



Tikrit University

College of Education for Women

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Subject: Rupert Brooke's "The Soldier"

Asst. Prof Rudaina Abdulrazzaq M. Saeed Ph.D

Rudaina63@tu.edu.iq

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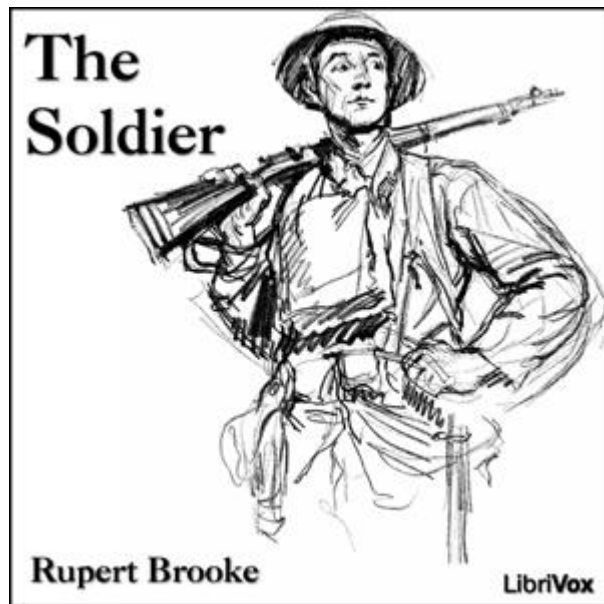
Rupert Brooke

Rupert Brooke was an English poet known for his sonnets written during the First World War. He died in 1915 of blood poisoning at the age of 27. He wrote poetry from an early age and attended Cambridge University. He joined the English Navy during the first year of the First World War (1914). However, he died the following year—not in warfare, as the patriotic tone of the poem might lead the reader to believe, but from poisoning brought on by an insect bite. His early poetic influences include W.B. Yeats, Charles Baudelaire, John Keats, and Oscar Wilde.

Rupert Brooke was a prominent English poet in the early 20th century who is best-remembered for his WWI poem, 'The Soldier.' His poetry often dealt with themes of love, mortality, and nostalgia for an idealized past. Brooke's work reflects the anxieties and uncertainties of the time period, including the looming threat of World War I. In this poem (The Soldier), he shows off his skill with personal narratives.

Introduction

"The Soldier" is a poem by Rupert Brooke written during the first year of the First World War (1914). It is a deeply patriotic and idealistic poem that expresses a soldier's love for his homeland in this case England, which is portrayed as a kind of nurturing paradise. Indeed, such is the soldier's bond with England that he feels his country to be both the origin of his existence and the place to which his consciousness will return when he dies. The opening line provides a tone to the poem that makes it feel almost like an epistolary as if the poet is confessing in a letter or journal. He talks of his death in a foreign field. But rather than lamenting the notion of his own demise, he claims that it will mean there is a piece of England in that foreign country. So the suggestion here is that in some ways his death would be a victory.



The Soldier (1914)

**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.**

**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.**

Analysis of The Soldier

Stanza One

**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 the suns of home.**

The poem starts off with what might be considered a sense of foreboding. Although one might think that this hints at the nature of the poem that is misleading as the poem almost espouses the idea of dying during wartime, rather than condemning it. This almost flies in the face of General Patton who once said "The object of war is not to die for your country but to make the other bastard die for his"! The opening line also provides a tone to the poem that makes it feel almost like an epistolary as if the poet is confessing in a letter or journal.

As soon as the second and third lines we see the narrator put a positive spin on his potential demise. I say "his" assuming the gender of the narrator. Unfortunately at the start of the First World War, the roles of women in the military were non-existent so it is safe to assume a narrator is a man. He talks of his death in a foreign field; this is presumably a reference to a battlefield. But rather than lamenting the notion of his own demise, he claims that it will mean there is a piece of England in that foreign country. So the suggestion here is that in some ways his death would be a victory.

Referring to his corpse as being "richer dust" is an interesting choice of words here and perhaps a reference to the phrase used during a funeral service. The classic "ashes to ashes, dust to dust" line. This idea that his body is simply made of dust isn't necessarily totally symbolic. After all, we are primarily a carbon-based life form! The dust metaphor continues into the fifth line where the poet talks about how that dust was formed and shaped by England. The concept that he is trying to put across is that

The use of language in this stanza is really interesting. It talks of hearts and minds in an attempt to personify England. The reason for doing this is because people have a vested interest in people. If you can humanize a country you can increase its value in the eyes of people. What I mean by this is that a person probably wouldn't justify dying for bits of rock and dirt but for another person. Well, that could be something worth giving your life for.

Note the use of the word "eternal". Whilst not referencing England directly its use is very deliberate, it puts the thought of eternity into your mind so you associate that with England. This poem has a sense that England will prevail, and that our sovereignty is eternal .

The poem draws to its conclusion in the final target. Once again this is used to extol the virtues of English culture. This is made to feel very visceral by drawing on the senses. This isn't just about how England looks, but how it sounds as well. These descriptions are almost a way to justify what was said in the first stanza.

If the first stanza is saying it's okay to die in war because it is good for your country, the second stanza is justifying that by suggesting "look, this is what you'd be dying for, isn't it great?"

The final line is very clever. It uses really positive language in order to infer that dying in the field of battle ends up with you being at peace. It results in you ending up in heaven. Not just any heaven though, an English heaven. Can we then infer from this that there is a suggestion that an English heaven would be superior to any other nation's heaven? I

mean most religions would suggest that all nations share one heaven! I don't think that is what is being suggested here. Rather I think that the phrase is used to make a comparison. The suggestion is that England is the closest you can come to heaven in the mortal world.

Themes

The themes in this poem include **War, sacrifice, pride** and **English nationalism (Patriotism)**.

The poem is trying to instill a feeling of patriotism and pride of nation. Although in the poem it is specifically English patriotism, the feeling can be translated to any country. Although some of the subjects are war and death, the poem does not directly acknowledge these, in fact only very briefly mentioning death in the first line ["if I should die, think only this of me"]. The poem is overall uplifting poem, reminiscing his memories of home and life in England. Although the descriptions don't really work, it does make me feel slightly proud, seeing as we were in the same war and fought a similar fight for the empire.

