

Hawk Roosting by Ted Hughes

The one where the hawk is in charge

The speaker of the poem is a hawk who is looking down on the earth beneath him. He begins the poem perched at the top of a tree, waiting to swoop on his next prey. His attitude and tone are very arrogant and he compares himself to God. He is very proud of his place in the food chain and the fact he can choose who lives and who dies. He doesn't want the natural order of things to be disrupted.

Key Quotes:

- In the title of the poem "roosting" suggests the hawk is still, not a swooping bird of prey as we may imagine. This gives a sense of the hawk meditating on his powers of destruction
- The tone is haughty. The hawk is focussed and not distracted - "no falsifying dream"
- The language creates an arrogance to the hawk - "I hold Creation in my foot", "it is all mine"
- There is a sense of control and that the hawk is playing God throughout the poem - "allotment of death"
- Final words - "I am going to keep things like this" shows the power that the hawk has. It is a statement suggesting he is king of the animal kingdom and untouchable

Context:

- Ted Hughes was Poet Laureate until his death in 1984 and wrote many poems about the natural world
- Hughes said the poem wasn't about cruelty - he just wanted to show a hawk's 'natural way of thinking'

Possible Links:

- Power - Ozymandias
- The natural world - To Autumn, Afternoons, Death of a Naturalist

Hawk Roosting

His place at the top of the food chain

Suggests he is waiting to swoop

He does not need to look at the world to know his place in it – he is almost meditating on his success

I sit in the top of the wood, my eyes closed.

Repetition of 'hooked' suggests he is in control – his claws are sunk in

Inaction, no falsifying dream

Reality is better than dreaming for him. He doesn't need to lie.

Between my hooked head and hooked feet:

He even dreams that his kills go perfectly

Or in sleep rehearse perfect kills and eat.

Suggests they are there specifically for him

The convenience of the high trees!

The air's buoyancy and the sun's ray

All aspects of nature are for his ease

Are of advantage to me;

And the earth's face upward for my inspection.

Arrogant tone – he is even scrutinising earth

Shows his power – links to the idea of a dictator 'locking down' on others' freedom

My feet are locked upon the rough bark.

It took the whole of Creation

Sees himself as God-like

To produce my foot, my each feather:

Now I hold Creation in my foot

Repetition of 'Creation' and the capitalisation of it emphasises his arrogance and God delusions

Or fly up, and revolve it all slowly

Suggests the world turns just for him

I kill where I please because it is all mine.

No false arguments – links to the arrogance in the first stanza – he feels he is perfect

Shows his selfish and power obsessed nature

There is no sophistry in my body:

My manners are tearing off heads

Brutally honest – violent language shows his brutality

The allotment of death.

For the one path of my flight is direct

He can 'play God' and decide who lives and who dies

Through the bones of the living.

No arguments assert my right:

Links to dictatorship – no one else has a say or can challenge him

Contrast between 'bones' and 'living' reminds the reader he has the power to take life away

The sun is behind me.

Suggests even the sun is backing him up and supporting him

Nothing has changed since I began.

He is in charge – he decides the rules of nature

My eye has permitted no change.

I am going to keep things like this.

Links to the circle of life – his reign will never end

Arrogant tone to end the poem. Reinforces his need for power and control

Ted Hughes