

## **Wilfred Owen in Scarborough**

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## Wilfred Owen in Scarborough

Over the centuries the now ruinous Scarborough Castle in North Yorkshire has seen a great deal of conflict and suffering, not least in the surprise German naval bombardment of 16 December 1914, during which several shells punctured its thick medieval walls. The rest of the seaside town endured significant casualties and widespread damage, with seventeen unsuspecting civilians killed in the sudden onslaught. The attack became the subject of one of Kitchener's most famous recruitment posters, proclaiming 'Remember Scarborough!' above an image of Britannia leading the charge of volunteering manhood, with the hellish image of Scarborough burning in the background. Nearly three years later, and all too familiar with the idea of war as hell, Wilfred Owen looked out across Scarborough's North Bay from his turret billet in the Clarence Gardens Hotel to the castle high on the headland. He had arrived in York at 3am on 21 November, and, unable to find a hotel room for the night, he caught the first train to Scarborough and took temporary shelter in the Victoria Hotel, from where he wrote a postcard to his mother, remembering on a touchingly personal note that the hotel was 'at the corner of the square where we went to the dentist's once'.<sup>1</sup>

Back in December 1914 at the time of the German raid on Scarborough Owen was working as an English tutor in Mérignac. He wrote a Christmas letter home to his mother from France in which he describes his reaction to the events at Scarborough and nearby coastal towns:

'We had reports of that "business" [The East Coast Bombardment]: the first said "no real damage"; the second said "a few persons killed" a third said "more than 80 killed, 115 wounded." When I read that a shell fell into a group of sixteen schoolboys and killed fifteen, I raved. Talk about rumours of wars and earthquakes in diverse places: all that's historic now. The beginning of the End must be ended, and the beginning of the middle of the end is now.'<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Wilfred Owen to Susan Owen, postmark 24 November 1917 (written days earlier), in Wilfred Owen, *Collected Letters*, edited by Harold Owen and John Bell (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 508.

<sup>2</sup> Wilfred Owen to Susan Owen, 21 December 1914, *Collected Letters*, p. 310.

This is an uncanny foreshadowing of Churchill's famous Second World War rhetoric around the Battle of El Alamein in 1942: the civilian English tutor Owen here predicts a quick conclusion to a war now intruding intolerably into ordinary people's lives. In writing about Scarborough to his mother in 1914 he would have in mind their family holiday of 1905, from which a photograph survives, with Owen seated on a pony on the South Bay beach. This is likely to be the holiday when they visited the dentist in West Square, and the same holiday that Owen was to recall in another letter to his mother once he was settled into the Clarence Gardens Hotel, writing: 'Did I tell you the Hotel stands on the edge of the North Cliff; just where we played cricket once?'<sup>3</sup>

The young Wilfred Owen continued his tutoring work in France until September 1915, after which he enlisted, in the first instance with the Artist's Rifles in October 1915. He was subsequently commissioned as second lieutenant into the Manchester Regiment in June 1916, disembarking in France as a soldier for the first time in December 1916 and engaging in Front Line fighting in various locations on the Western Front through to April 1917. This first encounter with what he termed the 'seventh hell' led to symptoms of shell shock and a medical board back home.<sup>4</sup> The Confidential Record of Proceedings notes:

In March 1917 he fell down a well at Bouchoir, and was momentarily stunned. He was under medical treatment for 3 weeks, and then resumed duty. About the middle of April he was blown up by a shell explosion while he was asleep. On May 1<sup>st</sup> he was observed to be shaky and tremulous, and his conduct and manner were peculiar, and his memory confused [...]. On 16/6/17 he was transferred to the Welsh Hospital, Netley. There is little abnormality to be observed but he seems to be of a highly strung temperament. He leaves here today transferred to Craiglockhart Hospital, Edinburgh for special observation and treatment.<sup>5</sup>

On 18 August 1917 Siegfried Sassoon met Owen at Craiglockhart for the first time, and in mid-October 1917 also met Robert Graves, who was visiting Sassoon.

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<sup>3</sup> Letter, Wilfred Owen to Susan Owen, 3 December 1917, *Collected Letters*, p. 514.

<sup>4</sup> Letter, Wilfred Owen to Susan Owen, 16 January 1917, *Collected Letters*, p. 427.

<sup>5</sup> 'Proceedings of Owen's Medical Board,' by War Office. Crown copyright via *First World War Poetry Digital Archive*, accessed August 17, 2021, <http://ww1lit.nsms.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit/collections/item/5088>.

There is a note on Owen's Medical Register, dated 30 October 1917, that he is unfit for General Service permanently; but 'Fit Light Duty of a clerical nature. Instructed to report to Res[erve] Unit'.<sup>6</sup> Craiglockhart had done its job and Owen's neurasthenia and nightmares were more under control. After three weeks' leave it was to Scarborough, and to the Officers' Mess of the 5<sup>th</sup> Manchesters (reserve) at the Clarence Gardens Hotel, that Owen went to undertake these light clerical duties.

Given that he was put in charge of the day-to-day running of the whole Mess the duties were not all that light, and he wrote to his mother with some humour about his daily Scarborough routine:

"I have to control the Household, which consists of some dozen Batmen, 4 Mess Orderlies, 4 Buglers, the Cook, (a fat woman of great skill,) two female kitcheners, and various charwomen!

They need driving. You should see me scooting the buglers round the dining-room on their knees with dustpan and brush!"<sup>7</sup>

By December he elaborated further: 'Life here is a mixture of wind, sand, crumbs on carpets, telephones, signatures, clean sheets, shortage of meat, and too many money-sums. But I like it'.<sup>8</sup> But outside of the daily routine he had some precious commodities to hand, including space, in the form of his own room: 'So I sit in the middle of my five-windowed turret, and look down upon the sea. The sun is valiant in its old age.'<sup>9</sup> He also had money, and started hunting for antique furniture: 'I took a joy-walk into Scarboro' yesterday, & discovered 3 genuine "Hepplethwaite" Chairs. I think I must have 'em'.<sup>10</sup> Two letters later, he writes: 'I went to an Auction yesterday, & got an antique side table wondrous cheap. [...] A beautiful old piece, – to be my Cottage sideboard.'<sup>11</sup> These are poignant purchases, planning for his post-war life and for a cottage he was never able to

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<sup>6</sup> 'Owen's Medical Register,' *First World War Poetry Digital Archive*, accessed August 17, 2021, <http://ww1lit.nsms.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit/items/show/8122>.

<sup>7</sup> Wilfred Owen to Susan Owen, 23 November 1917, *Collected Letters*, pp. 508-9.

<sup>8</sup> Wilfred Owen to Susan Owen, 9 December 1917, *Collected Letters*, p. 515.

<sup>9</sup> Wilfred Owen to Susan Owen, 13 December 1917, *Collected Letters*, p. 516.

<sup>10</sup> Wilfred Owen to Susan Owen, 3 December 1917, *Collected Letters*, p. 514.

<sup>11</sup> Wilfred Owen to Susan Owen, 9 December 1917, *Collected Letters*, p. 515.

buy. But most precious, and despite the pressing daily life of crumbs and sums, he had time to read and write.<sup>12</sup>

One poem from this period that tries to negotiate the experiences of home and front was inspired by newspaper reports of a mining disaster on 12 January 1918, when an underground explosion ignited firedamp at the Minnie Pit of the Podmore Hall Colliery in Halmer End, near Stoke on Trent. The initial explosion killed eleven miners, but 144 others were suffocated to death underground by carbon monoxide poisoning. The disaster gave Owen the starting point for his first commercially published poem, 'Miners', an elegiac meditation on coal burning in a winter hearth, in which the young dead of the mining disaster are compared with those who 'worked dark pits / Of war'.<sup>13</sup> The poem begins with the primeval forests from which coal is made, and ends with thoughts of the centuries to come, comforted by the sacrifices of war:

There was a whispering in my hearth,

    A sigh of the coal,  
Grown wistful of a former earth  
    It might recall.

I listened for a tale of leaves  
    And smothered ferns,  
Fronde-forests, and the low, sly lives  
    Before the fauns.

The contemporary mining tragedy is measured against geological time in which ancient forests collapse into compressed beds of carbon. But this deep time is not there to point up the triviality of human experience; for Owen it sharpens the focus on the human tragedy. He does not encounter in his grate, as he imagines he might, the sound and sense of the prehistoric forests fossilised in the coal, but instead sees the colour of the dead miners' bones in the burnt white ash:

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<sup>12</sup> For Owen's own list of books read in Scarborough, see 'Notes: Books read at Scarborough. Dec 1917 / Projects (May 5, 1918, Ripon),' by Owen, Wilfred (1893-1918). The English Faculty Library, University of Oxford / The Wilfred Owen Literary Estate via *First World War Poetry Digital Archive*, accessed August 17, 2021, <http://ww1lit.nsms.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit/collections/item/5022>.

<sup>13</sup> Wilfred Owen, 'Miners', *The Nation*, 26 January 1918, p. 539.

But the coals were murmuring of their mine,  
And moans down there  
Of boys that slept wry sleep, and men  
Writhing for air.

And I saw white bones in the cinder-shard,  
Bones without number;  
For many hearts with coal are charred,  
And few remember.

The second half of the poem metaphorizes this immediate disaster into a more universal reflection on the larger disaster of war, where the dark pits are not tunnels dug through coal seams, but the experiences of war itself:

I thought of all that worked dark pits  
Of war, and died  
Digging the rock where Death reposes  
Peace lies indeed.

Comforted years will sit soft-chaired  
In rooms of amber;  
The years will stretch their hands, well-cheered  
By our lives' ember;

The centuries will burn rich loads  
With which we groaned,  
Whose warmth shall lull their dreaming lids  
While songs are crooned.  
But they will not dream of us poor lads,  
Lost in the ground.

Owen returns to suitably infernal imagery, the hellish dark pits, in a poem that is attempting to remember those lost, and whose memory Owen feels will also be lost to the 'comforted years' of peace that will follow.

This poem, written in front of a coal fire at the Clarence Gardens Hotel, appeared in *The Nation* on 26 January 1918. He sent some of the money he received for its

publication back home to his mother, telling her to buy some coal for the fire with it. 'Stoke up', he wrote, with several layers of irony.<sup>14</sup>

As a mark of the continuing rise of his reputation, three days earlier on the 23 January Owen travelled from Scarborough to London to attend the wedding of Robert Graves to Nancy Nicholson, where he met several influential figures, including Edwin Lutyens, Edward Marsh, George Mallory the mountaineer, William Heinemann the publisher, and the artist Max Beerbohm. He gave Robert and Nancy Graves the gift of a set of apostle spoons, almost certainly bought from a Scarborough antique shop.

As a result of a further medical board Owen was considered sufficiently recuperated to move to the Northern Command Depot at Ripon on 11 March. On 4 June another board passed him as Category A: Fit, and a railway warrant was issued for him to return to his 5<sup>th</sup> Reserve Battalion, Manchester Regiment, still based in Scarborough.<sup>15</sup>

Things had changed in the couple of months he had been away, and he was no longer billeted in the hotel, but in a tent near to the Barracks entrance. But apart from this uncomfortable change of circumstance he picked up his previous routines of Scarborough life, buying furniture for his post-war cottage: 'Priestley has obtained a fair price for my Chest of Drawers, & accordingly it will be sent on Monday next addressed to Father. [...] The drawers may be packed with books or other refuse in the form of valuable candlesticks.'<sup>16</sup>

The future cottage sentiment was one shared by Graves, who wrote it into the title poem of his first collection, *Over the Brazier* (1916):

What life to lead and where to go  
After the War, after the War?  
We'd often talked this way before  
But I still see the brazier glow  
That April night, still feel the smoke

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<sup>14</sup> Wilfred Owen to Susan Owen, 11 February 1918, *Collected Letters*, p. 530.

<sup>15</sup> 'Owen's Medical Register,' *First World War Poetry Digital Archive*

<sup>16</sup> Wilfred Owen to Susan Owen, 15 July 1918, *Collected Letters*, p. 564.

And stifling pungency of burning coke.

I'd thought: 'A cottage in the hills,  
North Wales, a cottage full of books,  
Pictures and brass and cosy nooks  
And comfortable broad window-sills,  
Flowers in the garden, walls all white,  
I'd live there peacefully, and dream and write.'<sup>17</sup>

Whilst planning for his own future life Owen was rather more irritated to see normality going on about him on the home front, reacting badly to the increasing summer season holiday traffic and its perceived complacency in contrast to the terrors of war:

'This morning at 8.20 we heard a boat torpedoed in the bay about a mile out, they say who saw it. I think only 10 lives were saved. I wish the Bosche would have the pluck to come right in & make a clean sweep of the Pleasure Boats, and the promenaders on the Spa, and all the stinking Leeds & Bradford War-profiteers now reading *John Bull* on Scarborough sands.'<sup>18</sup>

In part such anger may have been intensified by his own frustrating sense of being increasingly incarcerated by work. He wrote to Osbert Sitwell: 'Westborough [one of Scarborough's main shopping streets] is now a weekly ambition. The Spa is beyond my hopes.'<sup>19</sup>

He did make it out to a couple of local bookshops, however, where he tried to buy the Sitwells' 1917 *Wheels* anthology of poetry (the Sitwells had grown up in Scarborough, but their recent book was not in stock, an example of prophets not being recognized in their own town).<sup>20</sup> That was in July, but in August he did purchase a copy of Algernon Charles Swinburne's *Poems and Ballads*. This book survives and is inscribed 'W.E.S. OWEN / Scarborough. Aug 1918.' A postcard of St Mary's Church is stuck to the dust jacket, and his mother Susan made a later annotation: 'This came back with his

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<sup>17</sup> Robert Graves, 'Over the Brazier', in *War Poems*, edited by Charles Mundy (Bridgend: Seren, 2016), p. 83.

<sup>18</sup> Wilfred Owen to Susan Owen, 10 August 1918, *Collected Letters*, p. 568.

<sup>19</sup> Wilfred Owen to Osbert Sitwell, July 1918, *Collected Letters*, p. 562.

<sup>20</sup> Wilfred Owen to Osbert Sitwell, July 1918, *Collected Letters*, p. 562.



things from France'.<sup>21</sup> The book is now in the Oxford University English Faculty library along with the rest of Owen's personal library. We know from his letters that he had read Swinburne before, but around this time he is reading him so attentively that he pays homage to Swinburne through pastiche in one of his best-known war poems, 'Greater Love'. Swinburne's poem 'Before the Mirror' begins:

'Before the Mirror' (Verses Written Under a Picture) *Inscribed to J. A. Whistler*

White rose in red rose-garden  
Is not so white;  
Snowdrops that plead for pardon  
And pine for fright  
Because the hard East blows  
Over their maiden rows  
Grow not as this face grows from pale to bright.<sup>22</sup>

Swinburne's poem is a response to a painting by Whistler called 'Symphony in White, No. 2: The Little White Girl', in which the subject's reflection in a mirror is more sorrowful and careworn than the face it seemingly reflects. It seems to ask, which, if either, is the truer representation? Owen's poem also imagines a young, beautiful woman, but what it holds up as a mirror to her beauty is the beauty of the dead young soldiers of war:

'Greater Love'

Red lips are not so red  
As the stained stones kissed by the English dead.  
Kindness of wooed and wooer  
Seems shame to their love pure.  
O Love, your eyes lose lure  
When I behold eyes blinded in my stead!

Your slender attitude  
Trembles not exquisite like limbs knife-skewed,

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<sup>21</sup> Jon Stallworthy, *Wilfred Owen* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 321.

<sup>22</sup> Algernon Charles Swinburne, *Poems and Ballads*, ed. Morse Peckham (Indianapolis and New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1970), p. 124.

Rolling and rolling there  
Where God seems not to care;  
Till the fierce love they bear  
Cramps them in death's extreme decrepitude.<sup>23</sup>

Owen's elegy is a poem about the violence of battle, and a love poem, and a satire on love poetry, parodying aspects of the Petrarchan tradition, with poems written in praise of a woman, comparing her to the most beautiful things in the poet's imagination, and finding her as lovely as, or lovelier than, those things. Owen turns these expectations upside down: 'Red lips are not so red'; my lover's lips are not as brilliant red as the blood of the English dead. This is the Petrarchan method but used to very different effect. There is a strange eroticism to: 'the stained stones kissed by the English dead', where the violence of a head splitting open on a stone is described in terms of a kiss more beautiful than the kiss of a woman's lips. This is not the only kiss in the poem either:

Your dear voice is not dear,  
Gentle, and evening clear,  
As theirs whom none now hear,  
Now earth has stopped their piteous mouths that coughed.<sup>24</sup>

In death the soldiers' mouths are stopped with earth, but it is also here in the Shakespearean sense, in which to stop a mouth means to kiss. As Beatrice says to Hero in *Much Ado about Nothing*, a play which is in Owen's personal library in a 1908 Cassell and Company edition: 'Speak, cousin; or, if you cannot, stop his mouth with a kiss, and let not him speak, neither.'<sup>25</sup> It is a poem about, in Owen's famous phrase, the pity of war, but it is also a violent poem, a religious poem, an erotic poem, and a consciously artistic poem, speaking to the Petrarchan tradition and to Swinburne's poem and to the Whistler painting behind that.

A further medical board on 11 August struck Owen off the draft for being returned to the front owing to problems with his heart valves (the Medical Officer had

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<sup>23</sup> Wilfred Owen, *The Poems*, ed. Jon Stallworthy (London: Chatto & Windus, 1990), p. 143.

<sup>24</sup> Wilfred Owen, *The Poems*, p. 143.

<sup>25</sup> William Shakespeare, *Much Ado about Nothing*, act 2 scene 1.

heard a heart murmur that had been detected in some previous examinations); and a few days of leave secured an idyllic visit to see the wounded and recuperating Sassoon in London on 14 and 15 August (Sassoon had been accidentally shot in the head by a British soldier). Owen returned to Scarborough on 17 August. His friends, and especially Charles Scott Moncrieff, had been trying to get Owen an instructorship to prevent him from returning to the front. However, it is possible that this manoeuvring had the opposite effect. Owen was required to undergo a further medical examination, and previous health conditions were deemed resolved. He was given his embarkation orders on 26 August.

Back at the Front Owen was very quickly to find himself engaged in front-line offensives. In October and early November 1918, the trench stalemate was breaking down and troops were on the offensive deep into the German entrenchments. His battalion were sent to make an assault on the Beaurevoir-Fonsomme line in late September and early October, and their objectives were gained, with heavy losses. Owen was required to assume command of his company and was awarded a Military Cross for actions on the field.

Four weeks on and his battalion was preparing to cross the Sambre-Oise Canal, near Ors. On 4 November 1918 the Manchesters took part in a surprise attack that involved the construction of a bridge across the canal under heavy enemy fire. Owen was killed by this enemy fire whilst helping his men to repair the makeshift bridge, which had been damaged by a shell as soon as it was installed.

It is somehow more poignant that he should have been killed exactly a week before the armistice. He nearly made it to his cottage. On Armistice Day 11 November 1918 Susan Owen received a telegram from the War Office, informing her of Owen's death in action. His copy of Swinburne's poems, bought in Scarborough, eventually found its way home along with his loaded army revolver, to join all his other books, his chest of drawers, his sideboard, his letters, and the many sheets of manuscripts of his poems.

By the time of his death only a handful of poems had appeared in print. However, Owen's friendship with Sassoon had also introduced him to the Sitwells, and they took a particular interest in ensuring that Owen's poetry found the audience it deserved. They published a handful of poems in their annual anthology *Wheels* (the 1919 edition) and then Edith Sitwell started, and Sassoon finished, editing the first *Collected Poems*, published in 1920. Subsequent editors have re-edited and added to the body of his poems, although one of the great unknowns is the precise chronology of the poems. Occasionally Owen mentions in passing a particular poem by name in his letters, the letters being the source of most of what we know about his life. But for the most part we have to rely on a sense of his stylistic development, and a technique pioneered by Owen's greatest and most scrupulous of editors, Jon Stallworthy, of matching up manuscript drafts through paper batches and watermarks, and cross-referencing them with the paper he was using for dated letters. What Stallworthy's scholarship demonstrates is just how important Owen's two stays in Scarborough were to his poetic output. Putting the question of Owen's youthful sonnets to one side, Stallworthy identifies eleven poems as revised or probably revised at Scarborough, including 'Dulce et Decorum Est', 'Mental Cases'; and 'Disabled', and twenty eight poems possibly or probably drafted or completely written at Scarborough, including 'Apologia Pro Poemate Meo', 'Strange Meeting' ('drafted, probably, at Scarborough'), and 'Greater Love' ('revised at Scarborough that July' says Stallworthy, but I think more likely August after the purchase of the book of Swinburne's poems in Scarborough).<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> According to Stallworthy these are the poems possibly or probably drafted / written at Scarborough (21 in total): 'From my Diary, July 1914'; 'The Ballad of Many Thorns'; 'I Saw his Round Mouth's Crimson'; 'Le Christianisme'; 'Who is the God of Canongate'; 'At a Calvary Near the Ancre'; 'The Letter'; 'Conscious'; 'Schoolmistress'; 'A Tear Song'; 'Insensibility'; 'Strange Meeting' ('drafted, probably, at Scarborough'); 'Asleep'; 'The Show'; 'Training'; 'Greater Love' ('revised at Scarborough that July' says Stallworthy, but more likely August after the purchase of the book of Swinburne's poems in Scarborough); 'The Last Laugh'; 'The Parable of the Old Man and the Young'; 'Exposure' ('begun at Scarborough...finished in France in September 1918'); 'The Sentry' ('Begun at Craiglockhart...continued at Scarborough in May 1918 [but Owen wasn't in Scarborough in May he was in Ripon] and completed in France that September'); 'Spring Offensive' ('begun probably at Scarborough').

Poems that Stallworthy identifies as revised at Scarborough (11 in total): 'Dulce et Decorum Est' ('revised, probably, at Scarborough'); 'Sonnet – On Seeing a Piece of Our Heavy Artillery Brought into Action'; 'The End'; 'The Calls'; 'The Next War'; 'Mental Cases'; 'The Chances'; 'The Send-Off'; 'Disabled'; 'The Kind Ghosts'; 'Soldier's Dream'.

Known to be written at Scarborough (7 in total): 'Apologia Pro Poemate Meo'; 'Hospital Barge'; 'Page Eglantine'; 'The Rime of the Youthful Mariner'; 'Miners'; 'A Terre'; 'I am the Ghost of Shadwell Stair'.

Of the list of poems probably revised in Scarborough, 'The Calls' has a foghorn image recognisable to anyone who has spent time in the town:

A dismal fog-hoarse siren howls at dawn.  
I watch the man it calls for, pushed and drawn  
Backwards and forwards, helpless as a pawn.  
But I'm lazy, and his work's crazy.<sup>27</sup>

Stallworthy also suggests Owen's poem 'The End', begun in 1916, was continued at Scarborough:

When I do ask white Age he saith not so:  
'My head hangs weighed with snow.'  
And when I hearken to the Earth, she saith:  
'My fiery heart shrinks, aching. It is death.  
Mine ancient scars shall not be glorified,  
Nor my titanic tears, the seas, be dried.'<sup>28</sup>

The question that Age and Earth are answering in this poem is: 'Shall Life renew these bodies?' The poem offers no comfort in this respect: the seas, which are the repository of the earth's grieving tears, will never dry. This poem's 'titanic tears, the seas' echo in the opening lines of 'Strange Meeting', another poem probably drafted at Scarborough:

It seemed that out of battle I escaped  
Down some profound dull tunnel, long since scooped  
Through granites which titanic wars had groined.<sup>29</sup>

Owen's poem 'The End' provided his family with their choice of headstone inscription for his grave:

Shall Life Renew these bodies?  
Of a Truth  
All Death will he Annul

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<sup>27</sup> Wilfred Owen, *The Poems*, p. 139.

<sup>28</sup> Wilfred Owen, *The Poems*, p. 136.

<sup>29</sup> Wilfred Owen, *The Poems*, p. 125.

Stallworthy says that this is a misquotation, but it is more strictly a quotation so selective that it changes the meaning of the lines, and the negative answers to the question in the poem are changed in the inscription to a positive assertion: life will renew them; life will annul all death.

When Owen arrived in Scarborough as a battle-scarred soldier and maturing poet, he was in territory familiar from happy childhood holidays of beach ponies and cricket. This time it was Scarborough's retail opportunities that occupied many of his spare moments, collecting furniture and books to support his literary ambitions and plans for domestic life after the war. Much harder to quantify is the effect of the panoramic view from the top turret windows at the Clarence Gardens Hotel, looking across the North Sea only to the limits of the horizon, and across the centuries to the castle on the headland. Scarborough gave him the time, space, and stability to write, and a contrast to the enclosing hell of the trenches. 'Remember Scarborough!', proclaimed Kitchener's famous recruiting poster, tying the town resolutely to the popular imagination of the war. We should remember it also as a significant place in the story of Owen's life and poetry.

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Wilfred Owen in Scarborough Timeline:

- Summer 1905 – Owen family holiday in Scarborough
- December 1914 – working as an English tutor in France
- September 1915 – gives up tutoring
- October 1915 – joins Artist's Rifles
- June 1916 – commissioned as second lieutenant into the Manchester Regiment
- December 1916 – disembarks France
- March 1917 – falls down a well at Bouchoir
- April 1917 – breaks down with shell shock

16 June 1917 – transferred to the Welsh Hospital, Netley

25 June 1917 – transferred to Craiglockhart Hospital

June 1917 – Sassoon’s Declaration against the war

July 1917 – Graves gives evidence at Sassoon’s medical board

18 August 1917 – Sassoon meets Owen at Craiglockhart for first time

October 1917 – Robert Graves revisits Craiglockhart and meets Owen

30 October 1917 – passed unfit for G.S. permanently; but ‘Fit Light Duty of a clerical nature’

21 November 1917 – arrives Victoria Hotel Scarborough after no hotel rooms in York. Then to billet in the Clarence Gardens Hotel, Queen’s Parade

12 January 1918 – mining disaster, Halmer End

23 January 1918 – attends wedding of Robert Graves and Nancy Nicholson

26 January 1918 – ‘Miners’ published in *The Nation*

11 March 1918 – transfers to Northern Command Depot, Ripon

4 June 1918 – returns to Scarborough, passed fit for General Service

26 August 1918 – Embarkation Orders; leaves Scarborough for the last time

1-3 October 1918 – In battle and awarded Military Cross in the field

4 November 1918 – killed in action.