‘The Charge of the Light Brigade’ is thunderously celebratory, depicting (showing) the brave six-hundred light cavalry, riding into certain death during the Crimean War. Whilst, ‘Flag’ shouts out Agard’s vocal and cutting protest about the futility of war. Tennyson’s position as Poet Laureate meant he was wise to be more careful in his questioning of war.

Agard’s poem ‘Flag’ begins with a question, “What’s that fluttering in a breeze?” The seemingly delicate verb, ‘fluttering’ evoking a fragile butterfly, in fact is depicting a dangerously patriotic symbol that allows extremists to hide behind patriotism in their quest for belonging. The questioning, that continues throughout the poem, serves an obvious purpose in its attempt to open the readers’ mind to an alternative view on Nationalism. ‘The Charge’ also begins with a positive attitude, “Theirs but to do and die”. The anaphora of ‘theirs’ cements the celebration of heroism of the soldiers as they ride into certain death. Yet Tennyson cleverly treads the line of careful criticism of the Monarchy, being ambiguous (can read in two ways) in either applauding this Victorian ‘do and die’ attitude or lamenting (being sad about) the pointless loss of life.

Both poems begin with a positive tone, yet, when listening closer, the reader can hear the darker, deeper undertones.