

Some other eclipse

Abbreviated conditions
decorate his name,
medical munitions
like time-bombs remain...

What he's become
defined with a word,
the broken-down sum
described and referred...

Defused and sedated,
just ink on a page
dismembered, mutated
dilution of rage.

Yet, still breathes the man
near the flame of his fuse,
and try as they can
they'll never excuse...

with forethought and knowing
of all that was done,
how they quickened his going
and darkened His Sun.

This poignant poem explores the dehumanization of an individual trapped within the cold, bureaucratic medical or institutional system. It contrasts the clinical reduction of a human being with the enduring, volatile spirit that remains trapped inside them. Here is a breakdown of the poem's core themes, structure, and imagery.

Core Themes

- **Dehumanisation by Diagnosis:** The poem highlights how a complex person is reduced to mere clinical labels and acronyms ("Abbreviated conditions").
- **Institutional Harm:** The final stanzas point a finger at institutional negligence or deliberate mistreatment ("with forethought and knowing"), suggesting that those in power actively hastened the person's decline.
- **The Suppressed Soul:** Despite being heavily medicated and physically or mentally altered, the subject's core humanity and anger still simmer just beneath the surface.

Stanza-by-Stanza Analysis

- **"Abbreviated conditions decorate his name, medical munitions like time-bombs remain..."**
The poem opens with the tragedy of identity loss. "Abbreviated conditions" refers to medical or psychiatric acronyms (like PTSD, OCD, or terminal codes) that now define his public identity. "Medical munitions" and "time-bombs" treat his treatments or symptoms as dangerous weapons waiting to detonate.
- **"What he's become defined with a word, the broken-down sum described and referred..."**
This highlights the clinical process of evaluation. A whole life is simplified into "a word" (a diagnosis). He is no longer viewed as a whole person, but as a "broken-down sum" shuffled through a bureaucratic system of referrals.
- **"Defused and sedated, just ink on a page dismembered, mutated dilution of rage."**
Heavy medication ("sedated") has "defused" his explosive internal pain. By turning him into "ink on a page" (a medical chart), the system has stripped him of his humanity. His natural, justified anger has been chemically watered down ("dilution of rage"), altering his true self ("mutated").
- **"Yet, still breathes the man near the flame of his fuse, and try as they can they'll never excuse..."**
A shift in tone offers a glimpse of resilience. Despite the heavy sedation, the "man" still exists right next to his explosive pain ("the flame of his fuse"). The poem transitions here into an indictment of his caretakers, stating their actions are inexcusable.

- **"with forethought and knowing of all that was done, how they quickened his going and darkened His Sun."**

The conclusion introduces a darker element of blame. The phrase "forethought and knowing" implies intent or conscious neglect by the system. By "quickening his going" (speeding up his death or decline) and "darkening His Sun," the institutions have extinguished his life force, joy, or sanity.

Structural and Literary Devices

- **Rhyme and Rhythm:** The poem utilizes strong AABB/CCDD rhyming couplets (*name/remain, word/referred, page/rage, fuse/excuse, done/Sun*). This driving, rhythmic beat mimics the ticking of the "time-bombs" mentioned in the second line.
- **Capitalisation:** Capitalising "His Sun" at the very end elevates the man's spirit to something grand and celestial. It emphasizes that the system didn't just break a patient; they extinguished a massive, vital light.
- **Contrast:** The writer brilliantly contrasts the stillness of clinical bureaucracy ("ink on a page", "sedated") with violent, fiery imagery ("munitions", "time-bombs", "rage", "flame", "fuse").

In plain, everyday language, the writer's main goal is to show the heartbreaking reality of **losing your identity to a cold medical or bureaucratic system**, while pointing an angry finger at the people responsible.

Here is what the writer really means, broken down simply:

1. Medical labels strip away humanity

When someone gets very sick or traumatised, doctors and institutions start describing them using medical codes, acronyms, and single-word diagnoses. The writer is saying that the person's real personality has been completely erased. They are no longer treated like a human being; they are just a "case file" or "ink on a page."

2. Medication is used as a silencer

The poem describes the person as being heavily drugged ("sedated") and calmed down ("defused"). The writer means that the system hasn't actually cured the person's deep pain or anger. Instead, they have just used heavy medication to chemically smother it so the person is easier for the staff to manage.

3. The inner spirit is trapped, but alive

Even though the person is drugged up and ruined by the system, the writer wants us to know that the actual man is still trapped inside. His spirit, his anger, and his life force are still burning like a lit fuse, even if no one else can see it through the sedation.

4. An accusation of cruel neglect

The most powerful part of the poem is the ending. The writer is directly accusing the caretakers or the system of **knowing exactly what they were doing**. Instead of helping the man live, their treatment actually speeded up his decline ("quickened his going") and completely stole away his happiness and life force ("darkened His Sun").

Summary

In short, the poem is a protest. It is a cry of anger against a system that treats hurting human beings like broken machines, medicating them into silence rather than actually caring for them.

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN



Analysis 2: Specific to a Military Veteran

Knowing that the author served **22 years in the British Army**, lives with **PTSD and ADHD**, and has battled **alcohol abuse** completely changes how we read this poem. It transforms it from a general complaint about medicine into a deeply personal, heartbreaking cry for help from a broken soldier. Here is what the poem means when viewed through the lens of a combat veteran's life:

1. The Military "Time-Bombs" and Trauma

- **The Original Context:** When he writes about *"medical munitions like time-bombs remain,"* he isn't just using creative language. He is talking about the literal trauma of war.
- **The Deeper Meaning:** After 22 years of service, the things he saw and did are sitting inside his mind like unexploded bombs (PTSD). The "medical munitions" could also represent the cocktail of heavy psychiatric medications prescribed to keep his PTSD flashbacks and ADHD mind quiet.

2. Shuffling from "Soldier" to a List of Acronyms

- **The Original Context:** *"Abbreviated conditions decorate his name... what he's become defined with a word."*
- **The Deeper Meaning:** In the Army, your name is "decorated" with ranks and medals of honour. Now, his name is "decorated" with clinical acronyms: **PTSD** and **ADHD**. He feels the system has stripped away his identity as a proud British Army veteran and reduced him to a checklist of mental illnesses.

3. Numbing the Mind (Sedation and Alcohol)

- **The Original Context:** *"Defused and sedated... dilution of rage."*
- **The Deeper Meaning:** Military PTSD often comes with intense, explosive anger ("rage"). To cope, he turned to alcohol, and the medical system turned to heavy sedatives. He is describing the hollow, zombie-like feeling of being "defused"—the alcohol and pills successfully drowned out the terrifying thoughts, but they also drowned out *him*. He is left feeling like a ghost, just "ink on a page" in a medical file or a veteran charity folder.

4. A Deep Betrayal by the System

- **The Original Context:** *"With forethought and knowing of all that was done, how they quickened his going and darkened His Sun."*
- **The Deeper Meaning:** This is the most painful part of the poem. For a man who gave over two decades of his life to his country, there is a profound sense of institutional betrayal. He feels that the Ministry of Defence, the medical boards, or society at large chewed him up, spat him out, and gave him pills to shut him up rather than actually helping him heal. By heavily medicating him and leaving him to struggle with addiction, they "darkened his sun"—extinguishing the pride, light, and purpose he once had.

The Meaning of the Title: "Some Other Eclipse"

A solar eclipse is a natural event where the moon blocks the sun. In this poem, the "eclipse" is man-made. The author's bright, vital soul and long military career have been completely eclipsed (blocked out) by the dark shadows of mental illness, heavy medication, and institutional neglect.

The Conflict of Identities: Combat Leader vs. Broken Patient

In the British Army, 22 years of service means this veteran likely reached a senior rank (such as a Sergeant, Colour Sergeant, or Warrant Officer). For over two decades, his identity was built on extreme discipline, control, authority, and protecting others.

- **The Contrast:** The poem captures the agonizing psychological drop from being a highly capable soldier to being a vulnerable patient.
- **The Loss of Control:** In the military, "conditions" refer to operational environments or terrain. In civilian life, his "conditions" are **PTSD** and **ADHD**. Instead of earning medals to "decorate" his uniform, clinical labels now "decorate his name." The poem reflects the deep humiliation of losing his status and being forced into a system where he has zero control.

The "Time-Bomb" of Dual Diagnoses (ADHD & PTSD)

The combination of ADHD and PTSD is notoriously volatile, and the poem's imagery perfectly mirrors this internal chaos:

- **The Unregulated Mind:** ADHD causes a constantly racing mind, impulsivity, and a need for high stimulation—traits that can actually thrive in high-adrenaline combat situations.
- **The Traumatized Mind:** PTSD introduces hyper-vigilance, flashbacks, and intense, explosive anger.
- **The Poem's Reflection:** When he writes about the "**flame of his fuse**" and "**medical munitions**," he is describing the internal pressure cooker of these two conditions interacting. The "rage" he mentions is a hallmark of combat-related PTSD.

Self-Medication vs. Chemical Restraint

The line "*Defused and sedated... dilution of rage*" hits differently when considering his struggles with alcohol abuse alongside psychiatric treatment.

- **The Cycle:** Alcohol is a central nervous system depressant often used by veterans to "turn off" the racing thoughts of ADHD and the terrifying flashbacks of PTSD.
- **The System's Fix:** When he sought help, the medical system likely prescribed heavy sedatives or antipsychotics to keep his PTSD outbursts at bay.
- **The Result:** The writer feels trapped between two forms of sedation. Whether it is the bottle or the prescription pill, the result is a "*mutation*" of his true self. He isn't healed; he is just biologically silenced so he is no longer a threat or a nuisance to society.

The Betrayal of the "Duty of Care"

For a soldier, loyalty is everything. You give the state your youth, your mental health, and the prime years of your life, operating under the assumption that there is a "Duty of Care" to look after you when you break.

- **The Accusation:** The final stanza moves from self-pity to a sharp, tactical counterattack against the institutions (the MoD, Veterans' Affairs, or NHS mental health services).
- **The Verdict:** Words like "*forethought*" and "*knowing*" are legalistic. He is accusing the system of premeditated neglect. They knew the risks of deployment, they knew the risks of sudden discharge into civilian life, and they knew that simply drugging a veteran is not a cure. By doing it anyway, they "**quickened his going**"—speeding up his psychological or physical decline.

Structural Symbolism: The "Military" Rhythm

The poem is written in a very rigid, strict meter with a marching rhythm. This structure itself tells a story. Even though he is writing about being broken down, sedated, and dismissed, his mind still defaults to the rhythm and structure of the army. He is using the discipline he learned in the military to attack the system that abandoned him.