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Master's 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 that 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 Victorian poetry and the Crimean conflict	8
1.3 The Edwardians and WWI	12
1.4 Modernist poetry and the Great War	14
1.5 First World War poetry	16
2. The historical and social contexts of the poems	17
2.1 The Crimean War	17
2.2 The role of the British Empire in the Crimean War	17
2.3 Public and artists' reactions to the Crimean War	18
2.4 WWI	19
2.5 The role of the British Empire in WWI	19
2.6 Public and artists' reactions to the WWI	20
3. Attitudes and criticism of the poems	22
3.1 "The Charge of the Light Brigade"	22
3.2 "For the Fallen"	23
3.3 "Dulce et Decorum est"	24
3.4 "The Soldier"	24
3.5 "They" and "Suicide in the Trenches"	25

II. Practical part	27
4. Literary analysis of the poems	27
4.1 "The Charge of the Light Brigade"	27
4.2 "The Soldier"	33
4.3 "For the Fallen"	37
4.4 "Dulce Et Decorum Est"	40
4.5 "They" and "Suicide in the Trenches"	45
5. Comparison of the analyses	52
5.1 "The Charge of the Light Brigade" vs. "The Soldier"	52
5.2 "The Charge of the Light Brigade" vs. "For the Fallen"	54
5.3 "The Charge of the Light Brigade" vs. " Dulce et Decorum est"	56
5.4 "The Charge of the Light Brigade" vs. " They"	59
5.5 "The Charge of the Light Brigade" vs. " Suicide in the Trenches"	61
5.6 Summary of the comparisons.....	62
Conclusion	65
Bibliography	67

Introduction

Throughout the history of humankind, numerous occasions of war have happened. War has thus become an inseparable part of human experience. Even now, we have several ongoing wars in different parts of the world, like the Syrian Civil War or the War in Afghanistan. The reasons and circumstances of these conflicts 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).

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 paper looks both at it and the Crimean War and analyzes their reflection in English war poetry. To be more specific, this paper interprets one war poem from the Victorian period and five from the Great War. The following poems have been selected for analysis: Alfred Tennyson's "The Charge of the Light Brigade" (1854), "For the Fallen" (1914) by Laurence Binyon, Rupert Brooke's "The Soldier" (1914), two poems of Siegfried Sassoon, "They" (1917) and "Suicide in the Trenches" (1918), and, finally, "Dulce et Decorum Est" (1920) by Wilfred Owen.

The reason for choosing this particular topic was the fact that my bachelor thesis was related to the Vietnam War, and I would like to familiarise myself with the wars that happened before. In addition, I wanted to spot any differences or similarities between these three conflicts. There were no specific criteria for selecting these poems as I chose them from the long list of war poems. My main interest was to understand why the authors reacted to these wars in the way they did and what messages they were trying to pass.

This thesis aims to analyze and compare the mentioned war poems and answer the following two questions "How the depiction of war 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 critics' and other writers' attitudes towards them and, finally, it demonstrates other literary works 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’ is hard to define. Initially, it referred to anyone who took part in combat during any war conflict. The combatants would describe the aspects of war and share their personal beliefs about it. Later, non-combatants and civilian poets started to write about war, making the term applicable to any of these groups. Nowadays, anybody who writes poems about war publicly may be considered a war poet (Featherstone 1). The roots of this genre in British history go to the Old English poem, "The Battle of Maldon", that described the events of the eponymous battle of 991. It was a clash between the Anglo-Saxons and the Vikings, won by the invaders. The poem is known for its striking depiction of battle episodes and warriors’ obedience to the commander. In 1911, G. K. Chesterton again referred to Anglo-Saxon and Viking conflict. This time the poem concentrated on the Battle of Edington in 878, won by the domestic side (Ahlquist).

English war poetry practically remained silent until the middle of the nineteenth century. It is believed that the first signs of English written war poetry occurred during the Crimean War (1853-1856) due to the work of Alfred Tennyson "The Charge of the Light Brigade" (1854). This immortal ballad of courage started a new era of the genre, for war poetry has become a prominent feature of English literature since then. Tennyson’s poem "Maud" (1854) also mentions the war, yet this fact is still debatable¹ (Adams 405).

The poets who continued Tennyson’s legacy were Rudyard Kipling, Thomas Hardy, and Algernon Swinburne. They all depicted the events of the Second Boer War.² The first two even addressed WWI in their later poems. The Great War was the time when English war poetry achieved its climax and made this genre a valuable part of English literature. The poets like Siegfried Sassoon, Wilfred Owen, Rupert Brooke, Robert Graves, and others showed how the war looked in reality. In their poems, the soldiers portrayed despair, disillusionment, hopes, and fears (Llewellyn and Thompson).

¹ Some critics assumed that the hero indeed intended to go to the war, while the others rejected this idea (Adams 404-405).

² A conflict between the British Empire and South African Republic and its ally the Orange Free State (1899-1902) ("The Battle of Maldon").

The response to the Second War World was not the same as it was to WWI. The notion ‘war poet’ was well established at that time, and everybody was expecting some new Brooke or Sassoon to emerge. The WWI poets were the idols for the WWII young soldiers, who lacked the confidence to write, for they were uncertain about the effect their poems could have. They believed that their works could not have the same impact on the public as the ones of WWI. Keith Douglas even paid homage to Rosenberg by claiming: “Rosenberg I only repeat what you were saying” (qtd. in Gehrz). The perfect explanation of this situation came from WWI veteran Robert Graves. He stated that while his generation attempted to show the fiendish reality of the war to the ignorant people, the generation of WWII poets did not have such necessity as everybody perfectly understood the nature of the war (Gehrz).

Today, English war poetry is still alive due to the efforts of John Jeffcock, a former Coldstream Guard.³ He offered anyone who was affected by war, from veterans to soldiers’ children, to share with their experience. These people wrote about their ‘encounters’ with any of the contemporary wars, and the best works were gathered in the anthology *Heroes: 100 Poems from the New Generation of War Poets* (2011) (Field).

It is usually hard to fully understand poems without any information about the historical or social context during which they were composed. Having a little awareness of these contexts will help to realise why the ideas of the poems were as they were and what impact they had in the end. That is the reason why the thesis concentrates on two time periods: the Victorian era (1837-1901) and the first two decades of the twentieth century. The rest of the chapter focuses on the literary context of the poems.

1.2 Victorian poetry and the Crimean conflict

The Victorian period began right after the Romanticism movement, lasted for more than sixty years, and was followed by the Edwardian era. At the start, Victorian poetry was influenced by the previous movement, making the themes of love, harmony, and sentimentality still relevant. Nevertheless, the Victorians managed to address other issues and came up with new motifs. The three main themes of this period were established: a conflict between religion and science, medieval fables, and legends. Within the time, the poets also addressed the issue of child labour (“Victorian Era Poetry Characteristics & Salient Features”).

³ An infantry unit of the British army (“Who We Are: the Coldstream Guards”).

Sibaprasad Dutta divides the Victorian poets into two groups: the High Victorian Poetry and the Pre-Raphaelites. The first group included Alfred, Lord Tennyson, Robert Browning, his wife Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Matthew Arnold and Gerard Manley Hopkins. The members of the second group were Dante Gabriel Rossetti, William Morris and Algernon Charles Swinburne. Generally, Pre-Raphaelites focused on realistic details and vividness of the poems (2003). To be more specific, this group concentrated on themes like: “eroticized medievalism and pictorial techniques [...] sensuous description, subjective psychological states, elaborate personification, and complex poetic forms” (Garofalo). The High Victorians, in turn, would write their poems in a formal language, and Tennyson, Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Arnold would question God’s existence (Sanchis).

Additionally, some poets used to react to social or political changes in Britain or the world. For example, Barrett 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 (Avery). Her ‘successor’ Christina Rossetti was against slavery, too. Her "Goblin Market" (1859) was interpreted as a social commentary on Victorian gender roles. The poem raised questions about virginity, female seduction and erotic desire (Kent).

Hardy did not write about the Crimean War yet arguably contributed to English war poetry more than Tennyson. In all, he wrote poems about three different wars. Hardy composed his first war poem, "Drummer Hodge" (1899), after the outbreak of the Second Boer War (1899-1903). This work inspired Brooke to write his "The Soldier" (Williams). The central image of the poem is the burial of the English drummer on a South African hill. The procedure takes place without a coffin: the boy is ‘thrown’ into the grave, which will become a ‘landmark’ of this area as his bones will mix with this foreign land. Hodge has died too young, having no time to get to know real life (Tearle). The next war work was the epic poetic drama *The Dynasts* (1904-1908) about the Napoleonic wars (1803-1815). The drama portrays real historical events of that time, like the Battle of Austerlitz in 1805 or the Battle of Waterloo in 1815. The characters include real historical persons as well as fictionalized ones (Hynes 225). The third conflict to which the poet responded was the First World War, but the poems about it will be discussed in section 1.5.

Another big name that is associated with English war poetry is Rudyard Kipling, who responded to three wars likewise. However, instead of the Napoleonic Wars he wrote about the Crimean War (1853-1856). His direct response to Tennyson's "The Charge of the Light Brigade" (1854) was "The Last of the Light Brigade" (1890). It features an imaginary visit from the cavalry's twenty survivors to Tennyson's house. The time has been merciless on them, for they are barely surviving by working and living in the workhouse. Such conditions forced them to beg, but people gave them only twenty-four pounds. The veterans ask the poet to write a continuation to "The Charge" and to tell Britain that they are starving now. Feeling a sincere sympathy for them, Tennyson writes it, and the continuation reaches its aim: the cavalymen receive a solid cheque.⁴ The last lines of the poem mock the Englishmen who teach their kids to honour the Light Brigade, but in reality, do not care about the veterans at all:

O thirty million English that babble of England's might,
Behold there are twenty heroes who lack their food to-night;
Our children's children are lisping to "honour the charge they made - "
And we leave to the streets and the workhouse the charge of the Light Brigade!
(37-40)

This poem, along with others about the late-Victorian British Army, was included in *Barrack-Room Ballads* (1892) (Stewart). His attitude towards the First World War is mentioned in section 1.5, too.

Besides Kipling and Tennyson, the most notable poets who reacted to the Crimean War 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" (503). Together with Franklin Lushington, Sydney Dobell, Gerald Massey, and Robert Barnabas Brough, they drew public attention to the Crimean War.

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

⁴ Before reaching the addressee, the money had been given to "convicted Irish rebels and to the Society for the Protection of Cruelty to Animals" (McGivering and Radcliffe).

war than stay at home. The poem's march-like rhythm makes it to be read in an inspirational tone (Ho 29).

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. Those who were responsible for starting the war were the target of this criticism. 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. (Ho 92, 102, 106)

Massey referred to the war in two volumes of poems *The Ballad of Babe Christabel: with Other Lyrical Poems* (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' (Ho 58). 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 an old mother and patriotically calls her up to battle as she used to (1).

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) (Ho 115). One of the sonnets, the psalm *An Aspiration of the Spirit*, shows the world immersed in madness and anarchy of war in which the narrator is slowly drowning. He sees his only salvation in Jesus (Dobell 100-101).

"The Due of the Dead" (1854) by Taylor is an atypical example of a war poem. Written as a response to the philanthropic request made by the correspondent of *The Times* Thomas Chenery,⁵ 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 (Ho 79).

The only female 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 transports of his heart") that he embodies "today / The poet of his art"' (qtd. in Ho 49). Shore

⁵ Chenery asked the public to donate for the injured soldiers due to the lack of medical supplies and crew (Ho 36).

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.

To summarise, the mentioned poets clearly outlined their position regarding the Crimean War, for they criticised it and paid respect to the soldiers. All but Lushington, with his jingoistic poems, lamented the troopers' deaths (Ho 27-28). Surely, there were other poets-supporters of the campaign, but their works are less well-known. For the first time in English poetry, a war conflict dragged the attention of so many poets. Today it might be seen as a catalyst for a new development of English war poetry.

1.3 The Edwardians and WWI

After the end of the Victorian period, people hoped for some better changes in society. As it was the turn of the centuries, everybody felt that a new period would bring something new and different. Edward VII became the king, and a new, yet short, era began: it was a time of peace, prosperity, technological progress and positive shifts in politics.⁶ On the other hand, the inequality regarding social status remained a societal issue. The First World War marked the end of this period (Holland).

The situation in poetry was the following: Hardy and Kipling were trying to bring back such literary genres as the ballad, satire, and narrative poem. Meanwhile, the Edwardians would refer to the notion of rationalism and diversify the forms of realism. At this time, numerous literary movements began to develop, with imagism and futurism affecting the era the most. Finally, poetry could influence the masses' outlook ("Features of Edwardian Era Literature"). Although it is hard to define a true Edwardian poet due to the shortness of the period and the variety of literary movements that existed concurrently, the contemporary literary critic Kenneth Millard distinguishes seven representatives in his book *Edwardian Poetry* (1991): Henry Newbolt, John Masefield, Alfred Edward Housman, Edward Thomas, John Davidson, Thomas Hardy, and Rupert Brooke. All of them but Davidson have a relation to WWI poetry. This section focuses on the first four names.

At the start of the war, Sir Henry Newbolt was offered a place in the British War Propaganda Bureau and subsequently was unreasonably dubbed a *warmonger*. In reality, his approach to the war poems was rational and objective (Winterbottom). One of his war collections, *Tales of the Great War* (1916), was praised for an objective portrayal of the

⁶ Minor social classes (labourers, servants, industrial working class) gained some benefits, power, and authority through the Liberal welfare reforms, 1906-1914 ("20th century liberal reforms").

enemy, for it reduced the degree of hatred towards the hostilities promoted by the government (*The Springfield Republican*). His most famous poem, "The War Films" (1916) from *St. George's Day and Other Poems* (1918), tells about the emotional effect of the war documentaries shown in cinemas. In the case of the poem, it was the footage of the Battle of the Somme. Somebody in the audience shockingly witnesses the brutality of the war for the first time: he/she feels strong empathy for the soldiers and desires to exchange his/her life for theirs. His later collections: *Poems: New and Old* (1919), *A Perpetual Memory, and Other Poems* (1939), and *Selected Poems* (1940) also were related to WWI (Lucy).

Because of his age, Masfield was too old for military service and joined the Red Cross. Being a member of the medical staff, he worked in the field hospitals in France (Yates). One of his first war poems, "August 1914" (1914), pays tribute to the fallen of WWI and wars of the past as well. The author states that WWI disturbed the idyll of a peaceful life as the men thoughtlessly went to the war and died in foreign lands. In these lands, the soldiers faced the misery of trench warfare and experienced a feeling of despair. After death, their ghosts would wander over the English downs — the places where they used to live. The war itself is called a dim idea showing Masfield's anti-war mood (Yates). More personal work, an elegy "The Island of Skyros" (1915), was written in memory of his good friend Brooke. In the poem, Masfield recalls the time they spent together on this island and compares it with the current situation, where he is alone on Skyros, paying a visit to his comrade's grave. The antithesis between lighthearted past and grim present is the main motif in this elegy.

Housman's contribution to war poetry was minimal: only one collection — *Last Poems* (1922), and just one poem directly describing the conflict — "Epitaph on an Army of Mercenaries" (1917). Nevertheless, his early collection *A Shropshire Lad* (1896) had a certain impact on the WWI poets like Owen, Sassoon, Charles Sorley, and others. They went to the war with copies of the book, and later the image of Housman's lads became an inspiration for their poems (Parker). "Epitaph on an Army of Mercenaries" is dedicated to the British Expeditionary Force — a unit of the British Army that existed before the Kitchener's army. They were the first who participated in the combat with the German side and suffered heavy casualties through the first two years of the conflict. This 8-verse work salutes the unit's soldiers and compares them with a Greek titan Atlas. Similarly to him, they held the enemy and thus defended the nation. For the protection, the unit paid the highest price — their lives (Housman 15). According to Griffiths, Housman ironically used the word *mercenaries* to mock the Germans who used to call the British by this name. For him, these mercenaries were the saviours (2011). The rest of the poems from the collection concentrated on the

aftermath of the First World War. One of them, "Soldier from the wars returning" (1922), portrays a veteran who has returned home and can enjoy peace and rest now. Even his horse is free from the bridle and can independently gallop through the fields eating clover. The time to live a calm and happy life has come.

Thomas was the only one from this quartet who served: he was a member of the Royal Garrison Artillery and was killed in action in 1917. Thomas was a poet of the 'Home Front', for he wrote only one poem during his service life (Longley). The poet tended to mix the themes of landscape and war, questioning how the latter could affect an individual. Sometimes, his war poems were contrary in moods: one could be optimistic, whereas another gloomy.

From what is mentioned, none of them considered battlefield death as a duty. They predominantly focused on the war consequences and grief over the fallen compatriots. They were just at the beginning of battles depiction — the thing WWI poets would later perfect. Comparing them to the Victorians, one may notice that the Edwardians were rather passive and neutral in terms of their attitude to war, whereas the Victorians marked their societal position more clearly and made society donate their money for the soldiers' cause.

1.4 Modernist poetry and the Great War

Modernism appeared at the end of the nineteenth century and boomed after the Edwardian era during the 1910s and the 1920s. The poets spurned Victorian tradition and sought to find new ways of expression. To do so, they would mix different styles. A regular poem of that period would include complex language, which was often subjective, fragmented and absurd. A lot of attention was paid to symbolism and each object in the poem could have several interpretations. Most importantly, the poets used to react to contemporary society at every stage of the movement. The outbreak of WWI added a dose of depression to the poems, causing authors to refer to the theme of alienation, and after the war, many would write about the decline of civilisation (Ali).

The most notable figures in British modernist poetry, who addressed the conflict, were two American expatriates: Ezra Pound and Thomas Stearns Eliot. The first was strongly opposed to the conflict, for he saw it as evil (Barnishel 34). He accused the British Empire of breaking the lives of the young soldiers and criticised her international politics, yet directly referred to the war only in 1920, in two sections of the long poem *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*: "These fought in any case" and "They died a myriad" (34). In the former, his alter-ego pities the fallen lads and blames the propaganda for their deaths: "Died some pro patria, non dulce non

et decor... / walked eye-deep in hell / believing in old man's lies, then unbelieving" (Pound 69-71). These lines echo Owen's argument in "Dulce et Decorum Est". Pound states that the troopers joined the war for different reasons and, in the end, showed great fortitude. Although some adapted to kill, some lost their faith in pre-war slogans. In the latter section, the protagonist concludes, with deep grief, that the generation has lost its best children. Any civilisation that sends her sons to certain death is 'botched'. In the same part, the war is being referred to as 'an old bitch' (Pound 90). WWI is mentioned again in *Canto XVI* (1924/5) from the unfinished poem *The Cantos* (1915/65). Here, the poet blames the Austro-Hungarian emperor Franz Josef, whom he offensively calls 'son of a bitch', for all the devastation caused by the war. Pound then proceeds with informing the conditions where his close friends were battling and their fate (M'bark 103-105).

The Waste Land (1922) by T. S. Eliot presented the devastating fallouts of the war. The apocalyptic world served as an allusion to the demolished post-war Europe. Eliot attempted to trace the changes between English societal pre-war and post-war mood. The war did not vindicate the expectations of "the ultimate aesthetic experience" (Bennett 4) as the soldiers faced unspeakable violence. In the section "What the thunder said", the battlefields turned into lifeless scorched land with no water but only rocks and mountains. It was the price for the industrial revolution and making modernized war technologies, which would burn the ground down. Those who supported the war could not imagine such a gruesome outcome and were criticised in part "The Burial of the Dead". Eliot called war supporters a 'hypocrite lecteur' (*The Waste Land* 74) and insisted that their corruptible beliefs led to massive desolation. He illustrates his aversion through the image of exhausted soldiers returning to London, proving that pre-war ideals have crumbled (12). The poet understood that the Western World had degraded and nearly eradicated itself and that there was a need for some societal reconstruction. The key for this restoration would be the memory of the people — they should always remember what has happened and never allow a similar event to repeat itself (22).

As stated in the first paragraph, modernists referred to the issue of WWI some years after it was finished. They were not interested in soldiers' duty and dignity but in the post-war world. Witnessing terrifying aftermaths, Europe in ruins, and being influenced by the Great War poets, they questioned the necessity of the conflict, blamed the responsible ones for the death of the innocent people and expressed disbelief about the nearest future. They might add neither novelty nor creativity to WWI poetry, but, most importantly, they showed the cost of human shortsightedness and foolishness.

1.5 First World War poetry

The two representatives of the older generation, Hardy and Kipling, were on the opposite sides of the barricades — if the former thought that the war was a mistake, the latter actively justified it. When Germany had invaded Belgium in 1914, he encouraged British soldiers to take a gun and stand up for freedom in the poem "For All We Have and Are" (1914) (McGreevy). Even though Hardy had started with a little bit pro-war "Men Who March Away" (1914), his rhetoric changed with "In Time of 'The Breaking of Nations'" (1915) (Muhammed 15). Several years after WWI, the poet wondered if all the devastation and chaos caused by WWI was worth it in his poem "And There Was a Great Calm" (1920) (Williams).

The young boys who wrote about the war horrors gained public sympathy and contributed to changing the public view of the Great War. Among these boys, besides the mentioned ones in the introduction, were Isaac Rosenberg, Robert Graves, Charles Sorley and many others. To put it briefly, the lads "fashioned a new form of poetry, as they attempted to give expression to the horrors of trench warfare" (Lynch). For example, Sorley's poems were "striking in their quality of thinking, feeling, tone and literary skill" (Cooper). In his most recognised poem, "A Sonnet [XXXIV]" (1915), he asks the reader not to mourn nor to loud the fallen soldiers in his/her dreams, but just to state that they are dead, as are the others. (Cooper).

To sum up, WWI poets 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 experience combat expressed their concerns in poems from home. The most important thing is that nobody was indifferent to WWI. The war poems of this conflict increasingly reflected the irrational reality of trench warfare. The Great War had a bigger impact on the world than the Crimean War, and 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

Three words that describe the situation in the British Empire during the nineteenth century are industrialism, colonialism, and urban migration. In terms of foreign policy, the Empire participated in a number of wars: the Napoleonic wars (1803-1815), the Crimean war (1853-1856), the Anglo-Zulu War (1879), and the Second Boer War (1899-1902) to name a few (Ní Fhlathúin). The Crimean War was a conflict between the Russian Empire on the one side, and the alliance formed by the Ottoman Empire, the British Empire, the French Empire, and the Kingdom of Sardinia on the other. The war had started in the Balkans when the Russian Empire occupied the Danubian Principalities. Since these lands were under the Ottoman suzerainty, the Turkish sultan had no choice but to declare war against the Russians. The British and the French empires, each for their own reasons, decided to support him. Together, they defeated the Russian Empire in 1856. The battling sides combated not only on the Crimean Peninsula. They battled in the Balkans, the Caucasus, the White and the Baltic seas, and the North Pacific. The Crimean War was the first war conflict where armies were using modern technologies: railways, telegraphs, rifle-muskets, and naval shells. This conflict was also the first to be documented in written reports and photographs (Lambert).

2.2 The role of the British Empire in the Crimean War

The British Empire entered only in 1854 and helped its allies to win. Both her army and fleet fought in various regions: from the Black Sea to the North Pacific, from Crimea to Greece. At the Black Sea, the British fleet took part in the siege of Sevastopol (“Siege of Sevastopol”). At the Pacific theatre, the navy failed to capture Petropavlovsk. At the White Sea, the Royal Navy shelled the Solovetsky Islands, ruined the town Kola, but failed to invade Arkhangelsk (“The Crimean War’s White Sea Theatre”). At the Baltic Sea, the Anglo-French combined fleet caused a large-scale attack on Russian military supplies by destroying the Bomarsund fortress and blockading sea imports to Russia (Arnold 95). Meanwhile, on the land, the British army, together with the French troopers, occupied Piraeus in Hellas and neutralized the Greek army (Tucker and Roberts 1210). As for the Crimean significant war operations, the British forces won a strategically important battle on the Alma River. Then, probably the most famous event of that war happened during the battle of Balaclava — the infamous raid of the Light Brigade (Lambert).

This light cavalry unit, formed from lancers, hussars, and dragoons, was under the command of Major General James Brudenell. The approximate number of the squad was around 600. Their original aim was to prevent the Russians from capturing the Turkish guns located on the right causeway. The task seemed optimum, but due to a misunderstanding between brigade Captain Louis Nolan and British cavalry commander George Bingham, 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 provided a defensive fire from both sides during the brigade's way, and that shell bombardment trapped the cavalry in a crossfire from the front, left, and right. Despite heavy casualties, the soldiers completed the order — rode to the redoubt and forced enemies back (Antill). The light brigade suffered heavy losses: 156 killed or missing, 122 wounded, and around 60 taken as prisoners (Calthorpe 132). Those who survived the ambush retired later. This attack enhanced the British cavalry and showed an unspeakable failure of the British command (Markovits). The raid was glorified by Alfred Tennyson in his poem "The Charge of The Light Brigade", which will be analysed 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). In the Parliament, the Tories insisted on creating an account of all soldiers who had been sent to Crimea as they believed it would help to calculate the precise number of casualties (Leonard 98). In literature, some poets also reacted to the war. For example, George Whyte-Melville, who voluntarily served in the Crimea on the Turkish side, wrote the poem "A Child in the Nursery Crying" (1855), where he claimed that death is inevitable (De Galan). In "Alma" (1855), from the collection *Alma: And Other Poems*, R.C.Trench's glorified the soldiers who had won the Battle of the Alma and praised their boldness (Trench 7-9). 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 the events and praise their fearlessness. Some of his works were *Winter in the Trenches* (1854), *The landing at Eupatoria* (1854), and *The Charge of the Light Brigade* (1855) ("William Simpson: Sketches from the Crimean War").

2.4 WWI

The Great War 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 his allies for help. 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, the USA, and 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 ended with the Entente Powers' victory (Sheffield).

2.5 The role of the British Empire in WWI

Despite being industrially developed, the British Empire had a small number of armed forces in comparison to other dominant countries. The approximate number of soldiers was between 400,000-700,000, with half of them serving at the British overseas territories (Tucker and Roberts 504). Chin considers it the main reason why the government started war propaganda ("Kitchener's New Army"). The primary goal was to recruit at least 100,000 men, but only in the first two months, to the recruiters' astonishment, half a million volunteers joined the army. Led by propaganda, many young boys lied about their age to be enlisted. These lads were called 'the Kitchener's army', due to the name of the senior British Army officer Herbert Kitchener. At the end of the war, four million troopers were serving under the Union Flag (2018).

However, 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, which they did not pass. The Britons lost the battle as well as 60,000 of their own. It turned out that the usage of chlorine gas did help much ("Battle of Loos"). The next step was the Battle of the Somme — one the deadliest in the war, for the British army lost more than 400,000 men. The Franco-British powers won this battle, yet this fact is still negotiable, and the survivors from the Kitchener's army gained valuable experience ("Battle of Somme"). James Karuga lists some other significant battles the British troops combated: Battles of Marne (victory), Gallipoli (loss), and Passchendaele (loss) (2016). On the Arabian Peninsula and partially in North Africa, British colonel Thomas Edward Lawrence led the Arabic tribes against the Ottoman Empire and helped them to banish the Turks from these lands ("Who was Lawrence of Arabia?"). At the Pacific theatre,

Australia, as a part of the British Empire, seized some of the German overseas territories such as New Guinea (“Capture of German outposts in the Pacific 1914”).

Besides fighting on land, the British forces also fought at sea, where their results were controversial. In the beginning, the Royal Navy unsuccessfully protected Scarborough, Hartlepool, and Whitby (Duffy). The British fleet redeemed itself later when it stopped the German Navy at Yarmouth (Stone) and completed a strategic objective at the Battle of Jutland, which was the first step to the Central Powers’ defeat (“What Was the Battle of Jutland?”).

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 rapidly found support among different social classes, from the minorities to the soldiers, as they were initially blind to the realities of war (Loez). The British government started using propaganda in newspapers as a counter-method against the German atrocities in Belgium, whose actions were treated as an act of inexplicable cruelty. The main goal of propaganda was to encourage young men to go to the front. One more consequence of propaganda was the fact that people believed that the Empire was entering the war under the pretext that Belgium should be protected (Fox).

Sooner, the war degenerated into costly attrition, which wiped out a generation of young men. The actualities of modern warfare were initially apparent to the men who fought, and when they returned home on leave, they explained what was happening at the front. Due to their stories, an explicit and disturbing image of the war gradually spread throughout the population. The experience of the war poets, whose poems were published in newspapers or collected into popular anthologies, was the most reliable proof of battlefield terror (Gomez 68).

The group of war poets included Siegfried Sassoon, Wilfred Owen, Isaac Rosenberg, Robert Graves, and many others. During their first battles, they saw a real face of warfare: mud, endless bombardments, rotting corpses of friends, gas attacks, and giant tanks. The boys realized that this war was sinister, meaningless and that their friends died for nothing (69). 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 (70). These experiences inspired the lads to write an ugly truth about the war and the leaders in their poems. These poems led to the anti-war protests as many mothers wanted their children back from the merciless battlefields. Some of the poets made it out alive, Sassoon and Graves, whereas some did not: Owen, Brooke, and Rosenberg.

In English prose, 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, referring 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) (Trott).

WWI was depicted not only in the literature, for some painters mirrored its horrors in their works. For example, in *Paths of Glory* (1917),⁷ C.R.W. Nevinson depicted the bodies of two soldiers lying face down in the mud somewhere on the battlefield. These soldiers are unidentified, which suggests that they have lost their personality on the front (Robinson).

⁷ 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 (Markovits). According to him, heroism did not demand action; 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). Additionally, Kingsley realized that the poem was an answer to his call for ‘Tyrtæan strains’ (Markovits). 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” (Ruskin 137). Nevertheless, not all shared the fascination and admiration of the poem. *The Times*, for example, called the charge “splendid self-sacrifice” (6), 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).

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 pride. He compares the soldiers with an “English dog” (8) which can sacrifice its life. Both poems pay tribute to the cavalry, yet in different ways. While Dobell emphasises the riders’ nationality: “These were our common Britons. 'Tis our way / In England” (6-7) 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 describe the charge itself. He simply states that some of the soldiers “came back from victory” (3), 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 a more solid and better poem than Dobell's patriotic pride in his sonnet.

3.2 "For the Fallen"

The poems like this typically came out at the end of the war to pay tribute to the deceased soldiers, 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. 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 (Alexander). Before its publication, the Englishmen were still sanguine and had patriotic hopes as the war was just in the beginning, and its gloominess was yet to come. After the publication, society's optimism changed into a shock, for the Empire was disillusioned. The earlier publishing probably was caused by the Battle of Mons in August 1914, where the British army suffered heavy casualties (Alexander). English composer Edward Elgar included this poem for his choir and played it at Queen's Hall for six nights in a row. 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" (13-16) are cited annually on Remembrance Sunday in Britain and the Commonwealth (Alexander).

"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) and said that it "cut him to the heart" (Alexander). The British Library called it "the most affecting and well-known elegies from the period" ("Manuscript of 'For the Fallen' by Laurence Binyon"). 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 and states that they could have had a bright future, full of joy and mirth, but death, or as the poem calls it "Frost" (11), 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" (9), 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 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 194). The Indian critic Amitava Banerjee accused the poet of intentionally depicting appalling images of war to support Horace's statement in the poem's title. Additionally, D.R. Welland denounces the last line of the poem and "censures its 'strident and exhausting' impact'" (qtd. in Williams 195). Another person who contributed to the poem criticism was Dominique Hibberd, who described the last part as confused and unpleasant (195). Some other critics agreed that "Dulce et Decorum Est", justifiably, is Owen's answer to Jessie Pope⁸, a British poetess who wrote patriotic war poems at the same time. She belonged to the group of home front female propagandists.⁹ In her pro-war poetry, Pope encouraged and persuaded young men to join the war (196).

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. 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" (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, which was achieved with the help of powerful individual images and relationships between "physical and moral corruption" (199). 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 (201-202).

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), and Brooke's poetry suddenly began to be treated as too sentimental and naive. Specifically, "The Soldier" was

⁸ The poem was originally dedicated "To Jessie Pope, etc." (196).

⁹ This group included Humphry Ward, Emma Orczy, May Cannan, and Vesta Tiley (Martin).

criticized for being romantic since 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 (Semansky). The British critic Bernard Bergonzi was uncertain whom the poet was 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" (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" (178) and evaluating them as "eloquent and skilful" (178). In his critical essay on Brooke, 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 (156). 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 (100). Laskowski was also sure that the reception of the poem had changed due to the transformation of opinions on WWI (120).

The poem was met with a positive attitude among the readers, for it appealed to the Britons. 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. 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", published after the war, 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 motherland¹⁰ (Semansky).

On the other hand, a poem that 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 the Trenches"

¹⁰ The more detailed comparison of these poems is presented in the practical part.

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 mechanised fighting and violence ("Siegfried Sassoon"). "Suicide in the Trenches" was strongly praised 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" (165). 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 ("Siegfried Sassoon").

"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 the enemy's troopers. He asks his girlfriend whether she could forgive him for such an 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 natural to kill people you do not know in the name of God. This idea slightly echoes the criticism of the church in "They", where the bishop implies that all the suffering at the war is blessed by God.

The poem "In Flanders Fields" (1915) by John McCrae might be considered as a soul mate to "Suicide in the Trenches". 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 rest in peace. What is more, they ask their battlefield friends to keep battling 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 poems in terms of the portrayal of war. It focuses on how the poets illustrated the wars through the content of their poems. The current part also tries to notice whether the forms of the poems impact the depiction of war. Beyond that, it looks at the opinions the poets have about the notions of duty and dignity. The second half of the current part 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. During the isolation, he would read newspapers to be in touch with the world's realities (Ormond). Thus, Tennyson knew about British participation in the Crimean War and started to write patriotic poems like "The War" (1855) addressing this issue. Eventually, two articles in *The Times* about the heavy casualties of the Light Brigade at the Battle of Balaclava 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 (Ormond).

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 league, half a league,
Half a league onward,
All in the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.
"Forward, the Light Brigade!
Charge for the guns!" he said.
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred. (1-8)

The beginning of the poem depicts the start of the charge and immediately sets up the action scene — the ride of the cavalry. The brigade was formed from three ranks: the first one 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 row included the 8th Hussars and the 4th Light Dragoons. Captain Nolan was with the second line, while Lord Cardigan was alone in the front leading the charge (“Battle of Balaclava”). Three *half a league* in a row, with quick pronunciation, can bring an image of a heavily breathing horse: the consonants *h* and *f* before stressed vowel *a* create an impression of a sniffing horse (Altman). The lines “All in the valley of Death / Rode the six hundred...” (3-4) mention the place which the cavalry must ride through and its number. “The valley of Death” may serve as an allusion to Psalm 23, which starts with “The Lord is my shepherd” (Altman). The valley itself is mentioned 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” (qtd. in Altman). Such a reference may suggest that the soldiers see their leader as the God and they are not afraid to die by following him. “The valley of death” may also refer to the bodies which were left on the battlefield. The verses ““Forward, the Light Brigade! / Charge for the guns!” he said...” (5-6), 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 position. Lines 7 and 8 are similar to 3 and 4, and while 4 and 8 are identical, 3 and 7 slightly differ — 3 contains “all in”, whereas 7 has “into”. “All in” suggests the unity of the soldiers, and “into” emphasises the place where the cavalry is heading. Overall, this stanza does not depict the battle yet. Instead, it creates the setting and explains what is going on and what to expect next.

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

“Forward, the Light Brigade!”
 Was there a man dismayed?
 Not though the soldier knew
 Someone had blundered.
 Theirs not to make reply,
 Theirs not to reason why,
 Theirs but to do and die.
 Into the valley of Death
 Rode the six hundred. (9-17)

Line 9 repeats the command from 5 and illustrates that the brigade is continuing 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 persist. The cavalymen conform to the principles of the army demonstrated in 13, 14, and 15: do not question the commander neither dispute his orders, obey them, be loyal to the superior, and be ready to die on duty. The last two verses of the stanza duplicate verses 7-8. To sum it up, the cavalymen do not dispute the order of their leader and accompany him to their deaths.

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

Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon in front of them
Volleyed and thundered;
Stormed at with shot and shell,
Boldly they rode and well,
Into the jaws of Death,
Into the mouth of hell
Rode the six hundred. (18-26)

Verses 18, 19, and 20 indicate that the enemy has opened fire, and the brigade is under heavy bombardment 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 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 blasts.¹¹ The next one 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, it fearlessly is carrying on. The squad knows that they will not crumble until the order is executed. The horsemen cold-heartedly ride till the end, watching their mates die. They are a personification of integrity. “Into the jaws of Death, / Into the mouth of Hell” (24-25) — here, the battleground is shown as a hell which is going to devour and spit them out, but these soldiers do not mind it. Each one of them is ready to try his luck and fate, and that is why they are galloping into

¹¹ According to one of the attack participants, Captain Godfrey Morgan, the second shell killed Captain Nolan (Morgan 6).

this inferno. This stanza starts to describe 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”, not “the valley of death” as it was in the preceding stanzas.

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

Flashed all their sabres bare,
Flashed as they turned in air
Sabring the gunners there,
Charging an army, while
All the world wondered.
Plunged in the battery-smoke
Right through the line they broke;
Cossack and Russian
Reeled from the sabre stroke
Shattered and sundered.
Then they rode back, but not
Not the six hundred. (27-38)

The horsemen, with their weapons drawn,¹² are reaching the spot: “Flashed all their sabres bare, / Flashed as they turned in air” (27-28). The next two lines point to the start of the combat. The fight is a bloodshed, for 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 overstatement.¹³ The consequences of the attack are shown in 32 and 33: thick smoke of the cannons and a broken frontline of the redoubts. The next two lines are about the cavalymen forcing the foes back, which results in the Cossacks’¹⁴ and Russians’ deaths. The Russians

¹² The sabre was the main weapon the cavalries used at that time. In military tactics, while approaching the enemy, the cavalymen used to hold up their sabres, yell, in order to morally discourage the enemy, and burst into the front lines (Cooke 64).

¹³ Since the poem was published after several months from the episode, people could know about the charge as it was happening. Thus, ‘the world’ could not ‘wonder’ (Markovits).

¹⁴ 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 (Provan).

are torn asunder by this courageous assault and have no option but to retreat. Meanwhile, the brigade is riding back to the camp — some in groups, some alone.¹⁵ The last verse informs that not all of them returned. As it was clear from the start, the majority of the soldiers would not make it, so, the result is not unexpected — many lost their lives during the charge. It 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 Britons:

Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon behind them
Volleyed and thundered;
Stormed at with shot and shell,
While horse and hero fell.
They that had fought so well
Came through the jaws of Death,
Back from the mouth of hell,
All that was left of them,
Left of six hundred. (39-49)

Again, the unit has to ride under the crossfire,¹⁶ which is shown in the sequence of lines 39-41. To reach the base, they need to survive the bombardment once more. The troopers again are “Volleyed and thundered; / Stormed at with shot and shell...” (42-43). The following verse 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

¹⁵ Ironically, the first person who returned 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. On his way back, he managed to evade the capture (Antill).

¹⁶ 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”).

the upcoming horses.¹⁷ The animals, terrified by explosions, are in a hurry and panic, but they still are carrying their riders to a safe place. The next line emphasises 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 by 46-47. “All that was left” highlights that only a small percentage of the cavalry remained.¹⁸ 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:

When can their glory fade?
O the wild charge they made!
All the world wondered.
Honour the charge they made!
Honour the Light Brigade,
Noble six hundred! (50-55).

It immediately questions “When can their glory fade?” (50), meaning that the author hopes that this 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!” (54-55). This closing remark urges the reader to laud the soldiers due to their remarkable feat.¹⁹ 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: the verse “All in

¹⁷ A lieutenant from the Hussars rescued two of his men, and one private from the Dragoons saved a trumpeter (“Army” 665).

¹⁸ Between 247-278 men were killed, wounded, or missing. A large number were imprisoned. Only 195 of them returned on horses (“Battle of Balaclava”).

¹⁹ Six cavalry members received the Victorian Cross, the most prestigious British honour (“Battle of Balaclava”).

the valley of death” consists of seven syllables instead of the usual six. Such a 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 (Altman). One more interesting property of the poem is the end-stopped lines²⁰. 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 this vision, the poet demonstrates his faith in the soldiers (Altman).

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, the sabres flashing, and so on. "The Charge of the Light Brigade" transfers the reader to the action with all of its horrors. Tennyson describes the battle through three similar expressions: “the valley of Death”, “the jaws of Death”, and “the mouth of Hell”. The poet stresses 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. Tennyson created his example of an idealistic soldier — the one who esteems his duty and is prepared to die for any cause commanded to him.

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 (Means). 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 (“A Richer Dust: Rupert Brooke & The Culture of Mourning”). 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 (Means). After his death, Brooke became the poster boy for the First World War. However, the public opinion turned against Brooke’s nationalist sentiments after the war, and his reputation has never quite

²⁰ In poetry, it is a line that shows the completion of a sentence or a phrase (“End Stopped Line”).

recovered from being so closely identified with the war effort ("A Richer Dust: Rupert Brooke & The Culture of Mourning").

"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 (Means). The young man shares his thoughts about own death with the readers:

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

And think, this heart, all evil shed away,
A pulse in the eternal mind, no less
Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England given;
Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day;
And laughter, learnt of friends; and gentleness,
In hearts at peace, under an English heaven (1-14).

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 hypothesises about his death. 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, but 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" (3) 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 the fourth line: “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 “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.²¹

The description of “dust” is featured in the following line: “A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware...” (5). There is a repetition of the word *dust*, and it is referred not by *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 emphasises the hero’s English heritage: “A body of England’s, breathing English air...” (7). He is proud to be an Englishman and labels himself as an English offspring. The soldier somehow 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. “Blest by suns of home” suggests that his decision to go to the war was met with praise and approval among his compatriots. Alternatively, the hero can refer to all warmth of the Sun he received in his homeland. To summarise 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...” (9) and again carries an address to the reader. It might be seen as another request, mirroring the situation

²¹ Such a command should sound like: “There shall be an English death which will make this rich ground even more worthy.”

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 and will be in peace with himself, and, in the end, 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" (10). Presumably, "eternal mind" means some high power or God, implying that 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 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 before the endless sleep: "Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day; / And laughter, learnt of friends; and gentleness...". The former presents everything marvellous he recollects about England, and the latter 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 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 that should be proved through the rest of the poem, and the resolution (Howard). 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 middle verses 5, 6, 7, and 8 provide evidence explaining why the soldier 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, for it 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 Edenic England. The protagonist is

ready to die for his country, so one might assume that he treats death as some kind of patriotic duty. On the other hand, he does not address the notion of dignity.

4.3 "For the Fallen"

According to Tyrrell (2010), 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 recognised in England as it was seen as an elegy that was cherishing the dead (Chen).

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

With proud thanksgiving, a mother for her children,

England mourns for her dead across the sea.

Flesh of her flesh they were, spirit of her spirit,

Fallen in the cause of the free. (1-4)

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, suggesting that it was not their war. Line 3 emphasises 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 Adam said, This *is* now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman because she was taken out of man" (*Genesis* 2:23). Such a reference proves the existence of the mentioned maternal relationship. The last line explains the cause the young soldiers died for — freedom. In the case of the poem, death for such a patriotic ideal is considered to be righteous. However, one question may be raised about this line "Which freedom does it refer to?".²² Presumably, it is the freedom of England.

²² The official explanation of the British Empire's entry into WWI was to protect Belgium's neutrality (Section 2.6).

Solemn the drums thrill; Death august and royal

Sings sorrow up into immortal spheres,

There is music in the midst of desolation

And a glory that shines upon our tears. (5-8)

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 line 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,

Straight of limb, true of eye, steady and aglow.

They were staunch to the end against odds uncounted;

They fell with their faces to the foe. (9-12)

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 11-12 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 intentionally highlights the soldiers' dignity as they died "with their faces to the foe", never with their backs.

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. (13-16)

The fourth stanza immediately presents an antithesis in the lines 13-14, stating that those who perished will not grow up and will not experience the taste of adulthood, unlike the survivors. As Tearle points out, the phrase “Age shall not weary them” is a reference to Shakespeare's tragedy *Antony and Cleopatra* (1623). The quote belongs to a fictional Roman general Enobarbus who discusses Cleopatra's beauty: “Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale / Her infinite variety” (qtd. in Tearle). In this case, Binyon associates the soldiers with the Egyptian queen, depicting them as the country leaders. Lines 15-16 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;

They sit no more at familiar tables of home;

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

They sleep beyond England's foam. (17-20)

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 suggests 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 last line of the quatrain 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,

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

To the innermost heart of their own land they are known

As the stars are known to the Night. (21-24)

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.

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,
Moving in marches upon the heavenly plain;
As the stars that are starry in the time of our darkness,
To the end, to the end, they remain. (25-28)

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, symbolising 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 war²³ and was similar to contemporary war poems, which romanticised the war. Later, it became a voice of the lost and disillusioned generation. With each loss and each death, Binyon's work was more and more relevant in terms of mourning the dead (Chen). Its main message is to ensure that the nation will remember her fallen children. The poem does not depict the war but instead presents its highly probable outcome. The poet assumes that it is any soldier's duty to go to war and die with dignity facing the enemy. The admiration of the latter statement is shown in line 12.

4.4 "Dulce Et Decorum Est"

²³ Binyon composed the poem immediately after the Battle of Mons (23.8.1914), where the British Expeditionary Force had suffered heavy casualties (Chen).

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 — 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 (Senington). 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 (Hill). 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" (O'Brien).

The first stanza depicts a retreat from the battlefield:

Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,
Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge,
Till on the haunting flares we turned our backs,
And towards our distant rest began to trudge.
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
Of gas-shells dropping softly behind. (1-8)

The first pair of lines sets the scene: the soldiers, who are bent forwards and "knock-need", are folding back through the mud. The protagonist 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 the adversity of the war that continuously chases them. According to military tactics (Duffy), 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 (Lovett). 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 he must hide from the shells like the others. 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
Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time,
But someone still was yelling out and stumbling
And flound’ring like a man in fire or lime.—
Dim through the misty panes and thick green light,
As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.
In all my dreams before my helpless sight,
He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning. (9-16)

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 helmets²⁴ 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 that tended to confuse — the Tube Helmet (Payne). 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 failed to do so in time and was poisoned by the gas. As a result, he is in agony now. 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 claim that the gruesome image of the army friend still haunts the speaker in his 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

²⁴ Sometimes, the soldiers would cover their noses and mouths with the water-soaked or urine-soaked rags. These preventive measures could lessen the impact of chlorine (Patton).

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” — typical consequences of a chlorine attack. The hero might feel guilty 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. In his article “Gas in The Great War” (2019), military historian James Patton describes four main types of poisonous gases:

- a) The least deadly 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 could die of cancer later. 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 that 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 soldiers, with phosgene being the most effective: 85% of these deaths were on its account. In the context of 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
Behind the wagon that we flung him in,
And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,
His hanging face, like a devil’s sick of sin;
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. (17-28)

Throughout the whole stanza, Owen is explaining the fallout of the poisonous chemicals. The poetic persona opens his statement by creating a hypothetical situation: he suggests the reader putting himself/herself in a situation where he/she can observe how the soldiers farewell their comrade, who is barely alive and moments away from dying. That is what lines 17 and 18 are about. Lines 19-24 demonstrate the damage caused by chlorine: rolled-up eyes, shabby face skin, and face 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 the War. The blood he expectorates is compared to animal cud emphasizing the aftermath of internal bleeding. Besides internal bleeding, his lungs are burnt. Finally, the trooper's tongue is covered with sores. Next, the narrator refers to someone calling him/her "My friend" (25). Here, Owen intentionally addresses Jessie Pope.²⁵ 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 English soldiers. Owen hypothesises 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 trench warfare.

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

²⁵ Section 3.3.

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 agonised 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. Owen strongly disagrees with Horace as he does not find a duty to die for one's country conventional. He presumes that such a death is a foolish way to show soldiers' dignity and sees no point in it. In other words, dying for the country in the name of false ideals is not heroism — it is stupidity. It is better to be a reasonable coward than a blindfolded loyal combatant.

4.5 "They" and "Suicide in the Trenches"

As Simkin points out, 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’ (1997): he was once injured by the measles and later was shot by a sniper during the Battle of Scarpe (Trueman). At the end of his convalescent leave, 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 then to the press and read out in Parliament (Clarke).

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 1916.²⁶ That is, as the poet became increasingly disturbed by the Great War, the tone and content of his poems changed (Saunders). 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 (Saunders).

²⁶ In 1915 he lost a brother, and in 1916 a close friend (Saunders).

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

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

He speaks to the soldiers, who have gathered for an unknown reason: it can be either a sermon, funeral, requiem or 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 has 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 about. His figure represents the hypocrisy of the Church²⁷ 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 (Griffiths). 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 time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time" (1 John 2:18). The image of Antichrist symbolizes the global evil that the war has brought. The bishop uses the mentioned biblical imagery to justify the war. He is also certain that the trooper's sacrifices will lead to a new generation — "an honourable race" (Griffiths). In reality, such a *race* of patriotically-blinded people would bring excessive nationalism to the country.²⁸ So, the

²⁷ The religious propagandists claimed that the war was a righteous thing to participate in (Fielden 42, 47).

²⁸ This is exactly what happened later in Germany, in the 1930s, where a group of people, remembering a heavy defeat in WWI, came to power, militarized the whole nation, and started WWII (Bullock and Bullock).

churchman unintentionally expresses nationalistic belief in lines 4-5. 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, states that a man can reach divine enlightenment²⁹ only by dying. 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.
'For George lost both his legs; and Bill's stone blind;
'Poor Jim's shot through the lungs and like to die;
'And Bert's gone syphilitic: you'll not find
'A chap who's served that hasn't found some change.
'And the Bishop said: 'The ways of God are strange!' (7-12).

Their reply is sodden with anger, as they agree that they had changed, but not for the better. The soldiers support this statement with concrete and plain facts: someone is crippled, another one cannot see, some lad is infected with a lethal disease, and the last one has bare chances to survive due to an exit wound. There are obvious circumstances behind each of these cases. Thus, George's legs could have been either torn off by a shell or amputated in the hospital due to 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 (Makepeace). 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.

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 mere mortals with natural

²⁹ A concept in Christianity that refers to the revelation and complete understanding of existence.

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. They call their brothers-in-arms "chaps", highlighting their close relationship and estranging the comrades from the clergyman's "the boys". Each soldier's fellow has a name that 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!", that 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, and his 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 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*.

The structure of the poem plays an important part in its understanding. For example, in the first stanza, the poet parodies and subverts the standard composition of the sermon, for he uses colons and semicolons as pauses in several lines. Such a choice of 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.

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 (Karsten 32). 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 just ignores it and refuses to admit his fault in sending hundreds of soldiers to certain death. Besides the Church, Sassoon directed his wrath against the British politicians, who assured the volunteers that they would find 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. Similarly to Owen, he is against the idea of dying for someone else's interests. He sees neither sensible duty nor dignity in such sacrifices.

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

I knew a simple soldier boy

Who grinned at life in empty joy,
Slept soundly through the lonesome dark,
And whistled early with the lark. (1-4)

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 activities: 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. Unfortunately, in a couple of months, they would join the ranks of the British 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 later transfers into depressing.

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

In winter trenches, cowed and glum,
With crumps and lice and lack of rum,
He put a bullet through his brain.
No one spoke of him again. (5-8)

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. Living in the winter trenches was too hard, for their conditions were miserable. Everything from clothes to food was frozen, and the frigid trench walls did not provide any warmth. The mentioned conditions easily could cause frostbite with the following amputation (Riddle). The word “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. The mention of “lice” indicates the poor hygienic conditions that were common for trench warfare. Besides the lice, the soldiers also

suffered from rats, fever, trench foot,³⁰ scabies, and influenza ("Disease in the Trenches" 28, 30). One more disease, which the article does not mention, is a trench mouth.³¹ The absence of the rum shows that the soldier cannot ease his fear or cheer himself up. These three factors are leading the soldier to the suicide as he does not see any rescue from the war claws.³² 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 suicide contributes to the depressed tone of this particular stanza. Its main idea 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. Furthermore, his image will not have been mentioned in any propagandist speech. Similarly, his comrades would not discuss his death as they would get used to such occurrences. In this stanza, Sassoon uses a cacophonous technique of consonants to imitate the noise of warfare: "*trenches*", "*cowed*", "*crumps*", and "*lack*" (Howard). Analogously, he mimics the sound of a pulled trigger by using plosives in "*put*", "*brain*", and "*bullet*" (Howard).

The second-person point of view of the last stanza enables the poet to directly address the 'war lovers' back home. The tone of the poem shifts for the last time — it is angry and bitter now:

You smug-faced crowds with kindling eye
Who cheer when soldier lads march by,
Sneak home and pray you'll never know
The hell where youth and laughter go. (9-12)

³⁰ "After long periods standing in soaking wet socks and boots, trench foot would start to set in" (30). The only treatment for this disease was changing socks every few hours. If trench foot was not treated, this could lead to amputation of the feet.

³¹ 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 ("Trench Mouth - the Great War periodontal disease").

³² 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 263).

Sassoon refers to them as “smug-faced”, pointing out their pseudo-patriotism, as they approved the fact that 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 their 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 brutality of the war. Here, Sassoon compares the war with hell and concludes that returned combatants will never express amusement. Having faced the terror of WWI 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 fallout.

Howard believes that the poem is written in the form of a nursery rhyme to create the atmosphere of naivety and express the soldier’s youth (2019). The current form, alongside with the dark subject matter, gives the poem a sense of irony. By using 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 suicide. By this explicit picture of self-murder, Sassoon protested against the British people who were advocating war. Through the verses of "Suicide in the Trenches," a reader can get an idea that the poet opposes military service driven by propaganda. The author sees the fault of the Establishment in not providing the supplies to the troopers and making them live for years in disgusting conditions. The poem insists that it is impossible to serve in this horrific environment. The questions of duty and dignity become secondary things for the soldiers as all their thoughts are about survival.

5. Comparison of the analyses

The last chapter summarises the literary analysis from the previous section and compares "The Charge of the Light Brigade" with the poems of the Great War. Specifically, the comparison is carried out from six different angles: the protagonists, their idea of duty and dignity, tone and aim of the poems, the depiction of war, and, finally, attitude towards it.

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 particular hint may help to determine whether he is a horseman or a spectator. Throughout the poem, the hero uses the pronoun *they* referring to the horsemen. Had he been a part of them, he would have used *we* to emphasise that he rode with them too. The 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 pride. The assumption that he is only a spectator creates a better 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 it 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 hypothesises 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 the gallop of the horses, cannot set any other tone but vigorous one. The lines like "Forward, the Light Brigade" (5), "Boldly they rode and well" (23), "They that had fought so well" (45), and "O the wild charge they made" (51), 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” (38-37), “All that was left of them, / Left of six hundred” (48-49). 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 for England. This melancholy is featured throughout 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...” (5), “A body of England’s, breathing English air” (7). 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” (12-14). 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 real 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 the 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 capitalised words *Death* and *Hell*. These two words might be applied to any description of any war. Unfortunately, such a detailed picture of war is absent in Brooke’s poem because it does not mention the war itself. It features only the soldier’s thoughts about his potential death during the war. This absence supports the earlier mentioned statement that this 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 proper 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. Nevertheless, they both value the notion of a soldier's duty. Their view of dignity is also impossible to compare as Brooke did not address this subject.

Both poems glorify war, yet in different ways. Tennyson aesthetically depicts horsemen's suicidal mission. The lines of his poem show his patriotic attitude, and it may seem that the poet 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 work. 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.

Summarising all the points above, a clear idea of similarities and differences of the poems 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 hero in "For the Fallen" is not a soldier. He/she is an English citizen who promises to memorialise the fallen troopers. This person knows nothing about the war but hopes that no matter how hard it will be, the army will hold on to the last. He/she continues Brooke's idea of dying far away from England: "England mourns for her dead across the sea" (2). The speaker is still a little bit under the impression of the propagandistic notion of "noble death", for he/she presumes that British soldiers will die courageously fighting the enemy. At this point, his/her presumption echoes the belief of Tennyson's narrator, who thinks that the horsemen will die with dignity facing the foes during their task. 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!" (53-55), 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" (15-16). The common goal of the narrators is to make

sure that the nation will not forget its warriors; and Binyon's protagonist is confident 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, "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;" (17-18) or "Moving in marches upon the heavenly plain;" (26). The absence of exclamations sets a calm tone in Binyon's work. This feature may be explained by the fact that "For the fallen" is an elegy, and exclamation marks usually do not belong here. Specific lines like "They sleep beyond England's foam" (20) or "To the innermost heart of their own land they are known / As the stars are known to the Night" (23-24) confirm that the poem features a patriotic tone. If in "The Charge of the Light Brigade" the tone remains valorous the whole time, it shifts in "For the Fallen" 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 to the front by stating that they would not come back. However, his poem still romanticised the war and could not slow down the euphoria of recruitment. Either way, his intentions were fulfilled. Contrasting the aim of "For the Fallen" with the goal of "The Charge of the Light Brigade", it becomes obvious that both authors wanted society to cherish the memory of the dead soldiers, yet their other aims do not match. Even though Binyon adores the soldiers who died facing the enemy, he does not imply that it is a privilege to die in the battle. That is where his ideology deviates from Tennyson's war ideals. To put it simply, the poets share the same idea about soldiers' dignity, for they believe that it is heroic to die while battling the foes, yet Binyon does not consider it as a duty.

In terms of war depiction, Tennyson surpasses Binyon as the latter lacks a striking illustration of warfare in his poem. Binyon can offer only two examples slightly connected to the war. The 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" (9-10). The second example, featured in the same stanza, illustrates the speaker's assumption about combat "They were staunch to the end against odds uncounted; / They fell with their faces to the foe" (11-12). 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 of the Light Brigade" 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. Although it romanticises the Great War, the poem does not directly glorify nor criticise it. The poem depicts sorrow towards the dead soldiers and reveals a hope that their deaths will encourage the nation to overcome any obstacles. Nevertheless, after some years of publication, this poem unintentionally awoke England from a dream about a dignified war. In conclusion, "The Charge of the Light Brigade" expresses its opinion about 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, while their aims differ; Binyon does not depict the war; the attitudes towards the war conflicts are akin to each other; both authors have the same idea about soldiers' dignity, but their opinions regarding the notion of duty 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 the riders, but pulls back. He retreats because of 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 the maimed body of his brother-in-arms into a wagon. The following actions distinguish him from the soldier who only observed the ride of the cavalry. The main 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 and respected.

Owen's aforementioned intention 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. (20-28)

The last four lines stand in opposition to Tennyson's call for commendation: "Honour the charge they made! / Honour the Light Brigade, / Noble six hundred!" (53-55). 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..." (14-16). 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" (5-7). This tone can be compared to the signs of sorrow in Tennyson's poem. This leads to the conclusion that "Dulce et Decorum est" is richer in tone shifts than "The Charge of the Light Brigade" as the latter rarely adds diversity to its valorous tone.

As to the aim, Owen's poem 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 objective. The portrayal of discouraged and ragged troops fulfils the second goal of the poem. With his work, Owen rose against the poets who were praising the war. "Dulce et Decorum est" was 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. However, it came out only in 1920 when the nation had already accepted the truth about WWI. 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 should the soldiers fight for the questionable ideals?" occurred. Today, the British Army claims that her troops should participate in any war or conflict only if it directly threatens the sovereignty of the United Kingdom ("What We Do"). Concluding this chapter, it is fair to say that both poems achieved their aims, even though they were completely opposed.

"Dulce et Decorum est" depicts the battle in every part except the last one because it focuses on the aftermath. The first stanza illustrates gas shells being fired, while the next describes a gas attack. Instead of a direct confrontation, like in "The Charge of the Light

Brigade", Owen depicts 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. Had a man failed to protect himself, he would have perished 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" (32-36) or "Volleyed and thundered; / Stormed at with shot and shell" (42-43). The last quote is comparable with "Bent double", "Knock-kneed", and the rest of the description of the dispirited troops, in a way that these 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 galloping cavalymen in their gleaming uniforms waving shining sabres. Although Tennyson does not mention the outfit, it is still clear that neither dragoons nor hussars would ride in rumpled uniforms. Another difference between the poems is that, on the contrary from Owen, Tennyson explained what weapons the troops used — sabres. Apparently, the soldiers in "Dulce Et Decorum Est" used rifles, daggers, grenades, and pistols — the standard inventory. Unlike Owen, Tennyson did not depict the cavalymen as old beggars, for they ruthlessly gallop through the battlefield while killing the enemies. 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" commands to wear the 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. Summarising all the points above, one can state 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 demonstrate the horrible fallout 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.

Tennyson glorified the Crimean War in his poem, whereas Owen criticized both the war and 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 agonising soldier. Depicting his pain, the poet hypothesised that if the government or parents had witnessed such a scene, they would not

have insisted that it is a soldier's duty to die for his country. He saw no dignity in a painful death for some vague ideals. This point of view does not support Tennyson's presumption of virtuous battlefield death.

On the whole, the poems are distinguishable. The narrator in "The Charge of the Light Brigade" watches the combat, while the one in "Dulce Et Decorum Est" takes an active part. The heroic tone of Tennyson's poem differs from the three tones in Owen's work. The aims, even though being achieved, do vary. The aims, even though being achieved, do vary. The war portrayals alter in battle description: one poem describes the battle, whereas the other focuses on its fallout. Lastly, the poets hold opposing views regarding the topic of war and notions of duty and dignity.

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

The protagonists in Sassoon's poem are young soldiers who returned home, 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 some could even have been crippled by falling/galloping horses. The noticeable difference between these two groups may lie in the idea that they share different opinions towards war. The cavalymen 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 trench warfare, and the romantic spirit inside them 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 moralising 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,'" (3-5). Later, it changes to angrily sceptical, for the boys responding to his statements: "... you'll not find / A chap who's served that hasn't found some change" (10-11). They are angry with the bishop's refusal to accept the real facts about the war. Tennyson's work, on the contrary, lacks this shift of the tones. 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 English institutions like the Church as well as a political hierarchy. This intention explains why the figure of the bishop plays a wicked role in the poem. The image of a cleric usually embodies support, friendship, and sanctuary, but the

author makes it untrustworthy. The poet knew that such bishops propagandised 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. Sassoon completed his aim, for his poem shook the authority of the Church in the public eye. Thus, society's level of trust declined. All in all, the aims of the poems once again distinguish.

Similarly to his friend Owen, Sassoon concentrates on the aftermath of a battle: the boys have returned home. Referring to what was mentioned earlier, each of them has experienced the war firsthand, and now they have to live with the marks left by it. Nevertheless, war is not directly featured in this poem. If the enemies of the cavalry were cannons, cossacks, and the Russians, the enemy of the young soldiers was no one else as the bishop himself. 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 one side and the boys' sincerity from another. Such invisible battles, behind the closed doors, between soldiers and the officials, were happening during and after WWI (Wadell 88). The combatants wanted to tell the truth, but the officials refused to listen or did not want to. Even though Sassoon does not illustrate warfare, he describes an equally important issue of that period. The battle the boys fought could have saved the lives of thousands. Coming 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. Reading between the lines of "They", one may say that the author did not consider duty and dignity the most important values at war. He was more concerned about the young lads whose lives and bodies were twisted by deceitful propaganda. Thus, he did not support Tennyson's opinion about these two issues.

The poems feature polarised attitudes towards war. To be more specific, "They" concentrates more on the institutions which were supporting the war. The poem shows its position regarding the conflict through its content, where the lads explain that it literally cripples the modern generation. Moreover, Sassoon implies that the Church and other establishments should prevent recruits from servicing in all kinds of questionable armed conflicts or, at least, believe the soldiers 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", for it maintains a position that a true soldier never questions the order and carries it out even under the risk of death. It also urges the readers to respect such men.

In summation, the poems are close only in one of the five angles — the protagonists who are the soldiers. Sassoon's poem is more variable in terms of tone than Tennyson's one. The

aims of the works are divergent, yet they are completed. Tennyson depicts the actual battle, whereas Sassoon concentrates on the confrontation between the Establishment and the soldiers. The poets understand the issues of duty and dignity differently. 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 just a friend of the self-killer. The detailed depiction of the trenches suggests that he is indeed a soldier who witnessed the suicide of his fellow. Assuming that his monologue is happening after the war, one may consider him an experienced soldier. In such a scenario, the soldier reminds the figure of Tennyson's narrator, yet again neither of them took part in any clash throughout the poems. Nevertheless, 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 the one 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 the signs of patriotism like the tone of "The Charge of the Light Brigade". The only common feature the poems share in terms of tone is sorrow for the fallen — the cavalymen and the suicidal soldier, respectively.

Identically to the previous poems, the aim of "Suicide" differs from the one of "The Charge of the Light Brigade". While Tennyson respects the sacrifice of the cavalymen 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 — English society reconsidered its view on WWI. All in all, 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 conditions in the trenches from which the soldiers fought: "In winter trenches, cowed and glum, / With crumps and lice and lack of rum" (5-6). In such conditions, it was hard to maintain a fighting spirit, not to mention mental issues. Since there is no any information about the conditions in the British camp in Balaclava, one cannot say 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 a contrast may be explained by the fact that it was harder to maintain sane during mechanised 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" (12). Sassoon saw the war as the place where naivety, innocence, and carelessness vanish. Regarding the depiction of war, both poets agreed on the presumption that it is, in fact, hell.

Referring to the previous paragraph, it is safe to say that Sassoon's poem has a negative attitude towards the war, for it views WWI as the incarnation of evil. Such an approach does not agree with Tennyson's idea of a dutiful sacrifice. This difference makes the perspectives of the poems on the wars quite divergent. Sassoon does not think that inability to overcome the war struggles somehow discredits the dignity of the trooper. He also believes that it is not his duty to live in such poor conditions and eventually die there. His views resist the ones shared by Tennyson.

In conclusion, the poems share two particular similarities. The first one is their protagonists, who both are experienced soldiers. The second similarity is their view of war as an inferno. On the other side, the works vary in the remaining four angles.

5.6 Summary of the comparisons

The current chapter ends with a table that 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	Aim	Direct depiction of war	Attitude towards war	Viewpoint regarding duty and dignity
"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 a perfect place for a glorious deed)	- The duty should be carried out under any circumstances; - To die on duty is dignity;

“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)	- To die for a homeland is a patriotic duty;
“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)	- To die facing the enemy emphasises soldiers’ dignity, but it is not necessarily their duty;
“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)	- Everybody might exalt the notion of soldiers’ duty until the war comes to their families; - There is no dignity in dying an agonising death;
“They”	A group of soldiers (on furlough/veterans)	Moralising; Sceptical;	To discredit the Church and throw the light on the realities	_____	Negative (war ruins your life)	There is no reasonable duty or dignity in dying for

			of the war			somebody else's interests;
"Suicide in the Trenches"	Soldier (recruit)	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)	- It is not a soldier's duty to live in unbearable conditions while fighting somebody else's war; - Suicide does not lessen the soldier's legacy;

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 of the circumstances and influences under which the selected poems were composed. It also illustrated how other poets responded to the issue of war. The practical part analysed the chosen works and tried to understand the differences in their authors' ideas about war.

A brief summary shows how the points of view regarding war have changed from the nineteenth to the twentieth century. "The Charge of the Light Brigade" started the renaissance of English war poetry. Being a product of his time and never battling, Tennyson sincerely believed that honourable death in combat is a noble thing. During the Victorian era, many would agree with his assumption.

"The Soldier" supported Tennyson's idea about dying in the line of duty. 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 and the poem was used as a propagandistic tool.

The only poem published after WWI, "Dulce et Decorum est", did not bring much to the public's re-evaluation of WWI. Society already opened its eyes to the true horrors of war and was slowly distancing itself from that period. The only thing the poem could offer was a shocking image of the soldier vomiting his inner organs, yet upon its publication, people were already familiar with the effects of various gases. Today, "Dulce et Decorum est" stands as one of the greatest war poems in English poetry, for it kills any desire to go to war.

Sassoon decided to illustrate the fallout of the war in "They" as he had experienced the cruelty of WWI on his own skin. He wanted to show its destructive mark, and that is why the heroes of this poem mention their impaired brothers-in-arms. Besides this desire, Sassoon wished to expose the higher institutions that were luring the young lads to the army. The poet understood that the recruits were ignorant of the things they were going to face. The illustration of this unawareness is shown in "Suicide in the Trenches", where the soldier shoots himself. He had encountered the things which were beyond his outlook and succumbed to despair. Both of the poems continued the idea about the depiction of the war realities.

Finally, "For the Fallen" serves as a logical conclusion to all of the mentioned poems, despite being published a couple of years before. It claims that the task of the nation is to remember the killed soldiers and be guided by their example in times of misery.

The summary helps to answer the two questions from the introduction. In the 1850s, the war was depicted as something worth dying for, and those who served were praised by the poets for their courage. Six decades later, during its first years, WWI was also seen as a worthy place to die. Then, towards the end, people's consciousness changed, for it was deemed as something where no one sane would go, especially when the person does not fully comprehend the necessity of doing it. The factor that contributed to this change was rationality. Due to the poems of Sassoon, people started asking logical questions like "What is the point of war?", "Why should anybody participate in it?" or "Who is responsible for this madness?". If the earlier WWI poems shared similar beliefs presented in "The Charge of the Light Brigade", the later ones separated themselves from these views. The credit for this change goes to Sassoon and other anti-war poets. They shifted themselves away from the established dogma that an honourable death or sacrifice in the name of the homeland shapes a soldier's dignity. These poets put concepts of duty and dignity aside and concentrated only on soldier's life — the thing they valued the most. They shared a belief that any soldier should not meaninglessly give his life away, especially during the war that had not been started by him. Their reconsideration affected the depiction of war in a way that it was no more a place where the soldiers could find glory and die like heroes — it became a place where life may abruptly and meaninglessly end. So, answering the questions from the introduction, one can be sure that the depiction of war has changed due to a more realistic portrayal of its inhumanity.

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