



BAYONET CHARGE BY TED HUGHES

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FULL POEM

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, –

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

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

HOW TO FIGURE OUT A POEM

If you want to figure out a poem you have to figure out how the speaker is seeing the world

- If you want to figure out how the speaker is seeing the world you have to look at the symbolic language the speaker is using
 - There are many kinds of symbolic languages but one of the most important is metaphor
 - Metaphor is a counter-logical use of language but makes all the sense in the world on a higher level
 - This is how you know you are dealing with a metaphor
 - It makes no sense on the literal level
 - But it makes sense on a 'higher' figurative level
 - We use metaphorical language everyday
 - 'the Whitehouse announced today that...'
- when the features of the thing which the speaker is comparing the subject to become so overwhelming that they have stopped seeing the differences, then we can see how the speaker sees the world





WHO WAS TED HUGHES?

- Born in 1930 and died in 1998
 - Grew up in the countryside of Yorkshire
 - Passionate about animals and nature
 - Devoted to poetry from a young age, despite lack of income
 - Poet and children's writer
 - Father served in WW1
 - Obsessed with astrology
 - Poet Laureate 1984-1998
-

POWER AND CONFLICT IN THIS POEM

Power

- The power of propaganda
- the power of consciousness to change reality
 - if we remove blind patriotism we can avoid war
- the powerlessness of blind obedience and patriotism
 - if we accept the empty promises of patriotism and nationalism, we become more barbaric than animals and the effects of the atrocities we commit live on for decades, whether or not we do as well
- the powerlessness of being trapped in conflict
 - the soldier realises that sacrificing his life for this war is senseless but Hughes does not let us know if it is too late for him or not
- the powerlessness of surviving war
 - nightmares
 - PTSD
 - massive loss of life
 - decimated communities and families
 - communal loss of vitality
- the powerlessness of trying to express the inexpressible

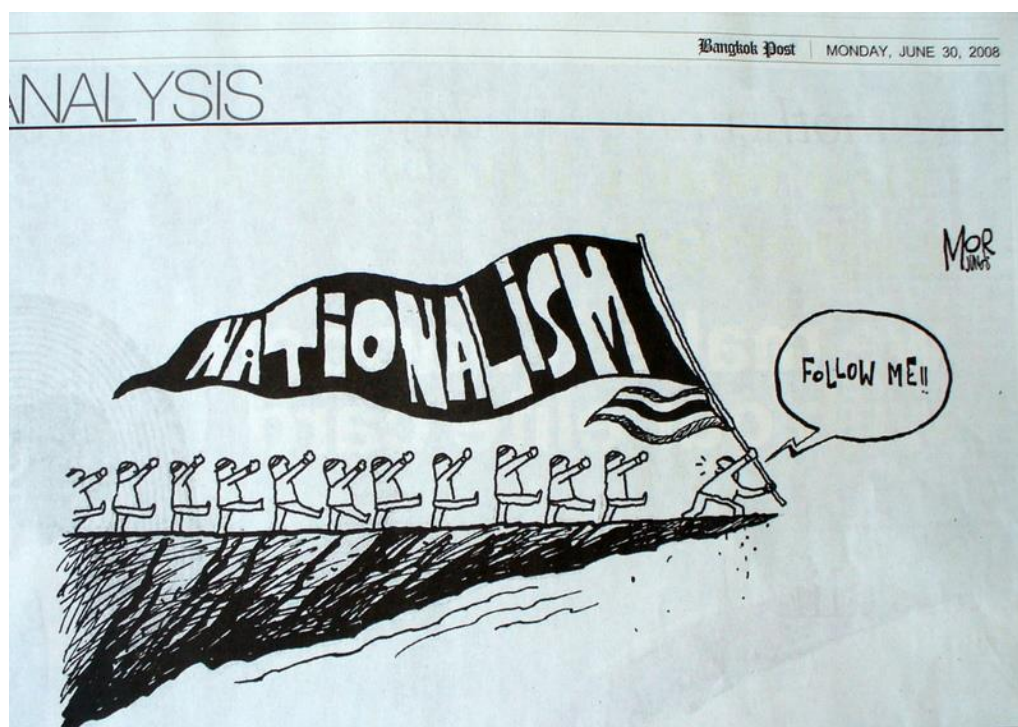
conflict

- man vs himself
 - he is battling to control his own terror
- humanity vs nature
 - nature becomes ill because of man's wars
 - war is against nature
- humanity vs patriotism
- man vs man
 - Hughes believed that true violence is the inhumanity of man vs man
- dreamworld vs reality
 - 'Suddenly he awoke and was running'





- Which is the dreamworld and which is the reality? The poem wants to confuse the two
 - The protagonist wakes into a nightmare



CONTEXT: THE POWER OF WWI PROPAGANDA

During World War One, propaganda was employed on a global scale

- Unlike previous wars, this was the first total war in which whole nations and not just professional armies were locked in mortal combat.
 - This and subsequent modern wars required propaganda:
 - to mobilise hatred against the enemy;
 - to convince the population of the justness of the cause;
 - to enlist the active support and cooperation of neutral countries;
 - and to strengthen the support of allies.

CONTEXT: TYPES OF WWI PROPAGANDA



Propaganda for patriotism and nationalism

- nations relied heavily on symbols and slogans of nationalism and patriotism
 - While the armies of continental Europe were made up of conscripts, the British army was made up of professionals and then volunteers
 - The British placed immense reliance on propaganda to justify the war and help promote recruitment
 - 'Your Country Needs You'
 - Stereotypes were also used
 - Religious symbolism of St George slaying the (German) dragon
 - Recruitment posters changed from appealing to national honour to 'mobilisation by shame'
 - Savile Lumley's 1915 poster written 'Daddy, what did YOU do in the Great War?'
 - Other strategies included a need to
 - channel emotions such as courage or hatred
 - conserve resources
 - strengthen national identity
 - emphasise the barbarity of the Germans and Austro-Hungarian armies
 - use women as symbols, victims and homemakers
 - influence children to develop particular values and contribute to the war effort
- propaganda was designed to manipulate every type of person into signing up for the army

CONTEXT: HUGHES'S CHILDHOOD

Bayonet Charge is about WW1

- It is one of six war poems included in Hughes' first published collection of poems, *The Hawk in the Rain*.
 - *The Hawk in the Rain* represented a criticism of the lack of vitality in post war English society and contemporary English poetry.
 - His childhood was overshadowed by the legacy of one war and foreshadowed by the arrival of the next
 - He wrote out of the impact of memory rather than experience
 - But the memory represents the individual memory of his father who was one of only seventeen soldiers in the Lancashire Fusiliers to survive at Gallipoli
 - His writing also represents the collective memory of English culture
 - Even though Hughes was born after WWI (1914 - 1918), he believed the massive casualty rates had decimated communities in such a way that it could be felt into the 1930s
 - He also lived through WWII
 - *Bayonet Charge* compares nicely to other WW1 poetry, or perhaps the much older *Charge of the Light Brigade*
 - but Hughes himself was not even born when the first world war took place.
 - Unlike Wilfred Owen, a war poet who served and died in WW1, Hughes writes about a war he did not personally experience: a fact which proves key to helping us understand *Bayonet Charge*.





HUGHES' MOTIVATION

Hughes' father had served in the war

- In fact, William Hughes was one of only seventeen soldiers in the Lancashire Fusiliers who survived death at Gallipoli
 - Through other Hughes poems, we are told that his father spent the rest of his life emotionally paralysed from the trauma he experienced
 - So, Ted Hughes writes about WW1 because, although he didn't personally experience it, he felt the effects of it in his everyday life through his relationship with his father as well as his observations of his community and his family

Secondly, Hughes grew up in a West Yorkshire community which he says was 'still stunned' by the first world war.

- The region had lost so many of its population to the war that Hughes felt that 'the whole region is in mourning for the first world war'.
 - He felt the war 'seemed to have killed every other young man my relatives had known'

Finally, Hughes wrote about WW1 due to his admiration for the poetry of Wilfred Owen.

- He felt that Owen's poetry was 'contemporary' in the way he wrote about those events which so greatly influenced Hughes's own existence.
 - He commented on Owen's determination that everyone in Britain should know exactly what the soldiers were facing, and of his wish that there be an understanding of and appreciation for the suffering of those fighting and dying on the battlefield.
 - In his published letters, Hughes explained that 'Owen, when I came to know his poems, grew to represent my father's experience'.
 - We shall return to the influence of Wilfred Owen later on.

HUGHES' GENERAL POETIC STYLE

His verse deals with

- the physical and the natural
 - physically, the soldier is trying to survive
 - at the same time, he questions the nature of conflict
 - the poem contains two symbols of nature
 - 'the green hedge'
 - 'the yellow hare'
- the self and the subconscious
- the personal and the universal

Hughes' form

- he chose free verse rather than tightly structured traditional poetic forms as a suitable medium for his exploration of a chaotic and often violent world
- he also did much to contribute to the revival of the dramatic monologue in the 1960s
 - *Bayonet Charge* appears to bare many hallmarks of a traditional dramatic monologue





He was known for:

- his striking diction
- powerful imagery
- narrative skill
- experimental approach
 - he binds form and meaning in a complex relationship
 - notice the complex relationship between the form of *Bayonet Charge* and the meaning
 - it carries many features of a dramatic monologue, yet it seems easier to simply classify it as a narrative poem

TOPICS IN BAYONET CHARGE

This is a poem about war, but it is more than that.

- It is about a single soldier, a terrified one
 - The title contradicts, in a way, the essence of the poem, because a Bayonet Charge is normally a group of soldiers charging together
 - But Ted Hughes has flipped this and focused solely on the individual and the rest of mankind falls away
 - The point seems to be that in order to understand the collective experience of post-war England, we need to first understand the individual experience
 - If we focus solely on the collective experience, the true essence of that experience may become lost in the sea of numbers
 - In a way, this is really what all literature is about: understanding the individual so we can understand the author's point about society
- *Bayonet Charge* has at its heart the theme of the indescribable horror of war.
 - The poem sets out to describe the horror of war, but ultimately cannot do so.

STRUCTURE: GENERAL

The poem is broken into three verses which is intrinsic to basic storytelling

1. In the first, a soldier wakes up to find himself charging towards the enemy, with his gun and bayonet in hand.
 - This can be seen as the **exposition**
 - The author has also included the **rising action** here
2. In the second verse, the soldier suddenly stops to contemplate what he is doing and why he is doing it.
 - This can be seen as the **climax**
 - This is also the **turning point** in the story
3. In the third and final verse, the focus shifts to a hare which has found itself caught up in the midst of the battle.
 - Here we have the **falling action** and the **resolution**
 - 'King, honour, human dignity, etcetera
Dropped like luxuries in a yelling alarm'

STRUCTURE: IN MEDIA RES





the poem begins mid-action, with the adverb 'suddenly'

- Clearly something has gone before this moment, but we as the reader are not made aware of it.
 - The result is that we are confused and perhaps unsure of what is happening: just like the frightened soldier.
 - Hughes also structures the poem this way to focus on the moment of change, when he realizes that 'King, honour, human dignity, etcetera' have no real value
 - They are nothing but tools of propaganda used to drive young men to war

FORM: 'DRAMATIC MONOLOGUE' FORM DEVELOPMENT

The form of a poem can highlight the kind of relationship the poet desires to create with the reader

- During the Romantic period, many poets adopted a first person, confessional style, *creating intimacy with the reader through direct address*
 - William Wordsworth's *The Prelude* (begun in 1799, but revised many times) is an autobiographical account of the poet's journey to artistic maturity
 - Browning and Tennyson's innovation, however, was to write in the voice of a fictional personae
 - This also appears to be the case with *Bayonet Charge*
 - The voice in the poem seems to be a fictional persona
 - Although it may be based on Hughes' experiences with his father
 - However, unlike conventional dramatic monologues, this one is written in the third person
 - Paradoxically though, the language style of the poem in combination with the narrative structure appears to place a lot of emphasis on the speaker's mental state
- Developed during the early to mid-nineteenth century
- The dramatic monologue may be the most distinctive structure of the Victorian period
 - Robert Browning used this form often and has been credited, together with Tennyson, for its creation

'DRAMATIC MONOLOGUE' GENERAL FEATURES

Dramatic monologues tend to focus on interiority rather than action

- It gives us an interior view of the workings of the speaker's mind
 - Traditionally, Robert Browning, who is often credited with its creation, wished to make us feel the complex and unstable nature of an individual person
 - In the preface to *Sordello*, he writes:
 - 'My stress lay on the incidents in the development of a soul. Little else is worth study'
 - Accordingly Browning pays the least possible attention to outward nature.





- Although Hughes, whose poetry is known to have been influenced by the dramatic monologue form, focuses on the interior workings of his protagonist's mind, he differs from Browning by also focusing on the action of the scene, perhaps, because it is the cause of the protagonist's mental instability.
- It is a poetic form in which there is one imaginary speaker addressing an imaginary audience
 - The speaker ('I') is not the poet
 - However, in *Bayonet Charge*, although we are aware that it is not Ted Hughes in the poem itself, indicating, therefore, it may not be correct to categorise the speaker as imaginary because the voice may actually be his father's
 - Perhaps Hughes is imagining his father's experiences on the battlefield in World War 1
 - In this way and others, we can, perhaps, trace the influence the dramatic monologue had on Hughes, even if he does not conform to it completely.
 - In a traditional dramatic monologue, the speaker addresses an audience within the poem
 - However, this is another area where Hughes appears to differ from the classic form
 - It seems as though there is no audience within the poem, although it is possible to imagine that the story could have come Hughes' father addressing his family in a neutral, emotionless, matter-of-fact tone.
- Characters in dramatic monologues often teeter on the verge of madness or delusion
 - In *Bayonet Charge*, it is almost as if the speaker is coming out of a state of delusion, however, the irony is that it appears his life may be in its very final moments
 - Nevertheless, if we see the poem as being based on his father's experiences, it is possible that the speaker survives physically but still dies emotionally and psychologically.
 - Elsewhere characters in dramatic monologues may represent themselves directly to the reader, perhaps pleading for understanding or anticipating judgment for their actions
 - *Porphyria's Lover*
- In most dramatic monologues, some attempt is made to imitate natural speech
 - Use of enjambment
 - Iambic pentameter
 - Careful use of linguistic techniques
- Dramatic monologues represent the distillation of a crucial moment of human experience, focusing on a particular occasion that becomes a revelation of an almost religious nature as the speaker tries to transcend the finite

DRAMA

The dramatic monologue form allows the poet to dramatise the human condition

- It works as a piece of drama
 - The form makes it possible to combine rhyme, rhythm and metre with narrative
 - Dramatic monologues are concerned with situations, episodes of lives that are still in the process of developing
 - They focus on examples of self-occupied men and women as they attempt to overcome the limitations of their physical lives





- In the case of *My Last Duchess*, it may be that the Duke's sense of jealousy is his limitation as he is unable to set himself free of it
 - So he orders the murder of the Duchess in order to preserve an eternal sense of control.
 - However, in *Bayonet Charge*, we could say that the soldier is limited by his beliefs in patriotism and honour, which were possibly fed to him via nationalistic and militaristic propaganda.
- In nineteenth-century examples, dramatic monologues are often presented within dramatic scenarios, as if talking to or interacting with others
 - *Bayonet Charge* clearly fits this criterion because Hughes takes the reader right into the heart of a World War 1 trench battle
 - In particular, it focuses on a moment during the charge when a soldier runs out of bullets and has to charge towards the enemy trench, in the hope that he will be able to use the blade at the end of weapon to kill at least one member of the enemy
 - However, this moment (the charge) proves to be a turning point for him as he begins to realise that all the reasons he had for fighting, such as king, honour, dignity, country, etc essentially have no real value
 - "Like luxuries in a yelling alarm"
 - The poem appears to be a clear criticism of war propaganda, especially the type that was so prevalent during World War 1

FORM – A 'PERCEIVED' RATHER THAN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL VIEWPOINT

The form of a poem can highlight the kind of relationship the poet desires to create with the reader. For example, the lyric is often based on autobiographical material and is written from a personal point of view, thus allowing the poet to forge a link between the reader and herself; however, the dramatic monologue creates a different kind of relationship between poet, subject matter and reader

- It gives us an interior view of the workings of the speaker's mind
- The poet and 'I' are separate entities; imagination replaces experience; and the viewpoint is 'perceived' rather than personal
 - In the 1970s and 80s, women poets used real, fictional, mythical and historical personae as an alternative means of exploring what it meant to be a woman – or at times, a man.
 - They often used this technique to challenge gender, racial, social and religious expectations through the characters they create
- Dramatic monologues are also seen as a method for inviting sympathy for the speaker
 - We judge them but we are also sympathetic towards them
 - In this case, if we see the poem as Hughes dramatising his father's experiences in poem form, it is easy to sympathise with his father
 - Even if the persona is completely imagined, it helps us gain some insight into the psychological and emotional conflicts soldiers would have and still do experience, especially in life-or-death war scenarios.

HOW BROWNING COMBINES THE SUBJECTIVE AND THE OBJECTIVE





Dramatic monologues, especially Browning's, are known to combine both the subjective and the objective

- They explore the 'truth broken into prismic hues' – that is, 'truth' as it is seen by particular individuals, broken down into its component parts
 - Browning presents the Duke as morally corrupted by power and money, to the point that he can no longer think rationally or that, perhaps, his sense of rationality is so opposed to the average person that we cannot help but find it detestable
 - However, he has full confidence in his rationality and the poem, therefore, exposes the differences in reality that people experience based on their access to power and status – the poem appears to illustrate that the higher a person's status and access to power, the more opposed their priorities are compared to the average person
 - Similarly, in *Bayonet Charge*, Hughes' protagonist experiences an epiphany right in the midst of a life and death situation
 - Suddenly, when faced with his own mortality, he begins to question his own values, such as 'King, honour, human dignity, etcetera'
 - In other words, the things he once held as true, instantaneously become nothing more than 'luxuries in a yelling alarm'.

FORM: DRAMATIC MONOLOGUE - NARRATIVE STRUCTURE

A narrative poem is one that tells a story

- The three main kinds of narrative poems are:
 - Epic
 - Metrical romance
 - Ballad
 - However, some narrative poems do not fall into these categories, such as *Bayonet Charge*.
 - Hughes' may have used a free form narrative poem because it represents the story of a soldier who is on the cusp of death when he suddenly realises that sacrificing his life for the sake of patriotic ideals is senseless
 - He realises, on the battlefield, that he wants to be free of patriotism, nationalism and all their associated symbols, which is why, in the third stanza, he drops 'them like luxuries in a yelling alarm'
 - However, there is a suggestion by Hughes that it is too late for him

While the story itself is important, the underlying ideas and experiences, and the poet's means of presenting them, are central to our understanding of the poem.

FORM: WHY USE THIRD PERSON NARRATIVE PERSPECTIVE?

The form of a poem can highlight the kind of relationship the poet desires to create with the reader

- Ted Hughes could have chosen any first person narrative form of poem to show us an internal view of the speaker's mind





- However Hughes has positioned us where we can only watch the horrific events unfolding in the story of the poem
 - We are not inside the world of the poem but observing from a distance and so we are rendered helpless in the plight of the soldier and the hare
 - This reflects the fact that Hughes is trying to describe an event that is out of our common experience
 - However, he provides us with a way to relate to the story through his use of similes which work as analogies
 - 'numb as a smashed arm'
 - 'sweating like molten iron from the centre of his chest'
 - 'a yellow hare that rolled like a flame'
 - 'his foot hung like Statuary in mid-stride.'
 - 'King, honour, human dignity, etcetera
Dropped like luxuries in a yelling alarm'
 - Although, we may feel helpless as we watch the soldier and the hare, Hughes seems to suggest there is a solution to the madness, which the speaker discovers only when he is on the verge of death
 - That is to drop 'King, honour, human dignity, etcetera
/ ... like luxuries in a yelling alarm'

FORM: DRAMATIC MONOLOGUE NARRATIVE OVERVIEW

Bayonet Charge is a poem that tells the story of a very short period of time in the battle field in, presumably, World War One

- It begins with a soldier, the protagonist, waking up and running towards a 'green hedge'
 - It is not clear as to whether he had decided, as he woke up, to head for the 'green hedge' or if he had decided before,
 - However his objective to get to the 'green hedge' does not change from the beginning of the poem to the end
 - this observation is contrasted with the fact that his ideals change mid-way
 - He no longer wishes to serve for patriotic, royal or national honour, yet he carries on toward the hedge, probably out of sheer terror
 - He is trapped, and this is captured in the cyclical structure of the poem
- It ends with him plunging 'past with his bayonet towards the green hedge'
 - The cyclical structure appears to indicate that he has come full circle from having great aspirations of patriotism to dropping them 'like luxuries in a yelling alarm'
 - The cyclical structure could also portray the idea that he is trapped and that he cannot escape from the horrors of war
 - 'the green hedge' will not be able to protect him and even if he escapes death on the battlefield, he may be paralysed by the trauma of war for the rest of his life, just as Hughes' father was, who was one of only seventeen soldiers in the Lancashire Fusiliers to escape death at Gallipoli in World War One.
 - There is a juxtaposition in the symbolism of the 'green hedge'.





- Green represents nature and rebirth and so Hughes uses the enjambment to fool the reader into thinking that perhaps it represents salvation for the horrors of the war
 - The next line carries on with the deception of the 'green hedge' because it 'dazzled' as if attractive until we realise that it 'dazzled with rifle fire'
 - From this point it seems impossible that the soldier will survive because the verb 'dazzled' suggests that it was a sustained attack that nobody was likely to survive
 - Perhaps this is why Hughes appears to slow down time in the poem with the verb 'stopped-', the dash after it, the caesura in the form of a question and the 'mid-stride' imagery
 - The author appears to want to describe the indescribable by taking us into the world of the soldier's final seconds
- However, Hughes does not make it clear as to whether or not the soldier actually makes it into the 'green hedge'

STRUCTURE: ENJAMBMENT

there is the enjambment found throughout the piece.

- We see this throughout the poem - even between verses, such as verse 2 and 3 which reads: 'Then the shot-slashed furrows//Threw up a yellow hare'

enjambment is where lines continue onto the next

- they don't make sense on their own; you have to read the next part of the line to make sense of it
 - they also focus our attention on the words at the end of the line and at the beginning of the next line
 - We can also look at it as meaning which is continued across line boundaries.
 - This approach was common in 16th and 17th century poetry but was used far less frequently by eighteenth century poets
 - In the 19th century the Romantic poets were reacting against the restrictive rules governing 18th century verse
 - They aimed to use everyday language and the rhythms of speech;
 - run-on lines were a natural extension of this principle
 - therefore, they represent natural speech,
 - an essential part of our human nature and this poem is about human nature vs manmade ideals
 - if the couplets stopped at the end of each line, this would sound mechanical and unnatural

Another view is that the enjambment reflects the erratic nature of thought, particularly one battling with conflicting emotions and / or an erratic environment.

- Whenever a poet employs enjambment, it instantly creates a disjointed, unordered effect on the reader.
 - The soldier has been thrown into a chaotic and disordered event, waking into a battle charge.
 - The enjambment reflects this - just like the soldier, the reader struggles to make sense of the chaos and disorder.





STRUCTURE: EFFECTS OF ENJAMBMENT

In a way the enjambment (run-on lines) remove the pleasure that comes with the correspondence of line and thought neatly concluding at the end of the line

- Enjambment can also produce a kind of pleasure where emotion and intellect compels us forward in order to obtain that pleasure of meaning.
 - Here, it adds to the sense of drama of the poem and compels us forward as we observe the psychological trauma the soldier experiences being manifested in his actions and behaviour as he tries to make sense of a senseless environment
 - Enjambment can also reflect the erratic nature of thought, as well as environment, which is appropriate here because Hughes' poem is about observing the terror a soldier goes through in war but, perhaps, more importantly, it appears to reflect the speaker's stream of consciousness
 - In this sense, the run-on lines create a sense of surprise and dramatic pause, particularly in lines such as 'That dazzled with rifle fire, hearing / Bullets'
 - Throughout the poem, Hughes compels us forward to obtain its meaning, but in the final stanza our observation of the horrific experiences of the soldier are mirrored within the poem as he observes the terror of the 'yellow hare' 'its mouth wide / Open silent, its eyes standing out'
 - Enjambment can also create a kind of dramatic pause
 - The dramatic pause can be used to manipulate the reader into making assumptions as to what should come next
 - In this poem, enjambment reflects the disjointed nature of the speaker's mind
 - It reflects his sprawling thoughts about what he was going through
 - It can also leave us with a sense of breathlessness, reflecting the sense of breathlessness as a natural feature of the struggle to survive

STRUCTURE: CAESURA

A caesura is a stop or pause in the middle of a line of poetry to break or interrupt the rhythm

There are three types of caesura

- Initial caesura
 - This comes near the beginning of the line
- Medial caesura
 - This comes around the middle of the line and is probably the most commonly used form of caesura
- Terminal caesura
 - This comes near the end of the line





STRUCTURE: EFFECTS OF CAESURA

Caesuras can give the reader a break, space to breath and time to think

- There are only two examples of caesura in the poem and they both come in the second stanza
 - Both caesuras represent moments where the soldier stops to consider what he is doing and why
 - However, the first caesura is a terminal one, whereas the second caesura is a medial one
 - ‘Was he the hand pointing that second? He was running’
 - This is a terminal caesura
 - It seems to reflect the idea that this was a thought which came at a crucial moment, perhaps one very close to his death
 - It seems to echo the first line of the second stanza ‘In bewilderment then he almost stopped –’
 - Had he ‘stopped’, he probably would have been killed at that very moment and so the caesura reflects a moment where he is reflecting on that thought
 - ‘...his foot hung like Statuary in mid-stride. Then the shot-slashed furrows’

LANGUAGE: GENERAL STYLE

The language style is very matter of fact

- It is generally lacking in emotion which could point to a number of ideas within the world of the poem and outside of it as well:
 - It could reflect the inhumane nature of war
 - or the emotional numbing that Hughes experienced in his relationship with his father, who suffered from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
 - Perhaps this is the way his father would have relayed stories about war to him
 - It could also reflect the emotional numbing that all PTSD victims and their families suffer.
 - This poem may represent the recollection of an experience on the battlefield by a survivor
 - We Should also remember that *Bayonet Charge* was part of his 1957 publication, *The Hawk in the Rain* which represented a criticism of the lack of vitality in post war English society and contemporary English poetry.
 - The lack of emotion in the poem could reflect the lack of vitality he experienced in post war English society and contemporary English poetry

LANGUAGE: HUGHES' INFLUENCES

His poetry explores the brutal energy of life and the landscape, in language, that is intense and physical

- The hard edge to his verse can be linked to his interest in post-war Eastern European poets:
 - Vasko Popa (1922 - 91)
 - Zbigniew Herbert (1924 - 98)





- Miroslav Holub (1923 - 98)
- János Pilinszky (1921 - 81)
 - Their work reflects the difficult times in which it was composed:
 - The language is concise and unpoetic because they are striving to express the inexpressible
 - Like Hughes, these poets take nothing for granted, questioning all art that aims to beautify and console, subverting myths, and doubting both God and life itself

LANGUAGE: STANZA STYLES

The poem is broken into three verses

1. In the first, a soldier wakes up to find himself charging towards the enemy with his gun and bayonet in hand.
 - This can be seen as the **exposition**
 - The author has also included the **rising action** here
 - This stanza features **descriptive verbs** and **concrete nouns**
 - The verbs help to portray a scene of confusion through actions which lack control
 - stumbling
 - dazzled
 - lugged
 - hearing
 - sweating
 - They also help to support the author's established sense of confusion with his use of **in media res**
 - There is a distinct lack of abstract nouns in this stanza and a much higher concentration of concrete nouns
 - khaki
 - field
 - Green hedge
 - Rifle fire
 - Bullets
 - Air
 - Arm
 - Eye
 - Chest
 - Tears
 - Iron
 - This stanza, like the third one is also marked by the strong aural qualities of the language
 - Stanza 1
 - Suddenly
 - Khaki
 - Clods
 - Towards
 - Green hedge
 - Dazzled
 - Bullets
 - Belly
 - Patriotic tear





- Stanza 3
 - Threshed
 - Wide open
 - Plunged past
 - Bayonet toward the green hedge
 - Dignity
 - Dropped
 - Blue
 - dynamite
 - The first stanza follows the classic convention of storytelling by setting the scene and Hughes uses concrete nouns to fashion a three-dimensional, concrete world of war, allowing us to construct the image of the battlefield within our minds
 - The guttural consonants and harsh plosives seem to add the finishing touches to the physical world by creating harsh sounds we would expect to hear on the battlefield
 - They also create a semantic field of war symbols
- 2. In the second stanza, the soldier suddenly stops (although probably just for a fraction of a second) to contemplate what he is doing and why he is doing it.
 - This can be seen as the climax
 - This is also the turning point in the story
 - This stanza introduces abstract nouns, and a question - a temporary interrogative mood
 - Bewilderment
 - Clockwork
 - Second
 - Nations
 - Reason
 - Because abstract nouns only exist in the minds of people, we begin to interact, not only with the physical world established in the opening stanza, but we are now also entering the mind of the soldier, or more possibly, the speaker
 - The abstract nouns introduce a psychological and intellectual dimension to the poem as the speaker begins to contemplate the 'reason of his still running'
 - This is complemented by the author's use of caesura in this stanza which indicates the need for him to stop and think, even for just a split second
 - The abstract nouns also allow us to personalise the story as we begin to search for meaning in the abstract nouns as they relate to the soldier's experience of war
- 3. In the third and final verse, the focus shifts to a hare which has found itself caught up in the midst of the battle.
 - Here we have the falling action and the resolution

HUGHES' PURPOSE

- To face life's hardships realistically





- To make the reader question whether the ideals of patriotism are worth sacrificing lives for
- To make the reader question what drives soldiers to sacrifice their lives for a higher cause
- To criticise the type of propaganda surrounding WWI that tricked people into giving up their lives for war
- To convey the effects of PTSD to those who have not suffered it or seen someone suffering from it
- To channel the pent up emotions, he grew up with having seen his father returning from war, emotionally paralysed by the trauma of war
- To convey the horrific nature of war to the reader, most of whom would never have experienced war
- That everyone in Britain should know exactly what the soldiers were facing, and of his wish that there be an understanding of and appreciation for the suffering of those fighting and dying on the battlefield
- To convey the true essence of violence

