

EXTRACT FROM THE PREDULDE

One summer evening (led by her) I found

A little boat tied to a willow tree

Within a rocky cave, its usual home.

Straight I unloosed her chain, and stepping in

Pushed from the shore. It was an act of stealth

And troubled pleasure, nor without the voice

Of mountain-echoes did my boat move on;

Leaving behind her still, on either side,

Small circles glittering idly in the moon,

Until they melted all into one track

Of sparkling light. But now, like one who rows,

Proud of his skill, to reach a chosen point

With an unswerving line, I fixed my view

Upon the summit of a craggy ridge,

The horizon's utmost boundary; far above

Was nothing but the stars and the grey sky.

She was an elfin pinnace; lustily

I dipped my oars into the silent lake,

And, as I rose upon the stroke, my boat

Went heaving through the water like a swan,

When, from behind that craggy steep till then

The horizon's bound, a huge peak, black and huge,

As if with voluntary power instinct,

Upreared its head. I struck and struck again

And growing still in stature the grim shape

Towered up between me and the stars, and still,

For so it seemed, with purpose of its own

And measured motion like a living thing,

Strode after me. With trembling oars I turned,

And through the silent water stole my way

Back to the covert of the willow tree;

There in her mooring-place I left my bark,--

And through the meadows homeward went, in grave

And serious mood; but after I had seen

That spectacle, for many days, my brain

The boat is a metaphor of man's influence, still anchored by the tree representing nature.

Loosening the chain and pushing from shore represents the poet as mankind moving to stand on its own two feet.

Wordsworth creates an idyllic and peaceful scene with **language semantically** peaceful.

The mood changed with the craggy ridge and horizon's boundary represents nature, limiting the progress of the poet.

The term 'elfin pinnace' could be translated as 'fairy boat', a **metaphor** for the now heated mood of the poet. Elves were often viewed as sexual and lustful.

The **simile** reminds us that anything man tries to produce is merely imitating nature which does it better.

The Horizon marks the shift in tone, the language becomes darker and dangerous. The peak, mountain, is **personified** with purpose of its own, nature shown as aggressive.

Use of 'trembling' **connotes** the fear and vulnerability of the poet, he is shown like a wounded animal, hiding away.

Meadows, usually peaceful and joyful and **juxtaposed** to the 'grave and serious mood'.

Worked with a dim and undetermined sense
Of unknown modes of being; o'er my thoughts
There hung a darkness, call it solitude
Or blank desertion. No familiar shapes
Remained, no pleasant images of trees,
Of sea or sky, no colours of green fields;
But huge and mighty forms, that do not live
Like living men, moved slowly through the mind
By day, and were a trouble to my dreams.

William Wordsworth

The darkness hanging over him represents his change to a darker mood at the end of the journey. The words all carry a dark and sinister tone, more morbid and melancholy. He is reflecting on the **conflict** in his mind of the juxtaposed peaceful side of nature and the harsh extremes it also contains "big and mighty forms".

The poem changes from **Euphony** (pleasant sounding words) to a **Cacophony** (harsh and rough sounding words.)

Context/Main Ideas

William Wordsworth was a romantic poet, we don't mean he wrote love poems, but he wrote poems about the world we live in which challenged people and the way they thought at the time. During this time 'epic' poems of large length were common, as were poems which looked at the world and man's place within it. This extract is from a much larger poem, it looks at the spiritual and moral development of a man growing up. The poem shows the spiritual growth of the poet, how he comes to terms with who he is, and his place in nature and the world. Wordsworth was inspired by memories of events and visits to different places, explaining how they affected him. He described *The Prelude* as "a poem on the growth of my own mind" with "contrasting views of Man, Nature, and Society".

This extract describes how Wordsworth went out in a boat on a lake at night. He was alone and a mountain peak loomed over him; its presence had a great effect and for days afterwards he was troubled by the experience.

Feelings/Attitudes

The poem is quite hard to relate to conflict and power. However there is a sense of conflict between man and nature where nature is eventually shown to be more powerful in the end.

During the poem the setting is of a journey in a boat. The journey represents a more spiritual journey and it becomes more rough and hostile along the way. At first, nature is shown at peace with the poet, later as it gets darker and he tries to reach the horizon it becomes harsh and predatory, putting man back in his place.

Wordsworth does not view humanity as having authority over nature. If anything, it's the other way round as we can see from his description of the huge mountain. Wordsworth also realises that once an event has happened, that doesn't mean it's over; the effect stayed with him for days afterwards.

The Prelude

William Wordsworth

Structure/Shape of the poem

Written as part of a much larger piece.

This section is 44 lines in blank verse (no real structure). The work is in iambic pentameter to give it a consistent pace.

The Prelude can definitely be viewed as an epic poem, in length at least. Epics are very long pieces of writing that usually deal with exciting, action-packed heroic events like wars or explorations. Although many of the events Wordsworth writes about are 'ordinary' they are given an epic quality, to fully describe the impact they had on his life.

As the poem progresses the journey the poet is on becomes rougher and words like 'and' are repeated to give it a breathless pace and feel.

There are no stanzas: the writing is continuous though there is plenty of punctuation to help us read it. This extract is a complete story in itself. It starts with "One summer evening..." and finishes with the effects on his mind of the boat trip: "a trouble to my dreams".

Poetic Devices

Sound

The Prelude is conversational, as if Wordsworth is sat next to us, telling us the story himself. The poet uses "and"s throughout to give the verse a breathless quality. Listen carefully next time someone tells you a story: there will be lots of 'and's used.

Imagery

Wordsworth effectively describes the night-time atmosphere with his choice of images.

Small circles glittering idly in the moon, Until they melted all into one track Of sparkling light.

But gentle moonlight becomes darkness as the poet-narrator's state of mind becomes troubled by the end of the extract:

...o'er my thoughts There hung a darkness, call it solitude Or blank desertion. No familiar shapes Remained, no pleasant images of trees, Of sea or sky, no colours of green fields;

This is imagery that could be associated with gothic (sinister or grotesque) tales, nightmares or even horror.

Personification is also used by Wordsworth: he refers to the boat as "her" (which is quite common in literature from that historic period) and the mountain peak comes alive and chases him:

...a huge peak, black and huge, As if with voluntary power instinct, Upreared its head...For so it seemed, with purpose of its own And measured motion like a living thing, Strode after me.

Charge of the Light Brigade

I

Half a league, half a league,

Half a league onward,

All in the valley of Death

Rode the six hundred.

“Forward, the Light Brigade!

Charge for the guns!” he said.

Into the valley of Death

Rode the six hundred.

League is about 3 miles, shows how far they have on their journey. Also can show quality, that they are not up to the challenge ahead. Double meaning.

Valley of Death is a biblical allusion to show the horror of what they now face, connotation of hell.

Repetition to build the tension and drag out the charge.

II

“Forward, the Light Brigade!”

Was there a man dismayed?

Not though the soldier knew

Someone had blundered.

Theirs not to make reply,

Theirs not to reason why,

Theirs but to do and die.

Into the valley of Death

Rode the six hundred.

Repetition of ‘theirs’ and ‘six hundred’ objectifies them as a symbol rather than just men. Also helps tone becomes more solemn to show impending doom.

III

Cannon to right of them,

Cannon to left of them,

Cannon in front of them

Volleyed and thundered;

Stormed at with shot and shell,

Boldly they rode and well,

Into the jaws of Death,

Into the mouth of hell

Rode the six hundred.

Cannon link to war and conflict, demonstrate how the odds are against them. Repetition to show scale of guns against them.

‘Boldly’ contrast with the scale of odds against them, emphasises futility. Sibilance to imply the swiftness of the charge.

Personifies death, used to exaggerate the futility and bravery of soldiers that they are going to die, but do so boldly.

IV

Flashed all their sabres bare,
Flashed as they turned in air
Sabring the gunners there,
Charging an army, while
All the world wondered.

Sabres: swords, the flash is the sun shining off the metal but also a metaphor for the glory they showed in their bravery which, like a flash, is short.

Plunged in the battery-smoke

Exaggerate (hyperbole) the scale of the mistake.

Right through the line they broke;

Cossack and Russian

Cossack and Russian, the enemy. Here the poet is showing how the enemy were not the equal of the British, however there were more of them. Consonance to shattered and sundered '-ered' to emphasise devastation.

Reeled from the sabre stroke

Shattered and sundered.

Then they rode back, but not

Not the six hundred.

Changes the tone by inserting the word 'not' implies the six hundred have mostly died

V

Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon behind them

Repetition from before, gives the poem a parallel to mirror the charge, now they are running away.

Volleyed and thundered;

Stormed at with shot and shell,

While horse and hero fell.

Glorify the poet make the men more like symbols of bravery than real men.

They that had fought so well

Came through the jaws of Death,

Mirrors the third stanza to emphasise the bravery and loss.

Back from the mouth of hell,

All that was left of them,

Left of six hundred.

VI

When can their glory fade?

O the wild charge they made!

All the world wondered.

Rhetorical question. The poet does not seem sad that these men died but rather is more concerned with their glory.

Honour the charge they made!

Honour the Light Brigade,

Noble six hundred!

The imperative, ordering people to give their respect when many questioned the charge. The Poet is showing how the soldiers themselves should be honoured, even if the decision to charge may have been wrong.

Alfred Lord Tennyson

Context/Main Ideas

Alfred, Lord Tennyson was one of the most important poets of the Victorian period. He was the Poet Laureate (the country's official poet) from 1850 until his death in 1892. His poems range from those focused on the legend of King Arthur to those dealing with the loss of a loved one.

The Crimean War took place between 1853 and 1856, with Imperial Russia on one side and an alliance including Britain and France on the other. The poem takes as its subject the Battle of Balaclava, one of the many battles of the war.

The poem glorifies the Brigade, celebrating the sacrifice they made for the country.

In the poem there is a balance between the realistic depiction of the violence experienced by the soldiers into the mouth of Hell and the glory of dying for one's country.

The poem presents the soldiers as a unit rather than as individuals, reinforcing the view of how honourable it is to be a part of an army with a common purpose.

The poem is written by Tennyson at a great distance from the events depicted in the poem. This gives the poem a distant quality, although perhaps closely reflects the feelings of the people reading newspaper reports in Britain.

Feelings/Attitudes

Tennyson's poem communicates a disgust at the treatment of the men of the Light Brigade: "Someone had blundered" in the decision to attack. It does, however, present the view that taking orders and serving one's country is honourable: "Theirs was not to reason why, / Theirs was but to do and die".

The poem ends with a command to the reader to remember the men and "Honour the charge they made!" Tennyson reminds the reader throughout the poem of the tremendous difficulties faced by those at war: they ride without question into the "valley of Death".

Structure/Shape of the poem

The poem is very regular in its structure, with several examples of repetition. The Charge of the Light Brigade is a narrative poem, with each of the stanzas progressing the story of the attack.

Poetic Devices

The rhythm of the opening lines creates a relentless beat which is continued throughout the poem, reflecting the riding of the Light Brigade into battle on horseback.

Tennyson's heavy use of repetition in the poem is perhaps intended to communicate the relentlessness of the charge, and of the dangers faced by the Brigade: "Cannon to the right of them, / Cannon to the left of them, / Cannon in front of them"

Charge of the Light Brigade

Alfred, Lord Tennyson

These dangers are presented as being unavoidable, with death inevitable: "Into the jaws of Death, / Into the mouth of Hell"

The final two lines of the first three stanzas act as a refrain, almost like a chorus, reminding the reader of the danger faced by "the six hundred".

Tennyson's use of alliteration creates a more visceral effect, that is, it helps to create a realistic and powerful description. "Storm'd at with shot and shell" is one example in which the 's' sounds reflect the viciousness of the attack faced by the Light Brigade.

Tennyson uses a rhetorical question (one asked for effect) at the beginning of the final stanza: "When can their glory fade?" After the five previous stanzas the answer to this question is clear: their glory should not fade, as their sacrifice is symbolic of all those who sacrifice their lives for the country.

The poem offers a balance of glorious language, which celebrates the Brigade, and graphic description of the danger they faced.

Exposure

Our brains ache, in the merciless iced east winds that knife us...
Wearied we keep awake because the night is silent...
Low drooping flares confuse our memory of the salient...
Worried by silence, sentries whisper, curious, nervous,
But nothing happens.

Watching, we hear the mad gusts tugging on the wire
Like twitching agonies of men among its brambles.
Northward incessantly, the flickering gunnery rumbles,
Far off, like a dull rumour of some other war.
What are we doing here?

The poignant misery of dawn begins to grow...
We only know war lasts, rain soaks, and clouds sag stormy.
Dawn massing in the east her melancholy army
Attacks once more in ranks on shivering ranks of gray,
But nothing happens.

Sudden successive flights of bullets streak the silence.
Less deadly than the air that shudders black with snow,
With sidelong flowing flakes that flock, pause and renew,
We watch them wandering up and down the wind's nonchalance,
But nothing happens.

Pale flakes with lingering stealth come feeling for our faces -
We cringe in holes, back on forgotten dreams, and stare, snow-
dazed, Deep into grassier ditches. So we drowse, sun-dozed,
Littered with blossoms trickling where the blackbird fusses.
Is it that we are dying?

Slowly our ghosts drag home: glimpsing the sunk fires glozed
With crusted dark-red jewels; crickets jingle there;
For hours the innocent mice rejoice: the house is theirs;
Shutters and doors all closed: on us the doors are closed -
We turn back to our dying.

Since we believe not otherwise can kind fires burn;
Now ever suns smile true on child, or field, or fruit,
For God's invincible spring our love is made afraid;
Therefore, not loath, we lie out here; therefore were born,
For love of God seems dying.

To-night, His frost will fasten on this mud and us,
Shrivelling many hands and puckering foreheads crisp.
The burying-party, picks and shovels in their shaking grasp,
Pause over half-known faces. All their eyes are ice,
But nothing happens.

Wilfred Owen

Personification of the weather described as 'merciless' and attacking them 'knife us' this is unexpected as we expect the fight to be between soldiers.

Sibilance the hissing s sound capture the noise of wind, it sounds both lonely but also biting.

The man made weapons are likened through metaphor to natural objects, showing mans war is a cheap imitation of nature.

Rhetorical question highlights the hopelessness of soldiers and war.

Contrast/oxymoron, dawn is meant to be hopeful and positive, not miserable.

Now the weather is personified, nothing happens repeated to emphasise the helplessness of the soldiers who are beyond help.

Harsh assonance and consonance of s and t sounds link weather with gunfire and therefore conflict and pain.

Now the snow is described with alliteration to emphasise the f sounds and highlight the cold heavy blanketing of the weather. The wind's 'nonchalance' implies the weather sees the soldiers as beneath it and weak.

Man is animalised, likened to scared animals, rabbits in holes. Showing that before nature man is just an animal.

Rhetorical Question shows the confusion of soldiers. Conditions are so bad they can no longer tell what is normal anymore.

Metaphor frozen blood described as jewels, poet sees men's lives as valuable and ultimately wasted.

So broken and hurt are the men that they feel abandoned and lose faith in God "our love is made afraid". Contrasts/ juxtaposes the battlefield with garden of Eden. Tone is one of betrayal and despair.

Use of scattered punctuation slows the pace, we can imagine the soldier finally succumbing to exposure and dyeing.

Metaphor ice as in cold and dead but also dead and empty, without soul.

Repetition final line emphasises the process doesn't end, the soldiers are frozen in time and hell.

Context/Main Ideas

Wilfred Owen (1893-1918) is one of the most famous English poets to emerge from the First World War. He was born on the borders of England and Wales and was interested in becoming a poet from an early age.

War broke out in 1914 and he joined the army the following year, aged 18. Before long he had to return to England to get treatment for shell-shock (what today we would call Post-traumatic Stress Disorder – severe anxiety brought on by a stressful situation like war).

He was sent to a hospital in Edinburgh and there he met the already well-known poet and writer Siegfried Sassoon. Owen returned to the trenches a year later and wrote some of his best-known poems. He was also decorated for his courage in battle, before being killed on 4th November 1918, just a week before peace was declared and the war finally ended.

Feelings/Attitudes

The war itself was often criticised because of a huge loss of life for very little gain. During the Somme over 60,000 British soldiers died in one day, and in all they only gained 6 miles by the end of the war. Owen's poems were often angry that the soldiers were in muddy dangerous trenches while the generals behind the lines were living in comfort. Owen's poems tried to show the truth of conditions to people back home. He was not against fighting, but was angry about the conditions soldiers had to live with in order to do so.

The poem itself is based on war and so links to conflict. The poem itself is about the weather and conditions of living in the trenches rather than any fighting. It is more a poem about the conflict between man and nature. This is extremely relevant because man has created machines that can launch explosive shells for miles and destroy the landscape, and yet, nature can still do more harm than any of it.

Exposure Wilfred Owen

Structure/Shape of the poem

The poem is structured as a series of eight stanzas of five lines. The last line of each stanza is noticeably shorter and indented which emphasises its importance. It is also part of the more general disruption of the rhythmic structure which uses hexameters as its basis. Many of these short lines are either rhetorical questions or the repetition of the phrase 'But nothing happens'. Both have the effect of emphasising the apparent pointlessness of what is going on.

The first four lines of each stanza follow the rhyming pattern of abba. This regularity emphasises the unchanging nature of daily life in the trenches. Closer inspection shows that many of the rhymes do not quite work as full rhymes eg: knife us/nervous, wire/war, brambles/rumbles. Owen is employing a technique known as half rhyme. This helps to unsettle the reader and defy the expected outcome, something which again echoes the experience of war.

Poetic Devices

Man v Nature: Written about soldiers in a trench we expect to see a large amount of military language, however most of this is used to describe and personify the weather as if it were an army attacking them. The poem ends with the fear of tonight and the people who will lose lives and how none of this will change anything. Within the poem it is the weather that is represented as merciless and triumphant.

In contrast to the brutalities of the war, the vocabulary Owen uses is sophisticated. The most notable feature of the language is Owen's skilful use of alliteration and assonance.

A particularly effective example of alliteration comes in the fourth stanza with the repetition of the letters 's', 'f' and 'w':

***Sudden successive flights of bullets streak the silence.
Less deadly than the air that shudders black with snow,
With sidelong flowing flakes that flock, pause, and renew,
We watch them wandering up and down the wind's nonchalance,
But nothing happens.***

The repeated use of the 's' sound reminds the reader of the bullets which are whizzing past the ears of the soldiers. As the lines follow one another so, gradually, the 's' sounds fade away; just as the hail of bullets would do. Intertwined into the same stanza are two other careful uses of alliteration as Owen uses the repeated 'f's on the third line and 'w's of the fourth line to form intricate word patterns.

***The poignant misery of dawn begins to grow...
We only know war lasts, rain soaks***

A clear example of assonance can be found in the third stanza where the sound of a long 'o' in the words 'soak', 'know' and 'grow' emphasises the slow tedious wait for something to occur. This same long 'o' sound occurs again in the sixth stanza.

Storm on the Island

We are prepared: we build our houses squat,

The language is rough and rural, giving the speaker a more agricultural tone.

Sink walls in rock and roof them with good slate.

The poet describes the earth almost like an old friend. Personifying it like an old wrinkled man.

The wizened earth had never troubled us

With hay, so as you can see, there are no stacks

The poet has a slightly ironic tone saying that because the ground has not been very arable they don't have to worry about looking after any crops or trees blowing over.

Or stooks that can be lost. Nor are there trees

Which might prove company when it blows full

The poet talks about much of nature with the same semantics as if it were a neighbour 'company'.

Blast: you know what I mean - leaves and branches

Aside gives a very personal conversational tone using a generic phrase.

Can raise a chorus in a gale

Personified the weather, suggesting it is singing.

So that you can listen to the thing you fear

Direct address using the word 'you' and talking about fear creates a friendly intimacy with the speaker.

Forgetting that it pummels your house too.

Violent language suggests the power of the weather as dominant over man.

But there are no trees, no natural shelter.

You might think that the sea is company,

Exploding comfortably down on the cliffs

Oxymoron, exploding is quite a violent term contrasting with comfortably, the poet is suggesting that because the violence is far off you feel more secure.

But no: when it begins, the flung spray hits

The very windows, spits like a tame cat

Simile -the poet uses a very familiar image to describe something that is powerful and majestic, this undermines the strength of the weather, suggesting it is only scary if we choose to let it.

Turned savage. We just sit tight while wind dives

And strafes invisibly. Space is a salvo.

Military metaphors salvo, strafe, bombardment relate to air attacks. The poet is drawing comparisons with the wind and human aircraft, suggesting that they are only what we make them.

We are bombarded by the empty air.

Strange, it is a huge nothing that we fear.

Oxymoron the poet suggests that our fear is a paradox, there is nothing to fear or that we fear the nothingness of the invisible wind.

Seamus Heaney

Context/Main Ideas

Seamus Heaney was a poet in Ireland, he grew up in a farming community and many of his poems were about very normal and homely subjects. He uses a large number of agricultural and natural images in his work as metaphors for human nature..

The poem is set around a story of a small isolated cottage near the sea in a storm and the exposure to the elements.

The poem describes the experience of being in a cliff-top cottage on an island off the coast of Ireland during a storm. Heaney describes the bare ground, the sea and the wind. The people in the cottage are extremely isolated and can do nothing against the powerful and violent weather.

Feelings/Attitudes

The poem looks at the conflict between nature and man and peoples fear of the weather. However the poet also points out that the fears are really rather small in the grand scheme. There is also a hint of war and conflict in the way the weather is described with "bombardment" and "salvo".

Storm on the Island Seamus Heaney

Structure/Shape of the poem

The poem is in blank verse with 19 lines. There are 5 feet (10 syllables) in each line. The verses are unrhymed and it gives it a very conversational tone. This is added to by the use of asides 'you know what I mean'.

The poem is in present tense to suggest the storm is occurring at the time. The poem uses a great deal of enjambment to help add to the conversational tone.

Poetic Devices

The title is blunt and explicit. The poem is about a storm on an island. Yet because there is no article ('The' or 'A') before the title, there is a sense that Heaney is not writing about one storm in particular, but about many similar storms. It is an experience he is used to.

The poem is written in the present tense. This creates a sense of drama and also reinforces the idea that storms happen all the time.

We do not know who is in the cottage with Heaney. He is certainly not alone because he refers to We throughout, but he chooses not to provide us with more details. The wind and waves are the 'characters' in the poem.

The poem begins in a confident tone - "We are prepared". Heaney seems to have a 'grit your teeth' attitude! Storms are obviously expected because buildings are designed to be "squat" especially to withstand them.

Heaney speaks in a friendly tone to draw us in. He uses common conversational tags - "as you see" (line 4), "you know what I mean" (line 7), "You might think" (line 12) - to involve us, and reminds us of our own lives: "the thing you fear" (line 9), "your house" (line 10). Is he talking to the reader specifically, or to people in general? Do you find that this emphasises how isolated he is on the island?

Many lines are not end stopped but run on from one to another. This is called enjambment. Look carefully at the line endings to see the effect enjambment creates. For example: "when it blows full / Blast" (line 6/7), which conveys the impression of a gust of wind suddenly 'blasting' in at the start of the line. "a tame cat / Turned savage", (line 15/16) where the surprise of finding "Turned savage" at the beginning of the line enacts the shock of the cat's sudden change in temperament.

Despite the confident start, by the end of the poem Heaney admits being afraid: "it is a huge nothing that we fear" (line 19). Perhaps this suggests that the ultimate power of the storm is that it is an unknown quantity. No one knows what the wind will do and what each storm will bring. Are such fears justified?

Bayonet Charge

Suddenly he awoke and was running- raw
In raw-seamed hot khaki, his sweat heavy,
Stumbling across a field of clods towards a green hedge
That dazzled with rifle fire, hearing
Bullets smacking the belly out of the air -
He lugged a rifle numb as a smashed arm;
The patriotic tear that had brimmed in his eye
Sweating like molten iron from the centre of his chest, -

Alliteration of R and H sounds gives sense of hard work heavy breathing.

Contrast between warzone and the 'green hedge' which is quite a peaceful rural image.

Enjambment adds to the chaos of the battlefield.

Personified bullets and semantic body parts with 'belly' and 'smashed arm' blurs the line between weapon and man by dehumanising the soldier and personifying the weapons.

Juxtaposed ideas of patriotic tear, a beautiful and noble thing full of emotion contrasted with 'sweating like molten iron' which further dehumanises the soldier and likens him more to a tank or machine.

In bewilderment then he almost stopped -
In what cold clockwork of the stars and the nations
Was he the hand pointing that second? He was running
Like a man who has jumped up in the dark and runs
Listening between his footfalls for the reason
Of his still running, and his foot hung like
Statuary in mid-stride. Then the shot-slashed furrows

Clockwork, a metaphor for his actions as being more like a clockwork machine than human. Trivialises war to a game of toy clockwork soldiers between nations.

Rhetorical Question, marks the change of pace, it is as if this is happening in slow motion or the soldier has stopped as he thinks on what he has become.

Enjambment, over four verses implies he has suddenly come to some realisation and this both seems to drag on but also all happen at once.

Threw up a yellow hare that rolled like a flame
And crawled in a thrashing circle, its mouth wide
Open silent, its eyes standing out.

Metaphor, is it a real hare? Maybe a coward? Yellow is the colour of fear and hares are prey. Natural and frightened image juxtaposed with his own machine like nature. Possible that the hare is another soldier shot and scared, trying to escape. Dehumanised.

He plunged past with his bayonet toward the green
hedge,
King, honour, human dignity, etcetera
Dropped like luxuries in a yelling alarm
To get out of that blue crackling air
His terror's touchy dynamite.

'plunged' implies diving in too deep or cannot return. He has made his decision to carry on and there is no turning back.

Listing of the key motivations for war emphasises that here and now they are second to the rush of battle.

Atmospheric description, similar to 'the air was electric', the word 'crackling' gives an element of danger to the verse.

Metaphor and Consonance of T sounds emphasises adrenaline rush and almost animal like reactions (Think of a cat that is prepared to fight or flee).

Ted Hughes

Context/Main Ideas

Ted Hughes (1930-1998) was born in Yorkshire, in the North of England, and grew up in the countryside. After serving in the RAF for two years, he won a scholarship to Cambridge University where he studied Archaeology and Anthropology. The themes of the countryside, human history and mythology therefore already deeply influenced his imagination by the time he started writing poetry as a student.

The poem is about a nameless soldier going over the top in the trenches. Soldiers would have bayonets attached to the end of their rifles and would use them to stab enemy soldiers. The nameless soldier in the poem seems to become more a weapon than a man, rushing toward the enemy. It is not clear at the end whether he dies but there is definitely a change in him. His actions are very raw and primal, much like an animal, suddenly pausing, preparing to react. Ted Hughes was a former RAF serviceman and includes a great amount of natural and historical ideas in his poems and he often looks at man's impact on nature.

Feelings/Attitudes

The poem clearly is set around conflict in that it is a soldier rushing out of the trenches on the attack. However the poem also looks at ideas like transformation, humanity and nature (in the form of the yellow hare and green hedge). In the poem the soldier is almost more machine or animal than human and this is reflected in the power themed words used to describe him.

There are parts of this poem which make us think more of a hunt or animals than humanity. The charge to the 'green hedge' seems to be more the action of an animal bolting in a field rather than soldiers charging a trench. The inclusion of the yellow hare is also powerful, we see the soldier in a moment of confusion, not sure why he is there and what he is doing, the hare seems to spur him on, either because he does not want to be a coward or because it reflects a brief moment of man and nature connecting before war once again breaks it.

This poem tries to step inside the body and mind of a soldier carrying out one of the most terrifying acts of this or any war: charging straight into rifle fire with the aim of killing enemy soldiers face-to-face. In doing so, Hughes dramatises the struggle between a man's thoughts and actions.

At the start of the poem the soldier is instinctively obeying orders. In stanza two he has moments of clarity when he thinks about what he is doing and time seems to stop still.

In the end, all high moral justifications such as king and country, have become meaningless. He himself becomes a form of human bomb, not a person but a weapon of war.

Bayonet Charge Ted Hughes

Structure/Shape of the poem

The poem is written in three stanzas. All three are filled with words and images, which could suggest the thick mud appropriate for a poem whose main theme is about a man running across a muddy field carrying a heavy gun.

The length of the lines varies a lot. Hughes uses long and short lines to suggest the quick and slow progress of the soldier.

The first stanza is all about action and running. The soldier is awake and running within six words of the opening line. The flow, however, is broken by the use of dashes "-" (three in the first stanza, one at the beginning of the second). This breaks up the flow of the poem and shows how the soldier is waking up to what is happening and slowly starting to think.

The second stanza therefore happens in a kind of slow-motion (note the three lines that are broken in the middle by punctuation – lines 11, 14 and 15).

The second half of line 15 breaks this spell and he knows he has to rush, without thinking, towards his death in the final stanza.

Poetic Devices

There is the frantic action of battle and the thick difficulty of the mud. In the middle of all this, there is the sudden fear and clear thoughts of the soldier. These feelings are presented in images you can see as well as images you can hear.

Sound

Hughes uses a dense repetition of words and sounds right from the beginning. For example, in stanza one he uses the repeated 'h' sound that expresses the soldier's heavy breathing.

Imagery

The rich descriptions contrast with where the soldier is heading - a simple, almost childish description – line 3.

Another form of contrast is between the imagery of war and the imagery of nature. Throughout the poem we have a background of farming and the natural world: line 3 and 16. The hare, however, becomes an image of death.

Similes like those found in line 8 and bring a sense of hell to the battlefield.

Remains

On another occasion, we got sent out
to tackle looters raiding a bank.
And one of them legs it up the road,
probably armed, possibly not.

Well myself and somebody else and somebody else
are all of the same mind,
so all three of us open fire.
Three of a kind all letting fly, and I swear

I see every round as it rips through his life –
I see broad daylight on the other side.
So we've hit this looter a dozen times
and he's there on the ground, sort of inside out,

pain itself, the image of agony.
One of my mates goes by
and tosses his guts back into his body.
Then he's carted off in the back of a lorry.

End of story, except not really.
His blood-shadow stays on the street, and out on patrol
I walk right over it week after week.
Then I'm home on leave. But I blink

and he bursts again through the doors of the bank.
Sleep, and he's probably armed, and possibly not.
Dream, and he's torn apart by a dozen rounds.
And the drink and the drugs won't flush him out –

he's here in my head when I close my eyes,
dug in behind enemy lines,
not left for dead in some distant, sun-stunned, sand-
smothered land
or six-feet-under in desert sand,

but near to the knuckle, here and now,
his bloody life in my bloody hands.

Simon Armitage

Anecdotal language, matter of fact tone, suggests this is one of many events.

Colloquialism, slang 'legs it'=run off. Used to give realistic tone to the voice of the speaker.

Aside 'possibly not' undermines severity of the statement, if he was not armed should he have been shot? He has the power to decide.

Analogy, soldiers described as cards in Poker, a game of luck. Emphasis that everything about this was just chance.

Graphic Hyperbole used to demonstrate the lack of glory or honour in this killing, it is not pretty but still very matter of fact..

Dehumanised 'looter' 'sort of inside out' makes the victim appear more of an object than what was moments ago a living breathing person.

Colloquialism, 'mate' almost makes this appear like a night out with the lads, like a social event.

The nature of what is happening, a violent killing is juxtaposed to the relaxed way he talks about the event.

Metaphor for the memory of the man and events. Blood connotes death, shadow connoting lingering memory.

Repetition from the start to show that this is the thought replaying in his mind and he is racked with guilt. He now feels powerless.

Cliché 'flush' common term to get rid of something unwanted, this is no longer a matter of war but everyday life.

Analogy, describes the memory like a hostile soldier in his mind, where he cannot get him.

Sibilance, smothered, six, sand: gives the impression of a sinister dream/nightmare like state.

Pun, bitter/dark humour bloody meaning covered in blood but also an expression of anger/hate. The soldier is at conflict with this dead man, but more with his own mind. Ends the poem with a sense of despair and open ended., no resolution.

Context/Main Ideas

Simon Armitage's poetry is known for its colloquial style, strong rhythms and voice. He deals with personal relationships, often drawing on his own life experience. He often uses the monologue form in his poetry to create immediate and moving characters. His delivery is deadpan and sometimes darkly humorous.

The poem is written from the perspective of a soldier stationed in Iraq or Afghanistan (or any warzone really). They are on patrol and fire on some bank robbers. One of the looters appeared to possibly have a gun so they open fire. The rest of the poem is looking at the fact the soldier, even long after this event, cannot leave the memory behind and carries this dead man with him in his mind.

Post traumatic stress and mental illness is very common in soldiers who struggle to come to terms with some part of their duty, normally a horrific memory of killing or being in danger which gives them nightmares and panic attacks as well as depression and sometimes suicidal tendencies.

This particular poem lacks the humour of some of his other work and instead presents a dark and disturbing image of a soldier suffering post-traumatic stress disorder.

Armitage made a film for Channel 4 in 2007 called *The Not Dead* and has a collection of poems of the same name, from which this poem is taken. In preparation for this work, he interviewed veteran soldiers of different wars, including the Gulf War. The reference to 'desert sand' in this poem suggests that it reflects the experiences of soldiers in the Gulf War.

Feelings/Attitudes

The poem is told anecdotally and begins with 'On another occasion', implying that this account is not the only unpleasant account the soldier has in his memory. He tells how he and 'somebody else and somebody else' opened fire on a looter who may or may not have been armed. They shot him dead and one of them put the man's 'guts back into his body' before he's carted away.

Later the soldier thinks about the shooting every time he walks down the street. Then later again, when he returns home he is still haunted by the thought of what he has done. He tries drink and drugs to drown out the memory, but they do not work. The line 'he's here in my head when I close my eyes' indicates this.

The final lines show that the memory was not left behind in the place of war in a distant land, but is with the speaker all the time. He feels as though he will always have blood on his hands.

Remains Simon Armitage

Structure/Shape of the poem

Remains is formed of eight stanzas. The first seven stanzas are in largely unrhymed quatrains. The final stanza consists of only two lines and therefore stands out, emphasising the fact the speaker cannot rid himself of the memory of the killing. It could also imply disintegration in the speaker's state of mind.

The title may refer to the remains of the dead man, the remains of the memory that haunts the speaker and to what remains are left of his own life now that he is riddled with guilt.

The poem is written as a monologue, from the point of view of the speaker. The poem has the feel of fast-paced natural speech. There is no regular rhythmic pattern and there are examples of enjambment, sometimes between stanzas, which adds to the sense of someone telling their story fairly naturally.

The first four stanzas describe the shooting while the second half of the poem describes the after-effects of this action on the speaker.

Poetic Devices

The language of the poem is anecdotal, which, along with the pace and rhythm, gives the sense the speaker is directly telling us his story. Slang such as 'mates' and colloquial language (such as 'legs it') is used throughout. The speaker shifts from past tense in the first two lines, to present tense for the rest of the poem which adds immediacy to the narrative.

The imagery is graphic and brutal in its depiction of the killing. The bullets 'rip' the man's body and after they have killed him and he is 'sort of inside out'. The poet does not spare the reader the details of the shooting, especially when he writes about how the speaker's mate 'tosses his guts back into his body'. This conveys the disturbance and trauma that the soldier carries with him long after he has returned home.

The language alludes to Shakespeare's play *Macbeth* with its references to sleep and bloody hands. When Macbeth murders his king (the innocent Duncan), he says 'Macbeth doth murder sleep' (II.2) and similarly the speaker here refers to his disturbed sleep after killing the looter. The poem ends with the image of his 'bloody hands', which reminds us of Lady Macbeth's struggles to remove the spot of blood that represents her guilt.

Poppies

Three days before Armistice Sunday
and poppies had already been placed
on individual war graves. Before you left,
I pinned one onto your lapel, crimped petals,
spasms of paper red, disrupting a blockade
of yellow bias binding around your blazer.

The poppy has symbolic links to violence, death and memory. It is quite foreboding in this poem.

Pronouns "I" and "Your" used to emphasises the intimacy and closely of the speaker and subject.

Blockade Military reference to blocking, perhaps of emotion. Alliteration also used with bias, binding, blunder emphasise bustle, mothering over her son.

Sellotape bandaged around my hand,
I rounded up as many white cat hairs
as I could, smoothed down your shirt's
upturned collar, steeled the softening
of my face. I wanted to graze my nose
across the tip of your nose, play at
being Eskimos like we did when
you were little. I resisted the impulse
to run my fingers through the gelled

Familiar noun/military metaphor The reference to sellotape is quite a familiar homely image, 'bandaged' can be used to imply wound or injury/harm.

Sibilance, The words 'steeled, shirt, softening' etc. gives a calm tone to the scene described in the poem.

The personal anecdote creates a sense of intimacy and human realism in the speakers voice. Juxtaposed with the military side of her son.

blackthorns of your hair. All my words
flattened, rolled, turned into felt,

Metaphor, a reference to the shortened hair stubble required in the military and how aggressive it makes her son appear to her.

Power of three, reflects the way the mother is tongue tied and doesn't know what to say, she is proud of her son but also doesn't want him to go.

slowly melting. I was brave, as I walked
with you, to the front door, threw
it open, the world overflowing
like a treasure chest. A split second
and you were away, intoxicated.

Symbolic, idea of throwing the door open and setting her son free. The door represents her own acceptance of his choice.

Simile, suggests how attractive the world appears to her son and also her aspiration for him to have opportunities.

After you'd gone I went into your bedroom,
released a song bird from its cage.

Metaphor, connotes that he is like a beautiful caged creature and needs to be set free. Implies that she understands this includes free to make mistakes and be harmed.

Later a single dove flew from the pear tree,
and this is where it has led me,
skirting the church yard walls, my stomach busy
making tucks, darts, pleats, hat-less, without
a winter coat or reinforcements of scarf, gloves.

Vague Pronoun, contains double meaning, this as in the location but also the situation, suggests that 'this' is her sons death, she cannot bear to speak the words. Implies pain.

Listing, implies the awkward feeling of the mother, trying to distract herself from grief.

On reaching the top of the hill I traced
the inscriptions on the war memorial,
leaned against it like a wishbone.

Physical senses, implies the intimacy between mother and son, connotes the tactile hypersensitivity and jumbled emotions.

The dove pulled freely against the sky,
an ornamental stitch. I listened, hoping to hear
your playground voice catching on the wind.

Caesura, breaking down the verses, implies the choking back tears.

Jane Weir

Context/Main Ideas

Jane Weir, born in 1963, grew up in Italy and Northern England, with an English mother and an Italian father. She has continued to absorb different cultural experiences throughout her life, also living in Northern Ireland during the troubled 1980s.

The poem looks at a mother of a son who has grown up and gone to war. The poem contains many clues that this is a more modern conflict, however the poem ends at the memorial, suggesting the son died at war or has at least not yet returned home and is now missed by the mother who fears the worst.

The poem is based very heavily around the idea of Poppies as memorials and therefore the idea of memory. The poem flashes back to key moments of the life of the mother and son.

The poem is set in the present day but reaches right back to the beginning of the Poppy Day tradition. Armistice Sunday began as a way of marking the end of the First World War in 1918. It was set up so people could remember the hundreds and thousands of ordinary men who had been killed in the First World War. Today, the event is used to remember soldiers of all wars who have died since then.

Feelings/Attitudes

When Poppies was written, British soldiers were still dying in wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The poem contains a range of emotions. There is genuine sadness but also pride. The poem doesn't seem to comment heavily on the war itself.

The poem is about the nature of grief. The mother is speaking directly to her son but a son who shifts in time. There is:

The son leaving home for school on his own for the first time.

The son who has just been killed.

Beneath the surface the son dying violently in a field hospital in Afghanistan.

It is as if all these different versions of her son fixed exist together inside her. When the poem reaches a moment in the present (line 26) she is vulnerable, without protection. The final lines then go back to the past tense "I traced...".

It is as if the present holds too much pain and her memories can only be expressed if distanced in imagery held safely in the past.

Poppies Jane Weir

Structure/Shape of the poem

The poem appears to have a strong, regular sense of form. There are four clear stanzas, the first and last with six lines, the second with 11 and the third 12.

On closer inspection, however, we can see a great deal of movement within this outwardly regular form. 19 lines out of 35 have breaks in the middle of the lines - marked by commas or more strongly by full-stops. These breaks are called caesuras.

This careful variation in form suggests the inner emotion of a narrator who is trying to remain calm and composed but is breaking with sadness inside.

The biggest movement in the poem, however, is in the narrative structure – how the story is told. The time sequence keeps changing along with her emotions. It goes from "Three days before" (line 1) to "Before you left" (line 3) to "After you'd gone" (line 23) to "later" (line 25) and the present in "this is where it has led me" on line 26. It ends with her suspended, on the hill, between the present and the past.

Poetic Devices

Sound: Like the form, the sounds of the poem are restrained. Rhyme would seem inappropriately lively.

Language: The colour and texture of the poppies is expressed through powerful language in the first stanza. The detailed description of the blazer is emphasised through alliteration on "bias binding... blazer". We feel the closeness between mother and child the moment she kneels to pin the poppy to the lapel. In words such as "spasms", "disrupting" and "blockade" however, she may be also recalling the violence of his death.

Imagery: This sense of her blocking out the memory of his violent death with a sweeter, purer memory is sustained in the second stanza: "Sellotape bandaged around my hand". This image carries echoes of battlefield injury as well as cleaning the cat hairs off the blazer. The contrast between the death in battle and the domestic happiness (the boy has been cuddling his cat) is powerful.

Metaphor and symbolism: In the third stanza, the language becomes metaphorical and symbolic. The door to the house is the door to the world. The song-bird is a metaphor for the mother setting the child free. This then changes into the dove, the symbol of peace – but here the peace the son has found is only the peace of death.

Tissue ← Metaphor/Double meaning Tissue both as paper but also living tissue and skin.
Paper that lets the light
shine through, this ← Enjambment, creates on-going monologue tone.
is what could alter things. ← Symbolic, suggest hope, positive tone.
Paper thinned by age or touching, ← Tactile, language, suggests a very familiar concept.

the kind you find in well-used books, ← Koran, symbolic of culture and religion and also emphasising a major conflict in modern society and the perceived war on Islam.
the back of the Koran, where a hand
has written in the names and histories, ← Emphasis on 'history' as central to the theme., emphasis that this has been handed down.
who was born to whom,

the height and weight, who
died where and how, on which sepia date, ← Sepia meaning faded or yellowed with age. Suggestion of handed down.
pages smoothed and stroked and turned
transparent with attention. ← Tactile verbs suggest this is not so much a religious book but a treasured heirloom and connection to family.

If buildings were paper,
I might feel their drift, see how easily ← Metaphor a paper structure would drift, but also 'drift' as in purpose, what they stand for. What they are for.
they fall away on a sigh, a shift
in the direction of the wind. ← Transient verbs, reflect movement and change. Personified with 'sigh'. Suggests it is a good thing that they are could be changeable. They adjust 'with the wind' winds of change.

Maps too. The sun shines through
their borderlines, the marks
that rivers make, roads, ← Listing, encompasses the man and nature made aspects of the world and how the 'sun shines' representing hope and how transparent these things become rather than the permanent object we see them to be.
railtracks, mountainfolds,

Fine slips from grocery shops
that say how much was sold
and what was paid by credit card
might fly our lives like paper kites.

Metaphor the familiar and everyday image of groceries represent larger scale socio economics. Our reliance on money and material wealth.

Flying Kites connotes a childlike innocence and ease. Suggesting perhaps that if we changed our approach to material ownership we would regain that childhood peace of mind.

An architect could use all this,
place layer over layer, luminous
script over numbers over line,
and never wish to build again with brick

Symbolic not just of someone who designs buildings but also anyone who makes anything. Metaphor for us all.

Enjambment, and semantics of written script listed here gives a tone of excitement and exploration.

or block, but let the daylight break
through capitals and monoliths,
through the shapes that pride can make,
find a way to trace a grand design

Pathetic fallacy , gives the hopeful aspect to the message of the poem through the reuse of light and shining.

Personify , pride given a form, suggestion that we, or society as a whole is this 'pride'.

Biblical reference, suggestive of the bigger picture and a sense of spiritual fulfilment. Suggests that we could be building things that improve our life, not hold us back.

with living tissue, raise a structure
never meant to last,
of paper smoothed and stroked
and thinned to be transparent,

Metaphor, for people or society.

Ominous, can be an allusion to the horrors of war and terrorism.

Repetition from stanza 3, reminding us of the tactile intimacy of the book but now on a larger scale.

turned into your skin.

Direct address, suggesting that instead of being at conflict with the world around us we create a sense of ownership and shared identity.

Imtiaz Dharker

Context/Main Ideas

Imtiaz Dharker is a contemporary poet who was born in Pakistan and grew up in Scotland. She has written five collections of poetry and often deals with themes of identity, the role of women in contemporary society and the search for meaning. She draws on her multi-cultural experience in her work.

The poem is written from the point of view of someone today looking out at the conflict and troubles of the modern world; destruction, war and politics, money and wealth as well as issues like terrorism and identity. The poem remarks how nothing is meant to last, that it would be better not to hold too tightly to that and instead we should be willing to let go and pass things on in their time to be remade.

In short, that the world would be better if it shared more qualities with 'tissue'.

Feelings/Attitudes

The speaker in this poem uses tissue paper as an extended metaphor for life. She considers how paper can 'alter things' and refers to the soft thin paper of religious books, in particular the Qur'an. There are also real life references to other lasting uses we have for paper in our lives such as maps, receipts and architect drawings. Each of these items is connected to important aspects of life: journeys, money and home. These examples demonstrate how important but also how fragile paper is.

In the final stages of the poem, the poet links the idea of a building being made from paper to human skin, using the words 'living tissue' and then 'your skin'. This is quite a complex idea, and the meaning is open to interpretation. She may be suggesting that the significance of human life will outlast the records we make of it on paper or in buildings. There is also a sense of the fragility of human life, and the fact that not everything can last.

The poem looks at conflict in terms of destruction and politics particularly, it hints that we make our own conflict by holding on too tight to power and control and actually the need to relax and remember we are all human.

Tissue Imtiaz Dharker

Structure/Shape of the poem

Tissue is mainly constructed in unrhymed, irregular quatrains. This form can be seen to represent the irregularity of life and the flimsy nature of the tissue paper the poem refers to.

The poem consists of ten stanzas. The first nine stanzas are each four lines long. The final stanza, however, is one line in length, drawing our attention to it. Separating out this line emphasises the connection between paper and skin, showing the significance of human life.

The poem lacks regular rhyme and its rhythm is unsteady, as if to mirror the fluttering of tissue paper. The poet uses enjambment, running meaning between lines and across stanza breaks. This adds to the flowing, delicate nature - both of paper and of the human lives the poet compares the tissue to.

Poetic Devices

The speaker emphasises the delicacy of the paper by using adjectives throughout the poem. The paper is described as 'fine', 'thin' and 'transparent'. The effect of light is also emphasised with 'luminous', 'daylight' and the way the 'sun shines through'.

References to the thin paper used by architects, shopkeepers and bookbinders are made to connect the practical uses of paper. These images provide an extended metaphor for human skin and life.

The Emigree

There once was a country... I left it as a child
but my memory of it is sunlight-clear

Ellipsis, creates a caesura, indicating flashback or exploration of past memories..

for it seems I never saw it in that November

Pathetic Fallacy, this concept of sunlight creates a positive image which juxtaposes her understanding as an adult.

which, I am told, comes to the mildest city.

Aside, draws distinction between experience and what the speaker has heard.

The worst news I receive of it cannot break

my original view, the bright, filled paperweight.

Metaphor, the idea of the city as a souvenir, shiny and unrealistic. Shallow as her childhood memories.

It may be at war, it may be sick with tyrants,

Personify the city to create the sense that it has been infected but can recover, almost hopeful yet deluded idea.

but I am branded by an impression of sunlight.

Connotation branded often conveys sense of marked for wrongness, repetition of sunlight..

The white streets of that city, the graceful slopes

Connotation, of innocence and purity.

glow even clearer as time rolls its tanks

Personify, time to emphasises its relentless and destructive nature.

and the frontiers rise between us, close like waves.

Juxtaposes, aggressive imagery 'frontiers' with the purity of nature 'waves'.

That child's vocabulary I carried here

like a hollow doll, opens and spills a grammar.

Metaphor, linking the memory of the city with tiny traces, to emphasise the value and preciousness of the memory.

Soon I shall have every coloured molecule of it.

It may by now be a lie, banned by the state

Synaesthesia, the blur between taste and vision, the jumbling of senses in order to show the confusion of memories and emphasises with repetition the clearly flawed but joyous nature of the memory.

but I can't get it off my tongue. It tastes of sunlight.

I have no passport, there's no way back at all

Personify, expanding the metaphor, perhaps suggesting that others have also fled, bringing with them the culture of her 'city' the 'white' links to this surreal and innocent quality.

but my city comes to me in its own white plane.

It lies down in front of me, docile as paper;

Metaphor, emphasises the open and emptiness but also the vulnerability.

I comb its hair and love its shining eyes.

Personify, she treats the memory with almost child like tenderness, reflects her own memories of childhood linked to the city.

My city takes me dancing through the city

of walls. They accuse me of absence, they circle me.

The reconciling with her past memory and current understanding, though her past she tries to view the present. Her past city identified as 'dancing' the modern one as with 'walls' Juxtaposing identities.

They accuse me of being dark in their free city.

My city hides behind me. They mutter death,

and my shadow falls as evidence of sunlight

Repetition, of 'accuse' gives a sinister identity to the oppression of the new city

Carol Rumens

Contrast, of darkness and light used to show the speaker coming to terms with the two separate identities.

Context/Main Ideas

Carol Rumens was born in South London and grew up there. In addition to her own verse, she has published a number of translations of Russian poems and has, according to the critic Ben Wilkinson, a 'fascination with elsewhere'. This fascination is clear in *The Émigrée*, which deals with a land and a city which for the speaker is permanently 'elsewhere'.

A displaced person pictures the country and the city where he or she was born. Neither the city nor the country is ever named and this lack of specific detail seems intentional. It is as if Rumens wants her poem to be relevant to as many people who have left their homelands as possible.

Emigrants are people who have left the country of their birth to settle elsewhere in the world. The spelling of the word Rumens chooses - *émigrée* - is a feminine form and suggests the speaker of the poem is a woman.

The exact location of the city is unclear and precise details of it are sparse. Perhaps it only ever really existed in the *émigrée's* imagination.

Feelings/Attitudes

Rumens suggests the city and country may now be war-torn, or under the control of a dictatorial government that has banned the language the speaker once knew. Despite this, nothing shakes the light-filled impression of a perfect place that the *émigrée's* childhood memories have left. This shows the power that places can have, even over people who have left them long ago and who have never revisited since. Though there is a clear sense of fondness for the place, there is also a more threatening tone in the poem, suggesting perhaps that the relationship with the past and with this place is not necessarily positive for the speaker.

The Emigrée Carol Rumens

Structure/Shape of the poem

The poem presents itself as a first-person account of an *émigrée's* relationship with her homeland. However, given the place is not named, the poem offers a more general consideration of the relationship between people, the places they left behind in childhood and to which they are unable to return. The lack of specific details about the *émigrée's* homeland implies that the poem may not be in any sense directly autobiographical. The speaker of the poem may be fictional and the city itself imaginary.

The poem is composed of three stanzas. The first two stanzas are eight lines each and the last stanza has nine lines. Why there's an extra line is unclear. Perhaps it suggests the speaker just can't let go of the memories and just doesn't want the poem to end?

The poem does not use rhyme, but there is a suggestion of a rhythmic pattern of five stresses to the line - although this pattern never fully establishes itself as a regular rhythm. Perhaps this reflects the speaker's state of mind, which though positive in many ways is also uneasy, unsettled and complex.

Poetic Devices

The language appears to be natural and without artificial devices, but this apparent plainness hides a large amount of figurative language:

Rumens makes great use of metaphor; memories include 'the bright, filled paperweight'; the city's brutal tyrant rulers are a sickness; the speaker is 'branded' by sunlight; time 'rolls its tanks' and every word of a grammar is a 'coloured molecule'. Perhaps the whole city is an extended metaphor, a symbol of the lost childhood to which no adult can return.

Rumens also uses similes in 'frontiers rise between us, close like waves' and 'That child's vocabulary I carried here/ like a hollow doll'. Rumens' use of simile (and metaphor) perhaps suggests the way in which the speaker is shaping her memories and making up her own narrative about her relationship with her homeland.

The city is personified and Rumens perhaps makes a play on words when she describes it flying to her 'in its own white plane'. As well as an aeroplane, a secondary meaning of 'plane' as something flat and level, may suggest a sheet of white paper. The poet may be teasingly suggesting that her city exists only in her poem and is an imaginary place. The fairytale like personification further adds to this sense of unreality.

Checking Out Me History

Dem tell me

Dem tell me

Wha dem want to tell me

Bandage up me eye with me own history

Blind me to me own identity

Dem tell me bout 1066 and all dat

dem tell me bout Dick Whittington and he cat

But Toussaint L'Ouverture

no dem never tell me bout dat

Repetition, suggests constant barrage of learning by rote without insight.

Restrictive verbs, create idea that the version of events given to them is harmful.

Mixing, fact and fiction in order to create sense of confusion.

Pronoun, 'dem' to represent a faceless body, general dislike of authority.

Toussaint

a slave

with vision

lick back

Napoleon

battalion

and first Black

Republic born

Toussaint de thorn

to de French

Toussaint de beacon

of de Haitian Revolution

Short verse and irregular rhyme creates an almost drum beat.

This can reflect the Caribbean traditions of music and verbal passing on of stories.

The stanza also looks at a conflict orientated character indicated by words such as 'battalion', 'thorn' and 'revolution'.

Dem tell me bout de man who discover de balloon

and de cow who jump over de moon

Dem tell me bout de dish ran away with de spoon

but dem never tell me bout Nanny de maroon

Juxtaposed myth v reality to indicate in part that fact or fiction, they all have the same relevance to the speaker because they do not reflect their culture or heritage.

Rhyme helps build the sense of rhythm and pace, in part as if the poet is getting riled up the further he goes.

Nanny

see-far woman

of mountain dream

fire-woman struggle

hopeful stream

to freedom river

Natural imagery suggests the power of this figure and also the very different ways we look at figures, perhaps suggesting a cultural emphasises with environment we lack in our own history.

Dem tell me bout Lord Nelson and Waterloo

but dem never tell me bout Shaka de great Zulu

Dem tell me bout Columbus and 1492

but what happen to de Caribs and de Arawaks too

Dem tell me bout Florence Nightingale and she lamp

and how Robin Hood used to camp

Dem tell me bout ole King Cole was a merry ole soul

but dem never tell me bout Mary Seacole

Contrast famous white ethnic figures with ethnic minority contemporaries. Emphasises the one sided nature of our education, draws in conflict.

Inaccurate terms being used in order to emphasise the lack of interest in the history 'dem' tell the poet.

From Jamaica

she travel far

to the Crimean War

she volunteer to go

and even when de British said no

she still brave the Russian snow

a healing star

among the wounded

a yellow sunrise

to the dying

Natural imagery metaphors 'healing star' to create an almost mythological character. Reinforces the idea of oral rote learning and passing down of history and culture.

The way these historical characters are described is also more vivid and passionate.

Dem tell me

Dem tell me wha dem want to tell me

But now I checking out me own history

I carving out me identity

Repetition of 'dem' also a monosyllabic pronoun, almost a drum beat.. Highlights the conflict between 'dem' and 'I'.

Violent metaphor. Expresses the resistance and need to create something which cannot be removed/ wont fade.

John Agard

Context/Main Ideas

John Agard was born in British Guiana (now called Guyana) in the Caribbean, in 1949. He moved to the UK in the late 1970s and is well known for powerful and fun performances of his work.

He uses non-standard phonetic spelling (written as a word sounds) to represent his own accent, and writes about what it is like being black to challenge racist attitudes, especially those which are unthinking.

This poem draws on Agard's experience to make us look at the way history is taught, and at how we conceive our identity as we learn about cultural traditions and narratives. It becomes clear that Agard had to follow a history curriculum biased towards whites, especially British whites, so that he learned about mythical, nursery rhyme characters instead of living black people from the past.

He challenges this view of history and cites some major black figures to balance the bias and create a basis for his own identity.

Feelings/Attitudes

What kind of tone does the poem have? Like the structure, the tone also divides into two. The "Dem tell me" sections have an accusatory, rebellious tone to them, created by repetition and short lines at the beginning. Whereas the sections on Toussaint L'Overture, Nanny de Maroon and Mary Seacole are celebratory in tone, emphasised by images of nature and using epic (out of the ordinary) vocabulary - words like "vision", "see-far" and "star".

It is a poem that challenges us to consider the meaning of history, how we come to know about the past and accept versions of history. The poet might be provoking us to "check out" our own histories, particularly if they include periods or important figures not taught in schools.

Checking Out Me History John Agard

Structure/Shape of the poem

Checking Out Me History alternates between two structures, marked by two different fonts. The first uses the repeated phrase "Dem tell me" to indicate the white version of history, mostly written in rhyming couplets, triplets or quatrains. Interspersed are the stories of three black historical figures: Toussaint L'Overture, Nanny de Maroon and Mary Seacole, told using abbreviated syntax with words missed out, shorter lines and an irregular rhyme scheme.

Poetic Devices

Sound: Agard uses variations in spelling to suggest Caribbean dialect, especially replacing 'th' with 'd'. This stresses the importance of carving out his "own identity".

There is repetition - particularly of "Dem tell me" - throughout the poem, creating a sense of rhythm.

End rhyme is heavily used, emphasised by adapted sections of nursery rhymes: the dish who ran away with the spoon, and Old King Cole, for example.

In the "Dem tell me" sections the poet refers to nursery rhyme characters and other non-historical people, like Robin Hood or the cow who jumped over the moon. Even "1066 and all dat", which might appear to be an historical reference, is probably citing a humorous book (published in 1930) famous for its irreverent parody of histories of England. There's a suggestion that the version of history taught to the poet is not exactly accurate even before you consider that black people have been completely left out.

The sections on individual black historical figures contain stronger imagery, with use of nature metaphors to powerful effect. Toussaint L'Overture is a "thorn" and a "beacon". Nanny de Maroon is linked with a mountain, fire and rivers. Mary Seacole is described in dramatic imagery as a "healing star" and a "yellow sunrise" to the patients she treats.

All three are associated with light - "beacon", "fire-woman" and "star" - suggesting that they play metaphorical roles, illuminating the poet's true historical identity.

Kamikaze

- Her father embarked at sunrise
with a flask of water, a samurai sword
in the cockpit, a shaven head
full of powerful incantations
and enough fuel for a one-way
journey into history*
- Imagery, Japan was also known as the land of the rising sun, linking the character to his culture and duty.
- Listing, creates a sense of intimacy with the pilot of simplicity which juxtaposes the metaphorical 'journey into history' of his flight.
- but half way there, she thought,
recounting it later to her children,
he must have looked far down
at the little fishing boats
strung out like bunting
on a green-blue translucent sea*
- Aside, used to give a sense of individualism to this nameless pilot and relaxed tone to the piece, contrasts the conflict of the context.
- Simile, emphasises the attractive temptation of the life below him. Contrasts with his 'journey into history', symbolises his inner conflict.
- and beneath them, arcing in swathes
like a huge flag waved first one way
then the other in a figure of eight,
the dark shoals of fishes
flashing silver as their bellies
swivelled towards the sun*
- Symbolic Figure of 8 ∞ the infinity symbol, repetitive cycle and feeling trapped by his destiny.
- The fish represent the aircraft, the 'flash of silver' metaphor for their honour and glory.
- The fish represent the pilots and his fate is linked with theirs, eventually they will be caught.
- and remembered how he
and his brothers waiting on the shore
built cairns of pearl-grey pebbles
to see whose withstood longest
the turbulent inrush of breakers
bringing their father's boat safe*
- Symbolic of death and remembrance.
- Futility -people, like the sand, will eventually succumb to fate/nature., but he seeks to hang on for as long as he can, but what is the point?
- Represents inner turmoil and conflict, questioning the strength to defy fate and the pressure on him to do his duty.

– yes, grandfather's boat – safe

to the shore, salt-sodden, awash

with cloud-marked mackerel,

black crabs, feathery prawns,

the loose silver of whitebait and once

a tuna, the dark prince, muscular, dangerous.

And though he came back

my mother never spoke again

in his presence, nor did she meet his eyes

and the neighbours too, they treated him

as though he no longer existed,

only we children still chattered and laughed

till gradually we too learned

to be silent, to live as though

he had never returned, that this

was no longer the father we loved.

And sometimes, she said, he must have wondered

which had been the better way to die.

Aside changes font to suggest the daughter, speaking to the children, emphasise individual/personal account of history, at odds with our views of these nameless pilots.

Sibilance shows the ocean wave sounds. Symbolic of the tide, which like him, returns.

Listing of the catch on the boat connotes the childhood joys and innocence which are darkened by the events of the pilot's life. The inclusion of the tuna and the metaphor forebodes the darker end to the poem. The fish represent people like the pilot, they are caught in the net of mankind but even without it they are stuck in their same old patterns, emphasises futility.

Pronoun leaves him nameless as though ashamed or difficult to name him.

Aside undermines the enormity of the event with matter of fact tone.

Learned implies the behaviour is not natural and was forced upon her, that she now realises and regrets this.

Punctuation used the dramatically emphasise the 'loved' and created empathy.

Highlights conflict, emphasises that he died in the eyes of his family. There is a tone of regret and sympathy at his situation, he had no way out.

Beatrice Garland

Context/Main Ideas

The poem is set around the events of a kamikaze pilot flying to war and then turning back before it was too late. Kamikaze pilots were expected to use up all their weapons and then suicide by flying into their targets as a final act of destruction. It was considered a great honour in Japan to die for your country. The pilot in this poem returns home and is rejected by his family forever after, his own wife refusing to speak to him.

Feelings/Attitudes

The real conflict is between the rules of a society 'honour' in Japanese culture, and the will to survive and return to a family. The conflict is particularly profound because there appears to be no right answer and the pilot dies, one way or another, in the eyes of his family, if not in body, the poem explores the futility of trying to avoid your own fate/destiny.

The poem is written both from a narrator and the daughter of the pilot. The narrator explains the events, almost translating the story, while the speaker gives a first person account of how they excluded her father.

The poet questions at the end which death would have been better, to die as a kamikaze pilot young or to grow old with a family who shut you out.

Poetic Devices

The language Garland chooses appears to be natural and every day. However this apparent ordinariness conceals some effective literary devices which invites the reader to think about what the pilot may have seen from his plane. It adds to the power of that moment, but also shows the daughter has thought about the same scene, time and time again.

An individual metaphor appears: 'a tuna, the dark prince' and the image of 'the loose silver of whitebait' suggests a comparison with coins, or possibly sunken treasure. The impression on the reader is of the great wealth of the sea.

Garland makes great use of sense impressions, include sight (colour and light/shade - eg 'green-blue translucent', 'dark shoals') and of taste (the 'salt-sodden' boat).

Kamikaze Beatrice Garland

Structure/Shape of the poem

Kamikaze is a narrative poem. It begins as a kind of report, summarising another conversation or an overheard story told by someone else. Sections of the poem are presented in italics as first-person narrative, where the storyteller speaks directly for herself. This has the effect of heightening the sense of sadness she feels.

Kamikaze is written in seven, six-line stanzas. The poem does not rhyme and has no regular rhythmic pattern, though most lines have three or four stresses. This style, together with the regular stanza structure, allows the story to be told simply, letting the tragedy and emotion shine through, but allowing readers to make up their own minds about events in the poem.

One notable feature of the poem's structure is that it is composed of only three sentences and contains only three full-stops, perhaps reflecting the idea of a story being told orally. The first sentence runs over five stanzas, as we are told about what the pilot can see from the cockpit. We are therefore given a lot of detail, allowing us to imagine more exactly the circumstances of the pilot's difficult decision.

The second sentence marks a shift in time and in speaker. The reader is presented with information directly from the daughter, speaking in her own words. Until this point, her story was re-told in third-person narrative, creating a distancing effect. Now, the reader is suddenly brought close to someone with a direct interest in the story she tells, speaking at a much later time.

The new sentence contains another surprise. It is only now that the reader learns the kamikaze pilot abandoned his mission and turned back. Placing this information at the point where the poem has a shift in time and speaker, gives the information more impact.

The final sentence is only three lines and reverts back to third person. It adds another twist, emphasising the fact that the pilot may have thought he would've been better off if he had died in the suicide mission.

Each change in speaker and each shift in time has a jarring and unsettling effect on the reader and perhaps expresses the turbulent, but repressed feelings of the daughter.