

Perspective of Death and war in Rupert Brooke’s poem “The Soldier” and Randall Jarrell’s poem “The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner”

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ABSTRACT

The current paper attempted to convey the complex selves of the well-known war poets Rupert Brooke and Randall Jarrell during and after World Wars I and II. Randall Jarrell was able to express the bitter reality of the war because he participated in the World War II. He witnessed the horror and the destruction which included the deaths of his fellow soldiers, as a result he wrote poems that was brutal and full of ferocious imagery. In his poems, Jarrell presents the horrors of war focusing on the idea of death in it. According to Rupert Brooke, going to war is a noble endeavor and a chance to demonstrate one's patriotism and strength of character. With the outbreak of the World War I Brooke was deeply patriotic encouraging the young men to join in what he considered to be a noble fight. Thus he focused on the idea of death and patriotism. The soldiers that Brooke depicts are patriotic to their country; they are ready to sacrifice their life in order to defend their homelands.

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1. Introduction

After World War I, modern poetry developed further and continued to do so during and after the Second World War. Stephen Colbourn, (2006) pointed out that “English verse altered under the impact of mass murder in the trenches 1914-1918”. The poetry of this period came closer to the news. Instead of being revelers of honor, glory, patriotism, and remembrance, poets turned into war correspondents of emotion and agony (Pattu et al., 2022; Junaid et al., 2025). They stopped being blatantly national. Stephen Colbourn, (2006) stated that W. B. Yeats disagreed with the notion that mud and blood could be appropriate poetry subjects, which is where the change and difference lay.

In English literature, the term “war poetry” refers to poetry that was composed during World Wars I and II that depicted the atrocities of combat and the horrific deaths caused by it. War poetry is categorized as innovative, revolutionary, and nonconformist modern poetry. Lesley (1993) notes that contemporary poets attempted to develop new writing techniques in order to produce a distinct style. In actuality, the twentieth-century poetry underwent a significant transformation due to the First and Second World Wars.

Poets who lived through the war, like Rupert Brooke, Randall Jarrell, Wilfred Owen, Kipling, Karl Shapiro, were unable to write poetry for pleasure or amusement alone because the conflict altered their perspectives and sense of imagination. The horrific scenes of dead bodies and human parts being thrown onto the battlefield exposed the majority of them to a number of psychological issues. The physical and psychological aspects of war, such as the suffering, insanity, exhaustion, anxiety, and dehumanization of people, were the main subjects of war poetry. It occasionally tries to capture the moment by including shots of young soldiers in combat.

Samuel Hynes (1930) stated that “Anyone who reads war poets will sense at once the note of praise that comes through the violence, anger, and grief,” (23). He went on to say that “men may not perform great deeds any longer, but they can be tough, social, and humorous under stress, they can be loyal to each other, they can feel pity, and they can perform their meaningless destructive duties faithfully and with skill” (23). In fact, the poet’s opposition to war was evident in his quest to find the human factor that, despite their adversarial circumstances, unites every soldier.

According to Younes (2017), war poets have tried to alter the initially optimistic perception of war held by many by exposing the terrible toll that wars took on all people and by describing the mental and physical suffering that people endure both during and after wars. Therefore, the ugliness, brutality, and terror of wars were important themes of the war

poetry. Some poets embrace the humanitarian view that war is immoral and ought to be avoided at all costs, while others believe that rebellion and war poetry are unavoidable parts of life.

Even though it didn't belong to a specific school of poetry, war poetry was very influential because it gave rise to new forms of expression. Poetry had already been written about war, but never with such passion expressing suffering and agony. A war poem expresses the bitter reality that there is no winner in the war as all the parties are losers no matter what achievements they achieve due to the destruction and huge death tolls that result from the war. Moreover, the greatest war poets are always aware that they are engaging in a horrific compromise between aesthetic pleasure and human suffering. Its main themes are soldiers' fears and moral struggles, death, war, destruction, and pointless conflict. War poetry originated during the First and Second World Wars, and the poets who wrote about the horrors of war—particularly in the trenches—were known as the War Poets or "Trench Poets." The war poetry carried on the tradition of Georgian poetry and exhibited one of its main traits: an escape from reality.

The First and Second World Wars produced some of the most profound poetry ever written, perhaps evoking the mood and terrain of combat more than before. The poets of the First and Second World Wars, many of whom were killed, formed a collective voice that shed light on the aspirations and disappointments of a generation as well as the tragedies and irreversible effects of the war. In spite of the end of the First and Second World Wars, yet poets are still moved by and inspired by it. Accordingly, opinion about the war differed among poets, some poets do see war as a kind of patriotism, but other poets see it as a source of destruction as it is in reality.

2. Methodology

The technique of this comparative literary analysis centres on examining the viewpoints on death and war in Randall Jarrell's *"The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner"* and Rupert Brooke's *"The Soldier."* This involves analysing the thematic representations of death and conflict in each poem, identifying the key ideological differences—such as Brooke's patriotic idealisation of wartime sacrifice contrasted with Jarrell's sombre depiction of battle as mechanical and dehumanising—and consulting relevant secondary sources or critical perspectives to support the interpretations. The analysis also considers how each poet's historical and cultural context shapes their attitudes toward warfare. Attention is given to the tone, imagery, and symbolism that each poet employs to construct their narrative of death. Ultimately, this approach provides a deeper understanding of how poetry can reflect, critique, or reinforce societal beliefs about war and human mortality.

3. Result and Discussion

At the beginning of war poetry was used as propaganda to persuade young men to participate in war, so poets who won't have experienced the war have an idealistic view unlike those who participate in war and saw the horror of war. Rupert Brooke, the Georgian poet of the first World War and Randall Jarrell a United States poet of the second World War are representative of these facts in their poetry. The paper will explore Rupert Brooke and Randall Jarrell's life and philosophy and Analyzing Rupert Brooke's pome "The Soldier" and Randall Jarrell's poem "The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner".

3.1 Rupert Brooke and Randall Jarrell's life and philosophy

Rupert Brooke (1887–1915) was a Georgian poet from England. He was a soldier for England in World War I who lost his life at the age of 27 in the conflict in 1914. He was a member of the British Royal Naval Division when he died in Greece during World War I from blood poisoning. In 1915, after Brooke succumbed to blood poisoning at a young age, Churchill Winston wrote an obituary notice for him that was published in The Times. Churchill stated that:

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"The thoughts to which he [Brooke] gave expression in the very few incomparable war sonnets which he has left behind will be shared by many thousands of young men moving resolutely and blithely forward into this, the hardest, the cruelest, and the least-rewarded of all the wars that men have fought" (Bloom, 2003, 38).

His death, his intense personal attraction, and the poetry's allure turned him into a symbol for all the brilliant young people lost in that conflict. Brooke was extraordinarily attractive. Given his great poetic talent and fervent patriotism, it makes perfect sense that he would occupy the status of the hero at the beginning of World War I. He has joined the War but he has died of an illness before taking part in the campaign. He resided in the Grant Chester village, which is close to

Cambridge, from 1909 to 1912. He wrote a great deal of pastoral poetry there, which is a kind of poetry that draws on the English and classical traditions for discussing nature and appreciating its beauty (Greene, et al., 2012).

The idea of publishing "Georgian" anthologies was his idea from the start. Among the collection of five war sonnets known as *Nineteen Fourteen in the Tate* of 1914, Brooke wrote his most well-known poetry. Brooke expresses joy in the first sonnet, "Peace," at the idea that the war has given a generation of people who had been living meaningless, empty lives a much-needed break.

His most well-known and outwardly patriotic poem, "The Soldier," serves as the coda to the sonnet sequence. When he imagines his own death, he embraces it as a chance to make a valiant sacrifice by dying for his country, as opposed to expressing sadness or fear at such an occurrence. Brooke's poems about the War, like "The Soldier," vividly capture his flamboyant personality and sense of patriotism. Whereas the majority of war poets, including Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon, depict war as a terrifying and terrible endeavor, Brooke sees it as a magnificent undertaking that offers a chance to demonstrate one's bravery and patriotism. His true interest in nature is evident in Brooke's nature poems.

Randall Jarrell (1914– 1965) was an American poet, author and writer. He was one of the well-known American war poets who wrote about the Second World War (Vaughan, 2009). He attended Vanderbilt University and was a Nashville, Tennessee native. Although he was very close to the poets that comprised the Fugitives group while he was a student at Vanderbilt, it is not thought that their work had a significant influence on his writing. Along with being a respected creative, Jarrell was also a respected academic and literary critic.

In 1942 he enlisted in the US Army Air Corps, which is the same year he published *Blood from a Stranger*, his debut collection of poetry. But he was not qualified to fly, so he became a control tower operator for the Army instead. His experiences in the Army were a major influence on *Little Friend, Little Friend* (1945) and *Losses* (1948), which dealt with the moral dilemmas and anxieties of soldiers. In this vein, one of Jarrell's most well-known poems is *The Death of the Ball-Turret Gunner*.

Thus, instead of becoming well-known as a poet during this time, he became known as a critic. Edmund Wilson, who featured Jarrell's critique in *The New Republic*, encouraged him to continue, and soon Jarrell was a ferociously funny poet's critic. His criticism started to shift in the post-war era, emphasizing more positive aspects. Jarrell's appreciations of William Carlos Williams, Elizabeth Bishop, and Robert Lowell contributed to their rise to prominence as important American poets. In addition, he is well known for his essays on Wallace Stevens, Walt Whitman, Marianne Moore, Robert Frost, and other poets, most of which were collected in *Poetry and the Age* (1953). Jarrell's poetry was greatly influenced by these writers. He is regarded as the most intelligent poetry critic of his generation by many academics. His poetry career gained momentum only after the publication of "The Woman at the Washington Zoo," his National Book Award-winning collection, in 1960. Several critics believe that his final book, *The Lost World*, which was released in 1966, solidified his reputation. (<https://www.americanpoems.com/poets/Randall-Jarrell/>)

Jarrell was killed in 1965 when he was struck by a car while strolling along a road in Chapel Hill close to dusk, according to Meyers, J. (1982). Jarrell had recently received treatment for a mental illness and had attempted suicide before, so the coroner's decision to rule the death accidental raised questions about the circumstances.

3.2 Analysis of Rupert Brooke's pome "The Soldier" and Randall Jarrell's poem "The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner"

During World combat I, Rupert Brooke's poem "The Soldier" served as a symbol of combat poetry. The poem "The Soldier" was written by him in 1914, the year when the First World War began. This poem is a potent example of an optimistic and patriotic poetry written by a soldier for his homeland, since it depicts England as a nurturing paradise. The soldier's devotion to England is so strong that he believes it is the site where his existence began and where his thoughts will ultimately return when he passes away. The public at the time appreciated the poem, which encapsulated the initial enthusiasm for the war before the somber realities of protracted hostilities became apparent. Nowadays, it's thought that the poem is a little naive and offers little insight into what it's really like to experience war and that it effectively distills and captures a particular kind of patriotism.

A great deal of poetry was written during World War I, a conflict that greatly impacted poets, especially those from Great Britain. Of those poems, *The Soldier* by Soldier Rupert Brooke is one of the most frequently quoted. Brooke was one of the first poets to produce poetry; other early poets who responded to the hardship and trauma caused by the "Great War" in different ways included, Robert Graves, Isaac Rosenberg, and Edmund Blunden. Whereas the majority of war poets, including Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon, depict war as a terrifying and terrible endeavor, Brooke sees it as

a magnificent undertaking that offers a chance to demonstrate one's bravery and patriotism. As Bloom (2003) succinctly stated: "More recent critics have complained that 'The Soldier' is riddled with sentimentality and narcissistic fantasy" (p.36).

"The Soldier" is more of an elegy on sacrifice than a poem about war. Although the speaker is a soldier and the poem's apparent subject is war, nothing in it alluded to actual combat. Rather, "The Soldier" is a hymn more to the ideal of a pastoral England than it is to the England of Brooke's day. The modern world, with its factories and cities, was left out of this nostalgic vision. The poem by Brooke is an elegy on the transcendent qualities of nature as they are reflected in the English countryside.

Brooke focuses on the idea of death and patriotism. Thus, the Soldier that Brooke depicts is a patriotic to his country, he is ready to sacrifice his life in order to defend and safe his homeland. This poem implied that people were formed by their home culture and environment and that their country was something more precious than their lives. Through that, *the soldier* can assert his own identity and happiness by scarifying his life for the sake of his country. Despite the fact that most people are frightened of dying, particularly the brutal ways of death that caused by war, the speaker in "The Soldier" is prepared to die because he believes that it is hid duty to protect, defend and martyred for the sake of his country and his beloved nation. For this reason, the speaker does not want his death to be mourned. In fact, Brooke celebrates the idea of death that caused by war because through martyrdom *the soldier* will be remembered forever. He links the idea of death with immortality explaining that the death of a soldier while protecting, defending and martyring for the sake of his country is the noblest way to die achieving the noblest goal embodying utmost levels of courage and patriotism. Brooke believed that through patriotism and sacrificing one's life for his country one can achieve immortality proving his true belonging and identity.

Brooke examined the relationship between a devoted British soldier and their country of origin in his poem "The Soldier." The poem suggests that people were shaped by their upbringing and culture and that their nation was something worth sacrificing their lives for, as this soldier fervently discusses his connection to England. Because he feels that England is the source of both his identity and sense of belonging, the soldier is prepared to sacrifice himself for the benefit of his country. That's why this poem is so patriotic; it implies that every nation has its own identity and moral standards, and that England's moral standards are especially noble.

Yousef (2022) explained the title of the poem in his article "Rupert Brooke's *The Soldier* Revisited: A New Perspective "as follows:

Data 2

"Although the title refers to one soldier, the text as a whole suggests that it is meant to represent all British soldiers. The poem as a whole demonstrates that the identity of the speaker is closely connected to that of his country and that the "England" of the poem is a homeland for all British soldiers and the soldier is a true representative of every Englishman. The speaker in the sonnet ultimately loses his individual identity and identifies himself with his homeland. (131)

Rupert Brooke mentioned in the first stanza that:

Data 3

If I should die, think only this of me:
That there's some corner of a foreign field
That is forever 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.

(Brooke, 2006:1-8)

The first stanza opens with a feeling that might be called dread. Though, given that the poem essentially accepts combat death rather than condemning it, one might assume that this indicates the poem's deceptive nature. This almost goes against the well-known statement made by General Patton, which states, "The subject of war is not to die for the nation you love but to have the opposing bastard die for his." (*The Soldier Summary and Analysis - JavaTpoint*, n.d.). If Brooke's poetry about this yearning for death didn't have the underlying assumption that something greater arrives with

death, they would just be cryptic and depressing. The collapse of the Old World on a continental scale imbued the Europeans with the belief that the 20th century would be unlike anything before it, even if that belief was seductive. There is a feeling that transcends death, where everything is left behind and one can truly become immortal. Brooke outlines a poetic promise of immortality in this state that is greater than anything that the turn of the century could have demanded. The first line of the poem establishes the tone, almost as though the author is confessing something in a journal or piece of writing. (n.d.)

Data 4

That is forever England. There shall be
In that rich earth a richer dust concealed;
A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,
(Brooke, 2006:3-5)

After his second and third lines, the narrator instantly turned his impending death into a positive. Since women were not allowed to serve in the military at the start of World War I, it is reasonable to assume that the narrator is a man. Since he speaks of dying in an alien field, a battlefield is most likely what he means when he says this.

In the first stanza, the fifth line the poet said: "A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware"

Data 5

In this line of the poem, Brooke has cleverly personified England as being almost motherly towards the soldier. He does this by implying that England give birth to and raised the soldier in the way a mother would, which represents that the soldier has a strong emotional connection to his country and explains why the soldier feels so compelled to protect it – because to him England, 'the mother country,' is family. ("The Soldier" Analysis, n.d.)

Moreover, the poet expands on the idea of dust by explaining how England created and shaped that dust. He is attempting to express the idea that he is the essence of England, but the larger takeaway is that all soldiers who give their lives in defense of their country are held to the same standards. Those soldiers spread Englishness almost like seeds because they are "shaped" by English culture when they die overseas.

Data 6

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.
(Brooke, 2006:6-8)

The last three lines of the Octave are packed with ideas of nationalism. They do a fantastic job of painting a favorable picture of England. The natural world is invoked to achieve this. Speaking of flowers, the air and rivers, all these elements help to express the impression that England is a beautiful nation.

The storyteller implies that a soldier could help transfer the exact components that made up that beauty to another country by doing that. This would certainly be a very noble thing to do, if it were ever carried out.

Data 7

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. (Brooke, 2006: 9-14)

In sonnets, new ideas are usually introduced in the second stanza. Accordingly, "Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day," states in the final paragraph. Once more, England is represented as a woman who is a very uplifting and joyful force. But this is not an accurate account of what the war was like. This might be viewed as propaganda in certain ways because the reality of the war is very bitter as war causes physical and psychological injuries. Although it was and still isn't a good or happy thing, this poem's line that describes England as "happy in her day" misrepresents the benefits of war. This is just another way that English culture is being praised. This particular passage from "*The Soldier*" exemplifies "the glory of war," which was widely celebrated at the time ("*The Soldier*" Analysis, n.d.).

Brooke makes numerous, specific references to England throughout the entire poem. Rather than illustrating patriarchy in general, which highlights how distinctively English the honor of dying for his country is. This shows that *the soldier* thinks England is much bigger than all the other nations fighting in the war and that it deserves to be protected at least twice as much as the others.

The second stanza, "Look, this is what you'd be dying for; isn't it great?" echoes the first stanza's claim that fighting for one's country is acceptable if it means losing one's life. The final line is really deep and impressive. It uses very upbeat rhetoric to convey the idea that dying on the battlefield brings about peace. *The Soldier*, is a poem by Brooke, captures the reader's attention with its powerful use of vivid imagery to convey to them the virtues of fighting for one's country and the greatness of England. ("*The Soldier*" Analysis, n.d.).

In contrast, Randall Jarrell's poem "*The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner*" exemplified war poetry in the Second World War. The speaker of Randall Jarrell's brief poem, "*The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner*," is a mourner of his own death in this postmodern elegy. In addition, the poem criticizes the catastrophic nature of war. The unpredictable aspect of faith and the fleeting nature of life are the subjects of Randall Jarrell's poem "*The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner*."

A brief poem of five lines, "*The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner*," describes the life of a young man who is killed while performing his job. As though the speaker were the ball turret gunner himself, the poem is written in the first-person perspective. Jarrell sums up the birth of a man who ends up in the hands of the government and is forced to fight in five lines. The man, like many other young men who worked in the same occupation during the war, is destined for the same end. The poem's brief length corresponds to the life of a young gunner. The gunner is killed, and the actual reality that nobody or anything is particularly affected by his passing. "*The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner*" presents a number of themes and offers excellent illustrations of the various poetic devices.

The poem by Jarrell, "*The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner*" clearly presents the anti-war imagery of the poem. The imagery drawn by Jarrell is that of sleep, animalist circumstances, and birth as the poet tries to present to the readers the nightmares of war (Bassett, 1978). Author Randall Jarrell explores the ugliness and cruelty of war in his poem "*The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner*," as well as *the soldier's* role in a time of war. In order to make his point—that huge numbers of lives were wasted in war, and that soldiers are seen as disposable or expendable—Jarrell employs an elaborate metaphor and informal language toward the end of the poem.

Nowadays, people tend to view war as something magnificent and powerful. Many films omit scenes in which young soldiers sacrifice their lives and thousands of people die systematically from non-heroic causes. The poem "*The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner*" made an effort to address some military-related topics. The narrator of this poem conveys the horror, the destruction, and grief of war through imagery, language, and melancholy. In fact, it discusses the pointlessness of life and the brutality of war. Probably the riskiest position on the crew belonged to the ball turret gunner. The gunner felt extremely claustrophobic once inside the ball turret (*The Experiences of a World War 1 Soldier - WriteWork*, n.d.).

Data 8

'The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner'

From my mother's sleep I fell into the State,

And I hunched in its belly till my wet fur froze.

Six miles from Earth, loosed from its dream of life.

I woke to the black flak and the nightmare fighters.

When I died they washed me out of the turret with a hose

(Jarrell, 1945, 1-5)

We quickly realize from the poem's title, "The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner," that it is about both war and the death which is the main cause of the war. There is a physical and psychological component of this death. Jarrell's title transports us back to the height of the "Ball Turret Gunner" era during World War II. Baldwin, E (2024) has pointed out that the title of this poem "The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner is one of its most complicated features. The words "turret" and "gunner," especially together, are likely to confuse the majority of readers. The title refers to a ball turret, a feature of a bomber aircraft which was like the B-17 or B-24".

It demonstrates the men who lived in a bubble resembling a rotating machine gun device at the bottom of the planes. Located at the base of the aircraft, the plexiglass ball turret was recessed. Machine guns were fired by the gunner who was positioned inside the sphere. He could see the enemy no matter where they were because his seat could rotate 360 degrees. Sharma, Kedar N, (2013) asserted that "The title of the poem is significant as it states the death of a man, a mere soldier, whose death is so common to the state. But to general people it strikes a stark, grim tone".

In the poem, Jarrell presents the horrors of war. The poem begins with an ironical touch of the imagery of sleep. The imagery presents two ideas – first is a state of sleep in numb consciousness, and the second is in nightmarish consciousness. Jarrell implies that only when a mother is sleeping, could the State take away her child to war. The second imagery shows that a soldier could fight only when he is asleep. The irony presented in the poem is that life for a soldier is a "dream" while reality surfaces as a "nightmare fighter". The animal imagery of war is presented through the theme of dehumanization. The soldier realizes that the jacket presented by the Air Force is not sufficient to keep him warm as his "wet fur froze." The birth or immortality theme is reiterated in the poem with the third imagery wherein Jarrell shows a soldier positioned himself in his mother's fetus:

Data 9

From my mother's sleep I fell into the State,
And I hunched in its belly till my wet fur froze.
(Jarrell, 1945, 1-2)

The first line describes how the B-24 enters the German airspace, the ball turret gunner climbs in and he is lowered to battle stations. The "mother" is, of course the bomber, and the flight to German airspace was boring and innerving, like a nightmarish sleep, while the State is the combat readiness.

In the first line of the poem, Jarrell presents the traumatic imagery of birth separated from the womb, and provides the image of the harsh realities of the war. Thus, birth for Jarrell does not signify life but death. Baldwin, E (2024) explained that his "mother's sleep" and "the State," the speaker makes an unexpected and perplexing opening statement. Both the speaker's mother and the beginnings of life itself are metaphorically represented by the term "mother" in these lines. The speaker falls, and the image of the mother sleeping follows. As he "into the State," she drifts off to sleep and dreams. It seems clear from the outset that this is something bad and outside of his control.

The expression "my mother's sleep" is the first clue of the womb metaphor in this poem. The poem explores the metaphor of the womb, where the speaker falls from the womb of the mother to the womb of the state, feeling feeble and powerless. The speaker's position in the womb is paralleled to the position of a ball turret gunner in a bomber craft, facing extreme cold temperatures and a fetal position. The speaker's wet fur froze, contrasting the warmth and nurturing womb of the mother with the cold and indifferent womb of the state.

The "state" metaphor is further explored, with the capitalization of the first letter making it at once more and less complicated. The "state" represents a new way of being and understanding of the world, focusing on war, death, and loss. The speaker, once young and innocent, is now in a different "belly" fighting for his life. The speaker connects the bomber's "belly" to the word "mother" in the first line, serving as a conduit into a new world. The poem concludes with the speaker hunching and huddling in the belly until his "wet fur froze," evoking the image of a newborn animal with wet fur from birth.

Data 10

Six miles from Earth, loosed rom its dream of life.

I woke to the black flak and the nightmare fighters.

When I died they washed me out of the turret with a hose

(Jarrell, 1945, 3-5)

The speaker begins a new sentence in the third line of the poem "*The Death of a Ball Turret Gunner*." He talks about flying "six miles from earth" in this passage. He exists in this horrible new world completely apart from the "dream of life" that is happening beneath him. It all seems so far away, everything there, everything he used to be. Death is a constant in the new world the speaker is living in. It's impossible to avoid it or get it out of your head.

Six miles is some 10 km or 30,000 ft in Aviationese. The air combat over Germany happened in high altitudes—much higher than at Pacific or Mediterranean. The ball turret is fragile and vulnerable, and the gunner simply cannot afford anything but to concentrate on what he is doing - and consider himself already dead. The German fighters would attack the bombers from below; and they would attempt to silence the ball turrets first so that their attacks would face less resistance.

In the fourth line of his poem, He says that when he wakes up, he sees "the nightmare fighters" and "black flak," which are exploding shells. The word "dream" in the previous line contrasts with this intriguing juxtaposition, which also connects to the word "sleep" in line one. Our "nightmare" soon resumes as we awaken to "black flak" and feel the stress of the Ball Turret Gunner's final moments. Far from over, this "nightmare" is. The poem ends with a chilling image that Jarrell conveys to us about the Ball Turret Gunners' passing, "when I died."

Flak is German for *Fliegerabwehrkanone*, anti-aircraft gun (or gunnery). The exploding shells would leave black clouds of smoke, and broadcast shrapnel around. The Flak was radar controlled, and the shells would explode exactly at the altitude where the planes flew. You could not fight the flak; you could only hope you would not get hit. The rhyming "black flak" describes the ominous booming sounds of the shells exploding.

But even worse were the German fighters, who were a true nightmare. Armed with heavy machine guns and 20 or 30 mm cannons, they would at first shoot the turrets and silence them, rendering the bomber defenseless. They would approach engines screaming, the alliterate "nightmare fighters" and shoot; against them, the ball turret gunner had only two machine guns. One single 30 mm shell would weigh 330 g (the same as a beer can), be filled with explosives, spread shrapnel when hit - and could blow the ball turret into smithereens and the occupant into mincemeat - literally. The bomber could be literally a bloody abattoir if it survived the mission. The gunner is more or less a sacrificial lamb. He exists only to defend his mother - the bomber - and he is completely overwhelmed by the enemy. He exists only to shoot and distract the attackers as well as he can before he gets killed.

The poem's fifth and last line informed the reader that the speaker had actually been dead the entire time. He passed away in his ball turret, and they had to "wash him out with a hose" after the plane touched down. The man's life and the poem come to an extremely horrific and unsettling conclusion with this. According to Richard Fein (1961),

Data 11

"the poem laments the "helplessness" of its "victimized" gunner, dead before he ever had a chance to live (hence the poem's rapid jump from birth to death with hardly a word said about the eighteen or nine-teen intervening years or even the pause of the expected comma between "when I died" and "they"). A deconstruction of the poem reveals, however, a message less stable than a first reading may find it". (23)

The Turret Ball gunner says "They washed me out of the turret with a hose." This was an inhumane way to end a life, and it is this disregard for life that compels us to doubt the humanity of war. Thus, war is compared to an abortion. The individual is flushed out because he is no longer useful. The picture's icy tone emphasizes even more how war is the antithesis of what it means to be human. Humans and war are the natural extremities of a spectrum. Despite their inherent oppositeness, they both have to be present. We lose our humanity in war. In fact, Jarrell uses a whisper and the metaphor of a "nightmare" to remind us of our humanity.

Data 12

He was once born into life from his mother's womb. Now, he's born into death from the womb of the plane. In both instances, a mess is associated with the process. Beyond the metaphor, Jarrell is trying to draw attention to the fact that this man's death, just like thousands of others, was not noble or dramatic. He died, and his remains were disposed of in the most concise way possible. (Baldwin, 2024)

The aforementioned lines highlight the pointlessness of life since, in most situations, and particularly in this poem, the ball turret and gunner meet their demise as they drop out of the fuselage of the Air Force plane, leaving the "womb" behind. Jarrell may have been implying that everyone born into this world will eventually experience death, some more quickly than others, by drawing a comparison between this and actual childbirth. Jarrell, a combatant himself, might also be enlightening us on the brutality of war. Those who fight are frequently very young, having just finished their training. It's possible that Jarrell is trying to express in this poem the fear felt by a lot of young airmen who were thrust into this hostile environment after being removed from their mother's comfort.

Sharma, Kedar N, (2013) asserted that Posthumous (after death) situations are what the speaker envisions. He refers to the act of washing a mother's womb after an abortion, which ends an unwanted pregnancy. The soldier is cleaned out of Ball Turret with a hose because, following his death in combat, he too becomes an unwanted baby for the country. They would wash away all of the blood, not exalt it. Jarrell brings up the miserable circumstances facing the warfighters. The speaker then imagines that there is no point to war and that soldiers who die are just forgotten and never given a reason to be remembered. Jarrell seems to be criticizing the war, saying it is completely pointless. Consequently, war is the main cause of physical injuries, as soldiers lose some of their limbs, causing them permanent disability. They may also lose vital parts of their bodies, such as loss of sight and hearing, in addition to sustaining serious, fatal wounds and also losing their lives due to the explosion. On the other hand, war is also the main cause of grief for families as they lose their sons and loved ones in battles. In addition, war is the main cause of psychological injuries such as trauma and a feeling of loss of safety and reassurance. Accordingly, war means destruction, death, and loss of loved ones.

4. Conclusion

To conclude, Brooke focuses on the idea of death and patriotism. The Soldiers that Brooke depicts are patriotic to their country, they are ready to sacrifice their lives in order to save their homeland. The poem suggested that people are formed by their home environment and culture and that their country was something, precious than their lives. Through that, the soldier can assert his own identity and belonging by sacrificing his life for his country. Brooke celebrates the idea of death that caused by war which will make the soldier remembered forever. He links death with immortality saying that dying for defending one's country is the best way that enables one to die with pride. For Brooke, Patriotism and sacrificing one's life for one's country lead one to confirm his real identity.

The poem by Randall Jarrell criticizes the callous, dehumanizing authority of the political state, which regards its citizens as nothing more than soldiers. The poem is about the insanity and cruelty of the war, especially the dehumanizing nature of the technological war. The gunner sits more or less helplessly in the ball turret - very much like a baby foetus in mother's womb - and he is cruelly aborted by nameless anti-aircraft gunnery which he cannot fight, or by ruthless enemy fighters spewing explosive shells onto you and who want to silence the turret by killing you. It is literally like performing an abortion to his mother - the bomber, which often had girls' names. When he dies, he becomes merely biomass to be washed away - a standard operational procedure in an abortion.

The poet compares the mother's womb to the ball turret of a fighter plane so that highlight the horrors of war through the use of abortion imagery. He draws a comparison between the mother's natural womb and the ball turret's womb. The natural womb of a mother was warm and caring, but the womb of a nation was cold and uncaring toward its soldiers. The ball turret and the mother's womb are similar in that they both depict the fetus in the womb of the mother and the hunched soldiers inside.

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