

The Lammas Hireling - Ian Duhig

Structure:

Four stanzas made up of six lines. Enjambment occurs between all of the stanzas to create the effect of ongoing and frantic speech giving no time to reflect on what has been said. This helps to increase the level of confusion felt by a reader, and is one of the reasons why it is initially difficult to understand the meaning of the poem. In addition, the breaks between stanzas often act as 'hinge points' for the poem, particularly between the first and second stanza when the tone shifts to be more mysterious and disturbing. There is a wide mix of different sentence lengths throughout 'The Lammas Hireling', varying from several lines to only one line or less. Again, this helps to encourage the feeling of confusion and make a reader see the narrator as erratic.

Themes:

Transgression - linking real and supernatural ideas

Language and truth - maintains confusion throughout due to unanswered questions

Society and culture - feminine and masculinity (wife and narrator) imagery

Language and Narrative:

- Ideas of "light" – whether that be something physically light in weight, or happy and positive connotations.
- Oxymoron "light from the dark lantern" makes a reader question the effectiveness of the lantern if it is not truly able to show light and clarity on the situation, acting as a metaphor for the confusing events.
- describing the moon as a "yellow witness" is interesting because it could be interpreted as indicating that the light it gives (both literally and physically) is tainted, in contrast to the typically 'pure' colour of white.
- Duhig also uses a semantic field of the supernatural, with words such as "warlock", "night" and "dark". This helps to add one of the extra layers of meaning to the poem, as it makes the reader question the reality of this situation, continuing with the general ideas of the narrator's story.
- Personification aims to reinforce the theme of the supernatural, for example "the fox-trap biting" gives the impression that it has been 'possessed' to be given animal or human like qualities.

Quotes:

"There was no splash"

Splitting this sentence across two lines places much more emphasis on "splash" due to the changing of lines creating a brief pause in reading. This helps to build tension, while also demonstrating the confusion of the description because there is more time for a reader to consider what the narrator is sharing.

"Her torn voice"

The use of "torn" is notable because it has savage and painful connotations, reflecting the strange situation that is described in the poem. In addition, specifically using "her" helps to focus on the vulnerability of any other person in relation to the narrator, who would come across as fearsome and frightening.