

Imagery in mccrae's "in flanders fields" and kipling's "for all we have and are" ...

[Literature](#), [Poetry](#)



" Few countries in the world have a poem printed on their currency, but Canada does ... it is the first verse of John McCrae's " In Flanders Fields," a poem that each November is recited in school gymnasiums and around war memorials in Canada and throughout many other English-speaking countries." (Holmes 1.). In this paper I am going to argue why the poem " In Flanders's Fields" by John Alexander McCrae's, published December 8, 1915 in the magazine Punch is through its imagery so famous that it is printed on the Canadian dollar and why Rudyard Kipling's " For All We Have and Are" written in 1914 is not as popular, even though both poems want to send a related message towards the First World War. McCrae's " In Flanders Fields" is more famous than Kipling's " For All We Have and Are", because McCrae's imagery is a pure euphemism for the " ugly truth".

The pastoral beginning of the first stanza of " In Flanders Fields" introduces the reader to a poem which lives of its colorful imagery. In the first line McCrae introduces the most important symbol of this poem, the poppies " In Flanders fields the poppies blow /" (1). The poppies are a symbol for the fallen soldiers of the First World War. One can argue that McCrae uses poppies because of their red color like the red blood from dead soldiers and that he wants the dead soldiers to be never forgotten like those beautiful flowers which come up again every year. He underlines this point again in the last line when he says that we should not forget the soldiers as long as poppies grow: " We shall not sleep, though poppies grow/" (14) Another evidence that the poppies are a symbol for the fallen soldiers is when he says that the poppies stand in a formation like soldiers in the army: " Between the crosses, row on row, /" (2).

The next important symbol are the larks which stand for the people who survived the war and maybe even for us today and how we are living light headed even though we are living on the grave yard of the fallen soldiers: "The larks still bravely singing,/ fly Scarce heard amid the guns below.//" (4-5). In the second stanza we learn that the persona are the by the war killed people: "We are the Dead. Short days ago/" (6). As we know that the dead soldiers are talking to us, the first romantic feeling that the first stanza, evoked through all the beauty and cheer of nature, is destroyed (Holmes 18).

A metaphor is used in the last stanza, where McCrae uses the torch as a symbol of duty. He requests us, the living, to continue to work hard for our nation and to keep our home alive, so that the death of our ancestors was not in vain "The torch; be yours to hold it high." (12). This poem would be not as romantic and touching as it is, if McCrae had not used as many beautiful images as he did. The colorful, natural images evoke powerful emotions.

Comparing "In Flanders Fields" with "For All We Have and Are" it is evident that Kipling does not beautify the unpleasant truth by using colorful images. Kipling draws the readers attention by telling the plain truth. In the first stanza he for instance states that there is nothing left today "But steel and fire and stone.//" (8). Those symbols evoke the awfulness of war, with their stress on coldness and power and also convey its potential cruelty and terror. (cf. Kipling Journal 50). In the third stanza he puts a special emphasize on the fact that there is no law anymore controlling the world but only: the

survival of the strongest: " No law except the sword / Unsheathed and uncontrolled,"/ (15-16).

He continues his thought by the use of the metaphor: " Once more it knits mankind,"(17) which we may understand as a metamorphosis of the different nations. With the following metaphor in line 25 he underlines the previous point: " To face the naked days in silent fortitude,"/ (25-26).

Because a destroying war will leave the entire nation without any goods and values, with other words: the nation has to start from zero or " naked".

Kipling underlines the serious and dangerous problems of the First World War with the usage of a dark shadowed imagery.

Comparing the use of imagery in those poems, we see that both evoke the readers emotions by using war related terms. Hereby Kipling uses terms which the reader directly relates to war: " Stand up and meet the war./ The Hun is at the gate!/" '(3). McCrae on the other hand is plays with the subconscious feelings that occur while thinking about the killed people and describing it with romantic word plays, for example with the alliteration in stanza two: " We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,/ Loved and were loved, and now we lie/ In Flanders fields.//"' (7-9).

This imagery through its romantic touch glorifies the war and the war heroes. The reader immediately feels requested to pick up their torches and to continue the fight against the enemy (10-12). Kipling on the other hand expresses, through his usage of dark images, a warning to the older generation, that England, emptied of its young men, can not survive (cf.

Kipling Journal 50). With this thought in mind he puts a special emphasis towards the questions in the last two lines of his poem, whether or not this war is worth fighting: "Who stands if freedom fall?/ Who dies if England live?"//.

This essay has argued that McCrae's poem "In Flanders Fields" is more known as Kipling's "For All We Have and Are" because McCrae uses imagery which emphasizes the ugly truth. In conclusion is to say that both poems are talking about the war, both poems are sending the message that we need to continue to fight for what already our ancestors have fought for, so that their death does not remain worthless.

Returning to the question posed at the beginning of this study, it is now possible to state that McCrae's poem reached more attention because he found a way to hide the ugly truth behind a romantic imagery, which even convinces the reader to follow his request of continuing what our forefathers had started. Kipling in contrary did not try to hide anything, he stated the plain facts and even warned those who were about to go to war (cf. Kipling Journal 51). Humans do not like to hear about the honest painful truth, because they intend to suppress the reality in order stay hopefully. That is the reason why McCrae's "In Flanders Fields" is a more famous than Kipling's "For All We Have and Are". Work Cited

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