The Poem Disabled By Wilfred Owen

The poem “Disabled”, written by Wilfred Owen, is about a man’s life before and after the war. This poem illustrates an underage boy applying to go to war by lying about his age because he thought that he wouldn’t have a hard time. This shows how persuasive propaganda was to people, it made people believe it's not as bad as many people think, another thing that persuades men to join was their wives and girlfriends would leave them if they didn’t join because it would show their cowardness. The author wants the audience to feel pity for this boy as he was tricked into going to war and he lost his legs and one of his arms.

One of this poem's main themes is that people tend to glorify and idealize war, but actually, they are unprepared for the destruction it brings. For example, the beautiful girls who used to dance with the soldier who is now legless and missing an arm from war 'touch him like some queer disease.' Previously they found him so good-looking, and now they want nothing to do with him as his appearance has changed. He used to be a youthful and beautiful man, so much that 'an artist was crazy about his eyes' and somebody told him he'd look like 'a god in kilts,' but now his face has lost its color and 'he's sick.' Though 'he's been drafted with drums and cheers,' when he comes back in fragments from the battle, just 'few' went out to greet him, and only one 'solemn man... thanked him.' People appeared to feel gratitude towards the young man until he turned to disgust at what had become of him. Even the girl he wanted to please, 'his Meg.' Owen also only uses two similes in this poem, the first one is about the boys' voices that remind him about pleasant “ rang saddening like a hymn ”, and the second one refers back to his disability, about how girls see it as a “queer disease.”

The frequent changes between past and present establish a compelling picture of what had to be surrendered by the soldier. Every verse starts with Owen describing the current life and circumstances of the soldier, then contrasting it to the past life of the soldier, but the last verse expresses his thoughts on his future: a life he can not handle, a life of dependency, and helplessness.

The soldier had been an egoistic man seeking glory by fighting in the war, thinking only about his looks, and the attraction that would have been shown by the women towards him, but ends up losing the chance to achieve his dreams. Unimaginably, the soldier does not get any medals on his return and there weren’t endless lines of people applauding: there is only a used wheelchair, waiting, gathering dust, and a small crowd of cheerless people. Instead of how he imagined, the people express their sympathy for the sacrifice he has made for his country rather than honoring his heroism towards the war, making the soldier feel pathetic and unworthy. This creates a striking view of the soldier’s life because it shows that he had joined the army whilst thinking emotionally rather than logically.