8

# Apragmatic study of patriotism in 'for the fallen' war poem

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**Abstract**

At the start of the conflict, most of the war poetry was composed by civilians who had little or no experience in combat and was all about patriotism and the nobleness of war. This study is to try to discuss the dominant theme 'patriotism' in the "For the Fallen" war poem by Laurence Binyon; to analyze the figurative languages to reveal this theme in such poem and point out the closest meaning of the simile, metaphor, personification, paradox, and hyperbole; and to analyze the relationship between the special uses of the figurative languages and this theme. It is used as a purpose to make the readers understand more about figurative language as a pragmatic theory. The research employs the qualitative and quantitative methods as the types of the research. Techniques are used of collecting data by searching then downloading the poem text, reading the stanzas, identifying the types of figurative languages which indicate the patriotism and underlying them, and identifying the most dominant type of figures of speech in such poem. The selection of these devices is done on the basis of MaQuarrie and Mick's (1996) classification. The result of the study shows that: Based on the frequency of occurrence: Metaphor which is the dominant type about (37.5%) which always uses an implicit comparison in the poem. The second position is personification about (18.75%), and the third positions are simile and alliteration about (12.5%) and the fourth positions are elegy, allusion, and repetition about (6.25%).

***Keywords***: War Poetry, Patriotism, Figurative Speech.

**المستخلص**

في بداية الصراع, كان معظم شعر الحرب مؤلفا من المدنيين الذين لم تكن لديهم الخبرة في القتال على الاطلاق. شعر الحرب اغلبه كان يدور الوطنية والنبل. هذه الدراسة هي محاولة مناقشة الموضوع المهيمن وهو "الوطنية" في قصيدة الحرب "من أجل الذين سقطوا" للورانس بينيون؛ لتحليل اللغات المجازية والكشف عن هذا الموضوع في هذه القصيدة والإشارة إلى أقرب معاني التشبيه والاستعارة والتشخيص والمفارقة والمبالغة؛ وتحليل العلاقة بين الاستخدامات الخاصة للغات التصويرية. وهذا الموضوع يتم استخدامه كغرض لجعل القراء يفهمون المزيد عن اللغة التصويرية كنظرية عملية. يستخدم البحث الأساليب النوعية والكمية كأنواع البحث. تقنيات جمع البيانات من خلال البحث ثم تنزيل نص القصيدة، وقراءة الأبيات، والتعرف على أنواع اللغات المجازية في القصيدة, والتعرف على النوع الاكثر شيوعا. تم اختيار هذه الأجهزة على أساس تصنيف MaQuarrie and Mick (1996) . لقد تم التحليل العملي للغة المجازية في هذه القصيدة لأن بعض أقوال هذه القصيدة تستخدم لغة مجازية. وأظهرت نتائج الدراسة ما يلي: بناءً على تكرار حدوثها; الاستعارة وهي النوع السائد بحوالي (37.5%) والتي تستخدم دائماً المقارنة الضمنية في القصيدة. والنوع الثاني هو التشبيه بحوالي (18.75%)، والنوع الثالث هما التشبيه والجناس بحوالي (12.5%)، والنوع الرابع هم المرثية والإشارة والتكرار بحوالي (6.25%).

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** شعر الحرب، الوطنية، الخطاب المجازي.

## 1. Introduction

At the beginning of the war, all war poetry was about patriotism, indicating nobleness of war, written by those who had no or little experience of war, mostly by civilians. the writer deals with analyzing figurative language in the war poem “For the Fallen” written by Laurence Binyon. This paper is concerned with a study of the work of the most important First World War poet, Laurence Binyon. Binyon's poetry was concerned with the theme of patriotism, nationalism and the immortality of soldiers. His poem ‘For the Fallen’ is a beautiful and powerful war poem. It addresses the losses England suffered in World War I while celebrating the soldier’s patriotism and bravery.

Figurative language is roughly defined as any expression of an idea that is not expressed in a conventional way. (Perrinem, 1977: 61). Figurative language is defined as language that is employed imaginatively rather than literarily. The meaning is not meant to be taken literally. Figurative language stimulates the imagination and offers fresh perspectives on the modern environment. It is used in poetry, drama, music, and movies, as well as in everyday conversation (Tarigan, 1985: 179).

The present study aims at:

1. Illustrating the pragmatic realization of figures of speech in ‘For the Fallen’ poem by Laurence Binyon that expresses the patriotic intention of the soldiers.
2. Understanding what figurative language really means in order to express the patriotic intention of the poet in this poem.
3. Identifying the most dominant type of figures of speech in such poem.

## 2 Theoretical Framework
### 2.1 Key Words
### 2.2 War Poetry

War poetry became a genre with the great outpouring that occurred between 1914 and 1918. The massive impact of the great modern wars of the 20th and 21st centuries has led to the development of war poetry as a literary trend and possibly a genre. The majority of literature presents it in various ways. The primary connection between war poets and war poetry is ultimately rooted in their direct involvement in conflict and battles on the front lines. Additionally, only a small number of the thousands of army poets who lived are remembered now. The First World War broke out in July 1914 and was meant to end by Christmas of that same year, but it continued until 1918. As a result, young men were asked to enlist in the army from all over the world, and they offered their services and loyalty to their country. Thousands of young men joined the army to fight in the war with the only belief that fighting for one's nation was a noble endeavor and that dying for it was bravery (Baldwin, 2021).

Before entering the army, these young men had no idea how long the war would last or how much damage it would bring about. Through their patriotic poetry, writers like Thomas Hardy, Rupert Brooke, Laurence Binyon, and many more inspired the people of their nation when the war started in 1914. English war poets have been writing since the Anglo-Saxon era, and most of them were laypeople who had no firsthand experience of fighting. Therefore, everything they published was either their own interpretation of the reality of war or their own ideas about it. 'For the Fallen' by Laurence Binyon is a beautiful and powerful war poem. It addresses the losses England suffered in World War I while celebrating the soldier's patriotism and bravery (Baldwin, 2021).

#### 2.2.1 Robert Laurence Binyon (1869--1943)

Throughout his career, poet and art historian Robert Laurence Binyon (1869–1943) wrote studies of Dutch, British, and Asian art at the British Museum. At the age of sixteen, he had his first poem published, and he wrote poetry all of his life. Shortly after the start of World War I, on September 21, 1914, Binyon wrote the elegy "For the Fallen," which would go on to become his most well-known poem, in The Times of

London. Predictive of the immense losses that the United Kingdom would incur over the ensuing four years of conflict, Sir Edward Elgar set the poem to music for his choral composition The Spirit of England (1916–17). "For the Fallen" was often read aloud during Remembrance Day services honoring Britain's wartime losses. This tradition of remembering the fallen has persisted to this day. Portions of the poem were carved on a great deal of tombstones and cenotaphs following the war. Here is a tiny volume, For the Fallen and Other Poems, released in 1917, which includes three of Binyon's wartime poems, "For the Fallen," "The Fourth of August," and "To Women," together with corresponding plates. The book is a notable illustration of a compilation of poetry from World War I. The three poems were first published in a longer collection titled The Winnowing Fan: Poems on the Great War, which was released in the latter part of 1914 (Sorensen, 2014).

**2.3 Patriotism**

Patriotism, love for or devotion to one's country, as the dictionary definition has it, is a popular topic in the literature on political theory and philosophy. One reason for its popularity is probably the preponderance of conceptions that see it as moderate, in contrast to nationalism. As George Orwell wrote in his 1945 book *Notes on Nationalism*, "patriotism is of its nature defensive, both militarily and culturally (Miscevic, 2022). Primoratz (2016) distinguishes patriotism into 5 types as follows:

1. Extreme patriotism that allegedly trumps moral considerations that conflict with it.
2. Extreme patriotism understood as the central moral virtue.
3. Moderate patriotism.
4. Patriotism as a morally indifferent preference, and
5. A distinctively ethical version of patriotism.

"For the Fallen" honors British soldiers died in WWI, highlighting their sacrifice and the ultimate act of patriotism, emphasizing the nobility of their sacrifice. The poem portrays England as a "mother" mourning the loss of WWI soldiers, emphasizing the emotional loss and the importance of remembering these men. The poem emphasizes the sacrifices of soldiers as part of England's body and soul, highlighting their immense pain and the importance of protecting a unified national identity. It respects the gravity of their loss and justifies their deaths by making them inextricable from the cause and

country they fought for. The poem highlights the sacrifices of soldiers for England's freedoms, describing their deaths as "august and royal," implying that their noble cause elevated their deaths to the level of royalty. The speaker emphasizes the bravery and patriotism of soldiers who remained unafraid against uncounted odds, highlighting their belief in their cause and the importance of honoring them for their noble and patriotic sacrifice. (*https://www.litcharts.com/poetry/laurence-binyon/for-the-fallen*)

Baldwin (2021) states that throughout this poem, the poet engages with themes of life/death as well as sacrifice and love for one's country. The speaker acknowledges the enormous loss England suffered and even depicts the country as a mourning mother. They don't dwell on the losses for the entire poem, though, preferring to celebrate what is achieved and the bravery of the soldiers who faced death every day. They sacrificed themselves for a higher goal—freedom and are never going to be forgotten. Their love of their country was so strong that they did not fear death at the end, the speaker suggests. Instead, they were willing to do whatever it took to achieve their country's goals.

### 2.4 Figures of Speech

A term or phrase that has a significance apart from its literal definition is called a figure of speech. Figures of speech such as metaphor, simile and personification are extensively used in poetry as expressive devices for the purpose to prove their literary competence and give their messages a stronger impact on the reader/ hearer. Pragmatically, the poet may wish to carry over a particular message to the readers / hearer that is not actually embodied in the individual words. Every word has a meaning in every context and in every time it is used. This means that there are different interpretations the reader / hearer may give depending on a variety of social, psychological and whatever feeling and mood he may have at that particular moment (Olaleye, 2015).

Figurative language can take many different forms. A metaphor or a simile, for example, can be used to compare two objects. Alliteration is one way that figures of speech can be utilized to manipulate the sound system and generate a dramatic impression. A hyperbole or an exaggeration can have an impact. Particularly in poetry and literature, figures of speech are particularly effective (Hussein, 2022).

Figurative language, also known as figure of speech is often found in linguistics study as well as in literary works, such as songs, novel, or even drama. According to Glucksberg (2001), figurative language is an unusual way of saying something. She further discusses that language employs figures of speech is not meant to be taken literally. In addition, the literal meaning of words and sentences in figurative language differs from the meaning which is intended (Glucksberg, 2001).

1- Simile: Simile is the comparison of two things usually unlike. It is a figure in which a similarity between two objects is directly expressed (Pardede, 2008). Stanford (2003) stated that simile is comparison of unlike things using the words 'like' or 'as'.
2- Metaphor: According to Stanford (2003) "metaphors is comparisons of unlike objects. Metaphors is comparison two thing directly that cannot use word 'like', or 'as'.
3- Hyperbole: It is figure of speech which contains exaggeration as it is (Keraf, 2009). Pardede (2002: 23) states that hyperbole means use of exaggerated terms for emphasis.
4- Personification: Keraf (2009) stated that "Personification is the figurative language that describes a non-life things or non-human object abstraction or ideas able to act like human being".
5- Metonymy: According to Keraf (2009: 142), "metonymy is figure of speech that used word closely associated with another word". Metonymy is a close relationship which uses the name of things, a person, or characteristic as something itself.
6- Symbolism: Pardede (2008:24) states that symbol is a trope that combines a literal and sensuous quality with an abstract or suggestive aspect but it is not literal meaning but use that meaning to suggest another.
7- Irony: Irony is a device based on the opposition of meaning to the sense (dictionary and contextual). It can be a literary, dramatic, and cinematic (Boggs and Petrie, 2008: 80).
8- Understatement: It is the opposite of hyperbole. Understatement is said to make the object to be less than it is, for example: We love the things we love for what they are (Pardede, 2008:24).

9- Allusions: Allusion is defined as a reference to a famous historical, literary, mythological or biblical character or event commonly known, for example: It's his Achilles (Boggs and Petrie, 2008: 80).

10-Idioms: "Idiom – An idiom is an expression whose meaning is not predictable from the usual meanings of the words that make it up (Abrams and Harpham, 2009).

## 3. Data Analysis

'For the Fallen' by Laurence Binyon is war poem. It expresses the celebrating the soldier's patriotism and bravery (Baldwin, 2021). It will be analyzed pragmatically by using figurative speech to express this theme, as the following:

***Unit (1): 1st Stanza***

*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.*

❖ ***The pragmatic realization***

1. Elegy: From the title, '***For the Fallen'***, there is an elegy for dead British soldiers to express his love and patriotic intention.
2. Personification: To highlight the patriotism and intimacy between England and the soldiers, through personification, Binyon personifies England as a "***proud***" "**mother**" to the soldiers who are "***her children***."

3. Metaphor: The metaphorical children of England, lost their lives in Europe during World War I. The soldiers were as much a part of England's spirit as they were of her body
    1. as in '***spirit of her spirit'***
    2. In these words "***Flesh of her flesh***.", the dead are not simply children; rather they are "Flesh of her flesh." In losing the soldiers, or "her flesh," England herself suffers a physical wound.
4. Alliteration: When the poet repeats the same consonant sound at the beginning of words. For example, *"**m**other" and "**m**ourns*".
5. Allusion : This phrase ***"spirit of her spirit"*** describes the dead as "spirit of England's spirit." The dead are not just a part of England's *body*, then, but also a part of her *soul* as an allusion to God's creation of Eve out of Adam's rib. The allusion stresses that dead are as important to England as Eve was to Adam. Such allusion expresses deeply the patriotic intention of the poet.
6. Repetition: In order to represent the patriotic intention of the poet, the repetition of the possessive "her" the dead are described in relation to England as "**her** children," "**her** dead," "**her** flesh," and "**her** spirit." Which expresses the intimate relationship between England and the dead, never letting the reader forget that these fallen soldiers are part of the nation they fought for.

***Unit (2): 2nd Stanza***

*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.*

- ***The pragmatic realization***

1. Personification: Death is personified as an "***august and royal***" figure who pays respects and nobility to the dead soldiers by singing a song. The adjectives "***august" and "royal***" depict figures of nobility, such as kings and queens.

***Unit (3): 3rd Stanza***

*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.*

- ***The pragmatic Realization:***

***1.*** Metaphor: the poet goes on to describe what the men were like when they died. They were ***"young"*** and strong. They had patriotic intentions and the willingness to sacrifice themselves in order to preserve their country.

*2.* Alliteration: When the poet repeats the same consonant sound at the beginning of words. For example *"**f**aces" and "**f**oe".*

***Unit (4): 4th Stanza***

*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.*

- ***The pragmatic Realization***

1. Metaphor: Words like:
    1. "***grow not old***" express that the soldiers will never grow old like the rest of England, and
    2. "***remember them***" remind the reader that these men are going to live on in the minds and hearts of those they left behind.

***Unit (5): 5th Stanza***

*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.*

- ***The pragmatic Realization:***

1. Metaphor: As a patriotic intention, soldiers will never get with their happy friends nor sit around tables in their homes, they put to rest beyond the ocean that surround England. The poet metaphorically describes death as a period of sleep and get rest " ***they sleep beyond England's foam***".

***Unit (6): 6th Stanza***

*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;*

- ***The pragmatic Realization:***

1`. Simile: '***As the stars are known to the Night':*** By comparing the soldiers like the stars exist in the sky, the soldiers will feel like the source of inspiration and nobility within each citizen. They will exist in the hearts of the England people.

***Unit (7): 7th Stanza***

*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.*

- ***The pragmatic realization***

1. Personification: '***As the stars that shall be bright':*** The stars are personified as moving across the '***heavenly plain***,' like soldiers. Not only are the fallen warriors as bright, honorable, motivating, heavenly, and eternal as the stars, but the stars themselves are fundamentally comparable to the noble soldiers.
2. Simile: '***As the stars that are starry in the time of our darkness,To the end, to the end, they remain':*** The poet uses a simile to compare the soldiers to stars. To express their patriotism, the soldiers will continue to exist and shine until the every end of time.

## 4. Analytical Framework

### 4.1 Results and Discussion

The result and discussion of the patriotism and how it is expressed pragmatically by using figurative speech in one of the most important war poem 'For the Fallen' by

Robert Laurence Binyon. The following tables present the frequencies and percentages of using such theme and the pragmatic realization of it.

Table (1) The Pragmatic Realization of Patriotism by Using Figurative Language

| Pragmatic realization | Freq. | Per. |
|---|---|---|
| Personification | 3 | 18.75% |
| Simile | 2 | 12.5% |
| Metaphor | 6 | 37.5% |
| Alliteration | 2 | 12.5% |
| Repetition | 1 | 6.25% |
| Allusion | 1 | 6.25% |
| Elegy | 1 | 6.25% |
| **Total** | **16** | **100%** |

Based on the frequency of occurrence in the table (1) above: Metaphor which is the dominant type about (37.5%) which always uses an implicit comparison in the poem. The second position is personification about (18.75%), and the third positions are simile and alliteration about (12.5%) and the fourth positions are elegy, allusion, and repetition about (6.25%).

**5.Conclusion**

Based on this research about pragmatic analysis of figurative language in 'For the Fallen' war poem concluded as follows:

1) Type of figurative languages in this poem have variation so they give the patriotic intention of the soldiers in language usage.
2) Such figurative language found in such poem help understanding what this figurative language really means in order to express the patriotic intention of the poet.
3) Metaphor as one of the figurative language found in such poem is the dominant type used by the poet to express his patriotism.

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