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Master thesis

The reflection of war and notion of duty and dignity in
A.L.Tennyson's "The Charge of the Light Brigade" in comparison
with selected poems of the First World War

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DECLARATION

I proclaim that I have worked on this thesis on my own and used only the sources that are stated in the bibliography.

PROHLÁŠENÍ

Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto práci zpracoval samostatně a použil pouze tyhle zdroje, které uvedené v seznamu pramenů.

ABSTRACT

The main theme of this thesis is English war poetry. The thesis refers to two particular wars, the Crimean (1853-1856) and World War One (1914-1918), and analyzes their reflection in English poetry. By doing so, it compares the war poems from these periods and inspects the writers' messages behind them. The thesis aims to scrutinize how the depiction of war had changed through time, alongside with the reasons affected it. In terms of structure, the theoretical part describes the different contexts (historical, cultural, and literal) of the chosen poems, while the practical features scrutiny of these works.

KEY WORDS

Poetry, soldier, duty, death, attitude, criticism, propaganda

ABSTRAKT

Hlavním tématem této diplomové práce je anglická válečná poezie. Práce odkazuje na dvě konkrétní války, Krymskou (1853-1856) a První Světovou (1914-1918), a analyzuje jejich odraz v anglické poezii. Práce porovnává válečné básně z těchto období a prozkoumá hlavní myšlenky autorů. Práce klade za cíl prozkoumat, jak odraz války změnil se v průběhu času, vzhledem k příčinám, které to postihly. Z hlediska struktury, teoretická část popisuje různé kontexty vybraných básní (historické, kulturní, literární), zatímco praktická část obsahuje podrobnou analýzu těchto děl.

KLIČOVÁ SLOVA

Poezie, voják, povinnost, smrt, postoj, kritika, propaganda

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	6
I. Theoretical part	7
1. The literary context of the poems	7
1.1 The development of English war poetry	7
1.2 The Victorian Era: features and poets	7
1.3 Civilian poets' responses to the Crimean conflict	11
1.4 The poetry of the Edwardian era	13
1.5 Modernism: characteristics and prominent poets	15
1.6 Modernism and the First World War	17
2. The historical and social contexts of the poems	19
2.1 The Crimean War	19
2.2 Role of the British Empire in the Crimean War	19
2.3 Public and artists' reactions to the Crimean War	20
2.4 WWI	21
2.5 The role of the British Empire in WWI	21
2.6 Public and artists' reactions to the WWI	22
3. Attitudes and criticism of the poems	25
3.1 "The Charge of the Light Brigade"	25
3.2 "For the Fallen"	26

3.3 "Dulce et Decorum est"	27
3.4 "The Soldier"	28
3.5 "They" and "Suicide in Trenches"	29
II. Practical part	31
4. Literary analysis of the poems	31
4.1 "The Charge of the Light Brigade"	31
4.2 "The Soldier"	38
4.3 "For the Fallen"	42
4.4 "Dulce Et Decorum Est"	46
4.5 "They" and "Suicide in the Trenches"	50
5. Comparison of the analyses	57
5.1 "The Charge of the Light Brigade" vs. "The Soldier"	57
5.2 "The Charge of the Light Brigade" vs. "For the Fallen"	59
5.3 "The Charge of the Light Brigade" vs. " Dulce et Decorum est"	61
5.4 "The Charge of the Light Brigade" vs. " They"	64
5.5 "The Charge of the Light Brigade" vs. " Suicide in the Trenches"	66
Conclusion	69
Bibliography	71

Introduction

Through the history of humankind, numerous occasions of war have happened. War has thus become an inseparable part of human experience. Even now, we have been having wars in different parts of the world: the Syrian Civil War, the Libyan Civil War, the conflict in Afghanistan, and the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The reasons and circumstances of these rivalries might differ, but it does not change the fact that people suffer and die. Such systematicity of the armed conflicts proves Karl Marx's conflict theory claiming that "social order is maintained by domination and power, rather than consensus and conformity." (Kenton, 2018)

The theme of war is the fundament of this thesis, since it is an emotive topic for the Britons, particularly the First World War. The thesis looks at it, as well as at the Crimean War, and analyzes their reflection in English poetry. In order to do so, one poem from the Crimean period and five from the Great War will be interpreted. The following poems have been selected for analysis: A.L.Tennyson's "The Charge of the Light Brigade" (1854), "For the Fallen" (1914) by Laurence Binyon, Rupert Brooke's "The Soldier" (1914), "Dulce et Decorum Est" (1917) by Wilfred Owen, and, finally, Siegfried Sassoon's "They" (1917) and "Suicide in the Trenches" (1918). One of the reasons for such choice is my interest to understand why the authors reacted to these combats in the way they did, and what messages they were trying to pass. The second reason is the fact that my bachelor thesis was related to the Vietnam War, and I would like to look closely at the wars which had happened before and try to spot any differences or similarities between these three conflicts.

This thesis aims to analyze and compare the mentioned war poems and answer the following two questions *How the war depiction in English war poetry has changed, concerning these poems? And if it has, in what way and under which circumstances?*

The theoretical part presents the literary, social, and historical contexts of these poems. Secondly, it analyzes the critics' and other writers' attitudes towards them, and, finally, it demonstrates other literary works, which were related to these war conflicts. The practical part offers a literary analysis of the poems and interprets their messages. It scrutinizes how each poet depicted the war through the content of his work. The comparison of these scrutinies follows after. Finally, the conclusion answers the questions stated in the preceding paragraph.

I. Theoretical part

1. The literary context of the poems

1.1 The development of English war poetry

The term ‘war poet’ can be defined easily — it could be anyone who writes about war and shares personal beliefs about it, even non-combatants. The first well-known example of this genre was the Old English poem, *The Battle of Maldon*, which described the events of the eponymous battle of 991.

However, English war poetry remained silent until the middle of the nineteenth century. It is believed that the first contemporary signs of English written war poetry occurred during the Crimean War (1853-1856) and were associated with the name of Alfred Lord Tennyson. It was the poem "The Charge of the Light Brigade" (1854) — an immortal hymn of courage, which started a new era of this genre. Since then, war poetry has become a prominent feature of world literature.

The poets who continued Tennyson’s legacy were Rudyard Kipling, Thomas Hardy, and Algernon Swinburne, all of whom depicted the events of the Boer War.¹ English war poetry achieved its climax only in the 1910s responding to the First World War. Such poets as Siegfried Sassoon, Rupert Brooke, Wilfred Owen, and others who wrote from battlefields, depicted own experience and feelings in their works.

It is usually hard to understand poems without any information about cultural, social, and political contexts during the time when they were composed. In the case of the thesis, it was two time periods: the Victorian era (1837-1901) and the first two decades of the twentieth century. The rest of the chapter is dedicated to the literary context of the poems.

1.2 The Victorian Era: features and poets

The Victorian period began right after the Romanticism movement, lasted for more than sixty years, and was followed by the Edwardian era. At the beginning of the former, some Romanticist representatives like William Wordsworth, Robert Southey, and John Clare still had some influence on the Victorian artists. However, Victorian literature rejected its

¹ A conflict between the British Empire and South African Republic and its ally the Orange Free State (1899-1902).

predecessors' ideas. It was a time when literature returned to realism, pragmatism, societal issues,² and agnosticism.³ One more major part of Victorian literature was the reclaiming of the past. This period is strongly associated with the Aesthetic Movement.⁴ The late Victorianism had a stream of pessimism, which was featured in the works of Hardy, whose characters were struggling against their passions and social circumstances. As for English society, people would argue about the industrial revolution and progress in terms of their usefulness. Besides this issue, an assumption that science can help cure diseases and solve problems appeared. Regarding the writers, the use of serialization gained popularity as novels were published in parts weekly, and readers could not wait for another issue to find out what happened to their beloved characters. Such writing in instalments helped them to earn more money. The end of this era came in 1901 with the death of the queen.

According to the aforementioned paragraph, the influence and legacy of the Romanticism were still occurring in the literature that is why such themes as love, harmony, and sentimentality were still common. Even so, typical motifs of Victorian poetry began to occur. The central themes of that period were realism, pessimism, child labour, unemployment, morality, and rural life. What is more, poetry addressed the topics of science and technology. Finally, some poets like Tennyson, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, and Matthew Arnold were questioning God's existence. The others, like Thomas Hardy, even lost their faith and mirrored it in their works. The well-known poets of this era, except the mentioned ones, were Robert Browning, Christina Rossetti, and Gerard Manley Hopkins. All of them, except Rossetti and Hardy, belonged to the so-called 'High Victorian Poetry'. Another branch of poetry was 'Pre-Raphaelite' which included Dante Gabriel Rossetti, William Morris, and Algernon Charles Swinburne. The distinctive features of Pre-Raphaelites were extreme attention to realistic detail and use of symbolism. (Dutta, 2003)

Robert Browning was deeply influenced by the Romanticists, especially by Percy Shelley. He was the first Victorian poet who began to experiment with the verse, that is why most of

² The subject of class issues, depicted in the literature, illustrated the luxury of the upper and poverty of the low classes.

³ A term created in 1869 by British biologist Thomas Henry Huxely. Refers to the view of God's existence. The question of his existence prevailed in the masses and many began to doubt his existence as there was no proof of it.

⁴ Beauty is the most precious thing in life.

his works were extensive and hard to understand. Such ambitions were praised neither by critics nor by readers. Thus, his best-known work, a long narrative poem *Sordello* (1840), was considered too obscure and difficult for Victorian tastes. Despite his failure with long poems, the poet was successful at writing simple and short poems like "Among the Rocks" (1864). Most of Browning's works had a similar fate. He gained praise and recognition only several decades later, and now he is regarded as one of the greatest poets of his age alongside with Tennyson. His next trademark was the usage of dramatic monologues.⁵ A perfect illustration of this particular technique can be observed in the poet's notable poems "Porphyria's Lover" (1836) and "My Last Duchess" (1842). These monologues had a huge influence on Ezra Pound, who called Browning his 'literary father'. Browning also wrote for the children, and his poem *The Pied Piper of Hamelin* (1842) nowadays is considered to be a canon of the children literature. (Drew, 1998)

Browning's wife, Elizabeth, established her reputation as an author of love poems, yet she also wrote other genres. Some of the poetess's works featured the theme of religion: *Aurora Leigh* (1856) and "The Virgin Mary to the Child Jesus" (1895). The former had a form of a continuous verse, similarly to her husband's poems, and again was not enthusiastically met by the critics, but gained popularity and success among the common readers. Her most remarkable work was a collection *Sonnets from the Portuguese* (1850), where she expressed her concerns about marrying Robert Browning. The collection starts with her doubts about his true love, as she is not sure if it is sincere, but as the sonnets progress, Browning overcomes her hesitation and admits her deep and true love for him. Additionally, Browning paid attention to the slavery problem in the USA: being a strong oppositionist, she composed the poem *The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point* (1848). This poem was written as a monologue of a black woman who was trying to secure her child. The main idea of this work was to claim that there is no difference between people with a different skin. Furthermore, in the massive political volume *Poems Before Congress* (1860), she criticized American slavery once more and supported the Second Italian War of Independence.

Elizabeth Browning's 'successor' was Christina Rossetti, even though the poems of the latter were considered to be less intellectual and less varied. Some critics even stated that she

⁵ "This consists essentially of a narrative spoken by a single character and amplified by his comments on his story and the circumstances in which he is speaking." (Drew)

was more talented in terms of poetry than Barrett-Browning. The main theme of Rossetti's poetry was a distinctive tension between desire and renunciation, i.e., sensual pleasure and religious severity. In what is believed her greatest work, *Goblin Market* (1859), she raises questions about virginity, female seduction, and erotic desire. Many critics interpreted this poem as a social commentary on Victorian gender roles. She was one of the first feminist writers at that time and addressed such issue as the prostitution of the under-age girls. The other prominent features of her poetry were separated lovers and regrets. Similarly to Barrett-Browning, Rossetti was against the slavery in America. Moreover, she was critical about animal abuse, imperialism, and military aggression. Rossetti even wrote Christmas carols "In the Bleak Midwinter" (1872) and "Love Came Down at Christmas" (1893). Her works influenced such famous writers as G.M.Hopkins and Virginia Woolf.

Taking Hopkins's poetry into account, one can see that its dominant themes were nature and religion, religious doubt specifically. His religious struggles were mirrored in so-called 'terrible sonnets' like "No Worst There Is None" (1885). During the last years of life, the theme of isolation prevailed in his works such as "To Seem the Stranger" (1886). Similarly to Robert Browning, Hopkins challenged the conventional norms of poetry. Being heavily influenced by the rhythmic structure of the Anglo-Saxon tradition, especially *Beowulf*, Hopkins wrote his poems in 'sprung rhythm'— an imitation of natural speech. He was impacted by Old English and would use dialecticisms and archaic words, as well as creating new words like *twindles*. Due to this fact, his poems were considered the most original of the nineteenth century, and, like other Victorians, he had an effect on the subsequent century poets such as Thomas Stearns Eliot and Wystan Hugh Auden. The poet's other famous works include "Carrion Comfort" (1887) and "Thou art indeed just, Lord, if I contend" (1899).

Another great poet from this period was Matthew Arnold, who was considered to be the third great Victorian poet after Tennyson and Robert Browning. Despite being known as a poet, Arnold also wrote prose and non-fiction. His poetry was intimate, pessimistic, and nostalgic. The mood of his poems was predominantly mournful and emotionally restrained. The common themes of his poems were pessimism as in *Resignation* (1849), myths as in "Cadmus and Harmonia" (1852), time as in "Consolation" (1852), love as in "Absence" (1857), nature as in "A Wish" (1867), faith and its loss as in "East London" (1867), and "Dover Beach" (1867), correspondingly. Arnold's influencer was no other than William Wordsworth, which explains the presence of symbolic landscapes in some of his poems. With

some time, the modernist features like pessimistic perception and sensibility also appeared in his compositions.

Thomas Hardy also succeeded both in prose and poetry. He started his literary career as a fiction writer, but in the late 1890s switched to the poetry, and since then did not compose any prosaic works. Despite the fact that his prose gained more praise than poetry at that time, both of them have gained the universal acclaim recently. Hardy was a traditional poet, for he was influenced by folk songs, yet this did not stop him from experimenting with verses. He even continued Robert Browning's tradition of dramatic monologues. Some of the poet's literary works like the poetic drama *The Dynasts* (1904-1908) were written in blank verse. His first significant volume was *Wessex Poems* (1898). Generally, Hardy wrote a wide range of poetry, including satires and ballads. Some of his poems are dedicated to his late wife and create a sequence of elegies *Poems of 1912-13*. Such themes as contrariness of fate, led-downs in love and life, antivivisectionism, and war criticism were also common for his poems. The English poets who were inspired by Hardy were W.H.Auden, Rupert Brooke, Siegfried Sassoon, and Philip Larkin.

1.3 Civilian poets' responses to the Crimean conflict

The poets from the previous section might have influenced and changed English poetry, but none of them responded to the Crimean War. Besides Tennyson, the most notable poets who reacted to this conflict were Tom Taylor and Louisa Shore. According to the *Journal of Victorian Culture*, the intention of those poets was "to arouse people's patriotic sentiment and exhort them to military action". [p.503] They were joined by Franklin Lushington, Sydney Dobell, Gerald Massey, and Robert Barnabas Brough. Together, they drew public attention on the Crimean War and, in a certain way, resurrected the English war poetry.

Lushington's "The Muster of the Guards" (1854) is dedicated to the Grenadier Guards and illustrates their march to the checkpoint from which they would be delivered to the war. The poem itself is a narrative, patriotic, and rousing monologue, by which the author shows support of the British military campaign. The narrator assumes that it is better to go to the war than stay at home. The poem's march-like rhythm makes it to be read in an inspirational tone.

On the contrary, Brough did not support the Crimean War. He wrote the collection of radical poems *Songs of the Governing Classes* (1855), where he criticized the Crimean

campaign from the British side. The targets of this criticism were those who were responsible for starting the war. Moreover, Brough attacked the upper classes due to his belief that they were exploiting the weak and the poor in that war, making soldiers' sacrifices meaningless. Besides satirical poems and taunts on lords, earls, and one marquis, the collection included different kinds of poetry: dramatic verses ("Vulgar Declamation"); historical ballads about the Incas, the Romans, and Nero; an ode to Lady Godiva; a mocking fable about rats and mice; and lyrical songs ("Ça ira").

Massey referred to the war in two volumes of poems *The Ballad of Babe Christabel* (1854) and *War Waits* (1855). The former shows the voice of the common and poor people after which he was proclaimed 'a people's poet'. In the poem "War Rumours", from the latter volume, he shows two sides of Britain: liberty and tyranny. He praises the former but states that it is not often the case as the working class is oppressed. Massey compares England to the old mother, and patriotically calls her up to battle as she used to.

Dobell depicted the suffering of British soldiers in his collections of war poems *Sonnets on the War* (1854), conjoint work with Alexander Smith, and in *England in Time of War* (1856). The latter includes a full spectrum of poems: lullaby "The Widow's Lullaby"; war poem *Grass from Battlefield*; elegy *A Hero's Grave*; psalm *An Aspiration of the Spirit*. Practically all of them are composed as lyrical or dramatic monologues differing in the length. The cases of blank verse as in "A Prayer of the Understanding" and unique example of the poem *A Shower in War-Time* written in a tercet format are present too. The feelings of sorrow, grief, joy, and calmness predominate in the poems heroes' monologues.

"The Due of the Dead" (1854) by Taylor is an atypical example of a war poem. It was written as a response to the philanthropic request made by the correspondent of *The Times* Thomas Chenery.⁶ The poem made the readers subscribe to the Patriotic Fund. Its main message was to convince the public that it owed to the dead soldiers and that every civilian should donate money to the widows and children of the killed troopers. Fortunately, the poem's objective was completed.

The only woman in this group, Louisa Shore, refashioned the role of a civilian poet in the poem "War Music" (1854). She stated that any soldier can become a civilian poet, as "a soldier performs action on the battlefield and makes no effort to convey his emotion ("The

⁶ Chenery asked the public to donate for the injured soldiers due to the lack of medical supplies and crew.

transports of his heart”) that he embodies “today/The poet of his art.”” (Ho, 2014) Shore even managed to criticize male poets for the exaggeration of patriotic feelings. At the end of the poem, she mentioned Florence Nightingale and the Light Cavalry Brigade.

1.4 The poetry of the Edwardian era

As it was the turn of the centuries, there was a feeling that a new period required something different. After the end of the Victorian period, the common people hoped for some better changes in society. Writers like Kipling awaited the fall of the old order. Edward VII became the king after Victoria and a new, yet short, era began: it was a time of peace, prosperity, technological progress and positive shifts in politics.⁷ On the other hand, the inequality regarding social status remained a societal issue. The First World War marked the end of this period.

Concerning the poetry, the remaining Victorians Hardy and Kipling were trying to bring back such literary genres as the ballad, satire, and narrative poem. The Edwardians continued the old tradition from the previous century and referred to the notion of rationalism as well. Due to the fact that it was the beginning of a new century, many literary movements began to develop. The significant ones for the Edwardian poetry were the movements of imagism and futurism. From gradually influencing and occasionally appearing in poetry, they have become an integral part of it. It is hard to define a true Edwardian poet due to the period’s shortness and the variety of literary movements which existed concurrently. According to one of the critics, Kenneth Millard, there were six Edwardian poets: John Masefield, Alfred Edward Housman, Edward Thomas, John Davidson, Thomas Hardy, and Rupert Brooke. (Millard, 1991) All of them, but the last two, will be the subject of this chapter.

Masefield was popular for the sea poems where he described his life in America and sea voyages. They were gathered in the collection *Salt Water Ballads* (1902). The most famous poem from this volume was "Sea Fever", which is composed in the form of a sailor’s monologue who strongly wills to sail one more time due to the call of the sea. Another distinct work of his legacy was a narrative poem *The Everlasting Mercy* (1911), which according to the Britannica (2019) “shocked literary orthodoxy with its phrases of colloquial coarseness hitherto unknown in the 20th-century English verse.” It depicts a path of

⁷ Minor social classes (labourers, servants, industrial working class) gained some benefits, power, and authority through the Liberal welfare reforms (1906-1914).

redemption of a violent womanizing alcoholic, who starts his path as a sinner but eventually finds forgiveness in Christianity.

Housman's poetry usually expressed pessimism and was inspired by Heinrich Heine's poems, William Shakespeare's songs from the plays, and the Scottish border ballads. The overwhelming majority of his poems were set in the countryside of Shropshire. These poems made it into the collection *A Shropshire Lad* (1896) and were perfectly appropriate for the Edwardian era taste due to their simplicity and beauty. Some critics even noted that his heroes' emotions are expressed clearly. The themes of doomed youth, melancholy, sorrow, narrow death, and grief are present here. The central protagonists there are the lads.⁸

Thomas, who is considered to be a war poet,⁹ came to the poetry scene after a successful career as a critic and essayist. He began to write poems after the acquaintance with Robert Frost, with whom he became good friends. It explains why his first works were written under the influence of the American poet. Later, Thomas found his style: the poet would portray the English countryside in his poems, but sometimes tended to mix the themes of landscape and war. He questioned how the latter could affect an individual. The theme of solitude also prevailed in his works. During his life, Thomas had only six poems published, under the pseudonym Edward Eastaway, in 1916.

Davidson was known for his expert writing of narrative lyrical ballads. His early notable work was the collection *In a Music Hall and other Poems* (1891), where his poetry gift was noticed. The poems from this volume described the life of the working class alongside with its poverty. The poet fully showed his unique philosophy¹⁰ in the series of 'testaments': *The Testament of a Vivisector* (1901), *The Testament of a Man Forbid* (1901), *The Testament of an Empire Builder* (1902), and *The Testament of John Davidson* (1908). These collections consisted of poems written in long and unrhymed dramatic monologues, which "expressed his idiosyncratic vision, which combined scientific materialism and romantic will in the belief that man has been created to express himself to the utmost." (Britannica, 2019)

1.5 Modernism: characteristics and prominent poets

⁸ The soldiers of the King's Shropshire Light Infantry.

⁹ Served in the Royal Garrison Artillery unit. Was killed in action in 1917.

¹⁰ Each man was to act naturally to the most extreme of his capacity, and the strongest had to dominate.

Modernism appeared at the end of the nineteenth century and boomed during the 1910s, after the Edwardian era, and in the 1920s. At the start, it broke up with tradition and sought to find fresh ideas and ways of expression. The main features of modernist poetry were a) individualism: the life of a person was considered more valuable than society's; b) experimentation: similarly to the Victorians, modernists spurned the old forms and techniques and started creating mixes of different styles; c) absurdity: the world was believed to be an absurd place, and the issue of the Great War non-meaningfulness was raised; d) symbolism: it was stated that objects, people, actions, events, all must have a significant meaning. The meaning of some scenes was usually left to the reader's traction and imagination; e) formalism: literature was seen as a craft, and that is why literary works, specifically in poetry, included other languages, fragmentation, and new words. Other significant features were a stream of consciousness, complex language, alienation, depression, an illustration of a deeper reality, and decline of civilization. (Ali, n.d.)

The key figures in British modernist poetry were American expatriates Ezra Pound and T.S.Eliot.

Pound was a 'father' of Modernism and the most influential poet of this movement. He wanted to break up with the Victorian and Edwardian rules and try to create something unique. His poems featured peculiar words, the absence of verbs, and parataxis. He started writing in 1907, and, just after a year, published his first collection of poems *A Lume Spento* (1908). After that, his career as a poet rapidly developed in Europe. He published two more collections of his poems within two years. Even more than this, Pound actively promoted imagism and vorticism. More focusing on the first, he thought that the poets of the past were not economical, and stated that authors should use an exact number of words to expand the simplest meaning. In his imagistic two-line poem, "In a Station of the Metro" (1913), Pound used only fourteen words. When WWI started, and the poet saw its carnage, he was unspeakably furious. He blamed the British Empire for breaking the lives of young soldiers and criticized its international politics. After the war, the poet moved from England to Paris, where he composed *Homage to Sextus Propertius* (1917), which referred to his disapproval of England. His other notable and famous works were the long poem *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* (1920) and the unfinished poem *The Cantos* (1913-1965). In addition to his literary work, Pound discovered and promoted such talents as Robert Frost, David Herbert Lawrence, T.S.Eliot and Ernest Hemingway.

Eliot, same as Pound, also was a leading figure of Modernist movement. He was arguably the most influential poet of the last century, for he changed English poetry forever. His poems were filled with references to myths and writers of the past, quotes from the hoary works, allusions, and religious symbols. Before the Great War, the poet's finest achievement was the poem "The Love Song of J.Alfred Prufrock" (1915), which started the revolution in English poetry. It included the references to the Bible, Shakespeare's plays, and the nineteenth-century French symbolists. The poem focused on such themes as isolation, regret, sexual frustration, morality, and demonstrated the use of the stream of consciousness. Another well-known work of that time was "Portrait of a Lady" (1916), which showed the emptiness and depression of the upper class. After the end of the war, the greatest poem of the twentieth century was born — *The Waste Land* (1922). It featured many aforementioned Eliot's techniques, but most importantly, the poem presented the echo of the war and its consequences by showing Europe as a destructive place. Nowadays, *The Waste Land* is considered to be a modernist canon.

For its success, the poem owes Pound whose editing helped Eliot to perfect it. Pound's assistance became known to the wide public in 1971 when earlier Eliot's drafts were found.¹¹ Presumably, Eliot showed his drafts to Pound in 1921 during his stay in Paris. Initially, the poem was to start with the line "First we had a couple of feelers down at Tom's place." (Ford, 2016), and was to feature a monologue of a night partier recalling the adventures of the previous night. However, this part was deleted, and eventually, the poem began with line 55 "April is the cruellest month, breeding...". (*The Wasteland*) Then, Pound advised removing seventy-two lines featuring satirical Popean rhyming from the beginning of 'The Fire Sermon'. From the section 'Death by Water' Pound cut eighty-three lines, which were to make the first section of that part, and which told the story about the North Atlantic fishing journey that ended tragically. On the other hand, Pound recommended¹² Eliot to leave the lines about Phlebas the Phoenician in this section. These factors inspired Eliot to link this character with some others¹³. Another Pound's suggestion was to make intervals between the parts of the poem. In the parts where Eliot denounced people, Pound carefully found a right

¹¹ The drafts were travelling between the editors and libraries from 1922 to 1971, when the poem was re-published by Eliot's second wife Valerie.

¹² Eliot was not sure about keeping these lines.

¹³ Mr. Eugenides, etc.

balance. Finally, Pound moderated “the sex scene between the typist and the young man carbuncular” (Ford) to make it less extensive. To conclude, Pound narrowed Eliot’s wording in many parts of the poem, and when the latter sent him the revised version, Pound commented “Complimenti, you bitch. I am wracked by the seven jealousies.” (Ford) Eliot dedicated this poem to Pound calling him *ig miglior fabbro*¹⁴. After the publication in 1922, the poem rapidly “did indeed convert many to the concept of poetry implicit in its use of collage, allusion and fractured narrative.” (Ford)

1.6 Modernism and the First World War

With the start of WWI, Modernism lost some popularity due to the rise of the war poets. Young boys who wrote about the war horrors gained public sympathy at this time and changed the society’s view of the Great War. Among these boys, besides the mentioned ones in the introduction, were Isaac Rosenberg, Edmund Blunden, Charles Sorley, and many others. They contributed the most to the English war poetry. These soldiers “fashioned a new form of poetry, as they attempted to give expression to the horrors of trench warfare.” (Lynch, 2015) From the Modernists’ side, Pound shared his thoughts on that conflict, too. In the section of the poem *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* (1920), "These Fought In Any Case", he pities the fallen young troopers and blames the propaganda for their deaths: “Die some, por patria mori/walked in hell/believing in old man’s lies...” These lines echo Owen’s argument in "Dulce et Decorum est". In prose, specifically in Rebecca West’s *The Return of the Soldier* (1918), the results of the war were also illustrated. The novel portrayed a fighter who returned from the front with mental trauma and depicted its effects on relationships with his family.

To sum it up, the Edwardians — modernists, war poets, some of whom belonged to the not mentioned Georgians¹⁵ (Graves, Sassoon) — reacted to the war more than the Victorians. Some of them even took part in it, unlike the Victorians, and felt its horrors on their skin. That is why they could relate it to the personal experience and subjectively wrote about it. Those who did not fight, like Pound, felt anxious about that world conflict and expressed their concerns in poems or novels. The poems of World War I increasingly reflected the

¹⁴ The better craftsman.

¹⁵ Lyrical poets who wrote at the beginning of the 20th-century during the reign of the King George V (1910-1936).

irrational reality of trench warfare. The Great War had a bigger impact on the world than the Crimean War, for its consequences were featured in literary works during the next decades.

2. The historical and social contexts of the poems

2.1 The Crimean War

For the British Empire, the nineteenth century was an age of industrialism, colonialism, and urban migration. In terms of foreign policy, this time was quite peaceful, as only two wars had happened:¹⁶ the Napoleonic wars (1803-1815) and the Crimean war (1853-1856). The latter was between the Russian Empire and the alliance formed by the three empires: Ottoman, British, and French, and the Kingdom of Sardinia. Despite its name, this war was battled not only on the Crimean Peninsula. It took place in the Balkans, the Caucasus, the White and the Baltic seas, and the North Pacific. Originally, the war had started in the Balkans when the Russian Empire occupied the Danubian Principalities¹⁷. Since these lands were under the Ottoman suzerainty, the Turkish sultan had no other option but to declare war against the Russians. At that time, the British and French Empires were in hostile relationships with the latter and wanted it to lose power and influence in these regions, so they decided to support the Ottoman Empire. Together, they defeated the Russian Empire in 1856. This war was the first war conflict where modern technologies were used: railways, telegraphs, and naval shells. It was also the first to be documented in written reports and photographs. (Lambert, 2011)

2.2 Role of the British Empire

The British Empire entered only in 1854 and played a crucial role. Her soldiers and fleet fought in the following areas, besides the Crimea: the Black Sea, the Azov Sea, the Baltic Sea, the White Sea, Greece and the northern part of the Pacific Ocean. At the Black Sea, the British fleet successfully took part in the Sevastopol siege. In Greece, they occupied Piraeus, alongside with the French troopers, and neutralized the Greek army. At the Pacific theatre, they failed to capture Petropavlovsk. At the White Sea, British fleet shelled Solovki, completely ruined the town Kola, but failed to invade Arkhangelsk. At the Baltic Sea, the Anglo-French combined fleet destroyed the Bomarsund fortress and blockaded sea imports to Russia. This was a large-scale attack on Russian military supplies. [Historical Dictionary of the Crimean War: 95] Despite its success on the sea, the most memorable British war

¹⁶ Not including small colonial wars with a limited number of soldiers.

¹⁷ The territories of modern Moldova and Romania.

operations happened on land, in the Crimea. Firstly, a strategically important battle was won on the Alma River. Then, the battle of Balaclava happened during which, the infamous raid of the light brigade took place.

This light cavalry unit, formed from lancers, hussars, and dragoons, was under the command of Major General James Brudenell. The riders were armed only with sabres and lances and had unarmoured horses. The approximate number of the squad was around 600. The original aim was to prevent the Russians from capturing Turkish guns located on the right causeway. The task seemed optimum, but due to a misunderstanding between brigade's captain Louis Nolan and Lord Raglan, it turned into a tragedy. Thus, instead of the right side, Nolan led his men to the far front — straight to the enemy's redoubt at the end of the valley. The Russian cannons on the hills from both sides provided a defensive fire during the brigade's way, and that shell bombardment trapped the cavalry in a crossfire from the front, left, and right. The unit had to achieve the bastion, clean it, and come back to the initial position. The soldiers knew that it was a suicide mission, yet completed the order: they rode to the redoubt and forced enemies back. While they were approaching the British positions, on their way back, the Heavy Brigade covered them. The light brigade suffered heavy casualties: 156 were killed or missing, 122 were wounded, and around 60 were taken as prisoners. [Calthorpe:132] Those who survived the ambush retired. This attack enhanced the British cavalry and showed an unspeakable failure of the British command. This raid was glorified by A.L.Tennyson in his poem "The Charge of The Light Brigade", which will be analyzed in the practical part.

2.3 Public and artists' reactions to the Crimean War

Despite the victory, the war was very unpopular in Britain, as the society reacted negatively to any fiasco of the army. In the winter of 1855, a group of 1500 men came to the Trafalgar Square to protest against the war: they rolled snowballs and would throw them everywhere, that is how this protest had gained its name — 'Snowball Riot'. (Marx, 1855) In Parliament, the Tories insisted that there should be an account of all soldiers who had been sent to the Crimea to calculate the precise number of casualties. Many poets also reacted to the war. For example, George Whyte-Melville, who served in the Crimea, wrote the poem "A Child in the Nursery Crying" (1855), where he claimed that death is inevitable. In "Alma" (1855), R.C.Trench's glorified the soldiers who had won the Battle of the Alma and praised their

courage and boldness. H.W.Longfellow wrote "Santa Filomena" (1857) where he praised Florence Nightingale's help to the soldiers in hospitals and compared her with Saint Philomena. The reflection of war also found its place in the paintings of William Simpson, who drew the events which he had witnessed. He depicted the soldiers in the battles to document it and praise their fearlessness. Some of his works include *Winter in the Trenches* (1854), *The landing at Eupatoria* (1854), and *The Charge of the Light Brigade* (1855).

2.4 WWI

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the British Empire was the biggest and probably the most powerful country in the world. It possessed colonies in every part of the planet, and, industrially, was the most developed nation in the world. In the 1910s, her position changed when the German Empire had surpassed it in this field. At this time, powerful European countries like France and the Austro-Hungarian Empire were equipped with modern weaponry and had large armies. All these countries dreamed of expanding their territories, making the outbreak of the war inevitable. Everybody was waiting for a spark to start the bloodiest war. It all started with the assassination of the Austro-Hungarian king's nephew in Sarajevo, 1914. Austria-Hungary immediately declared war on the Kingdom of Serbia, who then asked its allies for help. (Sheffield, 2011) Within a few months, the majority of countries declared war against each other and formed two rivalry coalitions. The first one, the Entente Powers, consisted of France, the British Empire, the Russian Empire, Italy, USA, Japan. The other coalition, the Central Powers, included the German Empire, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Ottoman Empire, and Bulgaria. The war lasted for four years and was won by the Entente Powers. After the war, the empires from the losing side were disbanded, and some of their territories were taken by the winners.

2.5 The role of the British Empire in WWI

Despite being industrially developed, the British Empire had a small number of armed forces, especially in comparison to other dominant countries. The approximate number of soldiers was between 400,000-700,000, but half of them were serving at the British overseas territories. That was the main reason why the government started war propaganda. Their primary goal was to recruit at least 100,000 men, but surprisingly, only in the first two months, half a million volunteers joined the army. Leading by propaganda, many young boys

lied about their age to be accepted. They were called ‘the Kitchener’s army’, due to the name of the senior British Army officer Herbert Kitchener. At the end of the war, the army was comprised of four million troopers. (Chinn, n.d.)

However, the quantity did not mean quality. At that time, there was a lack of trainers in the army, and many soldiers did not receive enough practice and remained unprepared. Their first test was the Battle of Loos,¹⁸ where the Britons used poisonous gas for the first time. Nevertheless, they lost this battle, and around 60,000 were killed. The next step was the Battle of the Somme¹⁹ — one the deadliest in the war, for the Brits lost more than 400,000 men, but the survivors gained experience. Most importantly, Franco-British powers won this battle, yet this fact is still negotiable. The other significant battles that included the British army were Battles of Marne (key victory), the battles of Gallipoli and Passchendaele (both were lost), and finally, the Battle of Cambrai (indecisive result).

Besides fighting on land, the British forces also fought at sea, where their results were controversial. (Karuga, 2016) In the beginning, the Royal Navy unsuccessfully protected Scarborough, Hartlepool, and Whitby. The British fleet redeemed itself later when it stopped the German Navy at Yarmouth and won the Battle of Jutland, which was the first step to the Central Powers defeat. The British Army also fought in Africa and the Pacific Ocean. (Grove, 2011) In North Africa and partially in the Arabian Peninsula, British colonel T.E.Lawrence led the Arabic tribes against the Ottoman Empire. He helped them to banish the Turks from these lands and gained independence. At the Pacific theatre, Australia, as a part of the British Empire, seized some of the German overseas territories such as Papua New Guinea. To sum it up, the British Empire played a major role in WWI and helped its allies to defeat the Central Powers. This war helped the Englishmen to modernize and improve their army, although it came at a price as around one million people died.

2.6 Public and artists’ reactions to the WWI

In the beginning, the Great War was popular and rapidly found support even among pacifist thinkers and artists. At first, the people at home were initially blind to the realities of war and thought that it would be quick and glorious. The government used propaganda as a counter-method against the German’s indoctrination. For example, Germans’ atrocity in

¹⁸ Autumn 1915.

¹⁹ It lasted for 140 days from July to November 1916.

Belgium was shown as an act of inexplicable behaviour in newspapers and later served as the intentional disinformation. The main goal of propaganda was to encourage young men to go to the front. Besides the newspapers, propaganda was used in recruitment posters, paintings, films, and literature.

Sooner, the war degenerated into a costly attrition which wiped out a generation of young men. The actualities of a modern war were initially apparent to the men who fought, and when they returned home on leave, they explained what was happening at the front.²⁰ Because of them, a clearer and more disturbing image of the war gradually spread throughout the population. This was in part due to the war poets, whose poems were published in newspapers or were collected into popular anthologies.

Among this group were Siegfried Sassoon, Wilfred Owen, Isaac Rosenberg, and many others. During their first battles, they saw a true face of warfare: mud, endless bombardments, rotting corpses of friends, gas attacks, and giant tanks. The boys realized that this war was sinister, had no reason, and that their friends died for nothing. Such experience inspired the young men to depict the horrors of war in their poems. The initial post-Romantic and nationalist ideals which encouraged so many of them to sign up for the war faded, and the soldiers felt increasingly betrayed by the older generation of politicians and military leaders running the war. Some of the poets survived the Great War, Sassoon and Robert Graves, whereas some did not: Owen, Brooke, and Rosenberg. These poems led to the anti-war protests as many mothers wanted their children back from merciless and useless battlefields. (Bostridge, 2011)

The war was also reflected in English prose, and the first one who published his war memoirs was John B.P. Adams. In his work, *Nothing of Importance* (1917), he depicted all difficulties and horrors he had to face, including attempts to defuse the mines and battlefield duels. He also compared war to a deck of cards, which refers to both sides of the war: tragedy and joy. Another representative of the war prose was Arthur G. West with his *The Diary of a Dead Officer* (1918). This work showed the way of a person from being a war supporter to becoming a pacifist. A humorous and light-hearted portrayal of war duty was featured in Ian Hay's novel *The First Hundred Thousand* (1915) (Robinson, 2014).

²⁰ During this war, chemical weapons were used for the very first time: many soldiers died, were blinded, and had a skin cancer afterwards.

WWI was depicted not only in the literature, for some painters showed its terror in their works. For example, in *Paths of Glory* (1917),²¹ C.R.W. Nevinson depicted the bodies of two soldiers lying face down in the mud somewhere at the battlefield. These soldiers are unidentified, which suggests the loss of personality.

²¹ See the appendices.

3. Attitudes and criticism of selected poems

3.1 "The Charge of the Light Brigade"

The poem generally gained positive reviews from the literary circles. Victorian novelist Charles Kingsley stated that it contributed to the meaning of the word *heroism* and added the notion of suffering to it. According to him, heroism did not demand action anymore, it required suffering. The battle itself “contributed to the growth of a new form of heroism, eventually yielding a new sense of national identity”. (Markovits, 2012) Additionally, Kingsley realized that the poem was an answer to his call for ‘Tyrtæan strains’.²² Influenced by the poem, John Ruskin distinguished between soldier and merchant in his essay collection *Unto This Last* (1862). He specified how these two characters differ in honour: the former possesses it, whereas the latter does not. Another Ruskin’s remark was about the English soldier’s role: “For the soldier's trade, verily and essentially, is not slaying, but being slain”. [p.137] Nevertheless, not all shared the fascination and admiration of the poem. *The Times*, for example, called the charge “splendid self-sacrifice” (1854), questioned its use, and noticed that the attack was magnified to show the bravery of the men who risked everything they had, in contrast to those who had stayed home. Finally, the ballad refuted Matthew Arnold’s statement that contemporary poetry was not able to illustrate “the great epic actions of the past”. (Markovits)

In society, the poem was seen as Tennyson’s “attempt to fix the significance of the charge”. (Markovits) In America, a famous abolitionist John Brown claimed that the raid in the poem represents the republican policy due to the willing sacrifice of the cavalry for the greater good.

Tennyson’s poem is similar to Sydney Dobell’s sonnet "Cavalry Charge At Balaclava" (1855): the latter addresses a foreigner and tells about those who participated in the charge with admiration and proudness. He compares the soldiers with an “English dog” which can sacrifice its life. Both poems pay tribute to the cavalry, yet in different ways. While Dobell emphasizes the riders’ nationality, “These were our common Britons. 'Tis our way / In England.”, and adores their actions, Tennyson simply glorifies soldiers’ courage and execution of the suicidal order and asks to honour them. Besides, Tennyson, unlike Dobell, does not call the raid a ‘victory’. Another big difference is the fact that Dobell does not

²² Tyrtæus was a Greek military poet.

describe the charge itself. He simply states that some of the soldiers “came back from victory” and that is all. In his work, it is unclear what the soldiers precisely did and what is the victory the poet is talking about. Only by knowing the historical context, the readers can fully comprehend this poem. On the contrary, "The Charge of the Light Brigade" explicitly depicts the raid itself. This feature and the illustration of loyal and fearless soldiers, makes Tennyson's work more solid and better poem than Dobell's patriotic pride in his sonnet.

3.2 "For the Fallen"

Originally, the poem was supposed to be published in *The Telegraph*, but was rejected and eventually appeared in *The Times*, where it opened the British society's eyes to the war. Before its publication, the Englishmen were still sanguine and had a 'patriotic hope' (Alexander, 2017) as the war was just in the beginning,²³ and its escalation within gloominess were yet to come. After the publication, society's optimism changed into a shock, for the whole Britain was disillusioned. Such poems typically came out at the end of war, but "For the Fallen" appeared during the second month of the conflict, and that is why it had such a huge impact on the public. The earlier publishing probably was caused by the Battle of Mons in August 1914, where the British army suffered heavy casualties. English composer Edward Elgar included this poem for his choir and played it at Queen's Hall for six nights in a row.²⁴ In the present, the poem's lines “They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old: / Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn. / At the going down of the sun and in the morning / We will remember them” are annually cited on Remembrance Sunday in Britain and the Commonwealth.

"For the Fallen" was praised both by the critics and writers — Rudyard Kipling was so fascinated by the poem that called it “the most beautiful expression of sorrow in the English language” (Tetlow, 2017) and said that it “cut him to the heart” (Alexander, 2017). The British Library called it “the most affecting and well-known elegies from the period.” Furthermore, Binyon's work was valued even among the soldiers, particularly by Owen, Sassoon, and Ivor Gurney.

In comparison with other war poems of that time, "For the Fallen" correlates with Rupert Brooke's "The Dead" (1914). Similarly to Binyon, Brooke mourns for the killed young men

²³ September 1914.

²⁴ In 1916.

and states that they could have had a bright future, full of joy and mirth, but death, or as the poem calls it 'Frost', had destroyed it. Both poems are similar in their elegiac tones. At the same time, Isaac Rosenberg's "The Immortals" (1918) might serve as an opposite to Brooke's poem. It depicts a soldier who has murdered many of the foes with 'slaughter mad', and now they are hunting him in his consciousness. These actions resemble his inner cruelty. The tones of the poems differ in a way that Binyon's one is calm and mournful, whereas Rosenberg's is angry, violent, and struggling.

3.3 "Dulce et Decorum est"

Academics considered Owen's poem as "repellently overdone rhetoric disqualified as poetry". (Williams, 1990) The Indian critic Amitava Banerjee accused the poet of intentionally depicting appalling images of war to support Horace's statement²⁵ in the poem's title. Additionally, D.R.Welland denounces the last line of the poem²⁶ and "censures its 'strident and exhausting' impact". (Williams:195) Another person who contributed to the poem criticism was Dominique Hibberd, who described the last part as confused and unpleasant. Some other critics agreed that "Dulce Et Decorum Est", justifiably, is Owen's answer to Jessie Pope, a British poetess, who wrote patriotic war poems at the same time. She belonged to the group of home front female propagandists. This group included Humphry Ward and Emma Orczy, to name a few. In her pro-war poetry, Pope encouraged and persuaded young men to join the war. In one of such poems, "Play the Game" (1915), she demands from men to stop playing football, take a gun, and go to the front. Pope criticizes those who are playing because others are fighting to keep them and Britannia safe. Owen's work was a response to her writing and originally was dedicated "To Jessie Pope, etc." On the contrary to her poem, Owen states that there is no reason to die for the country meaninglessly and if anybody from the volunteers had a chance to go through a gas attack, he would reconsider his decision to combat. According to Williams, "Dulce" might be seen as "a direct address from 'War' poet to 'Home Front' poetess." [p.199] Williams also suggests that if the readers do not pay attention to this dedication, they will have a more pleasant experience with the poem and will understand it better. He praises the poem for its coherence,

²⁵ Full quote: Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori, which is usually translated as: "It is sweet and proper to die for one's country." Alternative translation: "What joy, for fatherland to die!"

²⁶ Pro patria mori.

which was achieved with the help of powerful individual images and relationships between “physical and moral corruption”. [p.200] Last but not least, Williams approves Owen’s attempt to call Horace’s quote ‘an old Lie’. The critic presumes that by doing so, Owen tried to disguise a message for young generations: to abstain from pointless battles and preserve their innocence from physical corruption. The poem awakened the cynical masses and realistically showed war mares such as a gas attack.

3.4 "The Soldier"

Brooke’s poetry always got excessive praise, and “The Soldier” was not an exception. It was met with critical acclaim and gained wide popularity, but after the war some critics considered the poem to be “mawkishly self-indulgent” (Semansky, 2000) and Brooke’s poetry suddenly began to be treated as too sentimental and naive. Specifically, "The Soldier" was criticized for being romantic due to the fact that Brooke had never fought at war. His friend Charles Sorley, a Scottish poet who also served at that time, disliked the poem’s exploitation of sacrifice. The British critic Bernard Bergonzi was uncertain who the poet was actually praising: the country or himself? In *Heroes’ Twilight: A Study of the Literature of the Great War* (1965) he characterized the poem as “insistently self-regarding performance”. [p.43] In 1981, an English poet John Lehmann supported Bergonzi’s ideas, in *Rupert Brooke: His Life and His Legend* (1980), by claiming that now it is not difficult to notice narcissistic and sentimental motifs. On the other side, Lehmann praised the poem for its tone and structure, calling them “flawless” and evaluated it as “eloquent and skilful”. In his critical essay on Brooke, *Rupert Brooke: A Re-Appraisal* (1944), a Canadian writer Edward McCourt questioned the strength of patriotism in the poem as, according to him, patriotism is usually understood as some force that inspires, whereas there it is absent. Yet, McCourt did not deny the significance and influence of the poem. The person who defended Brooke was his biographer William Laskowski. In the poet’s biography, *Rupert Brooke* (1994), he claimed that it was a mistake to judge the poem without considering the mood of that period. [p.100] Laskowski was also sure that the reception of the poem had changed due to the transformation of opinions on the WWI.

The poem was met with a positive attitude among the readers, for it appealed to the Brittons. The journals featuring the poem were quickly sold out. "The Soldier" was treated as the message to all British troops stating that there is nothing wrong to die for their motherland

with nobility. Nevertheless, as WWI was going on, more and more British soldiers were dying, and the level of patriotism was significantly decreasing. The society could not take the non-stopping soldiers' deaths any longer and "The Soldier" immediately lost its status of patriotic inspiration. In addition to this, the poem "Dulce et Decorum est" was published and refuted the ideas stated in Brooke's poem. The idea of noble death for the country was changed into the belief that there is no reason in a pointless death, even for a motherland.²⁷

On the other hand, a poem which is similar to Brooke's one is "When I'm Killed" (1918) by Robert Graves. The antagonist of this poem, like the one in "The Soldier", thinks about his death and is fearlessly ready to meet it. He asks the reader neither to wait for him nor to mourn. These sentimental elements are similar to the ones in Brooke's poem, yet the topic of patriotism is absent.

3.5 "They" and "Suicide in Trenches"

Sassoon's poetry was the most influential among the war poets during that time, for many of them admired him and tried to write similarly. Critics praised his poems for showing the cost of mechanized fighting and violence. Concerning these two poems, academics agreed that they were pacifistic. "Suicide in Trenches" was accoladed for the theme of lethal despair. A historian Thomas Heyck said that it was a nice example of achieving sensitivity by "avoid[ing] sentimentality and self-pity while describing the realities of war" (2002). One contemporary critic even claimed that Sassoon helped to bring the true face of war to English homes. Common readers considered these poems, as well as his other works, too violent. They thought that Sassoon's main purpose was to shock the audience. The others attacked the poet for lack of patriotism.

"They" is written in the form of a dialogue between the bishop and the soldiers who returned home. God's servant praises troops for defeating the enemy and warns that they will come back different than they were before the war. The soldiers satirically reply that they are well aware of that and that *none* of them will return the same. The poem concludes with the bishop's clichéd statement, "The ways of God are strange!", meaning that there is some hidden purpose in young men's sacrifice. This poem slightly discredited the church's position and authority in society.

²⁷ The more detailed comparison of these poems is presented in the practical part.

"Suicide in Trenches" is composed as a monologue about a young trooper who commits suicide and is immediately forgotten. In the last verse, the author wishes that people who support soldiers and stay at home have never experienced the misery of the war. The main purpose of this poem is to demonstrate that some young men could not cope with overwhelming emotions in the war and had to end their lives.

"They" can be compared with Geoffrey A.S. Kennedy's "What's the Good?" (1919). The latter is written as a monologue of a soldier who confesses in killing enemy's troopers. He asks his girlfriend whether she could forgive him for such atrocity if she knew about it. His inner suffering mirrors the physical suffering of the soldiers in "They". The only difference is that his body is all right, whereas the boys in Sassoon's poem are incapacitated: somebody lost his legs, another young man lost his sight, and another was infected with syphilis. In the case of Kennedy's work, it is the soldier's soul that is damaged. After each killing, he destroys it more and more. All the hero wants is to be with his lover and get married. In Kennedy's situation, the soldier proves that he will return a new, changed person. Kennedy's protagonist also questions the idea of whether it is normal to kill people you do not know in the name of God. By doing so, do not you violate one of the basic commandments? And if the church finds such actions pleasing, then God's ways are definitely strange.

The poem "In Flanders Fields" (1915) by John McCrae, in a certain way, might be considered as a continuation to "Suicide in Trenches" as well as its soul mate. In Sassoon's poem, the narration comes from an unknown person, who tells the readers about the soldier's suicide, whereas in McCrae's work, the narrators are fallen soldiers, who warn about not forgetting them, otherwise they will never sleep. What is more, they ask their battlefield friends to keep fighting with the foes. If in Sassoon's poem the fallen soldier is spoken about, the deceased warriors speak for themselves in McCrae's.

II. Practical part

The following part deals with the analysis of the selected poems²⁸ in terms of the portrayal of war. It focuses on how the poets illustrated war through the content of their poems. Beyond that, the current part tries to notice whether the forms of the poems impact the depiction of war. The second chapter of the current section compares these analyses.

4. Literary analysis of the poems

4.1 "The Charge of the Light Brigade"

In 1854, Tennyson was living with his wife Emily on the Isle of Wight. At that time, he would wander lonely around the cliffs near his house, contemplating his future poems. It is believed that such isolation made him read newspapers to be in touch with the world realities. Thus, Tennyson knew about England's participation in the Crimean War and started to write patriotic poems like "The War" (1855) addressing this issue. But it was two articles in *The Times* about the heavy casualties of the Light Brigade at the Battle of Balaclava, which prompted him to compose one of his greatest poems — "The Charge of the Light Brigade". After the publishing, thousands of copies were sent to the soldiers in the Crimea to support their morale.

The beginning of the poem depicts the start of the charge and immediately sets up the action scene: the ride of the cavalry.

“Half a league²⁹, half a league, (1)

Half a league onward, (2)

All in the valley of Death (3)

Rode the six hundred. (4)

“Forward, the Light Brigade! (5)

Charge for the guns!” he said. (6)

Into the valley of Death (7)

Rode the six hundred.” (8) (*The Charge of the Light Brigade*)

²⁸ See the introduction.

²⁹ The word ‘league’ is from the old use and means distance around three miles, so in the case of the poem, half a league equals 1,5 miles. 1,5 miles equals 2400 metres.

The brigade itself was formed from three ranks: the first one was comprised of the 17th Lancers on the left and the 13th Light Dragoons on the right, the second line consisted only of the 11th Hussars, and the last rank included the 8th Hussars and the 4th Light Dragoons. Cpt. Nolan was with the second line, while Lord Cardigan was alone in the front leading the charge. Three ‘half a league’ in a row, or in other words an epizeuxis, bring an image of the sniffing horse if pronounced quickly: the consonants *h* and *f* before stressed *a* create an impression of a sniffing horse, though the animal is not mentioned in this stanza. The next two lines, “All in the valley of Death / Rode the six hundred.”, mention the place through which the riders must go through and their number³⁰. ‘The valley of Death’ serves as an allusion to Psalm 23 from *The Book of Psalms*, which starts with “The Lord is my shepherd”. It mentions the valley of death in the fourth line “Yea, though I walk through *the valley of the shadow of death*, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.” (King James Bible, 23:4) Such reference means that the soldiers consider their leader as the God, and, by following him, they are not frightened to die in this place of fear. Many of them died and their bodies were left on the battlefield, and ‘the valley of death’ may refer to these corpses. The next two lines, ““Forward, the Light Brigade! / Charge for the guns!” he said.”, feature a direct order from one of the commanders. This order establishes the direction of the attack and points out where the soldiers must ride to — the far front of the enemy’s position. Lines (7) and (8) are similar to (3) and (4), yet while (4) and (8) are identical, there is a slight distinction between (3) and (7): (3) contains ‘all in’, whereas the (7) ‘into’. The former can be understood as the unity of the soldiers, and the latter may emphasize the place where the cavalry is heading to. Overall, this stanza does not depict the battle yet. Instead, it creates the setting and explains what is going on or what to expect next.

The second stanza focuses on a moral code of the division:

““Forward, the Light Brigade!” (9)

Was there a man dismayed? (10)

Not though the soldier knew (11)

Someone had blundered. (12)

Theirs not to make reply, (13)

³⁰ The exact number is still unknown. Approximately, there were between 660-673 horsemen.

Theirs not to reason why, (14)
Theirs but to do and die. (15)
Into the valley of Death (16)
Rode the six hundred.” (17) (*The Charge of the Light Brigade*)

Line (9) repeats the command from (5) and illustrates that the brigade continues its raid. Verses (10) and (11) feature a rhetorical question and the immediate answer — everyone obeys the order without exception. The following two lines imply that the soldiers are aware that their raid is a mistake, but they still ride and follow their leaders. The basic principles of the army are demonstrated in (13), (14), and (15): do not question your commander, obey to his orders and do not dispute them, be loyal to him, and be ready to die on duty. The cavalymen follow these rules. The last verses of the stanza, (16) and (17), duplicate verses (7) and (8). To sum it up, the cavalymen do not dispute the order of their leader and follow him to the death.

The next part describes the cavalry’s way to the enemies’ spot:

“Cannon to right of them, (18)
Cannon to left of them, (19)
Cannon in front of them (20)
Volleyed and thundered; (21)
Stormed at with shot and shell, (22)
Boldly they rode and well, (23)
Into the jaws of Death, (24)
Into the mouth of hell (25)
Rode the six hundred. ” (26) (*The Charge of the Light Brigade*)

Verses (18), (19), and (20), indicate that the enemy has opened fire, and the brigade is under heavy bombardment. During the raid, the soldiers are under the fire from the cannons from three sides: front, left, and right. This fact leads to a logical assumption that three parts of the cavalry are under attack: the right flank, the left wing, and the front line. The cannon is the main enemy in this stanza as it causes death and hazard, and the only way to stop it is to kill

the gunners. Line (21) illustrates the chaos on the battlefield: artillery shells, exploding cannonballs, and loud blasts³¹. The next verse continues to demonstrate that the horsemen are showered with gunshots and artillery shells. The courage and dignity of the brigade are underlined in (23) — despite the three-side barrage, they fearlessly carry on. They know that they will not crumble until the order is executed. The horsemen cold-heartedly ride till the end, watching their mates die. They are the personification of integrity. “Into the jaws of Death, / Into the mouth of Hell” — here, the battleground is shown as hell which is going to devour and spit them out, but these soldiers do not mind it. They are ready to try their luck and test their fate, that is why they are galloping into this inferno. This stanza starts describing the battle, for it illustrates the first phase of the charge and the accompanying bombardment. The combat zone is now referred to as ‘the jaws of death’ and ‘the mouth of hell’ in opposite to ‘the valley of death’ from the preceding stanzas.

The fourth part of the poem concentrates on the clash between the two sides:

“Flashed all their sabres bare, (27)
Flashed as they turned in air (28)
Sabring the gunners there, (29)
Charging an army, while (30)
All the world wondered. (31)
Plunged in the battery-smoke (32)
Right through the line they broke; (33)
Cossack and Russian (34)
Reeled from the sabre stroke (35)
Shattered and sundered. (36)
Then they rode back, but not (37)
Not the six hundred.” (38) (*The Charge of the Light Brigade*)

³¹ According to one of the attack participants, Captain Godfrey Morgan, the second shell killed Captain Nolan. (*Flintshire Observer Mining Journal and General Advertiser for the Counties of Flint Denbigh*:6)

The horsemen strategically prepare their weapons³² before reaching the spot: “Flashed all their sabres bare, / Flashed as they turned in air”. Lines (29) and (30) point to the start of the combat. The fight is a bloodshed for the gunners, the Russian cavalry and battery are under attack: the cavalry is charged by the 11th Hussars and half of the 17th Lancers, while the battery is stormed by the 13th Light Dragoons (“Battle of Balaclava”). Verse (31) implies a little overstatement³³. The consequences of the attack are shown in (32) and (33): the remaining smoke from the cannon shots makes it difficult to fully orient there, and the frontline of the redoubts is broken. The next two lines are about the cavalymen forcing the foes back, which results in the Cossacks³⁴ and Russians’ deaths. The enemies are shocked by such courageous manoeuvre and have to fall back. They all are torn asunder after the assault and have no option but to retreat. While they are retreating, the brigade should return to the camp after the raid, which is stated in (37). The cavalry retreats and rides back in groups or singly³⁵. The last verse informs that, unfortunately, not all of them returned. As it was clear from the start, the majority of the soldiers will not make it, so, the result is not unexpected — many have lost their lives during the charge. This is the only part of the poem that mentions a direct encounter between the British and the Russians, resulting in havoc.

After the charge, the brigade must return to its position, and the fifth stanza features this return. The foes have already retreated and started barraging the Brittons:

“Cannon to right of them, (39)

Cannon to left of them, (40)

Cannon behind them (41)

Volleyed and thundered; (42)

³² The sabre is the only weapon the cavalry has, and its use can save your life. In military tactics, the cavalymen hold up their sabres, yell, in order to morally discourage the enemy, and easily burst into the front lines.

³³ During the battle, the world did not know about this attack yet, so, it could not wonder. The poem was written and published only in December, which makes that people found out about this heroic episode after more than one month.

³⁴ To be specific, they were Don Cossacks, whose participation in the Crimean War was limited. It was a regular division of the Russian Empire army, but their role in this campaign was not significant. Their main task was to protect Sevastopol.

³⁵ Ironically, the first person to return was Lord Cardigan. He was lost after the clash with the battery, then realized that he was all alone and rode back to the base.

Stormed at with shot and shell, (43)
While horse and hero fell. (44)
They that had fought so well (45)
Came through the jaws of Death, (46)
Back from the mouth of hell, (47)
All that was left of them, (48)
Left of six hundred.” (49) (*The Charge of the Light Brigade*)

Again, the brigade has to ride under the crossfire,³⁶ which is shown in the sequence of lines from (39) to (41). The cavalymen are galloping back to the camp. In order to reach this point, they need to survive the bombardment once more. The troopers again are “Volleyed and thundered; / Stormed at with shot and shell”. Verse (44) portrays the deaths of the soldiers and their horses as rapid cannonballs are killing them. Those who fall, but are still alive, are in great danger of being trampled down by the upcoming horses³⁷. The animals are in a hurry and panic, terrified by explosions, but they still are carrying their riders to a safe place. The next line emphasizes how well the British soldiers fought. Despite the failed plan of their commanders, unceasing bombardment, and numerous casualties, the riders kept on fighting hard. They battled for their lives and returned from this carnage. This statement is supported in (46) and (47). The last two lines of the stanza underline that not all of the riders survived the charge. ‘All that was left’ highlights that only a small percentage of the cavalry remained.³⁸ This stanza stands as a total opposite to the third one. If the latter describes the way to the redoubts, the former tells about the way back: ‘cannon in front of them’ has turned into ‘cannon behind them’. What is more, this part of the poem illustrates the fallout of the charge.

The final stanza concludes the soldiers’ accomplishment:

³⁶ At this time, their allies, the French Cavalry, attacked the Russians’ position on the Fedioukine Hills and stopped them from firing. This gave the Light Brigade a chance to avoid artillery fire from their right. (“Battle of Balaclava.”)

³⁷ A lieutenant from the Hussars rescued two of his men, and one private from the Dragoons saved a trumpeter.

³⁸ Between 247-278 men were killed, wounded, or missing. A large number were imprisoned. Only 195 of them returned on horses.

“When can their glory fade? (50)
O the wild charge they made! (51)
All the world wondered. (52)
Honour the charge they made! (53)
Honour the Light Brigade, (54)
Noble six hundred!” (55) (*The Charge of the Light Brigade*)

It immediately questions “When can their glory fade?”, meaning that the author hopes that this war episode will never be forgotten. The next line glorifies the sacrifice of the cavalymen one last time. Verse (52) repeats verse (31). Line (53) summons to praise this suicidal attack. The poem ends with “Honour the Light Brigade, / Noble six hundred!”. This closing remark urges the reader to laud the soldiers due to their remarkable feat.³⁹ To conclude, the last stanza evokes Tennyson's sense of pride towards the Light brigade.

The poem is written in dactylic dimeter, which enables the readers to read the poem in a quick tempo. Moreover, this metre allows the poem to echo the ride of the charge, for it sounds like galloping horses: several hundreds of horses sprint towards a spot, and the rhythm catches their clip-clops. On the other hand, this meter is not stable: verse ‘All in the valley of death.’ consists of seven syllables, instead of the usual six. Such metrical alteration has two functions: a) it makes this particular verse a marked refrain which easily can be remembered by the reader; b) it embodies the disorder of the attack which the poem depicts and adds a little chaos to the form of the poem. One more interesting property of the poem is the end-stopped lines⁴⁰. This feature can be observed in lines (13), (14), and (15), as they describe the strong will of the soldiers, who oblige to the irrational order. Tennyson sees these lines as strong and confident as the horsemen’s iron spirit, for they do not feature any doubt. Through such vision, the poet demonstrates his faith in the soldiers. (Altman, 2019)

In conclusion, the poem completes its aim via a precise description of the Light brigade’s assault. Each stanza plays its part in drawing a vivid picture of the battle: the galloping horses, the smoke from the cannons, the fired shells, and the sabres flashing. "The Charge of the Light Brigade" transfers the reader to the action with all of its horrors. Tennyson

³⁹ Six cavalry members received the Victorian Cross, the most prestigious British honour at that time.

⁴⁰ In poetry, it is a line that shows the completion of a sentence or a phrase.

describes the battle through three similar expressions: ‘the valley of Death’, ‘the jaws of Death’, and ‘the mouth of Hell’. The poet emphasizes the dignity of the cavalry and honours its courageous deed. The poem claims that it is a righteous thing to die a noble death executing the order, and these soldiers should be remembered and respected.

4.2 "The Soldier"

Brooke was a Georgian poet who was very likeable due to his beauty. Brooke was already a promising young poet when Britain entered the war, but he is best remembered for the war sonnets he wrote while on leave in late 1914. His fame as a war poet was the result of a rapid succession of events. Two of his works, the sonnets "The Dead" (1914) and "The Soldier", were printed in *The Times Literary Supplement* in March 1915. His collection of war poems, *1914 and Other Poems*, was published two months later. The same year, Brooke died from a mosquito bite. And so the legend was born: the beautiful soldier-poet that died before the actual warfare and thus preserves for all eternity the glory and purity of his patriotism. After his death, Brooke became the poster boy for the First World War. However, the public opinion turned against the nationalist sentiments of the Georgians after the war, and Brooke's reputation has never quite recovered from being so closely identified with the war effort.

"The Soldier" was originally entitled "The Recruit", and the occasion of Brooke's death and the posthumous swell in interest in his poetry was exploited to reinforce the recruitment drive:

“If I should die, think only this of me: (1)
That there's some corner of a foreign field (2)
That is for ever England. There shall be (3)
In that rich earth a richer dust concealed; (4)
A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware, (5)
Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam; (6)
A body of England's, breathing English air, (7)
Washed by the rivers, blest by suns of home. (8)

And think, this heart, all evil shed away, (9)
A pulse in the eternal mind, no less (10)

Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England given; (11)
Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day; (12)
And laughter, learnt of friends; and gentleness, (13)
In hearts at peace, under an English heaven.” (14) (“The Soldier”)

In the opening line, Brooke immediately addresses the reader. This line is considered to be a request, yet it can be interpreted as the last will, since the poem’s protagonist hypothesizes about his death⁴¹. These negative thoughts create a possibility that the poet was sensing his coming death. However, the poem’s hero is not terrified by it. The next line highlights the fact that the English troops fought in different parts of the world, yet never on Britain’s ground. The soldier understands that he might be transferred to any part of the front, and such thoughts give him a feeling of uncertainty about his final stand. The line “That is for ever England. There shall be” shows his patriotic spirit and slightly nationalistic mood. The soldier believes that if he fights for England, then every field with British troops will belong to his motherland. Some readers may see a pro-colonial attitude in the second and third lines. They can interpret it as a statement that wherever the foot of an Englishman steps, that land will be doomed to become a territory of the British Empire. In the context of the poem, the hero is an archetype of a patriotic soldier, so, the accusations of the colonial mood of the poem are reasonable. The continuation of this line enjambes in (4): “In that rich earth a richer dust concealed;”. The soldier compares himself to dust and estimates that his dead body will enrich the soil of the ground where he will fall. To his credit, by collocation ‘rich earth’, Brooke shows respect to foreign countries, praising their land. Yet again, the poet puts England’s status higher than other states: he claims that while they have ‘rich earth’, anyone from the British army has ‘a richer dust’. To put it simply, the protagonist assumes that English blood is more precious than non-English. The part “There shall be” supports this assumption because such word order sounds like the monarch’s will and looks like a command.⁴²

The description of ‘dust’ is featured in the following line: “A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware;”. There is a repetition of the word ‘dust’, and it is referred not by

⁴¹ The poem was written in 1914 and Brooke died the next year from sepsis.

⁴² Such command should sound like: “There shall be an English death which will make this rich ground even more worthy.”

‘which’, that should be expected, but by ‘whom’. In this case, ‘dust’ means soldier himself as he was raised and educated by England. The soldier possesses himself as a son of England, making England his mother figure. Line (6) continues listing the things England gave to the soldier: ‘flowers to love’ and ‘ways to roam’. The former may refer to the picturesque British flower fields and landscapes, where he grew up; the latter could resemble the numerous paths where the poem’s hero would wander during his boyhood, or the life paths he had chosen. One of these paths, ultimately, brought him to the war. These images are sodden with the romantic feeling of nostalgia. The next line emphasizes the hero’s English heritage: “A body of England’s, breathing English air,” He is proud to be an Englishman and labels himself as an English offspring. Line (7) also notices that somehow he manages to breathe with English air, even though he is in a foreign country. The last line of the first stanza completes the hero’s portrait. “Washed by rivers” could mean that he used to swim a lot and those rivers shaped his temper. “Blest⁴³ by suns of home” suggests that his decision to go to the war was met with praise and approval among his compatriots⁴⁴. Alternatively, the hero can refer to all warmth of the Sun he received at his homeland. To summarize it quickly, the first stanza presents the hero through his monologue, where his romantic attitude towards the war is shown. This part of the poem exhibits his great sense of nationhood.

The second stanza starts with “And think, this heart, all evil shed away,” and again carries an address to the reader. ‘And think’ might be seen as another request, mirroring the situation with the first line. In the ninth line the hero hopes that his heart will take away all evil from his life, he will forgive everything, he will be in peace with himself, and, in the end, he will become pure and uncorrupted. This desire marks a dream of rebirth. The next line is the most complicated for interpretation: “A pulse in the eternal mind, no less”. Presumably, ‘eternal mind’ means some high power or God. So, the soldier wishes to go to heaven, closer to God, rather than to hell. That is why he has to restrain all sinful emotions in his heart. This ‘pulse’ does one more thing: it “Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England given;” (11). Before the salvation, one last time, the soldier will recall and experience all the memories about his homeland from the past, and, finally, will die peacefully without any regrets. Lines (12) and (13) exemplify the things he will recollect

⁴³ An archaic form of blessed.

⁴⁴ As it is was stated in the theoretical part, in the beginning, English society supported the soldiers who went fighting.

before the endless sleep: “Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day; / And laughter, learnt of friends; and gentleness,”. (12) presents everything marvelous he recollects about England, and (13) illustrates the memories of spending time with friends: it was a simple and peaceful period, as everybody was having the time of their lives. Then, the war came and ruined this insouciance, and some of these ‘friends’ also might have gone to the front. The final line, “In hearts at peace, under an English heaven.”, states that he will die with peace and hints that heaven will look like England from his memories. There is no doubt that the trooper will be happy in the afterlife. The second stanza concentrates on the hero’s vision of paradise. In his world of fantasy, heaven will look like his home country.

As to the form, "The Soldier" is composed in the form of a sonnet, not a typical form for war poetry: this genre is usually associated with love and intimacy. Sonnets typically feature an argument, the proposition, in the opening, which should be proved through the rest of the poem, the resolution. In the context of the poem, the argument is stated through the soldier’s request to remember him with a patriotic sense. This proposition is featured in the first three verses, and the remaining ones have to justify it by presenting some evidence. The verses (5), (6), (7), and (8) provide evidence explaining why the soldier, in fact, should be remembered with a feeling of patriotism. The poem itself is built as an antithesis, as it contrasts several themes: life/death, homeland/foreign land, past/future, and reality/dreamland.

All in all, the war is not depicted in this poem at all, for the latter concentrates on the soldier’s emotional feelings. During the poem, he remembers the pre-war time, speculates what might occur after his death, and hopes for sweet redemption. In the end, he is not scared of death and is ready to accept it with total calmness. The main idea of "The Soldier" is to show the connection between the trooper and his idea of England: for him his country is an Eden.

4.3 "For the Fallen"

The poet’s early poetry was indifferent to the common people’s experience, but the war gave it a new human spirit. When the First World War started, Binyon was too old to enlist. Despite his age, he managed to volunteer as a Red Cross orderly in 1915. He worked in a French military hospital for two years and wrote about this experience in the poem "Fetching the Wounded" (1922). Binyon’s most famous war poem "For the Fallen" was immediately

recognized in England: the people felt that the poem expressed their disenchanting feelings about the war.

The poem consists of seven quatrains, each developing a particular idea. The opening stanza outlines the relationship between England and the fallen soldiers:

“With proud thanksgiving, a mother for her children, (1)

England mourns for her dead across the sea. (2)

Flesh of her flesh they were, spirit of her spirit, (3)

Fallen in the cause of the free.” (4) (“For the Fallen”)

Here, England is depicted as a mother figure to the troopers, who mourns for her deceased children. She is proud and thankful for their sacrifice. The end of the second line, ‘across the sea’, highlights that the boys had fallen in a foreign land, thus suggesting that it was not their war. Line (3) emphasizes the mother-child relationship between the troopers and their home country. This line is an allusion to the Bible as it reflects the words of Adam after the creation of Eve: “And the man said: “This is now bone of my bones, and *flesh of my flesh*; she shall be called ‘woman’, for out of man she was taken.” (*Genesis*, 2:23) Such reference proves the existence of the mentioned maternal relationship. The last line explains the cause the young soldiers died for — freedom. Dying for such patriotic ideal, in the case of the poem, is considered to be righteous. However, one question may be raised about this line *Which freedom does it refer to?*⁴⁵ Presumably, it is the freedom of England, yet the enemies never mentioned a desire to occupy it.

“Solemn the drums thrill; Death august and royal (5)

Sings sorrow up into immortal spheres, (6)

There is music in the midst of desolation (7)

And a glory that shines upon our tears.” (8) (“For the Fallen”)

⁴⁵ The official explanation of the British Empire's entry into WWI was to protect Belgium's neutrality.

The second stanza opens with an image of elegiac drum music which is played in soldiers' honour. Accompanied by this melody, the Death pities the soldiers' noble death and sings for them in some metaphysical space. The mentioning of August reminds the reader, that it was the first month of the Great War. People's sorrow and cry are illustrated in (8); 'our tears' suggests the reference to the whole British nation, meaning 'we — the people of Britain'.

The next quatrain shows the volunteers' romantic attitude towards the war:

“They went with songs to the battle, they were young, (9)

Straight of limb, true of eye, steady and aglow. (10)

They were staunch to the end against odds uncounted; (11)

They fell .” (12) (“For the Fallen”)

Before going to the front, they were naive and blind, for they considered the war to be playful. After witnessing the war horrors, the boys were quickly disillusioned. Line (10) foreshadows the changes that will happen to them: many will lose their limbs, the feeling of joy will transfer into grim and despair, and the adventurous spirit will turn into pessimism. Whichever war expectations the recruits had, each of these anticipations would disintegrate. Lines (11) and (12) accentuate the soldiers' heroism. Despite the odds, they never stepped back, fought till the end, and met their doom courageously. They did not run away from death and faced it manly. Binyon specifically highlights that the soldiers died 'with their faces to the foe', never with their backs.

“They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old: (13)

Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn. (14)

At the going down of the sun and in the morning (15)

We will remember them.” (16) (“For the Fallen”)

The fourth stanza immediately presents an antithesis in (13) and (14), stating that those who perished will not grow up and will not experience the taste of adulthood, unlike the survivors. The part 'Age shall not weary them' is a reference to Shakespeare's tragedy *Antony and*

Cleopatra (1623). The quote belongs to Enobarbus⁴⁶ discussing Cleopatra's beauty: "Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale / Her infinite variety." (*Antony and Cleopatra*, p.73) In this case, Binyon associates the soldiers with the Egyptian queen, depicting them as the country leaders. Lines (15) and (16) claim that the ordinary British people will remember the departed warriors forever.

The next part develops the thought about the doomed youth:

"They mingle not with their laughing comrades again; (17)

They sit no more at familiar tables of home; (18)

They have no lot in our labour of the day-time; (19)

They sleep beyond England's foam." (20) ("For the Fallen")

The opening line states that the killed troopers will never meet with their close friends, for their friends possibly suffered the same fate. The next one tells that there will be no more family gatherings, for the parents will never await their sons. They would always remember and curse the day the boys went to fight. Line (19) mentions that these boys will never contribute to the future of their country. The quatrain's last line once again depicts England as a mother figure: the soldiers rest in peace under her 'foam'. Like a true mother, she covered her sleeping sons with the shrouds.

"But where our desires are and our hopes profound, (21)

Felt as a well-spring that is hidden from sight, (22)

To the innermost heart of their own land they are known (23)

As the stars are known to the Night;" (24) ("For the Fallen")

Lines (21)-(23) suggest that even though the soldiers will not return, they will stay in the hearts of their grateful countrymen. The young men became a part of people's lives and will remain in their souls. Verse (24) compares the soldiers to the stars and England to the Night: like the night knows the stars, the country will know the names of her heroes.

⁴⁶ A general and politician of ancient Rome in the 1st century BC.

The idea of stars-as-soldiers continues in the opening of the last stanza, indicating that the soldiers' legacy will remain, while we, the ordinary citizens, will die:

“As the stars that shall be bright when we are dust, (25)

Moving in marches upon the heavenly plain; (26)

As the stars that are starry in the time of our darkness, (27)

To the end, to the end, they remain.” (28) (“For the Fallen”)

After the death, they will parade on divine grassland. The soldiers will light up the nation's way in the time of hardship and despair, symbolizing the hope. Inspired by their valour, the people will never give up no matter how hard it will be. The last line of the poem implies that the remembrance of the soldiers will last forever.

The poem is composed in the form of an elegy, which was not a popular war genre at that time. Regarding war poetry, elegies usually echo some lost battles or fallen heroes. This characteristic enables Binyon to express his grief about the departed soldiers and honour their memory. The tone transitions from calm to patriotic, encouraging the reader. The chosen format turned “For the Fallen” into one of the most well-known elegies of that period.

The poem was published only two months after the outbreak of the war⁴⁷ and was strongly opposed to contemporary war poems, which focused on encouraging young men to fight. Later, it was regarded as a voice of the lost and disillusioned generation. With each loss and each death, Binyon's work was more and more relevant. The poem does not depict the war but instead presents its outcome. Its main message is to mourn the troopers and to ensure that the nation will remember her fallen children.

4.4 "Dulce Et Decorum Est"

Owen enlisted into the war in 1915. He set out with an optimistic look, but this changed quickly. Firstly, he was shocked by the uncouth behaviour of his troops, and then two separate incidents — first he was blown into the air by a mortar and landed amongst the remains of a fellow officer, then he was trapped for several days in a German dugout —

⁴⁷ Binyon composed the poem immediately after the Battle of Mons 23.8.1914, where the British Expeditionary Force had suffered big casualties.

completely changed his viewpoint on the Great War. Owen's early poetry was heavily influenced by Romanticism, but after the mentioned events, he turned to realism. This reversal significantly altered his war poetry — by, for example, grafting wartime scenes of terror and mass destruction onto the conventions of pastoral elegy in "Anthem for a Doomed Youth" (1917).

Before composing the poem, Owen was suffering from obsessively recurring nightmares brought on by his war experience. His doctor suggested him to capture the images of his nightmares in his poetry, as a part of his therapy. Thus, the central image in this poem is that of a fellow soldier dying in a gas attack. As it was mentioned earlier, the title of the poem is a part of a line from Horace which translates as 'it is sweet and right to die for one's country'. This fact proves that Owen tended to use different allusions to bring the works of previous literary generations into conflict with the actualities of modern war. Returning to the poem, the first stanza depicts a retreat from the battlefield:

“Bent double, like old beggars under sacks, (1)
Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge, (2)
Till on the haunting flares we turned our backs, (3)
And towards our distant rest began to trudge. (4)
Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots, (5)
But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame; all blind; (6)
Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots (7)
Of gas-shells dropping softly behind.” (8) [“Dulce Et Decorum Est”]

The first pair of lines sets the picture of the poem: the soldiers, who are bent forwards and 'knock-need' are folding back through the mud. The poem's hero compares his squad with 'hags', due to their exhaustion. Something has caused their heavy coughing. The following two lines explore the scene more: the troopers are slowly moving from the dangerous flares, in search of a safe place. The flares resemble adversity of war that continuously chases them. According to military tactics, the flares usually were shot over the war zone at night, for their light helped to detect the enemy's position. Lines (5)-(7) describe the physical form of the squad: its members are numb, barefooted with bloody wrecked legs, and unable to walk properly. Despite these issues, they keep marching. The last line explains what has caused the

flares: 'Five-Nines'. Those are the 15 cm artillery shells fired from a German heavy field howitzer cannon. The closing line indicates that the squad is under bombardment. The pronouns 'we' and 'our' signals that the poem's hero, presumably Owen himself, is present at the battlefield, and like the others must hide from the shells. His presence makes the poem more personal and sincere.

The second part of the poem illustrates the gas attack:

“Gas! GAS! Quick, boys!—An ecstasy of fumbling (9)
Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time, (10)
But someone still was yelling out and stumbling (11)
And flound'ring like a man in fire or lime.— (12)
Dim through the misty panes and thick green light, (13)
As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.” (14) (“Dulce Et
Decorum Est”)

Moreover, it shifts the tone: the sleepy soldiers are now in an adrenaline rush, putting their helmets on. The following line features the squad wearing their helmets,⁴⁸ due to a warning about the gases. One might wonder why not to use the masks? In fact, these helmets were masks. It was just the official name of this device which tended to confuse — the Tube Helmet. This mask can protect from chlorine, which adds a tragedy to this poem. As a rule, it is important to wear it as quickly as you can, or you will die. However, a poor soul in (11) failed to wear a mask in time and was poisoned by the gas: now he is in agony. Owen compares the soldier, who is subjected to the toxic gas, to a person who is being burnt alive. The poem's hero watches his brother-in-arms drowning in green flares, with his lungs being filled with blood. The poet metaphorically implies that the elements of nature like 'water', 'fire', and 'lime', have risen against the vulnerable soldier. The image of the suffocating soldier resembles all the soldiers who were the victims of various venomous gases. Lines (15) and (16), “In all my dreams before my helpless sight,/He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.”, claim that the gruesome image of the army friend still haunts the speaker in his

⁴⁸ Sometimes, the soldiers would cover their noses and mouths with the water-soaked or urine-soaked rags. These preventive measures could the impact of chlorine.

dreams. The hero sees his friend tormented, but cannot do anything to help him. Owen is unable to escape from this image from the past. Such phantoms were chasing many survivors, who could not get rid of them. Some then consulted the doctors, while the others committed suicides. The two words that precisely depict the ghost chasing Owen are ‘guttering’ and ‘choking’— standard consequences of a chlorine attack. The hero might feel a guilt for still being alive, while his comrade is fading away.

To understand which gas was used on the soldiers, one might refer to the historical background. During World War One, there were four main types of poisonous gases:

a) The least deadliest was a tearing gas since it had zero effect and usually was not detected by the soldiers.

b) The most commonly used one was ‘mustard gas’, or Hun Stuff, as the British called it. It caused vomiting, internal and external bleeding, and affected the bronchi. Those who recovered from these symptoms later could die of cancer. Due to its chemical properties, the gas polluted the battlefield as it would remain active in the soil for several days. The shells containing this gas were yellow, and that is why it was called ‘mustard’. The mortality rate from this gas was 2-3%.

c) Chlorine - a gas that could damage the eyes, nose, throat, and lungs. The gas reacted with the water contained in the lungs and formed a specific acid, which could ruin the organ from within, thus leading to a sooner death. Also, it could cause asphyxiation. The soldiers marked the chlorine shells green. Approximately, chlorine killed 1,100 men.

d) Within some time, the soldiers had learnt how to protect themselves from chlorine. The effectiveness of chlorine was decreased, and the need for more effective gas appeared. The gas that overcame chlorine was colourless phosgene. It was deadlier and more toxic than its predecessor. The main effect of this gas was suffocation. Overall, the gases have killed 91,000 with phosgene being the most effective: 85% of these deaths were on its account. (Patton, 2019) So, regarding the poem, the ‘green sea’ hints that the soldiers were bombarded with chlorine.

The last stanza explicitly describes how it is eating the soldier’s body:

“If in some smothering dreams, you too could pace (17)

Behind the wagon that we flung him in, (18)

And watch the white eyes writhing in his face, (19)

His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin; (20)
If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood (21)
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs, (22)
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud (23)
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,— (24)
My friend, you would not tell with such high zest (25)
To children ardent for some desperate glory, (26)
The old Lie: *Dulce et decorum est* (27)
Pro patria mori." (28) ("Dulce Et Decorum Est")

Throughout the whole stanza, Owen is explaining the fallouts of the poisonous chemicals. The persona opens his statement by creating a hypothetical situation: he suggests the reader putting himself/herself in the situation where he/she can observe how the soldiers farewell their comrade, who is barely alive. It is only a matter of time when he will die. This is what lines (17) and (18) are about. Lines (19)-(24) demonstrate the damage caused by chlorine: rolled up eyes, shabby face skin, and the face is so damaged, that the soldier hideously looks like the devil. By this simile, the hero demonstrates that this particular soldier, like thousands of others, is sick of the evil of War. His lungs are burnt and he expectorates blood. The blood is compared to animal cud, thus emphasizing the aftermath of internal bleeding. Finally, the trooper's tongue is covered with sores. In (25), the narrator refers to someone calling him/her 'My friend'. Here, Owen intentionally addresses to Jessie Pope.⁴⁹ He criticizes her and others who used war propaganda as a tool for recruiting naive young boys. This propaganda led to the death of more than one million of English soldiers. Owen hypothesizes that if they had experienced a loss of a child caused by the chemicals, they would not have stated that it is a big privilege to die for Britain. In the last two lines, Owen uses Horace's quote in a harshly ironic way to contrast it with the description of trench warfare.

In terms of its poetic form, "Dulce Et Decorum Est" is similar to the French ballade due to the strict rhyme scheme. Owen has slightly adjusted the traditions of rhyming to focus attention on the disturbing and fierce events. Such non-traditional adjustments led to the poem's reading being similar to a common talking speed and clarity. The poem moves away

⁴⁹ See 3.3

from the visual impressions in the first and second parts ('sludge', 'haunted flares', 'the misty panes', 'thick green light',) to the sounds produced by the dying soldier's body, ('choking', 'gargling',), in the last stanza. Within each of these techniques, Owen successfully evokes the image of war and the effects of chlorine.

In the poem, the war is presented as a gruesome event where a human can senselessly waste his/her life. Throughout the poem, the hero is trying to distance himself from the abyss of war, but it seems impossible. His comrades are depicted as 'old beggars' and 'hags', despite the fact that they are young and in their prime. The poem illustrates the horror and trauma of war and deliberately depicts the terror caused by chlorine gas. The author intends to discredit the enduring myth that war is glorious by demonstrating the central symbol of "Dulce Et Decorum Est" — an agonized soldier. By doing so, he tries to change the ideology of the people who still believed that a glorious death for the fatherland is worth it.

4.5 "They" and "Suicide in the Trenches"

Sassoon came into the war with the expectations of a gentleman's war: breakfast in the morning followed by a spot of fencing, then afternoon tea, and so on — hence the reversal in his attitude was radical. This was evident in changes both in his poetry and in his behaviour, which became increasingly reckless, nearly suicidally courageous, earning him the name 'Mad Jack'. At the end of his convalescent leave,⁵⁰ the poet refused to return to duty and sent an open letter to his commanding officer condemning the war and the way it was being run. The letter was forwarded also to the press and read out in Parliament. (Simkin, 1997)

Sassoon's early war poems like "Absolution" (1915) or "The Kiss" (1916) celebrated the war effort and expressed patriotic sentiments, yet it all began to change around 1916.⁵¹ That is, as the poet became increasingly disturbed by the Great War, the tone and content of his poems changed. (Saunders, 2014) The language of his poetry became less honeyed, less lyrical, and more discordant; the everyday frontline realities of suicide and cowardice became recurring themes; the filth of the trenches and images of broken and rotting bodies were presented directly, and exploited for their shock value.

⁵⁰ He was shot by a sniper.

⁵¹ In 1915 he lost a brother, and in 1916 a close friend.

This chapter deals with two of his poems, and the first one to be analyzed is "They" (1917). The tone of its first stanza is liturgical and patronizing as it revolves around the cleric's speech about the war sacrifice:

“The Bishop tells us: 'When the boys come back (1)
'They will not be the same; for they'll have fought (2)
'In a just cause: they lead the last attack (3)
'On Anti-Christ; their comrades' blood has bought (4)
'New right to breed an honourable race, (5)
'They have challenged Death and dared him face to face.'” (6) ("They")

He speaks to the soldiers, who have gathered for an unknown reason: it can be either a sermon, funeral, requiem, as well as a regular Sunday service. In the opening lines, the Bishop states the obvious: upon their homecoming, the young soldiers would not be the same as they used to be, for the war had changed them, either physically or mentally. The bishop knows that there will not be many coming home, but still pictures the war as a righteous thing to fight for. The clergyman speaks about something he has no knowledge of. His figure represents the hypocrisy of the Church⁵², who lured a whole generation of young men into slaughter and ruined their lives. The part of line (3), ‘the last attack’, suggests that this dialogue is happening at the end of the war, yet it was still one year from the actual ending on the release of the poem. The soldiers’ enemies are compared to Antichrist, which makes the British soldiers the warriors of the light and good. Their blood, like the blood of Jesus, will lead to the salvation of the nation. The comparison to Antichrist is a biblical reference to the New Testament, where this character is mentioned by John the Evangelist for the first time: “Little children, it is the last hour: and as you have heard that Antichrist cometh, even now there are become many Antichrists: whereby we know that it is the last hour.” [2:18] The image of Antichrist symbolizes the global evil that the war has brought. The bishop uses the biblical imagery to justify the war. He is also certain that the trooper’s sacrifices will lead to a new generation — ‘an honourable race’. In reality, such race of patriotically-blinded people would bring an excessive nationalism to the country. Such situation happened in Germany, in

⁵² The religious propagandists claimed that the war was a righteous thing to participate in.

the 1930s, where a group of people, remembering a heavy defeat in WWI, came to power, militarized the whole nation, and started WWII. So, the churchman unintentionally expresses nationalistic belief in (4) and (5). The last line of the stanza again refers to Antichrist and celebrates the soldiers who courageously faced him. The Church, demonstrating its ignorance of the atrocious reality of the war, stated that only by dying a man can reach divine enlightenment⁵³. Nevertheless, the bishop admires the soldiers' valour in his propaganda.

The second part of the poem subverts the first by featuring the boys' retort to the bishop:

'We're none of us the same!' the boys reply. (7)

'For George lost both his legs; and Bill's stone blind; (8)

'Poor Jim's shot through the lungs and like to die; (9)

'And Bert's gone syphilitic: you'll not find (10)

'A chap who's served that hasn't found some change. (11)

'And the Bishop said: 'The ways of God are strange!' (12) ("They")

Their reply is sodden with anger, as they agree that they had changed, but not for the better. The soldiers support this statement with the concrete and plain facts: someone lost his limbs, another one was blinded, somebody caught a lethal disease, and someone was shot through the chest and has bare chances to survive such wound. George's legs could have been either torn off by a shell or amputated in the hospital due to the sepsis. It was the time when even a slight scratch or wound could lead to death as the medicine was not developed enough. Bill lost the eyesight because of some chemical gas. Jim got a mortal exit wound in the combat. The last one from this bunch, Bert, was contracted with the venereal disease. Since syphilis is transmitted via sex, it is logical to assume that Bert has visited a brothel. The brothel was a popular thing among the soldiers as the men had physical needs. There was even a brothel hierarchy: the ones with the blue shining were exclusively for the officers, whereas the ones with the red lights were for the lower ranks. One prostitute could have dozens of clients every day, and some soldiers hoped to catch a venereal disease to be sent to a hospital. The hospital treatment could save their lives or at least postpone their deaths for several weeks. (Makepeace, 2014)

⁵³ A concept in Christianity that refers to the revelation and complete understanding of existence.

Ironically, line (10) contradicts line (5), as, according to the bishop, these cowards will produce a new ‘honourable race’. They failed to resist the temptation, which means that they had sinned. They are not the warriors of light anymore — they are common mortal people with natural vices. The act of coitus with a prostitute deflates the church’s myth about the ideal soldiers. The soldiers claim that the seal of the war negatively affected everyone, who had gone to the front, verse (11). They call their brothers-in-arms ‘chaps’ highlighting their close relationship and estranging the comrades from the clergyman’s ‘the boys’. Each soldiers’ fellow has a name which contrasts them with the nameless idealised soldiers from the first stanza. The last line of the poem features a clichéd religious phrase, ‘The ways of God are strange!’, which once more shows the cleric’s aloofness and indifference to the soldiers’ lives. He cannot constructively respond to the soldiers’ remark and chooses this trite expression as his defence. Such statement has nothing to do with the reality of the war. Furthermore, it demonstrates how the bishop is blind to the real changes the combatants are going through. The second stanza clearly draws a line between the returning soldiers, whom the author gives a voice and associates himself with — us, and the ones that are glorified by the clergyman in his pulpit speeches — they.

In his poem, Sassoon satirically discredits the British religious system by using the figure of the bishop, a person who embodies truth, faith, and righteousness. Unfortunately, it occurs that he does not know what he is talking about, yet he tries to raise the spirit of the returned soldiers by bombastic and banal sermons. When he is faced with the evidence that war is not glorious, he simply ignores it and refuses to admit his fault in sending hundreds of soldiers to a certain death. Besides the Church, Sassoon directs his wrath against the British politicians, who assured the volunteers that they would find a glory on the battlefield. It turned out that instead of the promised glory, the only thing the warriors found was suffering. The depiction of the war fallouts sends a clear anti-war message filled with the poet’s fury and irritation.

The structure of the poem plays an important part in its understanding. Thus, in the first stanza the poet parodies and subverts the standard composition of the sermon: in several lines he uses colons and semicolons as pauses. Such punctuation makes the bishop’s speech halting, unconfident, and insincere. On the contrary, the soldiers’ reply features more natural pauses at the end of the lines demonstrating a complete meaning.

The next poem, "Suicide in the Trenches", shows a tragic fate of a common soldier who succumbed to the war pressure and shot himself dead. Despite its tragic theme, the poem opens with a peaceful stanza describing a joyful pre-war time:

“I knew a simple soldier boy (1)
Who grinned at life in empty joy, (2)
Slept soundly through the lonesome dark, (3)
And whistled early with the lark.” (4) ("Suicide in the Trenches")

The first line shows from whose perspective the poem is told: a comrade of the fallen soldier. Before the war, the soldier had the time of his life full of easiness and serenity. He did not hide his emotions and lived in harmony with nature. His routine consisted only of two things: good sleep and singing with ‘the lark’. The former foreshadows the upcoming sleepless nights in the trenches, but for now, the ‘lonesome dark’ does not disturb him. The latter shows how carefree he was. The image of the bird symbolizes the spring, i.e., the age of innocence. It was a peaceful time for the soldiers, as in a short time they were enlisted in the army. The war propaganda made them believe that the war would be an adventure that would vary their mundane lives. The beginning of the poem has a cheerful tone, which does not prepare the readers for further, much darker themes.

The second stanza marks a transition from spring to winter indicating soldier’s inner maturation. The comrade pictures a distressing situation in the trenches:

“In winter trenches, cowed and glum, (5)
With crumps and lice and lack of rum, (6)
He put a bullet through his brain. (7)
No one spoke of him again.” (8) ("Suicide in the Trenches")

The winter illustrates the severity of the war, meaning that the soldier’s youth and innocence were left at home. He was taken from his tranquil life and was thrown into unbearable conditions he was not prepared for. Instead of being careless, the soldier is gloomy and depressed now. The conditions of trenches at this time of a year were miserable: everything from clothes to food was frozen, and the frozen trench walls did not provide any warmth. The

mentioned conditions easily could cause frostbite with the following amputation. (Riddle, 2017) The ‘crumps’ resemble the shells that were dropped off on the British positions. Frequent bombardments used to demoralize the soldiers’ spirit and kept them under pressure all the time, often leading to shell-shock. The constant fear of being blown off tended to drive the soldiers crazy. ‘Lice’ indicates the poor hygienic conditions that were common for trench warfare. Besides the lice, the soldiers also suffered from rats, fever, trench foot,⁵⁴ trench mouth,⁵⁵ scabies, and influenza. The absence of the rum shows that the soldier cannot ease his fear or cheer himself up. These three factors led the soldier to the suicide as he did not see any rescue from the war claws.⁵⁶ The suicide completed his journey from innocence to moral degeneration. It turned out that he could not cope with the psychological and physical effects of the war and decided to shoot himself in the head. He considered it as the only option, and, by blowing his brains out, he freed himself from the constant pain and fear. The presence of the suicide contributes to the depressed tone of this particular stanza. Its main theme is that the soldier would rather be dead than live one more day in such poor conditions. After his death, he became a forgotten son of Britain, for no one will have spoken about a suicidal coward; his image will not have been mentioned in any propagandist speech. Similarly, his comrades would not discuss his death as they were used to such occurrences. In this stanza, Sassoon uses a cacophonous technique of the consonants to imitate the noise of warfare: ‘trenches’, ‘cowed’, ‘crumps’, ‘lack’. Analogously, he mimics the sound of a pulled trigger by using plosives in ‘put’, ‘brain’, and ‘bullet’.

The second-person point of view of the last stanza enables the poet to directly address the ‘war lovers’ back home. For the last time in the poem, the tone shifts: now, it is angry and bitter:

“You smug-faced crowds with kindling eye (9)

⁵⁴ “After long periods standing in soaking wet socks and boots, trench foot would start to set in.” (Diseases in the trenches, 2018) Treatments for this disease was changing socks every few hours. If trench foot was not treated, this could lead to amputation of the feet.

⁵⁵ An infection of the gums with sudden onset caused by unbalanced bacteria in the mouth. It causes swelling of the gums and teeth loss. This disease caused the gums to swell and sometimes caused teeth to fall out.

⁵⁶ The average suicide rate among the male combatants during the war was 15.48/100000. Taking only British troops into account, it was 10.90/100000 (Lester, 1994).

Who cheer when soldier lads march by, (10)

Sneak home and pray you'll never know (11)

The hell where youth and laughter go.” (12) ("Suicide in the Trenches")

Sassoon refers to them as ‘smug-faced’ pointing out their pseudo-patriotism, as they approved the fact of soldiers went battling. Some citizens watched with delight their future generation advancing to the Great War and did not try to dissuade them from this affair. He accuses the older generation of feeding the potential recruits a lie about a glorious war. Had they realised own blindness, they might have prevented the spread of the war propaganda. The boys themselves were unprepared for the battle, yet they still were unknowingly parading towards their fatal end. In the last two lines, the narrator furiously tells the civilians to sit quietly at home and ask the Lord to spare their families from the barbarity of the war. Here, Sassoon compares the war with hell and concludes that returned combatants will never express amusement. Having faced the terror of the war in first hand, Sassoon was fighting against the war propaganda. He tried to stop people from cheering on the war and wanted them to think about its destructive fallouts.

The poem is written in a form of a nursery rhyme to create the atmosphere of naivety and express the soldier’s youth. Such form, alongside with the dark subject matter, gives the poem a sense of irony. By using a simple language, Sassoon clearly shows how disgusting and abominable the war is. The war itself is shown through the struggles of a young soldier in the trenches: the absence of supplies, regular bombings, and anti-sanitary conditions broke his will and made him commit a suicide. By this explicit picture of self-murder, Sassoon protested against the British people who were advocating war.

5. Comparison of the analyses

The last chapter summarizes the literary analysis from the previous section and puts Tennyson’s poem against each of the Great War poems. Specifically, the comparison is

carried out from five different angles: the poems' protagonists, tone, aim, depiction of war, and attitude to war.

5.1 "The Charge of the Light Brigade" vs. "The Soldier"

The protagonist in Tennyson's ballad is hardly identifiable due to his anonymity: it can be either a participant of the charge or a person who watches the ambush from the British camp. There is even an opinion that the speaker is Tennyson himself, but this hypothesis crumbles under the question *If it is really Tennyson, how does he know so many details about the attack?* Nevertheless, a certain hint may help to determine whether he is a horseman or a common viewer. Throughout the poem, the hero uses the pronouns *they* referring to the horsemen. Had he been a part of them, he would have used *we* to emphasize that he rode with them too. The exact same situation happens with *theirs* instead of *ours*. He chooses the former to distance himself from the battlefield and celebrate the actions of his fellows. The protagonist tells about the attack with excitement and proudness. The assumption that he is only a spectator creates certain background about his position in the army — a soldier, for it is impossible that non-army people, except war correspondents, were allowed to the battlefield. If he is not in light cavalry, then he is a part of the infantry unit. The fact that he is a soldier means that he is properly trained. Considering the time of the Balaclava battle, where the charge occurred, it may be assumed that is not his first battle, for he could have fought in the Battle of Alma a month before. On the contrary, the poetical persona in "The Soldier" has not fought yet and only hypothesizes about dying in combat. He may be one of those Kitchener's recruits mentioned in the theoretical section. He has no imagination of how war looks but believes in the propagandistic assertion that death for your country is a noble thing. In terms of reliability of narration and war experience, the soldier's subjectivity from "The Charge of the Light Brigade" is more convincing.

The poems are not similar in terms of tone either. The tone of "The Charge of the Light Brigade" is valorous thanks to the rhythm. The latter, echoing gallop of the horses, cannot set any other tone but vigorous one. The lines like "Forward, the Light Brigade", "Boldly they rode and well", "They that had fought so well", and "O the wild charge they made", prove that the tone is indeed heroic, for it underlines the courage and bravery of the cavalry — despite all the odds, the soldiers accomplished their task. At the same time, in the second part of the poem, the notes of sadness occur: "Then they rode back, but not / Not the six hundred",

“All that was left of them, / Left of six hundred”. Brooke’s poem conveys a tone of patriotically romantic melancholy, for its speaker is ready to meet with death and sees it as a noble sacrifice: “That is for ever England”. This melancholy is featured through the whole poem and lies in the soldier’s discourse on death and hereafter. Adoring his country so much, he identifies many items with it, outlining his patriotic feelings: “A dust whom England bore...”, “A body of England’s, breathing English air”. He presumes that the afterlife will look like his home country: “Her [England] sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day; / And laughter, learnt of friends; and gentleness, / In hearts at peace, under an English heaven”. The different tones of the poems suggest that they have different aims.

The aim of "The Soldier" is to demonstrate a connection between the trooper and England. This poem had to encourage young men to enlist into the army, and that is why it promoted the idea that dying for the homeland is a heroic deed. Considering the fact that the number of volunteers exceeded the expectations at the beginning of the campaign, one might say that the poem achieved its aim. On the contrary, "The Charge of the Light Brigade" did not appeal for military recruitment. Its primary objective was to demonstrate and honour the boldness of English cavalry through a distinct description of its ambush during the battle. The subsidiary objective was to state that a true soldier will always execute the order, no matter how ridiculous it is. Both of these objectives were successfully met. All in all, both poems reached their goals.

The actual war is shown only in Tennyson’s work. While reading it, one can imagine a full picture of the battle: fired cannonballs, a cavalry unit with sabres crashing enemy’s lines, horses galloping everywhere — pure war mayhem. He refers to the battle as ‘the valley of Death’, ‘the jaws of Death’, and ‘the mouth of Hell’. These three collocations are applicable for the Crimean War, especially the capitalized words *Death* and *Hell*. Any other outcome of any war can be characterized by these two words. Unfortunately, such detailed picture of war is absent in Brooke’s poem because it does not even mention the war itself. It features only the soldier’s thoughts about his potential death during the war. Such absence supports the aforementioned statement that the soldier is, in fact, inexperienced and has never stepped on a battlefield. The omission of the war may be justified, in a way, by the fact that Brooke died before taking part in an actual battle. Thus, he had no idea about real warfare, still believing that war, particularly for the homeland, is a good place to die. Therefore, it can be stated that

it is impossible to compare the two poems in terms of war depiction as one of them does not feature it.

Both poems glorify war, yet in different ways. Tennyson aesthetically depicts horsemen's suicidal mission. Through the lines of his poem, he shows his patriotic attitude, and it may seem that he supports his country in the conflict. Despite feeling sorry for the fallen cavalymen, his protagonist believes that it is a real man's thing to die while carrying out an order. He puts a dutiful soldiering above the soldiers' lives. The poem is sometimes accused of being propagandistic because of this. Similarly to Tennyson, Brooke added patriotic notes into his poem. His soldier considers himself an English offspring and embraces death. This embracement must be caused by war propaganda: the soldier speculates about the war, having not experienced it yet, that it is a prestige to die for the name of England, somewhere far away from home. The poem is often criticised for nationalistic sentiments and excessive nationhood. To sum it up, both poems are blamed for being pro-war.

Summarizing all the points above, a clear idea of the poems' similarities and differences emerges. The protagonist in each work is a soldier, even though Tennyson's one is more experienced, the tones are distinct, the aims differ, the war is shown only in "The Charge of the Light Brigade", and the attitudes towards war are similar.

5.2 "The Charge of the Light Brigade" vs. "For the Fallen"

Unlike the protagonists in the previous two poems, the one in "For the Fallen" is not a soldier. He/she is an English citizen who promises to memorialize the fallen troopers. This person knows nothing about the war but hopes that no matter how hard it will be, the army will hold to the last. He/she 'continues' Brooke's idea of dying far away from England: "England mourns for her dead across the sea". The speaker slightly is still under the impression of the propagandistic notion of 'noble death' as he/she presumes that British soldiers will die courageously facing the enemy. At this point, his/her presumption echoes the one of Tennyson's narrator, for his soldier believes that the horsemen will die with dignity facing the foes during their command. While the soldier in "The Charge of the Light Brigade" passionately calls to remember and respect the cavalry: "Honour the charge they made! / Honour the Light Brigade, / Noble six hundred!", the citizen in "For the Fallen" claims to remember the dead more neutrally: "At the going down of the sun and in the morning / We will remember them". Although the protagonists are completely different in terms of their

relation to war, their common goal is to make sure that the nation will not forget its warriors. Last but not least, Binyon's protagonist is sure that this memory will inspire the country to stand tall during dark times.

As it was mentioned in the previous chapter, the tone of "For the fallen" is calm and patriotic. The latter is similar to the tone of Tennyson's work. The only difference is that Tennyson uses exclamation marks in half of the stanzas: "Forward, the Light Brigade!", "O the wild charge they made!", and "Noble six hundred!", whereas Binyon avoids the usage of this particular punctuation mark. Instead, he uses semicolons: "They mingle not with their laughing comrades again; / They sit no more at familiar tables of home;" or "Moving in marches upon the heavenly plain;". The absence of exclamation points sets a calm tone in Binyon's work. Such feature may be explained by the fact, that "For the fallen" is an elegy and exclamations usually does not belong here. Specific lines like "They sleep beyond England's foam" or "To the innermost heart of their own land they are known / As the stars are known to the Night" confirm that the poem features a patriotic tone. If in "The Charge of the Light Brigade" tone remains valorous from the beginning to the end, in "For the Fallen" it shifts, in some stanzas, from calm to sorrowful and from sorrowful to patriotic.

One of Binyon's aims is to assure the fallen soldiers that Englishmen will remember them forever. Another one is to show how the war deprives the young men of the future. Presumably, the poet intended to prevent parents from sending their children on the front by stating that they would not come back. Consequently, each of these aims was completed, for it was one of the first poems that stood against the pro-war poems and slowed down the euphoria of recruitment. Contrasting the aim of "For the Fallen" with the ones in "The Charge of the Light Brigade", it is clear that Binyon is slowly moving away from the influence of war propaganda as his work does not imply that it is a privilege to die in the battle. Finally, his poem had a more important effect on the society than Tennyson's one upon its publication.

In terms of war depiction, Tennyson's work wins again since Binyon's poem lacks a striking illustration of warfare. The latter can offer only two examples slightly connected to the war. First one is a pre-war picture of soldiers leaving for the front "They went with songs to the battle, they were young, / Straight of limb, true of eye, steady and aglow". The second example, featured in the same stanza, illustrates the speaker's assumption about a combat "They were staunch to the end against odds uncounted; / They fell with their faces to the

foe". Unluckily, the protagonist cannot support his/her assumption with the portrayal of a real battle. These examples are not as powerful as Tennyson's personification of war as the Grim Reaper or inferno. However, it is a little bit unfair to compare poems from this angle, specifically when one of them does not even have one.

Since the attitude of "The Charge" to war has already been explained several times, there is no need to repeat it. On the contrary, the position of "For the Fallen" in this field is unknown. One thing for sure is that the poem does not glorify the war nor criticizes it. The poem simply depicts sorrow towards the dead soldiers and reveals a hope that their deaths will encourage the nation to overcome any obstacles. Nevertheless, this poem unintentionally awoke England from a dream about a dignified war. In conclusion, "The Charge of the Light Brigade" expresses its view on the war more directly and clearly than "For the Fallen".

To sum up the comparison shortly, the protagonists in both works are distinct: the soldier and the citizen; patriotic tone draws the poems together; aims of the works do differ; war is not depicted in Binyon's poem; the attitudes towards the war also diverge.

5.3 "The Charge of the Light Brigade" vs. "Dulce et Decorum est"

The protagonist in "Dulce et Decorum est" is again a soldier, only this time he actively participates in the battle. He does not attack the enemy, like Tennyson's riders, but pulls back. His retreatment is caused by the gas attack: it is modern warfare now, and instead of cannonballs, the enemy fires gas shells. During the retreatment, the soldier has to load a maimed body of his brother-in-arms into a wagon. The following actions distinguish him from the soldier who only observed the cavalry's ride. The major difference between these warriors is their message to the readers: if Owen's hero desires to bust a myth about patriotic sacrifice, Tennyson's hero states that obedient service to your superior should be admired.

The intention of the former sets a critical tone in the poem, yet this applies only to the third stanza. Its part, which best expresses this tone, is composed of eight lines:

"If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,—
My friend, you would not tell with such high zest

To children ardent for some desperate glory,
The old Lie: *Dulce et decorum est*
Pro patria mori.”

The last four lines stand in opposition to Tennyson’s call for commendation: “Honour the charge the charge they made! / Honour the Light Brigade, / Noble six hundred!” Regarding the tone of the second stanza, Owen uses the atmosphere of fear to make it sound distressed: “As under a green sea, I saw him drowning. / In all my dreams, before my helpless sight, / He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.” The current tone is not featured in "The Charge of the Light Brigade". Finally, the tone of the first stanza is depressing, for it depicts a demoralized group of soldiers: “Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots / But limped on, blood-shod. / All went lame; all blind; Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots.” This tone can be compared to the notes of sorrow in Tennyson’s poem. So, it is obvious that "Dulce et Decorum est" is richer in tone shifts than "The Charge of the Light Brigade" as the latter rarely adds diverse notes to the valorous tone.

As to the aim, Owen’s work sets two tasks: to show the horror of war and contradict the idea of the old lie that it is sweet and fitting to die for one’s country. Through the gruesome picture of a soldier succumbing to the wounds caused by chlorine, the poem successfully completes the first one. The portrayal of discouraged and ragged troops fulfils the second goal of the poem. Through its lines, Owen rose against the authors whose poems were praising the war. "Dulce et Decorum est" was seen as a needed alternative for the pro-war poems like "Wake Up, England" (1914) by Robert Bridges, or "For All We Have and Are" (1914) by Rudyard Kipling. It was one of the poems that opened the Briton’s eyes to the abyss of the war. Nowadays, it is often compared with "The Charge of the Light Brigade" in terms of patriotism and duty. If in the nineteenth century it was a common thing to celebrate a dutiful soldiering, after the Great War the rational question *Why the soldiers should fight for the questionable ideals?* occurred. The public opinion that prevailed at that time, and is still valid today, was that troops should participate in any war or conflict only if it directly threatens the country’s sovereignty. Concluding this chapter, it is fair to say that both poems achieved their aims, even if they are completely opposed.

"Dulce et Decorum est" depicts the war/battle in every part except the last one because it focuses on the aftermath. The first stanza illustrates gas shells being fired ‘...outstripped

Five-Nines that dropped behind', while the next describes a gas attack 'Gas!Gas!Quick, boys...'. Instead of a direct confrontation, like in "The Charge of the Light Brigade", Owen depicts a modern combat: the enemy is no more bombarding the troops with cannonballs, for it is firing gas shells now, a mark of a new era. Have a man failed to protect himself he will perish in agony. The previous statement does not mean that shootouts or hand-to-hand combats did not happen at WWI. It just stays that it was a new century and modern ways of warfare emerged. The face-to-face combat in Tennyson is portrayed via numerous verses like 'Sab'ring the gunners there / Charging an army...', 'Plunged in the battery smoke' / Right thro' the line they broke; / Cossack and Russian / Reeled from the sabre stroke / Shattered and sundered', 'Volleyed and thundered; Stormed at with shot and shell'. 'Volleyed and thundered' is comparable with 'Bent double', 'Knock-kneed', and the rest of the description of the dispirited troops, in a way that these both descriptions portray a battle. The only difference is that the riders are still fighting, whereas the soldiers are experiencing combat fatigue. The cavalry rode to the battlefield with enthusiasm, whereas infantry left the battleground lumbering: the main distinction between the words *rode* and *trudge*. The troops with shabby clothes vary from the cavalymen who are galloping in their gleaming uniforms waving shining sabres. Despite the fact that Tennyson does not mention the outfit, it is still obvious that neither dragoons nor hussars would ride in rumpled uniforms. Another difference between the poems that, on the contrary from Owen, Tennyson explained what weapons the troops used — sabres. Apparently, the soldiers in "Dulce" used rifles, daggers, grenades, and pistols — the basic inventory. Unlike Owen, Tennyson did not depict the cavalymen as old beggars: it is implied that they are in their prime. The officers giving the orders are present in both works. The superior in "The Charge of the Light Brigade" leads his unit into the battle, while the officer in "Dulce et Decorum est" signalizes for gas masks. The former leads his unit to certain death, whereas the latter tries to protect the remains of his group. According to their actions, one may assume that Owen's superior cares more about his people than Tennyson's officer. Summarizing all the aforementioned points, it can be stated that both poets wanted to portray the battle but from different perspectives: thus, Tennyson wished to depict a glorious episode from the combat, whereas Owen chose to portray horrible fallouts of the encounter. Both of them managed to transfer the atmosphere of the battles through powerful imagery. In terms of war depiction, Owen's is more touching.

As it has been already explained, Tennyson glorified the Crimean War in his poem. As for Owen, he criticized the war alongside with the propagandistic dogma that it is an honour to die for one's homeland. For the discredit of this dogma, he used a painful picture of an agonizing soldier. Through the depiction of his pain, the poet hypothesized that if the government or parents had witnessed such scene, they would not have insisted that it is soldier's duty to die for his country.

On the whole, the poems are distinguishable. Tennyson's persona watches the combat, while Owen's takes an active part. The heroic tone in "The Charge" differs from each of the three tones in "Dulce": depressing, distressed, and critical. The aims, even though being achieved, are different too. The war portrayals vary in a way that one poem describes the battle, whereas the other focuses on its fallouts. Lastly, the poets vary in their views regarding the topic of war.

5.4 "The Charge of the Light Brigade" vs. "They"

The protagonists in Sassoon's poem are young soldiers who returned home. It is clear that they fought on the battlefields of the First World War, yet there is no information about their warfare experience. Unfortunately, the lads tell about other 'experiences': blindness, venereal disease, and invalidity. Possibly, the same outcome waited for the survivors of the Light Brigade's attack as they were bombarded with cannonballs, had a sabre fight, and later, some could have been crippled by falling/galloping horses. The not obvious difference between these two groups may lie in the idea that they share different opinions towards war. The cavalrymen are still enthusiastic to complete a suicidal mission, whereas the returned soldiers possess a certain level of cynicism regarding this subject. They have seen the atrocities of the trench warfare, and if there was some romantic spirit in them, it has gone. As in the previous chapter, the poetic personas are experienced soldiers. Only this time, there is a group of them.

Like in the case with "Dulce et Decorum est", the tone shifts in "They". In the beginning, it is patronizing as it correlates with the bishop's speech: "In a just cause: they lead the last attack / 'On Anti-Christ; their comrades' blood has bought / 'New right to breed an honourable race,'" . Later, it changes to angrily skeptical, for the boys responding to his statements: "... you'll not find / A chap who's served that hasn't found *some* change". They are angry with the bishop's refusal to accept the true facts about the war. There are no analogies to these tones in Tennyson's work: where he praises the war, the young men denounce it. In the

matter of tone, "They" predominates over "The Charge of the Light Brigade" because it is richer in this aspect.

Sassoon aimed to vilify England's institutions like church as well as a political hierarchy. This intention explains why the figure of the bishop plays a wicked role in the poem. The figure of cleric usually embodies support, friendship, and sanctuary, but the author makes it untrustworthy. The poet knew that such bishops propagandized the war all over the country, making young men eager to enlist themselves into the army. In contrast, Tennyson's poem could have attracted many juveniles to join the army ranks. It is believed that Sassoon completed his aim, for his poem shook the authority of both the Church and the politicians in the public eye. As the result, society's level of trust declined. It is obvious that the aims of the poems once again distinguish.

Similarly to his friend, Owen, Sassoon concentrates on the aftermath of a battle. But this time a much longer period has passed: the boys have returned home. Referring to what was mentioned earlier, each of them 'experienced' the war on their own skin and now they have to live with these consequences. Nevertheless, war is not directly featured in this poem. If the enemies of the cavalry were cannons, cossacks, and the Russians, the hostile of the young soldiers is no one else as the bishop himself. Obviously, they cannot fight with him using weapons, but they can do it by using words. In the case of "They" the battle is coming down between the bishop's blindness and stubbornness from the one side, and the boys' sincerity from another. Such invisible battles, behind the clothed doors, between soldiers and the officials, were happening during and after WWI. The combatants wanted to tell the truth, but the officials refused to listen or just did not want to. Even though Sassoon does not illustrate the warfare, he describes not less important issue of that period. The battle the boys fought could have saved the lives of thousands. To come to the point, Tennyson portrayed the battle in a positive light, whereas Sassoon showed the consequences of the war through a dialogue between the clergyman and the returned soldiers.

The poems feature polarizing attitudes towards war. To be more specific, "They" concentrates more on the ones who were supporting the war. Either way, the poem shows its position regarding the Great War through its content: this conflict cripples, literally and figuratively speaking, young generations. Moreover, the government should prevent recruits from servicing in all kinds of questionable armed conflicts or at least believe them, when they are talking about war horrors. This point of view does not equate with the beliefs expressed in

"The Charge of the Light Brigade" — a true soldier never questions the order and carries it out even under the risk of death, and these courageous men should be respected.

In summation, the poems are close only in one of the five angles — the protagonists are soldiers in both cases, regardless that in "Soldier" there is a whole unit of them. Sassoon's poem is more variable in terms of tone than Tennyson's. The aims of the works are different, yet they are completed. Tennyson depicts the actual battle, whereas Sassoon concentrates on the equally important confrontations between the authorities and the soldiers. Ultimately, the poems are dissimilar in their views on war.

5.5 "The Charge of the Light Brigade" vs. "Suicide in the Trenches"

From first sight, it is unclear who Sassoon's protagonist is: a soldier or simply a friend of the self-killer. The detailed depiction of the trenches suggests that he is indeed a soldier who witnessed a suicide of his fellow. Assuming that his monologue is happening after the war, one may consider him an experienced soldier. In such case, the soldier reminds the figure of Tennyson's hero, yet again neither of them took part in any clash throughout the poems. Still, Sassoon implies that the soldier occasionally fought as he lived in the trenches near the war zone.

The tone in Sassoon's poem is not heroic like in Tennyson's work. Firstly, it transitions from lighthearted ('empty joy', 'whistled early with the lark') to depressing ('He put a bullet through his brain'). Then, it switches from depressing to angry ('You smug-faced crowds with kindling eye'). None of these tones carries patriotic notes like the tone of "The Charge of the Light Brigade". The only common feature the poems share, in terms of tone, is the signs of sorrow for the fallen: the cavalymen and the suicidal soldier, correspondingly.

Identically to the previous poems, the aim of "Suicide" differs from the one of "The Charge". While Tennyson respects the cavalry's sacrifice and wants others to do the same, Sassoon shames the supporters of the war and angrily tells them to beg the lord for mercy and spare their families from the abyss of war. Despite raising a taboo subject, the soldier's suicide, the poem achieved its goal — the English society reconsidered its view on WWI. As there is no need to remind about the complementation of its own aims by Tennyson's poem, this paragraph will be concluded with the remark that the works of both poets achieved their objectives.

Sassoon portrays the war differently from Tennyson. While the latter focuses on the vivid illustration of the cavalry's attack, the former demonstrates the conditions of the trenches from which the soldiers fought: "In winter trenches, cowed and glum, / With crumps and lice and lack of rum,". In such conditions, it was hard to maintain a fighting spirit, not mentioning mental issues, but since there is no any information about the conditions of the British camp in Balaclava, it cannot be said with strong confidence that the fighting conditions were worse during the Great War. The next difference lies in the killing aspect: in Tennyson, the riders are being killed by the enemy, but in Sassoon, the soldier kills himself. Such contrast may be explained by the fact that it was harder to maintain sane during mechanized combat. The exact line from "The Suicide in the Trenches", which explicitly refers to the war itself, is the last one: "The hell where youth and laughter go". Sassoon saw the war as the place where naivety, innocence, and carelessness vanish. In the matter of the depiction of war, both poets agreed on the presumption that war is, in fact, *hell*.

Considering the previous paragraph, it is safe to say that Sassoon's poem has a negative attitude towards the war, for it views her as the incarnation of an inferno. This approach does not agree with Tennyson's idea of the dutiful sacrifice, making the attitudes of the poems quite divergent.

To recap the main points, the poems share particular similarities in the fields of poetic personas and depiction of war. Their protagonists are both experienced soldiers, and the poems believe that war is hell. Conversely, the poems vary in tone, aims, and attitudes to the conflicts.

This current chapter ends with a table which helps to remember all the similarities and differences between "The Charge of the Light Brigade" and the First World War poems.

Poems/subjects of comparison	Protagonist	Tone(s)	Aim(s)	Direct depiction of war	Attitude towards war
"The Charge of the Light Brigade"	Soldier	Valorous	To honour the courage of English cavalry	The extensive picture of the attack (cannons, sabres, etc.)	Positive (war is perfect place for a glorious

“The Soldier”	Soldier (recruit)	Patriotic	To demonstrate a close relationship between the trooper and England	_____	Positive (war is a good place to die for England)
“For the Fallen”	Citizen	Calm; Patriotic;	To make sure the fallen soldiers will be remembered forever	_____	Neutral/negative (war may kill you and rob of the future)
“Dulce et Decorum est”	Soldier (experienced)	Depressing; Distressed; Critical;	To show the horror of war and contradict the old lie	Gas attack	Negative (war=pain)
“They”	A group of soldiers (on furlough/veterans)	Patronizing; Skeptical;	To discredit the Church and throw the light on the realities of the war	_____	Negative (war ruins your life)
“Suicide in the Trenches”	Soldier	Lighthearted; Depressing; Angry;	To shame the war-lovers and explain that the war may drive you crazy	The hell where youth and laughter go	Negative (war=hell)

6. Conclusion

This thesis tried to shed some light on selected examples of English war poetry. The theoretical part not only informed about the role of England in two different wars but also gave a better understanding about the ideas and circumstances under which the selected poems were written. The practical part focused on the evolution of a war poem from the nineteenth to the twentieth century — a brief summary will illustrate this transformation.

"The Charge of the Light Brigade" started the renaissance of the English war poetry. Being a product of his time and never battling, Tennyson sincerely believed that honourable death in the combat is a noble thing. During the Victorian era, many would agree with his assumption.

"The Soldier" supported Tennyson's idea about a dutiful death. The poem even put it on the next level — a patriotic sacrifice. Since it was the beginning of WWI, this notion was well praised by the Britons. The poem was used as a propagandistic tool.

The public attitude towards the Great War started changing after the publication of "Dulce et Decorum est". This work opened the people's eyes to the true horrors of war as nobody knew that gases were massively used on the battlefields, for everybody still believed that soldiers were simply shooting each other. The image of the soldier wanting to vomit his inner organs shocked the society, and it had to reconsider its principles regarding the war.

"They" continued Owen's idea about the depiction of the war realities. Sassoon decided to illustrate the fallout of the war, for he experienced all the 'beauty' of war on his own skin.⁵⁷ He wanted to show its true face, and that is why the heroes of this poem mention their impaired brothers-in-arms. Besides this desire, Sassoon wanted to expose the higher institutions who were luring the young lads to the army ranks. The poet understood that the recruits were going to face things they had no correct awareness about, and that is why in "Suicide in the Trenches" the soldier shot himself. He had encountered the things which were beyond his beliefs and outlook.

Finally, "For the Fallen" serves a logical all the mentioned poems, despite being published a couple of years before: the soldiers will die, and our task as the nation is to remember them and be guided by their example at the times of misery.

⁵⁷ Sassoon used to fight and live in the trenches for quite a long time.

The summary helps to answer the two questions from the introduction.⁵⁸ The response to the first one is following: if in the 1850s war was depicted as something worth to nobly die for, in the 1910s it became a place to which no one sane would go to, especially when he/she does not fully comprehend its necessity. The factors that contributed to such changes are rationality and progress. Thanks to the poems of Owen and Sassoon people started asking logical questions like ‘What is the point of war?’, ‘Why should we participate in it if there is no any attempt from the enemy’s side to occupy our territory?’, or ‘Who might benefit from this conflict?’ These issues still apply to global conflicts today. With the progress, the core of warfare has changed — the cannons changed into tanks, sabres into bayonets, muskets into rifles. The air force appeared, the navy began to install modern technology, revolutionary experimental chemical weapons were used. The world shattered from modern warfare in the middle of the second decade of the last century as it was not ready for all of this.

Nowadays, the English war poetry is still alive due to the efforts of John Jeffcock, a former Coldstream Guard.⁵⁹ He offered to write about the war anyone who was impacted by it, from veterans to soldiers’ children. These people spoke about their ‘encounters’ with different wars. Their works were gathered in the poetry anthology *Heroes: 100 Poems from the New Generation of War Poets* (2011).⁶⁰

⁵⁸ “How the war depiction in English war poetry has changed, concerning these poems? And if it has, in what way and under which circumstances?”

⁵⁹ A unit of the British infantry.

⁶⁰ Foreword of the book.

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