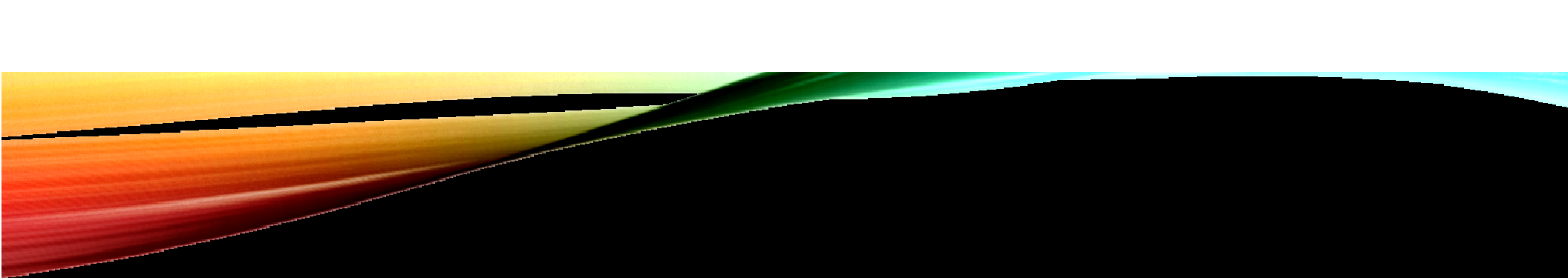




HAWK ROOSTING

TED HUGHES



PRESENTED
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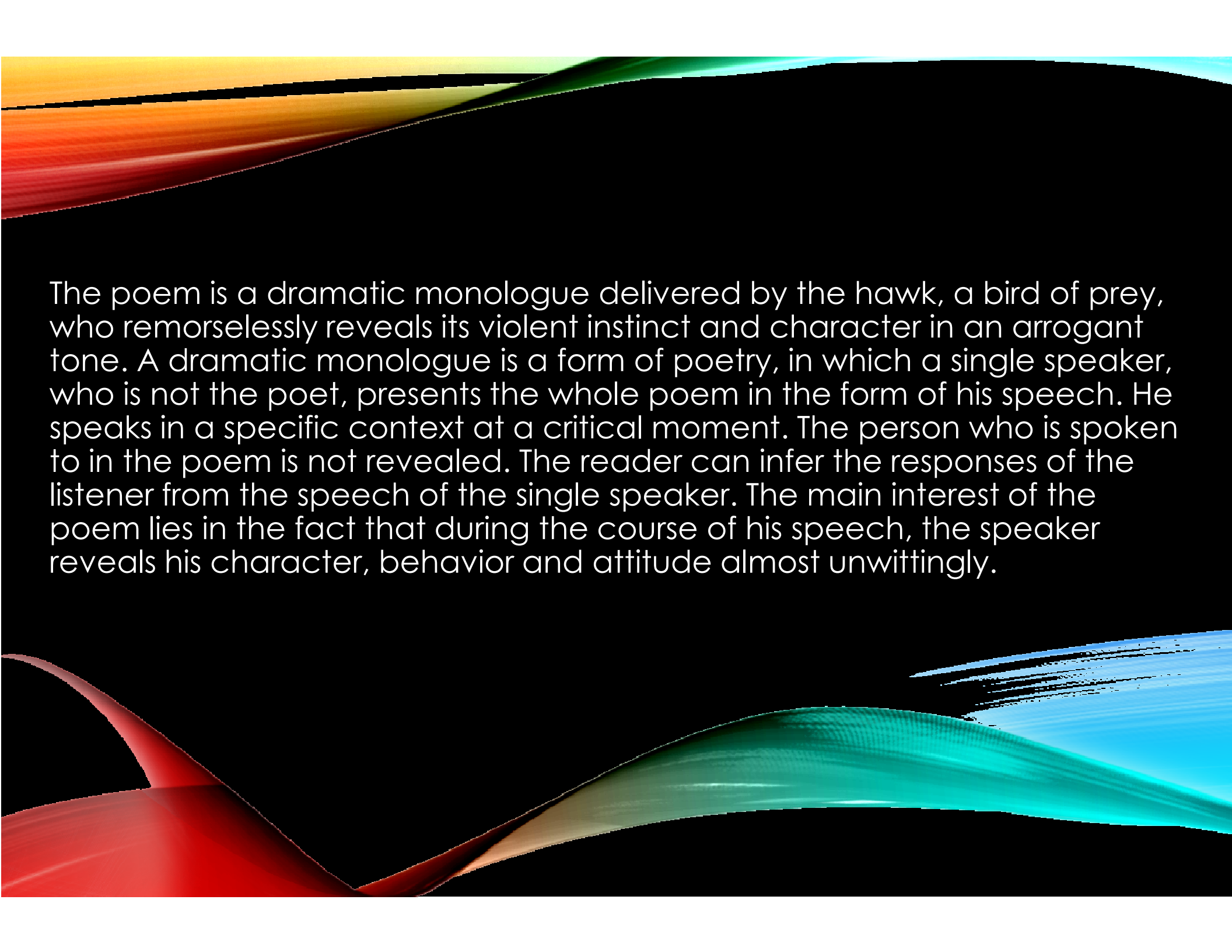
TED HUGHES

Edward James Ted Hughes was an English poet and children's writer. He was born on 17th August, 1930 and died on 28th October in 1998. He was the most influential English poet of the 2nd half of 20th century. Critics routinely rank him as one of the best poets of his generation. Hughes was British Poet Laureate from 1984 until his death. Born in West Yorkshire, he studied at Pembroke College, Cambridge, later spending most of his life in Devon. He was aware of the violent forces of nature. As a child, he gained an interest in the natural world and the violence required to survive in harsh environments. His poems emphasize the scheming and savagery of animal life. He viewed birds and animals as having unscrupulous instincts and menacing nature. He used animals as symbols in his poems. In his poems he associates the human nature with the ferocious nature of animals and predatory birds.

Ted Hughes = Wordsworth (nurse, guide, guardian)+ Tennyson (Red in tooth and claw)

ABOUT THE POEM

"Hawk Roosting" is one of the most celebrated poems of Ted Hughes, in which the poet has used dramatic monologue to expose a despotic and murderous nature symbolized by the hawk. The poem was first published in the volume *Lupercal* (1960). It is Ted Hughes' many-sided, vivid, startling, and yet truthful observation. The hawk while 'resting' at the top of the wood with closed eye expresses his happy state and satisfaction. He thinks of his prey with sense of pride and authority. We will now analyze the poem as an animal poem, study of violence, depiction of Nature and its simple structure under the following heads.



The poem is a dramatic monologue delivered by the hawk, a bird of prey, who remorselessly reveals its violent instinct and character in an arrogant tone. A dramatic monologue is a form of poetry, in which a single speaker, who is not the poet, presents the whole poem in the form of his speech. He speaks in a specific context at a critical moment. The person who is spoken to in the poem is not revealed. The reader can infer the responses of the listener from the speech of the single speaker. The main interest of the poem lies in the fact that during the course of his speech, the speaker reveals his character, behavior and attitude almost unwittingly.



THEMES, SYMBOLS, KEY FACTS

the question of human existence, man's relation with the universe, with the natural world and his inner self.

problem of human consciousness.

energy/positive force,

hawk symbolizes 'Nature Thinking'.

hawk is the mouthpiece of fascism.

hawk is as mortal and part of creation as any other creature, violent or timid.

violence is dominant theme.

style and diction in this poem is experimental.

cynicism.

powerful, violent, vital, predacious Nature.

TEXT

at in the top of the wood, my eyes
losed.
action, no falsifying dream
between my hooked head and hooked
et:
in sleep rehearse perfect kills and eat.

the convenience of the high trees!
the air's buoyancy and the sun's ray
of advantage to me;
and the earth's face upward for my
pection.

my feet are locked upon the rough bark.
look the whole of Creation
produce my foot, my each feather:
how I hold Creation in my foot

Or fly up, and revolve it all slowly -
I kill where I please because it is all mine
There is no sophistry in my body:
My manners are tearing off heads -

The allotment of death.
For the one path of my flight is direct
Through the bones of the living.
No arguments assert my right:

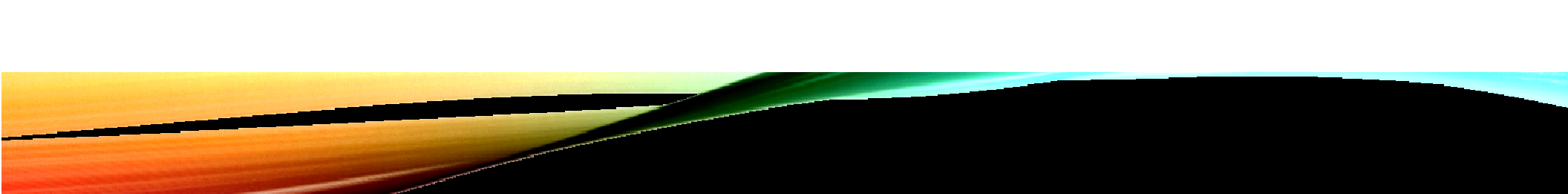
The sun is behind me.
Nothing has changed since I began.
My eye has permitted no change.
I am going to keep things like this.

ANALYSIS

The first stanza begins the Hawk's monologue in a plain voice. He is perched on the top of the forest feeling self-possessed with his eyes closed in contemplation of his absolute control of the world of birds and animals he preys upon. The punctuation of the second line conveys a directness of tone that runs till the fourth line of the stanza, and conveys an unfazed murderous intent.

The hawk indulges in no false dream; it kills with precision and at will and eats his prey. The visual imagery in the third line links the precision to kill which is inherent in the instinct of the hawk with the precise make up of his body that makes it possible to transform the instinct into murderous action.

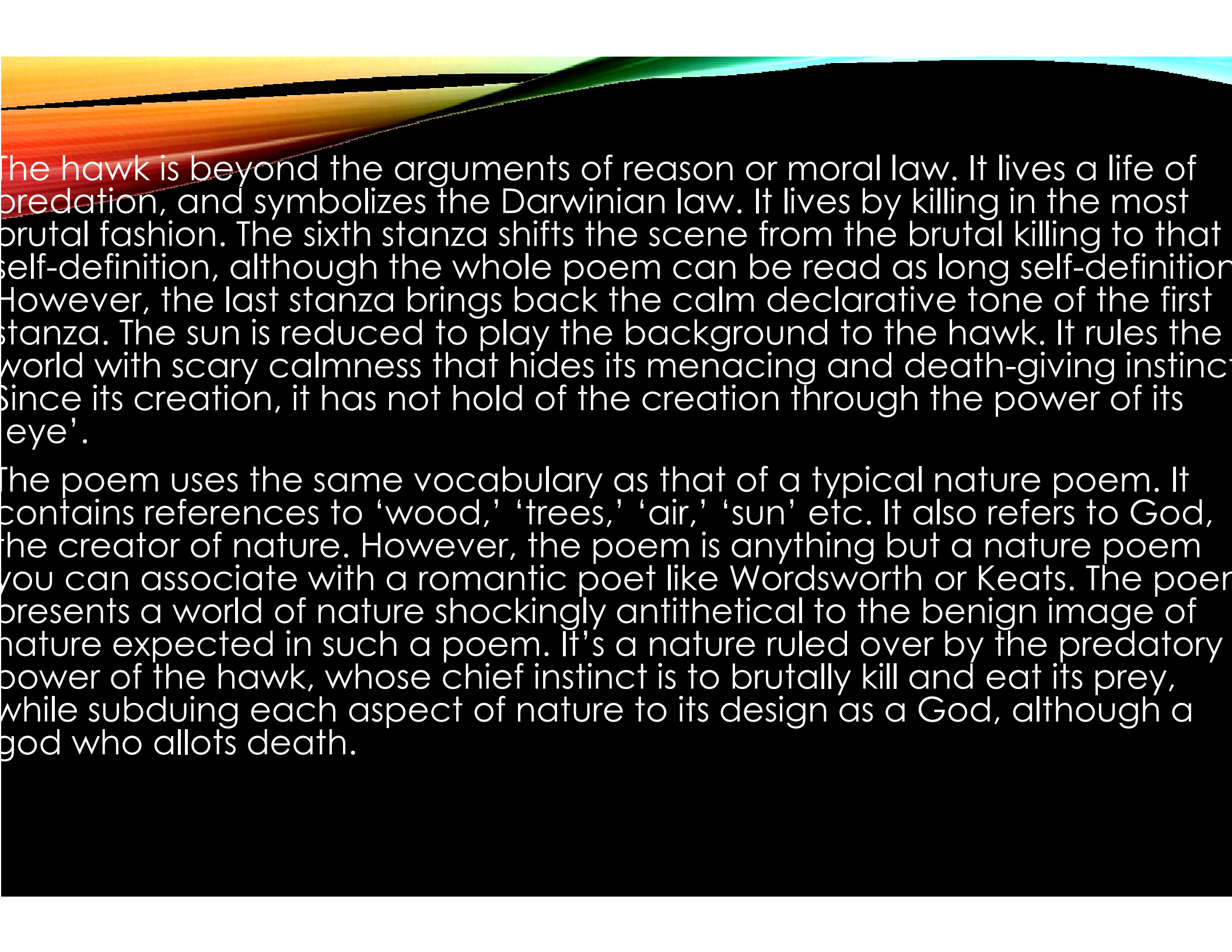
The use of the words "head" and "feet" makes personification implicit in the poem and so the poem may also be read as reflecting the guiltless murderous instinct in the humans. The hawk uses its "hooked head and hooked feet" In the second stanza, the hawk speaks about his firm grip over the earth; it can choose to kill at will as it possesses both the advantage of the height of the trees as well as its natural power of menacing flight that can utilize both the "air's buoyancy" and "the sun's ray" to glide down and kill its victims. The stanza uses a polysyllabic word in each line: "convenience," "buoyancy," "advantage," and "inspection." As an abstract fiction, these words convey ruthless ferocity of the hawk beyond rational and moral constraint. He symbolizes nature in its full nakedness of an urge to kill. The words also convey a militaristic attitude.



The pride of the hawk attains its apotheosis in the third stanza, as it feels godlike control over the earth. The first line of this stanza still presents the hawk perched the tree like the first lines of the previous stanzas. The power of its “hooked feet” is evident in their ability to be “locked upon the rough bark.” There is a rhetorical declaration of supremacy.

The hawk exudes with pride at being a special creation of Nature. In its coming to being, in the making of its “foot” and “feather,” as if the whole “Creation” participated. There is no hyperbole intended in this assertion of the hawk. There is no ambiguity in its voice that it holds the Creation under subjection. In stanzas fourth and fifth, the most pernicious aspect its power is unfolded. It holds its sway over all creation, and kills at will, because all is its own. There is no refinement, not hint of civilization about the body and the behavior of the hawk.

The two stanzas are syntactically linked. The physical brutishness expressed in the last line of the fourth stanza “tearing off heads” settles with the godlike decision of fate of the victim uttered in the first line of the fifth stanza and the last three lines of the fifth stanza complete the merciless killing instinct of the hawk.



The hawk is beyond the arguments of reason or moral law. It lives a life of predation, and symbolizes the Darwinian law. It lives by killing in the most brutal fashion. The sixth stanza shifts the scene from the brutal killing to that of self-definition, although the whole poem can be read as long self-definition. However, the last stanza brings back the calm declarative tone of the first stanza. The sun is reduced to play the background to the hawk. It rules the world with scary calmness that hides its menacing and death-giving instincts. Since its creation, it has not held of the creation through the power of its 'eye'.

The poem uses the same vocabulary as that of a typical nature poem. It contains references to 'wood,' 'trees,' 'air,' 'sun' etc. It also refers to God, the creator of nature. However, the poem is anything but a nature poem you can associate with a romantic poet like Wordsworth or Keats. The poem presents a world of nature shockingly antithetical to the benign image of nature expected in such a poem. It's a nature ruled over by the predatory power of the hawk, whose chief instinct is to brutally kill and eat its prey, while subduing each aspect of nature to its design as a God, although a god who allots death.



THANK YOU