

Manhunt: rhyme and war



Simon Armitage displays the impact that war can have upon a relationship by using a large range of methods to make the poem interesting. The first technique that he uses is ambiguity. He uses this in the title 'Manhunt'. Its metaphoric meaning is about the relationship between the man and his wife and how she tries to find her husband again after the war has taken him away from her. She feels like she has lost him even though he has just returned.

The poem is written in first person and from the perspective of the wife to show how she feels about her husband returning from the war. When Simon uses the phrase "after the first phase" this implies that this is only the beginning of the journey that is about to take place. It also implies that this is a long process and that she is trying to take it step by step. The phrases "and handle and hold...and mind and attend...and finger and thumb" are like those used in wedding vows only they have been altered so that it shows the vows that she is repeating have changed because her husband has changed.

I think it means that she feels like she is marrying her husband again because he is not the same, and she is getting to know him again after the impact of war and the long time apart. There is a constant repetition of the words "only then" which tells us how long this journey was taking. It puts emphasis on the time that this takes and shows us that though the poem is short; the journey being told took much longer. It also shows us how restricted their relationship had become as it is no longer as free as it was before her husband returned.

The phrase "Only then would he let me" shows us that her husband is very reluctant to her coming close to him. He does not want her to feel the hurt

and the pain that he is feeling. He feels like he has let his wife down. The lines “ and feel the hurt of his grazed heart” are short and this brings out the intensity and the words. The word ‘ grazed’ is more than just physical as it has been grazed emotionally as well. I think it shows us how extreme the impact of the war has been on the relationship as it has hurt him in more ways than one.

The phrase “ bind the struts” is used to make it seem like a ladder, and it seems to me like these words are used to dehumanise him. This technique is also used in the phrase “ punctured lung” as though he is not human anymore. The war has had such an impact on this man that he is no longer human, even to someone as important as a wife who knows him so well. It shows how negative the impact of war can be on relationships. The structure of the poem is quite simple. It is written in couplets which signify that they are a couple, and it highlights the intensity of their relationship.

Armitage uses enjambment where the lines run on in parallel of ‘ frozen river’ which shows the depths of his pain and the wife’s attempt to explore those depths. There are some rhymes in the poem but there are more half-rhymes. This is an irregular rhyme scheme, and it signifies that as the rhymes are broken, so is their relationship. The phrase “ the parachute silk” is a metaphor and shows us just how delicate this man is after war has changed his life, his body and his relationship with his wife.

It also shows us how tentative his wife is and how careful she has to be when she is with him. In the last line of the poem there are two commas used and this is a technique used to elongate the sentence and show how slow the journey is. It shows us the journey is slowing down and how the whole

process is not very fast at all and though we can not be sure of the time p of which all this happened over we can be sure that it was very long. The phrase “ scarring back to its source” uses the method of sibilance where the sound of the words is very sinister and it sounds very eerie.

The phrase “ sweating, unexploded mine” shows us that the word unexploded gives it the potential to explode. It shows us that the impact of war has a lasting effect. It also shows us that though it hasn’t exploded the journey for the wife could take even longer than expected if the worst possibly not have come yet. The repetition of the word ‘ and’ shows us how repetitive the wife’s mission is to find her husband because she is going over the same steps continuously, and it might take much more time than she wishes it would.