PREFACE

Born in 1930, Ted Hughes, has within the last three decades brought out more than thirty volumes of poetry and carved out an important place for himself in the array of prominent British poets—which goes much beyond the position of Poet Laureateship he now holds. His works range from much-anthologised pieces like "The Thought-Fox", "The Hawk in the Rain", "Jaguar" and "Six Young Men" to the complex mythopoeic symbolism of Crow and Cave Birds. After Yeats, Eliot, and Dylan Thomas, one can unhesitatingly say that Hughes is the only major poet in the British scene who recognizes the compelling need to create a personal mythology, individual and at the same time blending into the universal.

His poems are noted both for their powerful individual treatment and singularity of content. Most often the power of his language proves to be his bane because it forces attention away from the underlying tensions and deeper levels of meaning in his poetry. But far from being a mere poet with an eye on experimentation of form and technique, Hughes has reflected deeply on the problems of poetry and poetic creation. His concern has always been both personal and social—the poet in his vision constantly striving for a resolution of the inner and outer worlds.
Writing on myth and education, Hughes has observed:

Sharpness, clarity and scope of the mental eye are all-important in our dealings with the outer world, and that is plenty. And if we were machines it would be enough. But the outer world is only one of the worlds we live in. For better or worse we have another, and that is the inner world of our bodies and everything pertaining. It is closer than the outer world, more decisive, and utterly different. So here are two worlds, which we have to live in simultaneously. And because they are intricately interdependent at every moment, we can't ignore one and concentrate on the other without accidents. Probably fatal accidents.

Hughes goes on to point out that the inner world of the body might be regarded as an extension of the outer world, and it is in this inner world that the poet's main concerns lie.

Hughes's exteriorization of his inner pursuits attains dramatic dimensions in his poetry through the interplay of character, dialogue and action. By making a study of his characters, the *dramatis personae* of Hughes's double world, their relationships with each other, and the situation of the moment in the main overall drama of living and growing and dying, this thesis proposes to unlock Hughes's intimate negotiations with the inner world and his genuine exploration of its imaginative depths which infold the vital energies.

Six chapters comprise the body of the text. In the introductory chapter, I have endeavoured to place the poet in context, outlining the major influences that work towards the crystallizing of his poetry and ideas. The following five chapters deal with the human, the animal and the imaginary characters in his poetry. The human characters are further
classified into women and men and they are dealt with in detail in the second and third chapters. The chapter on women characters reflects the deteriorated White Goddess that Hughes perceives in the women of contemporary world who are either completely lacking in their awareness of the vital energies or possessing them in excessive quantities and therefore wayward in their relationships. The chapter on men characters strengthens this observation because the men too are lacking in purpose and vitality, and are thus totally inconsequential unless motivated by circumstances.

The fourth and fifth chapters are concerned mainly with the animal world—classified for the purposes of this study into the predatory and the domestic.

The imaginary beings in the Hughesian canon are analysed in the sixth chapter. The term imaginary here refers to subhuman characters like the Wodwo, the mythical demi-god Prometheus, and the supernatural deity itself.

The concluding chapter summarizes and endorses the observations and conclusions which have emerged from the foregoing chapters.

Reading and rereading Ted Hughes's poetry has been an immense source of pleasure for me. Hughes's childlike exultation at the varying forms of life in and around him, his much-deciphering poetic eye and his unusual and beguiling sense of humour, have bestowed me with greater insights into
myself. I feel the poet deserves to be read a great deal more from a purely personal point of view.

I would like to acknowledge my sincere gratitude to my Professor and supervising teacher Dr. K. Ayyappa Paniker who unhesitatingly offered all intellectual help in finding my way through an amorphous mass of data and information that had gathered all around me in the course of my study. Often keeping aside all his other valuable work, he found time to read through my writings--I am grateful for his meticulous eye and infinite patience.

The frustrations of a research scholar working on a contemporary British poet in Kerala, I found, commence with the non-availability of a large amount of both primary and secondary materials. The invaluable help rendered by Mr. Parthasarathy, Librarian, British Library, Trivandrum in getting books through interlibrary loan and the BLDS deserves special mention here. I am thankful to him and the library.

I am equally indebted to the Librarians of the Institute of English library, the Kerala University Library and the State Central Library of Trivandrum, the British Library and the USIS Library, Madras, and the American Studies Research Centre and the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages, Hyderabad.

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