

# "Strange Meeting"

classmate

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- Wilfred Owen

Dr. Mithilesh Kumar Manjhi  
Dept. of English  
J. N. College, Madhubani

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The enemy continues to mock the soldier with more and more truth about the 'Pity of war', the vanity of the patriots and the absurdity of progress at the cost of precious lives. The futility of courage and misuse of wisdom are brilliantly brought out through the lines:-

"Courage was mine, and I had mystery,  
Wisdom was mine, and I had mystery;  
To miss the march of this repreating word  
Into vain citadels that are not walled."

The bloodshed, the wounds and similar other ugly violence of war are, according to Owen, truths that 'lie too deep for taunt'. The central message that the poet wants to give is that war achieves nothing except the satisfaction of the vanity of a handful of people. War is inhuman, bestial, bloody, horrible and therefore worthy of hatred. No glory or glamour be attached to it. It is futile, absurd and meaningless. The soldier makes a mocking comment on the bravery of the enemy

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who killed him —

"I am the enemy you killed, my friend  
I know you in this dark; for so you frowned  
Yesterday through me as you jabbed and killed  
I parried; and my hands were soath & cold.  
Let us sleep now. . . ."

This poem is noted specially for its technical innovations. The half-rhymes ground / groaned; bestial / stared; friend / frowned; kill / cold etc. are frequently used to suggest the frustration and incompleteness of life brought about by war. Owen's extensive use of alliteration and assonance has been imitated by Auden and Spender. His large vision of humanity expressed through his searing emotions and his unequalled mastery over his medium makes his poem truly timeless.