

Wilfred Owen's Draft Preface

This book is not about heroes. English poetry is not yet fit to speak of them.

Nor is it about deeds, or lands, nor anything about glory, honour, might, majesty, dominion, or power, except War.

Above all I am not concerned with Poetry.

My subject is War, and the pity of War.

The Poetry is in the pity.

Yet these elegies are to this generation in no sense consolatory. They may be to the next. All a poet can do today is warn. That is why the true Poets must be truthful.

(If I thought the letter of this book would last, I might have used proper names; but if the spirit of it survives - survives Prussia - my ambition and those names will have achieved fresher fields than Flanders...)"

from Wilfred Owen's draft Preface, prepared for a collection of war poems that he hoped to publish in 1919. It was written in Ripon, Yorkshire, in 1918