Thomas Hardy, which are anti-war poems, and "The Soldier" by Rupert Brooke, which is pro-war.

The rationale for choosing these specific poems over others lies in their capacity to provide insights into the research question concerning the factors that drive individuals to enlist (what are the factors that entice individuals to recruit?). Each poem addresses a unique element of recruitment pertinent to this study. In addition, the selected poems offer a more authentic representation of war and scrutinize the various motivations that compel individuals to make the significant and often ill-advised decision to enlist. It is noteworthy that only one pro-war poem has been included, as the predominant themes in pro-war poetry from the era of the First World War largely centered on nationalism and imperialism, reflecting a singular motivation for joining the military, which will be discussed in detail later in the research. Conversely, the anti-war poems present a diverse range of war-related themes, revealing multiple factors influencing enlistment that will be beneficial for this investigation.

In the analysis of the poems, various methods of analysis are used in this paper because each text presents a unique perspective on the motivations that compel individuals to enter the battlefield. Some of the poems are analyzed from a political point of view, some economic or both, and some from a social perspective. Specifically concerning the poems that deal with social factors, it is essential to contextualize the drivers within a relevant theoretical framework aligned with Social Impact Theory. The following two sections provide political, economic, and social frameworks to contextualize the enlistment drives presented in the poems.

## **2. SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL FACTORS OF MILITARY RECRUITMENT:**

Military recruitment is a complicated topic, as the factors that spur people to enlist, whether voluntarily or forcefully, vary from community to community or from time to time. Individuals may or may not willingly join

the army; therefore, the reasons behind their recruitment will vary depending on their ideologies and perceptions of war and its objectives. Thus, militarization is an important topic to study in any related discipline, both for those who are pro-war or anti-war because the formal or informal mechanisms for military recruitment need understanding, and that mostly falls under the spectrum of social and political sciences. Although, according to Rech (2014), those aspects of the army are not deeply understood by the academicians in these fields.

With regard to historical periods or geographic location, there are several mechanisms militaries generally practice and rely on to convince populations to enlist. For example, governments utilize various media employed in military recruitment, such as posters, television advertisements, and online games, to offer insights into how violent imagery, metaphors, and templates are essential components of state-centric paradigms shaping global politics (Rech, 2014). In addition, in their pursuit of cultivating consent and compliance, states strategically employ nationalistic sentiments, reinterpret domestic histories to suit their objectives, and fabricate mythologies of warfare, through which they propagate anxieties, perceived threats, and the idea of otherness (Rowland, 2006; Saucier, 2010 cited in Rech, 2014).

Furthermore, Harris (2000), mentions some external factors that influence young people's decisions to join the army; some of them are related to social pressure from parents, staff in educational institutions, friends and peers, famous people, combatants on active duty and their family members, and veterans. He also mentions some others that are related to economic and financial benefits, such as the influence of a powerful economy, "base closure/downsizing, enlistment marketing and ads, and diminished enlistment incentives for the army.

In their book, Brett and Specht (2004), in examining the issue of child soldiers and suggesting some mechanisms to illuminate it, point out some basic factors that entice children and young people to enlist, including breaching law and order, easy access to armaments, acute forms of social exclusion, such as poverty and inequality, deprivation of educational opportunities, the prevalence of child abuse, and child labor. They find a correlation between military recruitment and economic conditions: the higher job opportunities available, the less desirable military service would be among high school graduates in the US. Economic reasons have also been emphasized by some other researchers as a determinant in recruitment. For example, the National Research Council (2003) highlights the reasons why, to young American individuals, military service has become less appealing

than other options available for them after graduating from high school, which poses challenges for recruiters.

Recruiters tend to employ all the strategies they can think of to enroll more civilians in the army to the extent that, sometimes in recruitment, age and gender are not taken into consideration. War-related data show that all age groups are likely to be forced into the military, including children of both genders, to the point that more than 300,000 children are believed to be recruited into armed forces in more than 20 countries all over the world, of which 40 percent are girls, predominantly due to compulsory labour (UN, 2015; Brett and Specht, 2004). These “child soldiers” are not solely utilized as combatants, but also in other army support roles as spies, cooks, porters, guards, and messengers (UNICEF, 2021). Brett and Specht (2014) also identify some determinants of child involvement in armed conflicts, such as their socio-economic and political environments, as well as at-risk personal conditions. It is worth noting that the mechanisms mentioned above for child recruitment can also apply to adult military personnel.

### **3. RECRUITMENT STIMULI BEFORE AND DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR**

All the factors mentioned above are commonly witnessed to be affecting individuals’ decisions to enlist in contemporary militarism. However, what is most prominent to this paper is pointing out the factors that have had an impact on militarization and recruitment before and during the First World War, since the selected poems were written during that time. For simplicity, the factors are divided into two main categories: socio-economic and political factors.

Some of the political factors are listed by Rech (2014, p. 245), including “nationalism, political, geographical and historical imaginary.” A surge of nationalist sentiments, the escalation of militarism, imperial competition, and competition for power and influence were the main reasons why the powerful European countries were involved in the war (Imperial War Museum). However, the public was not aware of these motives for waging war. For example, to convince them, in Great Britain, fear and anxiety were spread around the kingdom through military media and literature to validate the war and encourage the citizens to enlist. An example of this is manifested in the invasion literature genre (which emerged in 1871 and continued to be popular until 1918), which spread fear and anxiety among people through fictional stories emphasizing the aggressive tendencies of Britain’s imperial competitors in expanding their empires, or depicting the British army, surrendering to the one or more powerful external empires at home and

in areas in the larger British Empire before the onset of the First World War (Wild, 2017). Consequently, these attempts led to the creation of a professional British army.

It can be argued that the majority of people were not in favor of war; they were forced into the war in different ways. As Hall and Malešević (2013) rightly put it, the purported national group unification and “homogenization” observed during the time of violent tensions is not a spontaneous social response, and nor is it directly related to war itself; it is rather a complicated process that demands a lot of institutional effort for a long time to happen. Not all the population was moved to action by a sense of nationalism and sense of duty before and during the First World War in Great Britain, and thus the number of British professional soldiers was small compared to the number of the armed forces of their rivals.

Similarly, several sociological factors impact the individual’s decision to enlist. One of them was getting benefits from social and peer pressure to entice those men who were reluctant to join the army during the First World War. A case in point was the emergence of the White Feather Women Movement in 1914. Its followers presented all young men who were not in military uniforms with a white feather as a symbol of cowardice to shame them into enlisting after being humiliated and embarrassed in front of the public eye (Moorey, 2021).

Moorey also points out that not only the “shirkers,” but also men who were excused because of health issues, soldiers who were on leave or wounded, and workers in reserved occupations (those who were working in vital industries on the home front) were all humiliated and abused by the White Feather Movement. They were receiving white feathers from relatives or strangers on the grounds that they were out of uniform and not serving the country. Although the shaming tactics used by women recruiters induced some of the victims to enroll, a huge number of them did not surrender to the humiliation and refused to enlist (Gullace, 1997, cited in Moorey, 2021). The military-age men who were objecting had some factors making them unwilling to join. For example, some of these were ideologically against the war (who were called the “conscientious objectors” and held some Christian anti-war beliefs), some others were afraid to die, some were reluctant to enroll because of familial commitments, and some were indifferent to warfare due to their occupation as farmers (Gregory, 2008, p. 89).

Despite the rejections, as Gregory further notes, Britain managed to form a volunteer military force that was, between 1914 and 1916, the second largest in its history, although that number of voluntary combatants was not sufficient to win over the rival, powerful European armies. For this reason, new military strategies needed to

be enacted to encourage compulsory recruitment and volunteerism. The impact of reserved occupations and the 'shirkers' refusing to go to the front lines caused the militaries to issue the Conscription Law in 1916 (Silbey, 2004, p. 129). The recruiting officials employed various other strategies to encourage volunteerism in enlistment. For example, according to McKay (2021), to enlarge the army and reduce the money spent on them in prison, a sense of patriotic sentiment was spurred among the criminals in prison, and they were also recruited.

Overall, the military men belonged to all ranks and classes of society, and the reasons behind their recruitment were diverse. According to the soldiers who were interviewed by the BBC as part of The Great War television series of 1964 to talk about their experiences joining the army, they attributed the enlistment factors to societal pressure coming from family members, friends, and peers, military propaganda through film, songs, media and newspapers, nationalism, as well as fear propagated through psychological tactics (Imperial War Museum).

It is worth mentioning that the experience of participating in war and its subsequent impact led to a significant shift in public opinion towards a more anti-war stance. Studies indicate that, in the decade after the Second World War, the public's perception changed about the rationality and uselessness of the First World War (Todman, 2005). As Moorey (2021) reports, these counter-recruitment and anti-war perspectives were considerably evident among the relatives of the soldiers who enlisted due to pressure from the white feather women and consequently were killed in the war. They blamed those followers of the movement for the lost lives of their loved ones.

#### 4. EXAMINING RECRUITMENT FACTORS IN THE SELECTED PRO- AND ANTI-WAR POEMS

War occupies a huge part of English literature written during the First and Second World Wars. Literature of the First World War predominantly reflects on both illusions and disillusionment experienced by communities with strong patriotic sentiments that, driven by naivety, hastened to enlist and blindly joined the war as a result of being manipulated by official deceptive pro-war propaganda (Cohen and Higbee, 2017). The poetry of the pre-1914 and interwar periods especially "tended to be boisterous, nationalistic, patriotic and triumphant" (Demoor, 2022, p. 205).

It is noteworthy that many writers wrote in favor of or against the conflict. However, the majority of the war

writers were male during that time, and women were not as active as men in that respect due to the fact that the experience of female writers in the war was not first-hand, and it merely reflected that of men (Featherstone, 1995). For this reason, this article exclusively focuses on the war poems of male poets for a critical examination of the motives of military enlistment within the context of politics, sociology, and history, as English literature of the wartime was illustrative of the mood of the English society in general during and before the war.

##### 4.1 The Soldier

"The Soldier" is one of Rupert Brooke's sonnets from a group of war sonnets published in 1914 at the outbreak of the war under the title of "Nineteen Fourteen." It reached a massive readership when it was first published in *The Times*, and thus the poem depicts the mood of English society in their belief in sacrificing their lives for their country (Smith, 2014). Rupert Brooke himself was one of those soldiers who enthusiastically enlisted as a volunteer and joined the Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve, but the Reserve did not literally engage in war in 1915, during its deployment in Belgium (Jones, 1999). Brooke did not have real battlefield experience; therefore, "The Soldier" does not illustrate the realities of the battlefield, but rather, as Demoor (2022) rightly states, it is blatantly loaded with nationalistic and jingoistic themes that have colonialist and imperialistic overtones. Analyzing the poem from a socio-political perspective, one can argue that this is the main factor that had enticed Brooke himself or other like-minded young Englishmen to enlist.

Although some critics consider "The Soldier" to be a patriotic poem, many others argue that it is a nationalistic one that is influenced by pre-wartime pro-war propaganda. However, nationalism is a dominant theme in the poem, if we consider Primoratz's definition of the two terms. He defines patriotism as genuine affection and dedication to one's homeland free from any sense of hostility towards other nations, while he distinguishes nationalism from patriotism in that with strong love and devotion to one's nation, a nationalist has a derogatory view about other nations and behaves detrimentally towards them (Primoratz, 2015, cited in Yousef, 2022). Taking the above-mentioned definitions into consideration, patriotism is natural; conversely, nationalism is negative, as it is a political ideology that emerged in Western Europe during the upheaval of the early nineteenth century, which was spurred by colonial expansions (Kedourie, 1970, cited in Yousef, 2022).

Overall, "The Soldier" paints the picture of a soldier who has proudly sacrificed himself for his nation in a foreign land, and has turned that land into England

through his blood and “dust.” However, it never pictures the real horrific images of war that depict the realistic experience of a soldier on the battlefield. For this reason, a considerable number of critics have expressed disapproval of him, along with valuing extreme patriotism over the human cost of conflicts (Smith, 2014).

As Yousef (2022) puts it, Brooke’s sentiments against other nations in this sonnet and his other poems and letters are driven more by nationalistic perspectives than patriotic ones, which convey aggressive feelings rather than defensive ones, and this indicates a sense of competition and anonymity towards foreign nations. She also adds that the underlying nationalistic connotations lead to the validation of colonialist and imperialist interpretations of the poem, since colonialism is an extreme form of nationalism that allows military intervention in other countries. According to Kohn and Reddy (2024), the terms colonialism and imperialism are sometimes used synonymously as they both entail the exertion of political and economic control of a subordinate region, and they differ in that colonialism is characterized by relocating populations to new lands while still retaining political loyalty to their countries of origin, but imperialism signifies dominance over other lands whether through direct settlement, sovereignty, or other indirect forms of control. These political doctrines are reflected in the surface and underlying meaning of the poem.

The octave part of the sonnet reveals how a fervent patriotic sentiment stimulates the speaker of the poem to proudly answer the call to arms on other lands, without considering the rights of other nations. He tells his fellow citizens not to think of anything else when he dies, except “[t]hat there’s some corner of a foreign field/ That is forever England.” (Brooke, 1914, lines 2-3). This statement is too extreme and dangerous to be merely patriotic. It is nationalistic in its essence, as the persona of the poem not only thinks of taking that land but also transforming it into England with its values and culture. The lines, “[t]here shall be [i]n that rich earth a richer dust concealed, assert the theme of white supremacy and nationalism as “a richer dust, whom England bore, shaped and made aware, stands for the body of a deceased English combatant who was raised and nurtured by England and is now buried in another country, which is sacred enough to be able to change the values and culture of that nation into English ones (Brooke, 1914, lines 4-5). That means the body of an English soldier can act like fertilizer, making the occupied land richer, which metaphorically stands for spreading English culture in the colonized country and civilizing them as all other nations are considered inferior to England. This reveals how the speaker is brainwashed

by war propaganda into believing that it is a sacred act of duty to die for his country in other lands and spread the English culture and values in the occupied lands, believing that they are the superior race. These lines are evident examples of state expansion and colonial and imperial subjugation of other territories through military force.

Furthermore, the sestet reemphasizes the significance of sacrificing for a just cause via depicting the image of the soldier attaining a state of happiness in the aftermath of death, which is an evident indicator of the presence of imperialist and colonialist notions in the poem. The image of the deceased soldier, who is still “breathing English air” in the foreign territories and even in an “English heaven, indicates that instead of being remorseful for waging war and the harm he inflicts on other nations as an English soldier, the speaker is proud, his “heart” is “at peace, and his conscience is clear even after death (Brooke, 1914, Stanza 2). Additionally, he indicates that his “heart” is eternally delighted for “shed[ding] away all evil” in other lands through the imposition of English culture onto inferior foreign nations, and hence fostering their development (Brooke, 1914, lines 9 & 14). His feeling of English superiority culminates in the last two lines, when the poet draws an analogy between England and heaven, as the elation the dead soldier experiences in heaven parallels the blissful days he felt while alive in England.

To sum up, the whole poem revolves around themes of extreme Jingoism, nationalism, imperialism, and colonialism. These strong sentiments can be considered the root-driving cause of recruitment. In addition, the poem itself can be considered pro-war propaganda, of which Brooke himself was a victim.

#### **4.2 The Man He Killed**

Thomas Hardy (1840–1928) published “The Man He Killed” in 1902. Although it is a pre-1914 poem, it was published when Britain was fighting the Boers in South Africa in an attempt to extend its colonies (National Army Museum). Cengage Learning Gale (2016) claims that the poem does not provide a profound understanding of war, and it does not advocate against war. However, from the researchers’ perspective, if one deeply analyses the poem from a critical point of view it touches on some important aspects of war, such as the social consequences of war, and external influences affecting individuals’ decision-making regarding joining the army, and criticizing war via presenting the harsh reality of war and, and illustrating the psychological damages that it inflicts on the soldiers after realizing they conducted acts of crime.

The poet intertwines the feeling and perception of the persona of the poem on the battlefield and after the war

ends by juxtaposing the soldier's attitude about the war and his enemies through an imaginary scene in which he encounters "the man he [had] killed" and his real encounter with him in the past during the battle (Hardy, 1902). This juxtaposition of the two different situations is to question the rationality of recruitment and criticize justifying fighting and killing individuals that you have never met in life before for wrong causes. It is evident in the poem that the soldier, who is sitting alone in a bar reminiscing about the past, has rashly decided to enlist without having a reasonable cause.

In the third stanza, he confesses that he has killed him because he had perceived him to be his enemy ("I shot him dead because..."). As Abdulsalam (2020) rightly states, the technique Hardy utilized here is using Em dash, which indicates a pause in the flow of speech, to convey the message that the speaker did not have a real reason to kill his enemy. Thus, he is thinking of fabricating a reason to justify his criminal act. After the pause, he emphasizes several times that he killed him just because he was convinced that the man he killed was his enemy, as these lines suggest: "Because he was my foe, / Just so: my foe, of course he was; / That's clear enough; although" (Hardy, 1902, lines 10-12). These lines convey that the combatant lacks awareness of the underlying reasons for his hostility toward the stranger that he has killed. It implies that he has been manipulated into viewing a stranger as an enemy without any justifiable cause (Abdulsalam, 2020). The absence of a rationale for his hostility is further reinforced by the poem's structure, as the poet employs enjambment, leaving the last line of the stanza open-ended and failing to clarify the reasons for the enmity. He proceeds to the following stanza by clarifying the rationale for his enlistment in the armed forces, instead of providing a valid explanation for his hostility toward the victim. The pauses in the above lines are also interpreted by Abdulsalam (2020) to stand for the psychological turmoil that the speaker experiences after the war.

From these lines of the fourth stanza, "He thought he'd 'list, perhaps, off-hand, like just as I — / was out of work — had sold his traps, no other reason why. (Hardy, 1902)", it becomes evident to the reader that the soldier's motivation for enlisting in the army was neither rooted in patriotism nor influenced by societal or familial pressures, but rather in poverty. The other soldier shares a similar plight; both combatants appear to be facing significant economic hardships. Thus, he views recruitment as a necessary means of survival, even if it involves killing an individual whom he has never met outside the battlefield.

The first and last stanzas set an imaginary scenario

when the speaker contemplates the peculiarity and bizarreness of war, in which the enemies of the combat could have been friends or just strangers with a strong sense of humanity and empathy towards each other, helping each other when they are in need of a "half-a-crown." These stanzas criticize war in that it is "quaint and curious" (Hardy, 1902, line 17). Ultimately, it is reasonable to assert that ignorance, coupled with the deceptive nature of war propaganda and unfavorable economic conditions, drives some individuals to make impulsive decisions to enlist, often overlooking the harsh realities and tragic outcomes of war.

### 4.3 Glory of Women by Siegfried Sassoon and Disabled by Wilfred Owen

Contrary to Rupert Brookes' idealized and romanticized depiction of war, the portrayal of war is realistic in Siegfried Sassoon's "Glory of Women" and Wilfred Owen's "Disabled." These poems are deeply rooted in the poets' personal experiences. As noted by Kerr (2013) in his introduction to Owen's poems, both of them served on the front lines during the First World War. He also highlights that Owen, who enlisted in 1915 and was tragically killed in a battle in 1918 at the age of 25, suffered from shell-shock and received treatment in Craiglockhart military hospital, where he formed a friendship with Sassoon, who had been admitted to hospital prior to Owen due to his anti-war ideologies, which were considered treasonable. Furthermore, Kerr mentions that Sassoon had a considerable impact on Owen, as he consistently urged him to document his wartime experiences through writing.

These poems will be analyzed from a sociological perspective to identify and understand the nature of the other recruitment drives. To establish a theoretical framework, the analysis draws upon Social Impact Theory, as proposed by Bibb Latane in 1981, which explores the dynamics of social influence and the natural tendency of individuals to react to social pressures (Guy-Evans, 2023).

Before proceeding any further into the discussion of the poem, it is necessary to explain the Social Impact Theory in this regard. As noted by Guy-Evans (2023), the theory asserts that individuals can be both the generators and the recipients of social influence. In addition, it offers a conceptual model that interprets the influence of others as the outcome of social forces that affect an individual. Latane's theory posits that the influence of "social stimuli" amplifies in accordance with the "strength, immediacy, and number" of social sources involved. That means when the number of the sources of social influence increases, their relationship with the target gets closer,

and their authority and power over them gets stronger, their stimulus value or social effect increases more (Mullen and Goethals, 1987). The two variables of Latane's theory, namely, strength and immediacy, are categorized into trans-situational strength and situation-specific strength; and physical immediacy, temporal immediacy, and social immediacy, respectively (Guy-Evans, 2023). All these variables were observed to affect recruiters, as explained previously in the second and third sections of this article, leading them to enlist in different ways. For instance, as noted by Moorey (2021), women were manipulated by those men who were leading the war to exert pressure on other men to enlist. The decision not to enlist resulted in significant social ostracism for men, who faced threats from authorities. A notable instance of this manipulation occurred when Admiral Penrose Fitzgerald delivered a speech manipulating women to stand against men who were not in military uniforms (Moorey, 2021). He cautioned that their continued reluctance to enlist would lead to a more perilous situation at home than that they might encounter on the front lines. This implies that the social exclusion of men could be more distressing and painful than the suffering experienced in combat.

It is worth mentioning that the pain of social exclusion and rejection is real and has been proved by some researchers. For example, Kross et al. (2011) explore that during experiences of rejection and ostracism, some parts of the brain, like the secondary somatosensory cortex and dorsal posterior insula, become active which are the parts that are activated when experiencing physical pain, and thus social rejection and physical pain are alike not only in their distressing nature but also in their shared representation within somatosensory brain systems. Therefore, it can be argued that ostracism can act as a significant motivator, compelling individuals to take extreme measures to evade the painful feelings that are associated with it.

Based on the aforementioned explanation, social pressure can be considered as the primary factor impacting males to recruit, in these poems. In "Glory of Women," the pressure is generated on young men by women. That can be historically referred back to pressure from the White Feather Movement, as mentioned in the previous sections of this article, which had a negative impact on young men as they intimidated and pressured them to rush to enlist even if they were underage without contemplating the gruesome consequences of war. The whole poem, from the title to the last line, rebukes women in an ironic and, at the same time, critical tone. Some critics have criticized this aspect of Sassoon's poems for being misogynistic, such as Campbell (2007). However, such views must be refuted since what Sassoon criticizes

here is the naivety of women, as they were tricked by the propaganda of men of authority to send off their men to war without having knowledge about the real causes of the war and first-hand experience about the horrors of the battlefield. According to Campbell himself, Sassoon was protesting against conflict while he was at home on leave; he did not want to return and instead raised awareness of the horror of war by writing against all those who propagated for war, among them female "hero-worshippers." So, his protest was not merely directed towards women but all individuals alike who were favoring war, and hence it is not valid to label his stance as misogynistic.

"Glory of Women" was first published in 1917 in the *Cambridge Magazine* (Campbell, 2007). Sassoon skillfully utilizes irony in the title and the form of the poem to illustrate the negative role women played during the First World War. The title "Glory of Women" is ironical when it is juxtaposed with the content, and the form is also chosen ironically, which is a sonnet that is typically used for expressing love and romantic purposes. However, ironically, in the poem, women send their lovers to death. The octave, which fundamentally raises an issue in a sonnet, illustrates women's naivety in their views about war, which is manifested in their attraction to heroism when it comes to sexual selection. They choose men for their strength and heroic participation in war, as the following lines suggest:

You love us when we're heroes, home on leave,  
Or wounded in a mentionable place.  
You worship decorations; you believe  
That chivalry redeems the war's disgrace.  
You make us shells. You listen with delight,  
By tales of dirt and danger, fondly thrilled.  
You crown our distant ardors while we fight,  
And mourn our laurelled memories when we're killed.  
(Sassoon, 1918, Lines 1-8)

From these lines, one can indicate that the speaker is a soldier whose tone is disdainful toward women. He ironically pictures women's odd romantic feelings who only adore men in unspeakably miserable and distressful conditions, such as when they kill, are at home on leave to recount the terrific events of the battle to them, or are injured. He continues to mock at women's naivety and ignorance in that they "worship decorations" that stand for high military ranks which consequently provide the soldier with high social rank and materialistic achievements, finding the horrifying stories of war attractive and enjoyable, and holding the view that heroism and chivalry will restore dignity to the shame caused by unjustifiable war.

In the sestet, typically responsible for offering a

resolution within a sonnet, the poet alters the focus of his sarcastic remarks in the first part of the sonnet regarding the brutal aspects of war that women failed to comprehend. Instead, he now brings attention to the reality of women on both sides of the conflict, who, oblivious to the soldiers' struggles, are immersed in their ordinary lives, as indicated in the subsequent lines:

You can't believe that British troops "retire."  
When hell's last horror breaks them, and they run,  
Trampling the terrible corpses—blind with blood.  
O German mother dreaming by the fire,  
While you are knitting socks to send your son  
His face is trodden deeper in the mud.

(Sassoon, 1918, Lines 9-14)

Examining these lines in the context of Social Impact Theory, the visual imageries of the veteran "trampling the terrible corpses, blind with blood, and his face trodden deeper in the mud" in the sestet, along with the irony of the title that sarcastically gives a glorified role to women for being the cause of men's suffering and death, and the use of the pronoun "you" that builds a direct emotional connection between the reader and the speaker are so effective in conveying the message of the poem. It can be inferred that Sassoon criticizes women to be a negative source of influence in the social group, targeting male individuals and enticing them to enlist.

Reading this poem from the perspective of Social Impact Theory against the historical background of the war, it can be argued that women were used as a means to pressure men to recruit in pro-war propaganda, since men are impacted by sexual selection pressure. Evidence from previous studies on mate selection indicates that heroic acts during warfare serve as a natural propensity for mate selection based on the strength that enhances the desirability of males by females in the context of partner selection (Rusch, Leunissen, and Van Vugt 2015). Therefore, it can be concluded that the poet, in this poem, endeavors to awaken women from the trap of pro-war propaganda by presenting them with the brutal real picture of war. Additionally, he aims to communicate the idea that, as articulated by his friend, Nicholas Robert, who provided the introduction for the anthology entitled *Counter-Attack and Other Poems*, "war doesn't ennoble: it degrades" (cited in Sassoon, 1918, p. 7). This central theme is encapsulated in Sassoon's conversation with Robert:

Now let us nevermore say another word of whatever little may be good in war for the individual who has the heart to be steeled. Let no one ever [...] 'From henceforth say a word in any way countenancing war. It is dangerous even to speak of how here and there the individual may gain some hardship of soul

by it. For war is hell, and those who institute it are criminals. Was there anything to say for it? It should not be said, for its spiritual disasters far outweigh any of its advantages (Sassoon, 1918, p. 7).

Similarly, social pressure and socio-economic motives (seeking attention and fear of social ostracism) can be considered the main driving forces for recruitment in Wilfred Owen's "Disabled," which he wrote while hospitalized in the military hospital in 1917. This anti-war poem depicts the reality of war and the tragedy of war victims by portraying the image of a veteran's life preceding the war in contrast to his life following his enlistment. Through the use of several literary devices, the poet effectively explores the traumatic feeling of social rejection and alienation leading to the emptiness of life and loss of identity, experienced by the soldier who has suffered transformative physical and mental injuries in the war.

Owen illustrates the picture of a disabled soldier, but that veteran has not been identified, as the poet uses the pronoun "he" to generalize the situation of all soldiers who survive war. In addition, the stanzas are irregular in terms of length, which represents the chaotic disorder of war. In the three first stanzas, he juxtaposes the life of the soldier pre-war and post-war to illustrate the victims' physical and emotional agony.

The first stanza sets up the depressing mood of the soldier by emphasizing the impact of war on his body and then emotions. The soldier is handicapped in the war having his leg and forearm crippled, as these phrases suggest, "suit of grey, sewn short at elbow, legless" (Owen, 1917). Now, he sits helplessly, completely "disabled," waiting for others to push him in his "wheeled chair, "waiting for the dark" (suggesting the night or his death) to come "shiver[ing] in his ghastly suit of grey". The grey and dark colors symbolize his depressive situation after the war, which is contrasted by the vital and romantic colors such as "purple, dim, light blue" of the following stanzas, which are used to illustrate his state of happiness when he was a handsome young footballer prior to the onset of the war. While he is in this situation, the rest of the people are living their normal lives inconsiderate of his physical and emotional suffering, which significantly intensifies his suffering and pain as if he is attending a funeral: "Through the park/ Voices of boys rang saddening like a hymn/ Voices of play and pleasure after day" (lines 3-5). He has currently lost everything, such as the crowd that used to cherish him when he scored, all the women around him when he was a sports hero, and his youth and beauty, due to his naivety, as the following stanza suggests:

About this time, the Town used to swing so gay.



When glow-lamps budded in the light-blue trees,  
 And girls glanced lovelier as the air grew dim, –  
 In the old times, before he threw away his knees.  
 Now he will never feel again how slim  
 Girls' waists are, or how warm their subtle hands,  
 All of them touch him like some queer disease.  
 (Owen, 1917, Stanza 2)

These lines emphasize the impact of war on his psyche after losing the crowd and being treated like “some queer disease.” What is even more painful is the fact that now he realizes his mistake and holds himself accountable for what he is suffering now, as it can be inferred from these lines: “Before he threw away his knees/[...] He's lost his color very far from here, / Poured it down shell holes till the veins ran dry,” which suggests that he treated his life and body with no value as if throwing away rubbish (Lines 10, 17-18).

In the fourth stanza, which is the longest in the poem, the poet continues to provide the reasons why he acted so ignorantly to trade his life for nothing by deciding to enlist. When closely reading the whole stanza, one can conclude the motives behind the soldier's enlistment were self-serving and non-political stimuli encouraged by pro-war propaganda like a trap to catch individuals with various ambitious ideas. He made his decision after a football match when he was treated as a hero, surrounded by a huge crowd cheering him on and carrying him on their shoulders when he was injured. He was drunk when he decided to join the army, which can symbolize ignorance and lack of awareness and knowledge about the real causes of the war and its consequences. One time he liked a blood smear down his leg. After the matches, he carried shoulder-high. It was after football, when he'd drunk a peg. He thought he'd better join (lines 21-24). Now, conscious of the horror of war and regretful, “he wonders why” he joined the army (line 24).

Furthermore, the lines, “Germans he scarcely thought of, all their guilt, and Austria's, did not move him. And fears/of fearar came yet.” (lines 30-32), suggest that he joined the army not because of extreme patriotic or nationalistic passions, or fearing from the possible dangers that the other countries can pose as propagated by official recruiting media to entice people to recruit through fear, but he enlisted due to some other self-indulgent motives, which are all related to social pressure and social inclusion, which are grounded in Social Impact Theory. These lines provide examples of social pressure, the threats to one's self-concept, and the need for social acceptance acting as other drives for recruitment. Someone had said he'd look a god in kilts. That's why; and maybe, too, to please his Meg, /Aye, that was it, to please the giddy jilts, /He asked to join (lines 25-28). These confessions of the soldier emphasize that he joined

up to win the hearts of women (as they were also deceived by official recruiting propaganda to worship war heroes) and to please his friends.

Moreover, in lines (32-34), He thought of jewelled hilts/for daggers in plaid socks; of smart salutes; / And care of arms; and leave; and pay arrears, provide examples of more drivers who are associated with higher social status and income. These motives can be closely linked to social pressure and economic advantage, as these are some qualities that women often deem significant in mate selection. As a result, they can become compelling forces that drive men to strive for these attributes, occasionally resulting in wrong decisions, such as joining war and sacrificing everything, including their identity.

Overall, this poem criticizes war by demonstrating the true faces of those who participate in mobilizing public opinion in the direction of accepting and participating in armed conflicts, mostly via utilizing social pressure. All the stimuli presented in the poem that impact the soldier's decision to enlist are supported and promoted by the official recruiting propaganda, as evidenced by the following lines: He asked to join. He didn't have to beg; smiling, they wrote his lie: aged nineteen years (lines 28-29). These lines indicate that recruiters eagerly accept individuals influenced by their propaganda, irrespective of age. It can be concluded that the pro-war propaganda deludes individuals into believing that they will attain certain financial and social benefits as promised, while in reality, they forfeit everything they already possess, including their own identity, consequently rendering them incapable of becoming whole again.

## 5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 Conclusion

To conclude, the paper examined various drivers that spur individuals to enlist in an attempt to illustrate the nature of war and identify the conditions that impact military recruitment. As the poems ("The Soldier," "The Man He Killed," "Glory of Women," and "Disabled") suggest, there are several factors that are proven to have a tremendous impact on individuals regarding military recruitment and their active involvement in warfare, varying from one person to another.

To sum up, the findings illustrate the recruitment factors, which are political and socio-economic. The political motives scrutinized in the selected poems are related to the ideas of patriotism, nationalism, and colonialism. The paper concluded that individuals do not naturally have a tendency to fight others, especially in distant territories, but it is rather fuelled by the politicians utilizing a variety of propaganda tactics to deceive the public and change their opinions accordingly, which only costs them their

lives, happiness, peace of mind, and consequently their identity. Furthermore, the social recruitment drives include the need to fit into a group or community, the desire for social acceptance, and fear of social pressure along with the pursuit of societal standards. Finally, another primary motive is economic hardship since poverty leads to the military enlistee's ignorance as it is marked by a lack of education, and this results in active involvement in warfare.

The findings of this article are essential for enhancing public awareness regarding the harsh realities of war and educating them about recruitment push factors, and hence for motivating individuals to oppose it. Additionally, they serve as anti-war and anti-recruitment initiatives, which are critically significant for the preservation of global peace, as a well-informed populace is better equipped to understand and confront the fundamental causes of war and recruitment practices, thereby facilitating the prevention of war and enlistment.

## 5.2 Recommendations

In conclusion, it is highly recommended that scholars from various disciplines, including literature and other fields, engage in additional multidisciplinary research on the themes of war environments, contributing factors, and their damaging consequences. Such counter-recruitment efforts are essential for eradicating war and its push factors.

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