CHAPTER III

THE HUMAN WORLD: MEN

The inefficacy seen in the women characters of Hughes is equally evidenced by his men. They are quite incapable of living against the disintegration of the feminine power within and without, and their reactions, although varied in accordance with their individual temperaments, achieve but little of consequence.

Friedrich Nietzsche, in the context of making a study of Greek tragedy, has put forward a theory of the dual aspects of nature, one logical and the other intuitive, and related them to the qualities of the Greek gods Apollo and Dionysus respectively. It will be fruitful for the purposes of this study to approach Hughes's men with this Nietzschean division in mind. To Nietzsche, Apollo stands for "... that measured limitation, that freedom from the wilder emotions, that philosophical calmness of the sculptor-god,"¹ and is the personification of the rational intellect. Dionysus denotes the opposing force, a combination of stupendous awe and blissful ecstasy. The two contending forces resemble the two sexes in their dissimilarity and antithetical outlook. In The Birth of Tragedy, Nietzsche dwells at length on
the duplexity of the Apollonian and the Dionysian: in like manner as procreation is dependant on the duality of the sexes, involving perpetual conflicts with only periodically intervening reconciliations.

Hughes's masculine repertoire runs the entire gamut from the Apollonian to the Dionysian. On the one extreme there is the perfectly self-possessed Colonel Hagen of Gaudete, on the other the vegetarian, fearful of even the simplest organic matter like grass. While the men peopling his early poems display an almost complete absence of the elemental energy, the characters in the later poems reveal a gradually developing awareness of their instinctive strength, but respond variantly to the knowledge. Hughes exposes the negative consequences of the uncontrolled release of the suppressed vital energy through his portrayals of the war victims. In his rural characters, he explores the possibilities of a creative reconciliation between the human and the natural powers. By repeatedly depicting churchmen in a negative light, Hughes advocates a natural pre-Christian religion rather than one grounded on the artificial constraints of an institutionalized male-oriented Christianity.

The majority of the men in Hughes's poems reflect a sense of alienation from the vital energetic core of the universe. Throughout his poems, they surface as hesitant participators in the action, fearful of any violent display of energy, as in the passionate outbursts seen in the natural world. There are a few persons with a rural background who stand apart from the mainstream of activity and are able to relate to the natural
world intimately or naturally. It is the religious men who are deplorable in their lack of human understanding and fellow feeling. The emotional vacuum is present in all the men other than a few exceptions who seem to be placed there to assert by contrast the validity of the general fact. Yet they are also affirmations of the probability of an alternative state, where harmony with nature and the elemental inner energy is possible.

The human protagonist of the opening poem in Hughes's very first collection published, The Hawk in the Rain, is typically representative of the ineffectual man. The poem also titled "The Hawk in the Rain," opens with a description of the man struggling hard at every step in order to reach beyond the mediocrity of normal existence:

I drown in the drumming ploughland, I drag up
Heel after heel from the swallowing of the earth's mouth,
From clay that clutches my each step to the ankle
With the habit of the dogged grave . . .

The repetitive use of certain consonant clusters is itself suggestive of the monotony of the human being's ordinary existence. He is held down by the mud, the dust out of which he was given form. However hard he tries to reach beyond the drudgery and soar high in the atmosphere like the hawk he cannot do so for he is constrained by the limitations of an earthly life. Every step he takes is painstakingly wrought, yet there is progress. The constant fear of his own mortality and "the dogged grave" prevents him from accepting the challenge of the unknown, and he is doomed to "drown in the drumming ploughland" of his routine
existence. Yet this fear or the sheer inability to break free from the monotonous life does not prevent him from admiring the hawk's effortless stillness and power to withstand the onslaught of the natural forces. He is quite overawed by the strength of the hawk that enables it to hang "steady as a hallucination."

While banging wind kills these stubborn hedges,
Thumbs my eyes, throws my breath, tackles my heart,
And rain hacks my head to the bone, the hawk hangs
The diamond point of will that polestars
The sea drowner's endurance: and I,
Bloodily grabbed dazed last-moment-counting
Morsel in the earth's mouth, strain towards the master-Fulcrum of violence where the hawk hangs still.

Hypnotised by what appears to him to be the hawk's capacity to centralize all power, the man becomes more helpless. While he suffers a bad battering at the hands of the violent elements, the hawk remains quite unperturbed, offers him some hope of survival and almost provides a direction for his salvation. Even so, the man has no hope of redemption for, instead of benefiting from the example of the hawk and accepting newer challenges, he begins to brood on its mortality and the ensuing waste of energy. He is the very epitome of inaction, a variant of the Apollonian man.

The "gentle reader" of "Phaetons" (HR), is another person who is completely shattered by the violence in the world opened to him through his book. Even in the silent seclusion of his room, his senses are affected. The book is his means of transportation to a world of fire and fury where each sense tries to overcome the other four. Though the violence within
the pages causes him to lose the words in mid-sentence, he realizes that

The world has burned away beneath his book
A tossing upside-down team drags him on fire
Among the monsters of the zodiac.

He no longer needs the words or the book to reach this world for he now has direct contact with it and the horrors are evident. The book becomes only an intermediary, which loses significance when direct communion with the world outside normal life becomes possible.

Both the persons described "Wind" (HR) are quite fearful of power in the natural world around them. They know that the wind which "dented the balls of my eyes" is quite capable of breaking through the shelter they have carefully built to protect themselves against the elemental forces. They are quite defenceless against its fury, for

The house

Rang like some fine green goblet in the note
That any second would shatter it. Now deep
In chairs, in front of the great fire, we grip
Our hearts and cannot entertain book, thought,

Or each other. We watch the fire blazing,
And feel the roots of the house move, but sit on,
Seeing the window tremble to come in,
Hearing the stones cry out under the horizons.

Being aware of the immensity of the power that they are sheltering themselves from, they are terrified. Man, by his urbanization, has clearly lost the capacity to surrender himself to the natural forces or partake of the elemental energies. He needs to fortify himself against these energies and lives under constant terror.
of the appearance of any weakness in his fortresses.

The protagonist of "A Vegetarian" (Wodwo) is the extreme example of the extent to which a man can descend on account of blind terror. The reasons for his vegetarianism are neither religious nor humanitarian. He has become a vegetarian out of sheer fear. He is terrified of the animals, whether they be genuinely frightful, or calm and gentle by nature. He imagines Horrorsome qualities even in the most harmless of creatures:

Fearful of the hare with the manners of a lady,
Of the sow's loaded side and the boar's brown fang,

Fearful of the bull's tongue snaring and rending,
And of the sheep's jaw moving without mercy,

Tripped on Eternity's stone threshold.

Staring into the emptiness,

Unable to move, he hears the hounds of the grass.

By turning vegetarian, he thought he would be rid of all kinds of violence or energy and by staying absolutely still and emptying his life of all kinds of activity, he hopes to keep out of the sphere of all vitality. But even then, he finds, he is not free from his nightmarish thoughts, for now he has ghastly visions of being chased by grass which assumes fantastically horrifying proportions in his tortured imagination.

In such an atmosphere where all passion and even minor emotional outlets are feared, love becomes an awesome experience--something to be avoided for fear of its disastrous consequences. Hughes captures the drastic changes that transform the life of a simple man in "The Dove-Breeder" (HR). The protagonist, a gentle
and mild-mannered individual, is completely shattered when love invades his life:

Love struck into his life
Like a hawk into a dovecote.
What a cry went up!
Every gentle pedigree dove
Blindly clattered and beat;
And the mild-mannered dove-breeder
Shrieked at that raider.

The experience is so nerve-racking that the Dove Breeder suffers a complete change in character, first violently and vulgarly shrieking at the raider and then turning tearful and helpless. Having thus far flourished at a fairly peaceful profession, the man is quite disconcerted at the drastic change that the violent emotion has brought about in his life. Frustrated after discerning that his protests can effect no alteration in the situation, he passes through a phase of depression, wringing his hands and weeping copiously, but finally reconciles himself to his new experience:

Yet he soon dried his tears
Now he rides the morning mist
With a big-eyed hawk on his fist

For the tame and genteel profession he had pursued, he is compelled to substitute another, which can receive and absorb the effects of the energy released by the new-found passion. Unlike the doves which reacted with fear and confusion to his emotional involvement, the hawk is the perfect medium through which he can channelize his energies, for it is full of elemental power. By learning how to manage the hawk and limit its force
into constructive and manageable areas, he learns how to direct his own passions, and is therefore more powerful and vitally alive as a result of his experience.

But not all men in the sterile civilized world are able to discover themselves anew or reinvigorate their barren existence by means of such a powerful emotion. The majority have to be satisfied with mediocre relationships or compromises as evident from Hughes's portraits of Fallgrief and the protagonist of "Billet Doux" (HR).

Fallgrief, portrayed in "Fallgrief's Girl-friends" (HR) is an individual who is constrained to find himself a mate to convince the society of his own worth. The companion he finds himself at first is plainfaced and simple. The woman is quite aware of her shortcomings in the qualities of beauty and adornment and prefers him to be plainspoken rather than flattering or falsely sympathetic. So he finds explanations for his choice of a partner:

> Whilst I am this muck of man in this Muck of existence, I shall not seek more Than a muck of woman: wit and lucky looks Were a ring disabling this pig-snout, And a tin clasp on this diamond.

Knowing that he was not exceptionally endowed himself, he felt the woman was quite suitable for him as she had "What any woman born cannot but have" and that was worth far more than wit or "lucky looks." Apart from the reason of sheer animal coupling there was nothing to keep them together, for they had no common meeting grounds or equal capabilities. He was honest enough to admit this narrow ground for their union:
By this he meant to break out of the dream
Where admiration's giddy mannequin
Leads every sense to motley; he meant to stand naked
Awake in the pitch dark where the animal runs,
Where the insects couple as they murder each other,
Where the fish outwait the water.

But in the modern civilized society, the primitive impulses are not the only considerations for marital union as evident from Fallgrief's situation. For though he claimed in absolute honesty the sincerity of his purpose, a chance encounter changed his views completely. He was able to find for himself "a woman with such wit and looks/He can brag of her in every company." Social approbation is more important to him than mere primary needs. All the explanations and talk of bare essentials were proved to be mere bravado in the face of better opportunities and superior chances. It was only because he could not find a better woman that he had found excuses for his earlier partner.

But all men are not fortunate enough to chance upon a woman of their dreams, and they settle for whatever they can find in order to gratify their primary needs of sex and companionship. "Billet-Doux" (HR) is the loveletter of an individual who has looked far to find a loving companion of his requirements. But unlike Fallgrief, he is frank and admits to the limited aims with which he goes to her:

Love you I do not say I do or might either.
I come to you enforcedly—
Love's spoiled appetite for some delicacy—
I am driven to your bed and four walls
From bottomlessly breaking night—

It is his extreme loneliness and fear of death that have driven
him to propose to her. He also speaks of his long and difficult search for a partner and his own limitations and ill fortune. But despite all these shortcomings he has one quality which he considers positive, the capacity to "hold you closer and harder than love/By a desperation." He hopes this desperate need stated so explicitly will recommend his proposal and give him a "home" for he is now alone and uncared for, without a person to give him the warmth of human love and solicitude.

Yet marriage is not the ideal solution for this ignominous state of affairs. The emotion of love, being fickle and inconsistent, is quite capable of betraying its faithful adherents and leaving them hanging in a void. In "Two Phases" (HR), Hughes describes the experience of an individual who accepts his fallen state with bitterness and a state bordering on panic. When the force of the passion wears out after running its course, the protagonist reacts with infuriated grief to his present fallen state. He is full of contempt for the individual who was responsible for his fall and the resultant misery:

You had to come
Calling my singularity
In scorn
Imprisonment.

It contained content
That, now, at liberty
In your generous embrace,
As once, in rich Rome,
Caractacus,
I mourn.

Like Samson in his blind misery, he feels betrayed and labours without pleasure at his toil. Earlier he had enjoyed the new
preoccupation when "holiday ran prodigal" and work delightful. But now the work was merely drudgery for him, painstaking and thankless, for as Frost remarks,

Only where love and need are one,  
And the work is play for mortal stakes,  
Is the deed ever really done  
For heaven and future's sakes ("Two Tramps in Mud Time")

Knowing fully well that the labour would be uninspiring and unrewarding, he continues to work out his allotted portion of labour in misery and despair, for he has no alternative now:

Now, stripped to the skin,  
Can scarcely keep alive,  
Sweats his stint out,  
No better than a blind mole  
That burrows for its lot  
Of the flaming moon and sun  
Down some black hole ("Two Phases"--HR)

Instead of abandoning the foolhardy project that denies any chance of a hopeful change in circumstance, he persists in perpetrating the torture of an unhappy situation.

This aversion for a normal and active life and fear of elemental energy is clearly not limited to a few stray individuals. It applies to the generality of the surviving public who continue to live a very drab and mechanical existence. In "Public Bar TV" (Recklings), Hughes describes a group of people suffering from the deadening effects of a commercial medium. Instead of encouraging active participation in life and promoting communal interaction, as it was wont to do, the public bar has now come to denote an area of stagnation and inactivity. The people who visit the place are tired and defeated souls weary of life and
oppressed by a constant sense of failure. They had struggled through life in the hope of some fulfilment and in the expectation of some relaxation or reward in the long run.

Men that have been bending all their lives
In the one dim lamp of a pension
To lift their needs, relax as in graves,
Lifeless but for the eye-gleams of attention.

They haze and sip, like a mountain-range in the dew.
These are the Giant Stupids.
They are grimy to the spinal fluid
As if they slept nightly in the earth.

Mankind floats up the air in a peephole cloud—
That's moonland!
They can't comprehend. They undergo it like death.
They swallow all its drizzling nothings, like the mild earth.

The bar, as always, provides a shelter for them. But the refuge is not invigorating or companionable as it was formerly. By providing mechanized entertainment through the TV, the public bar had only added to their sense of alienation from society, for now they could no longer participate in the activity. Their role has become entirely passive for they have been distanced from a vibrantly alive and active life. The TV has become a symbol of mechanization and the deadening alienation which follows in its wake.

In Cave Birds: An Alchemical Cave Drama, Hughes's protagonist is one such man, an abstract individual, completely alienated from his essential and vital energetic core. For this crime, he is made to appear before the bird court where he is accused of wrong action in the past and made to repent for them. The whole cave drama is set around him his faults being that he
does not take any initiative on his own or consciously choose his course of action. He is the representative of the rational man who also stands for the majority of civilized men in the Western world. He epitomizes the modern man whose lack of zest for life results in a condition of deadening passivity as described by Eugenio Montale:

What we find in the so-called civilized world (something that has been developing ever since the end of the Enlightenment but is now accelerating at an every faster pace) is a lack of interest in the sense of life. This has nothing to do with activity: on the contrary. The void is being filled in with uselessness. Man no longer takes much interest in humanity. He is becoming appalingly bored.

Hughes places the blame for this condition of boredom and suffocating passivity on the present generation's neglect of the Dionysian or feminine aspects of life. His view corresponds to that of Nietzsche who professes that wisdom born solely out of a "hardening sceptical intellect" is a crime against nature. The human civilization is now reduced to a state where the female qualities are no longer treated with respect. The Moon, which is constantly associated with the Goddess, the symbol of beauty and romance, is no longer looked upon with awe or wonder. Robert Graves strongly decries this state of affairs "In which the Moon is despised as a burned-out satellite of the Earth and woman reckoned as 'auxiliary State personnel.'" The White Goddess, once worshipped as the supreme authority on earth is not only ignored, but even dishonoured by many. "All 'saints revile her, and all sober men/Ruled by the God Apollo's golden mean--"
It is only natural for such irreverence and outrageously insulting behaviour to suffer major repercussions. In *Cave Birds*, Hughes narrates an imaginary account of the consequences of such irresponsible behaviour. The protagonist is held on trial by the agents of nature, found guilty and forced to undergo a series of transformation by way of punishment.

He is the representative of the average man in contemporary society. Keith Sagar describes his role in the poem thus:

The protagonist is an innocent ('that is', says Hughes 'a guilty one'), an every man. He has certain features in common with Socrates, whom Hughes holds responsible for the disastrous course of Western Civilization, the committer of the original sin.\(^8\)

As a representative of a solely intellectual generation, he has obviously sinned against nature and also against mankind as part of the same crime. Yet he is innocent and "honourable". He is not aware of his sins and therefore not consciously guilty of his crimes. His situation is akin to the one illustrated by Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy*:

One man is enthralled by the Socratic zest for knowledge and is persuaded that he can staunch the eternal wound of being with its help.

The kinds of illusion I have named answer only to noble natures, who resent the burden of existence more deeply than the rest and who therefore require special beguilements to make them forget this burden. What we call culture is entirely composed of such beguilements.\(^9\)

The Socratic man, blind to the follies of the course of reason he has chosen to follow, has now to be made aware of its shortcomings. This realization can come only after an elaborate and painful ordeal. In the course of the arduous trial, Hughes's
protagonist undergoes several transformations of character. In Hughesian terms, he changes form from one bird to another, and yet another and so on until he becomes "the risen". The protagonist's discovery of his misconceptions and consequent repentance are part of a slow and difficult process.

At the bird court, he begins to defend himself by trying to reason out his innocence with the judge. His pleas are of no avail, for by his action he is only increasing the magnitude of his crime. But he does not understand the significance of his actions. He confronts his own innermost self, his "demon" in the court. In "After the First Fright" (CB), Hughes describes this confrontation and the resultant confusion in the protagonist's mind:

I sat up and took stock of my options.  
I argued my way out of every thought anybody could think  
But not out of the stopping and starting  
Catherine wheel in my belly.  
The disputation went beyond me too quickly.  
When I said: 'Civilization',  
He began to chop off his fingers and mourn,  
When I said: 'Sanity and again Sanity and above all Sanity,'  
He disembowelled himself with a cross-shaped cut.  
I stopped trying to say anything.

By arguing for 'Civilization', 'Sanity' and other reasonable qualities, the protagonist can only add to his collection of blunders. But he does not comprehend the repercussions of his actions and is finally silenced by his sheer inability to proceed. All his desperate efforts to absolve himself are foiled and he gives up out of frustration rather than genuine understanding. Hughes provides his explanation for the encounter and comments on the argument of the whole poem:
He is confronted in court with his victim. It is his own demon whom he now sees for the first time. The hero realizes he is out of his depth. He protests as an honourable platonist, thereby reenacting his crime in front of his judges. He still cannot understand his guilt. He cannot understand the sequence of cause and effect.  

"Honour" such as what the protagonist expresses is Platonist and so are all his actions. He has now to be made aware of his mistakes and this would naturally entail much suffering for him. He has to be punished for his wrong doings, for his neglect and his subjugation and enslaving of the feminine. There is poetic justice in this punishment, according to Hughes. Stuart Hirschberg explains the poet's views on this issue:

Hughes says that it is only fair that his hero suffers since he has made women—daughters, brides and mothers suffer throughout his life.  

So, the White Goddess takes her revenge on the protagonist. In the form of an avenging raven, she supervises the ritual death and dismemberment of the original version of the protagonist. The ritualistic annihilation has nothing negative about it. Instead, the vacuum in which he had been living—where "Nothingness came close and breathed on me" ("A Flayed Crow in the hall of judgement", CB) is now exchanged for a welcome fullness. The Executioner engulfs him completely.

He fills up the mirror, he fills up the cup
He fills up your thoughts to the brims of your eyes
You just see he is filling the eyes of your friends
And now lifting your hand you touch at your eyes
Which he has completely filled up
You touch him
You have no idea what has happened
To what is no longer yours
It feels like the world
Before your eyes opened
It is as if he is born again. By filling him up, the Executioner has brought into him an entirely new world and thus opens his eyes to a different area.

While all this drama takes place within the man, his external life continues unhindered and he is quite unaffected by the drastic changes on a different plane. The protagonist continues to live out his mundane existence, suffering the emptiness and monotony and remaining quite indifferent to pain and misery as in "Something was happening" (CB).

And all the time
I was scrubbing at my nails and staring through the window
But in the parallel inner life, he is reborn, and goes through the motions of trying to find his true self. After much self-examination and soul-searching, an uncertain period of confusion and lack of comprehension, he finds the woman within him, who, despite all his illtreatment, had just managed to survive, "She had made it but only just, just--" ("After there was Nothing there was a woman" CB). And in their reunion, the regeneration is complete as "They bring each other to perfection" ("Bride and groom lie hidden for three days" CB). She helps him rediscover himself and the wonder and joy resulting from the findings are reinvigorating for both of them.

She has found his hands for him,
and fitted them freshly at the wrists
They are amazed at themselves,
they go feeling all over her.
He has assembled her spine,
he cleaned each piece carefully.
And sets them in perfect order
A superhuman puzzle but he is inspired
She leans back twisting this way and that, using it and laughing incredulously
Now she has brought his feet, she is connecting them
So that his whole body lights up

They keep taking each other to the sun, they find they can easily
To test each new thing at each new step

The disclosures bring him a new awareness of himself by throwing new light on what was already present but not heeded. They throw fresh light on the existing situation giving him a new perception of his own being. So they become like "two gods of mud" lying in the dirt of their mundane physicality, yet rising to glorious heights by their joyous discovery of the divinity within their normal presence, and thereby achieve perfection. Both the male and female are fused together to bring about a renewed and spirited life. Thus he becomes the "risen" the epitome of perfection, for

On his lens
Each atom engraves with a diamond.
In the wind-fondled crucible of his splendour
The dirt becomes God.

Under his influence, even the filth is converted to beauty and divinity. His very presence radiates virtue and benevolence.

Yet everything is not as perfect as the poet himself would have it. For the whole process makes the protagonist too unearthly and divine. He seems to have lost his human connections. Hughes makes his misgivings clear in the final two line poem entitled "Finale":

At the end of the ritual
up comes a goblin.
The poet is clearly discomfitted by the new development. It is unexpected and this in turn creates much discomfiture in the reader. Hughes discusses such a development in an earlier interview with Egbert Faas. He explains how at times after a poem is written, he discovers another angle to be mentioned that cannot be included without destroying the structure of the poem. No poem can be regarded as the complete or final expression of any issue. If the problem is to be discussed more fully and in depth, the poet has to express himself through the medium of another poem:

You choose a subject because it serves, because you need it. We go on writing poems because one poem never gets the whole account right. There is always something missed. At the end of the ritual up comes a goblin. Anyway within a week the whole thing has changed, one needs a fresh bulletin.¹²

After completing Cave Birds, Hughes was obviously in such a situation, for he went on to write Gaudete on a similar theme. And in place of the single human protagonist of the "alchemical cave drama," Hughes included a large variety of human characters in the later collection. These human beings are placed against an ordinary backdrop and behave as real persons normally do. But their responses seem to be a little exaggerated in intensity, whether it be towards passivity or moving in the direction of violent agitation. They tend to choose either of the two extremes, and constantly ignore the White Goddess. Despite the variations in temperament, age and attitudes, they are all uniform in their neglect of the importance of the female. When made conscious of
the magnitude of their folly, they react variously in accordance with their differing temperaments.

Commander Estridge is a typical example of the passive and ineffectual men of the parish. Obviously once a man of action, he is now ageing and unemployed, his only pastime being voyeurism, in which he delights. His major preoccupation consists of spying on the carnal activities of men and animals. He clearly enjoys the world opened out to him through his lens but wishes to have no direct participation in it. He obviously prefers to view it from the end of his telescope. Though appreciative of an amorous display, whether in the world of animals or human beings, he is nevertheless taken aback at the scene of moral depravity that appears in his line of vision.

Estridge is pleased with his telescope
Which brings him a hen flattened under a cock in the barn doorway.
Then the birds scatter, long-legged.
Mrs Holroyd emerges, with dazzled eyes,

His hands gather up her skirts
As his foot closes the door
And Estridge's brain wrings
To a needling pang, as if a wire might snap.

His bulging eye
Hammers the blunt limits of object and light. (Gaudete, p.47)

He is fearful of any change in the established order and scheme of things. A little excitement viewed from a distance provides pleasurable entertainment enough. But when the scene reveals passion or activity that goes beyond the accepted social norms, he is shattered. When he sees Mrs Holroyd, who reminds him of "the country love of his youth," being ravished by Reverend Lumb,
it is not merely his social norms that are upset: the vision brings about the destruction of his very idol, the structure upon which the very edifice of his principles and dreams are built. Even before the appearance of this cataclysmic vision, Estridge had received several indications of the suppressed passions around him. He becomes gradually aware of the barely controlled passions displayed by his beautiful daughters through the force of the music played by them. The violence of the sonata frightens him for it seems as if

The music flings in his face, it strikes at him
With derisive laughter and contemptuous shouts.
Her hands seem to be plunging and tossing inside his chest.  
*(Gaudete, p. 41)*

The "dragonish" music produced by Jennifer from the piano, which seems to be "devouring itself", bewilders the Naval Commander for it seems to be "shouting something impossible, incomprehensible, monstrous" *(Gaudete, p. 42)*. His dream of beautiful daughters has now grown into a nightmarish reality which he cannot understand or cope with. The ultimate blow comes with the discovery of the suicide of his older daughter, Janet. His brain cannot take so much emotion and violent passions at a single instant. The life of quiet regularity and peaceful orderliness that he has been leading has not prepared him for such a calamity. He can only distance himself and watch uncomprehendingly:

*Old Estridge is trying vainly to reckon her words up,*
*As if they were some gibberish formula of huge numerals*
*Into which his whole family fortune is vanishing. *
*Explosions from different directions have left him*
*little more than mere outline.*
*He props his brow between finger and thumb*
*And rests his incomprehension on the sunlit*
*pattern of the carpet. *(Gaudete, p. 56)*
His confusion and chaotic bewilderment make us also acutely conscious of his advancing age and resultant feeling of uselessness. Though the motivation to wreck vengence on the vicar is strong within him, he cannot take direct action, for his civic consciousness and awareness of social duty are embedded deep in him. Though the presence of Evans gives him the impetus for action, he is held back by an awareness of his limitations. He is acutely conscious of the physical wasting brought about by the passage of time and the lack of exercise. Though all rational thought would lead him away from participation in impetuous action, he is led away by an irrational impulse to take recourse to savage violence. His latent vitality becomes vigorously alive at possibility of revenge for he suddenly has a maniacal vision of brutally murdering the erring clergyman:

Looking at Evans' dangerous, thick-set face, Estridge feels the draughty lack of his uniform. He feels the sheer-fall possibilities of being left out. But mostly he feels age, the wrinkle-crisp caul of the life-husk, an inert scratch-numb detachment. It would be so easy now to do nothing.

But then the sudden raving fantasy comes
Like a lump of insane music
Pulping Lumb's skull with an axe

And Estridge's heart bounds again and flutters. (Gaudete, p. 128)

He is now fully prepared to join in with the other men and cut short the efforts of the vicar in turning the meetings of the WI into sexual orgies, and living a life of promiscuity and moral depravity. Throwing his dignity and other social barriers aside, he enters the Bridge Inn for the first time in his life
to join the other men, in their reckless and maniacal pursuit of the clergyman. The throbbing hurt within him and the consciousness of the pain of his loss give him sufficient grounds for following this course. Yet he maintains a sane outlook even as the hunt begins, for he is the only one who makes an attempt to restrain the others by shouting about the "due process of law." He goes on to actively participate in the action, but the physical exertion proves too much for his effete decrepit body, for at the climax of the action he is seen "sitting holding his chest" (Gaudete, p. 166). Though his spirit is willing, the flesh proves too weak.

In the case of Major Hagen, the tale takes an entirely different turn. Like Estridge, he prefers to watch the world through a pair of binoculars. But though the hands holding the binoculars are thickened with age, they are powerful. He was obviously a man of action and unmistakable courage as suggested by the tiger's skull on his table and the "high-velocity" rifles in the cupboard. His former calling is itself indicative of this fact. Yet he has now retired from an active life and retreated into himself, into the sheltered precincts of his villa, decorative and ordered and beautifully placed in sylvan surroundings. From this secluded abode, he indulges in exploring the world outside through the protective glasses of his lenses. He views his wife's relations with Reverend Nicolas Lumbwith apparent dispassion and takes no purposeful steps to stop her from cuckolding him. His violent passions and maniacal fury
are diverted to his concentration on the shooting down of a passing ring dove. But on the rare occasion when his rage finds expression it is violent and destructive, like an avalanche on the move:

And an outrage too dazzling to look at ignites the whole tree of his nerves, a conflagration
Takes hold of everything—
His words seem to scald and corrupt his lips.
An insane voltage, a blue crackling entity
Is leaping around the kitchen
As if it had crashed in through the window.

A frenzy of obsolete guns
Is banging itself to tatters
And an Abbey of Banners yells like an exhausted schoolmaster.

Arsenals of crazier energy open.
Depth charges
Of incredulity and righteousness
Search the taciturn walls and furniture. (Gaudete, pp. 33-34)

He possesses a vast store of violent energy, as evident from his shooting of the dove or the brutal killing of his unusually violent pet dog. Yet he keeps himself carefully out of the sphere of action keeping his emotions well in control and is unwilling to forsake his dignity or calm distance. When finally he takes recourse to action and employs his "first love," the Mannlicher. 318, to shoot the vicar, he is still behind his binoculars and far away from the scene of action. He is distanced from the action but effects the step that none of the others could achieve despite their frenzied activity. He is the type of the Apollonian man, who can think calmly and remain dignified even in the most difficult and chaotic of situations, and yet act with perfect equanimity and maximum effectiveness when the need arises. Though physically absent from the pursuit and withdrawn from all activity,
Hagen is the man who takes the final controlled step to consummate the action.

Unlike Hagen and Estridge, who are provoked to action, either controlled or unrestrained, by the situation before them, Old Smayle keeps out of all physical activity. He is the grandfather of Felicity, the only girl who prefers to stay away from the WI gatherings and keep a sane head until almost the very end. He is also the vicar's nearest neighbour living at the top of the village. But he prefers to stay ignorant of the happenings around him. Like the men in "Public Bar TV" (Recklings) he spends uncreative hours gazing at the television. This fruitless absorption in the mechanical screen makes him ineffectual in real life for he is not conscious of Felicity's frenzied preparations for departure. When she slips out with the packed suitcase to comply with a prearranged plan in order to run away with the vicar, her grandfather hardly notices the activity, for he "sunk in his pullover and face-folds, has anchored his wits in the television" (Gaudete, p. 97). He is so steeped in the drugged otherness of an artificial medium that he cannot relate to the real world. He does not realize that drama and suspense are part of the normal world he lives in, being so habituated to dull routine and tireless monotony. Yet despite his passively torporous existence, he is not entirely devoid of a sense of humour. He is full of mirth, and able to laugh in open merriment at Joe Garten's suspicions regarding the vicar and makes fun of his "instantaneous exit" at the suggestion of Lumb's presence
near his bungalow. He is so calmly contented and placidly settled in the existing state of affairs that he cannot imagine another. So he refuses to accept the allegations against the clergyman and finds reasons to defend his actions. While discussing the affairs of Lumb with Garten and Felicity, he vindicates Lumb's courting of women on the grounds that it is done for the sake of the propagation of the Christian religion. He actually admires the vicar for devising such a clever plan:

The vicar, he declares,
Has realised that his religious career
Depends on women.
Because Christianity depends on women.
For all he knows, all those other religions, too, depend on women.
What would he do for congregation these days
Without women. (Gaudete, p. 65)

Smayle even imaginatively draws up a history of Christianity based on the role of women in it, to emphasize his argument in support of the vicar's activities. He repeatedly stresses the importance of the role of women in the growth and spread of Christianity. Women obviously provide the emotional crux of the religion with their blind following and absolute faith in the appropriateness of the path to which they were directed by their accepted leader.

It's like a herd of deer, he says, why is it always led by a hind?
Christianity's something about women.
His narrowed eye-puffs pierce right to the crux of it.
Christianity is Christ in his mammy's arms--
Either a babe at the tit
With all the terrible things that are going to happen to him hovering round his head like a halo,
Or else a young fellow collapsed across her knees
With all the terrible things having happened. (Gaudete, p. 65)
As pointed out in the earlier chapter, women provide the emotional centre around which the world revolves. Their men turn to them repeatedly for moral support. They have a natural maternal instinct which makes them protective and full of love and sympathy. And by their unquestioning acceptance and patient devotion, they make religion survive. By acting intelligently upon these factors, Lumb has only fulfilled his duties and moral obligations, more fully. Smayle is quite unconcerned about the negative aspects of Lumb's activities and neglects their existence entirely. He is clearly too old and set in his ways to imagine an alternative state of affairs or want any change in his placid and accustomed state of life. Even a minor ripple on the surface would disturb the calmly familiar routine he is habituated to. It is therefore no wonder that he refuses to accept the possibility of a violently dramatic change.

On the diametrically opposite side of the picture, Hughes presents the portrait of Evans, the blacksmith. He is the man of action, full of boundless energy and animal vigour, capable of instant action even if it is violently brutal or totally irrational. He is clearly a good worker with "fingers that are the masters/Of all the heavy agricultural steel/In the district" (p. 66). He is a man of few words, with a no-nonsensical approach, unwilling to listen to gossip or unnecessarily cast aspersions on anyone. He has little respect for Garten and probably nurtures an active dislike of the man. But once he is given proof, he pushes personal animosity aside, listens to the details and
understands even without elaborate explanation. He plunges into immediate action, beginning with his wife. After an almost calm session of brutal manhandling, his wife—who obviously lives in constant terror of his display of animalistic force—confesses the sordid truth regarding Lumb's activities. He is full of incredulity and marches out in unhesitating haste to gather together the other men and take revenge on the erring clergymen. He is direct in his approach:

Evans is giving his simple statement. Evans, it seems, intends to walk into the church basement tonight and see what's going on at the W.I. meeting. Anybody else will be welcome. But nobody must think they're going to restrain him, when he meets Mr Lumb. (Gaudete, p. 128)

Clearly he attributes all the blame to the over-enthusiastic clergyman. He completely ignores the role of the women in the whole endeavour. He has little respect for his wife as evident from his treatment of her. Apart from the physical, there seems to be no relation between them, for once the truth is out, Evans loses interest in her and goes away, while she, uncaring of his feelings, goes ahead with her preparations for the W.I. meeting. He obviously considers her to be his property, to be jealously guarded from intruders, but apart from that no emotional involvement seems to exist. He does not even consider women as capable of intelligent thought or action as evident from his description of "... a gaggle of spoofed women. Hysterical bored country wives. Credulous unfortunate females" (p. 128). He has only sympathy and contempt for the gullible women. But with regard to Lumb,
his intention is far from gentle and full of dangerous intent. He does not stop to consider civic duties or seek legal redress. He prefers to effect immediate physical remedies and is therefore dangerous. He has no patience for premeditated planning and prefers to act impetuously and face the consequences later rather than watch passively and behave rationally. Obviously this kind of blindly energetic brute force cannot sustain itself permanently. His disorderly actions bring about his fall for his offensive against Lumb rebounds upon himself and he is rendered helpless, though infuriated.

Evans, cursing, levering, is trying to fork Lumb off the wall-top like a bale,
And he sees too late
The stone block spinning in air in a shower of dust.
For a black vital second he loses contact with everything.
Surprised he finds himself numbed and criss-cross struggling to get up from the rubble
With an ugly taste in his mouth, and a detached precarious feeling,
While slowly understanding swarms back to centre.
His alarm to the wood is a disgorging beast-roar clotted with obscenities,
A rage as infinite as it is helpless.
But Lumb has vanished. (Gaudete, p. 162)

His hasty actions cannot bring about any fruitful result, for his attitude is too physical and impulsive. He is the type of the purely Dionysian man, full of primitive and instinctive energy, but unwilling to pause for thought and thereby naturally doomed to fail. He is the only man in the whole poem to possess such tendencies.

Joe Garten, the poacher, appears as one of the major rungs in the path of Lumb's destruction. Initially he is a mere voyeur
with an uncanny knack of arriving at the most unlikely places at the right moment. He is introduced as a passive onlooker who enjoys spying on the vicar's irregular activities. He takes no steps to do anything about it until he realizes that the clergyman's actions could have unpleasant bearings on his personal life. He realizes that the vicar's tentacles have taken hold of both his mother and Felicity, the girl he himself has been courting "Nightly, stormily, unhappily" (p. 65). Being almost a social outcast, for his acceptance of illegal activities as a profession, and not a popular person in the community, he has to take special pains to be heard. His initial efforts, sincere and earnest though they are, only make him the laughing stock of the Bridge Inn. Holroyd, for one, regards him as an "agricultural pest" (p. 126). His desperate attempts to make Evans and Old Smayle suspicious of the W.I. and Lumb's associations with it, end in utter failure. Instead, he becomes the object of their merriment for they imagine that he is merely indulging in worthless slander. Aware of his limitations, of his incapability of effecting any change in the prevailing situation on his own, he goes on to carefully and deliberately collect the required material to prove his case. He is meticulous and patiently persistent in his methods as in his study of the animal life in the forests at night. He was diligent in his role as informer.

For the night life and underground activity
Of the woods
And all the secretive operations of birds (p. 107)

Now he settles down to study the "secretive operations" and
"underground activity" of the Reverend Lumb and the women of the parish. His painstaking efforts do not go in vain for he managed to photograph the vicar at a scene of seduction. The picture of Lumb with the blacksmith's wife provides the necessary proof for convincing the men of the community. Though this evidence does not enable the townsfolk to like him more, it supplies the requisite evidence for them to take joint action. This Garten, though basically a vulgar and boorish person, becomes the instrument of awakening of the men in the parish and thereby initiates an alert and lively atmosphere in the town. But although he is so closely associated with nature and familiarly acquainted with its varying aspects, he is essentially unemotional and rational and therefore closer to the Apollonian rather than the Dionysian. It is through his rationality that he becomes the activator of the sluggish community, whose emotional outburst leads to such passion and violent bloodshed.

Relationships between men and women in the Gaudete poem appear superficial or non-existent on the surface. The men seem confident and indifferent and the women passive and bored. It is only when they reassess their relationships in the light of Lumb's activities that their true worth comes into the open. Unlike Hagen who seems genuinely indifferent to his wife and Estridge who is too tried and rendered incapacitate by his age, the other men of the parish seem quite normal in their relations with their wives.
Dr Westlake is quite unperturbed by the shock or grief displayed by the Estridge household at the death of Janet, the elder daughter. He even derives some pleasure from their sorrow and even attempts to highlight the seamy side of the suicide like a mere gossip and announce the fact of her pregnancy.

Westlake's delight in such facts, his opportunistic sense of theatre, his lust to uncover the worst and reveal it, could not let the chance pass. (Gaudete, p. 56)

Indifferent to their grief, he is almost callous and inhuman in his behaviour, for instead of listening to Jennifer's words, he lets his attention wander to the sensuous curves of her well-proportioned body.

The perfumed upheaval of all this ringing emotion and physical beauty is exciting him.
He follows what he can of her cascading explanations.
Her creamy satin blouse, stretching and flexing like a skin,
Her dark-haired ankles,
Her sandals askew, her helpless uncontrol,
Her giddy mathematics
Which are constructing an abyss-- (Gaudete, p. 56)

It is only when his spectacles fall down and break that he is suddenly able to perceive reality barefacedly and recognize the implications of the girl's words to his personal life. He responds violently and impulsively to a suspicion that his wife and Lumb indulge in immoral relations, though emotionally he feels numb and distanced. But his actions appear premature and foolish for he can find no physical proof to substantiate his conjectures and seems to be overreacting to an imagined crisis. Though convinced of the truth of his suspicions, he cannot take action and is therefore in a difficult situation. He actively
participates but cannot succeed in annihilating the vicar.

Dunworth, a young architect, Westlake's golfing companion, bursts into a spurt of violent activity on hearing of the vicar's presence in his house and understanding its consequences. He is glad to have gained an occasion to prove his doubts and suspicions correct and casually and confidently prepares the target pistol "with which he is expert" (p. 85) as he proceeds to oust the intruder. But when faced with the concrete fact of the adultery of his wife, the "brisk executive plan" collapses, and he is shocked out of his smug complacency and confidence:

The sight in front of him
Is so extraordinary and shocking,
So much more merciless and explicit than even
his most daring fantasy

That for a moment
He forgets himself, and simply stares.
He gropes for his lost initiative,
But what he sees, like a surprising blow in a dark room,
Has scattered him. (p. 85)

The naked fact of his wife's unfaithfulness is so shocking and painful to him that he becomes helpless and incapable of all action like a child. He discovers with deep sorrow and renewed force the fact that he loves his wife:

He is helplessly in love.
He stands there, in his child's helplessness,
As if he had searched everywhere and at last somehow he had found her.
An irresponsible joy chatters to be heard, somewhere in the back of his head, as he gazes at her,
Feeling all his nerves dazzle, with waftings of vertigo,
As if he were gazing into an open furnace. (p. 87)

What had once bored him in his wife began to seem attractive, for Lumb seems to have indeed awakened him to a new dawn of affection.
The relationships between people of the same sex in the world of Gaudete seem to be either strained or non-existent. Estridge and Hagen are friends but do not agree at all points. The normally strict segregation between social classes is ignored during the crises and all of them think and act together displaying much cooperation and fellow feeling. Their instinctive distrust and dislike of Garten is forgotten and his words accepted in honour of the general cause. Among the women the feeling of amity is less natural and genuine. Though they all gather together at the basement of the church for a common cause the atmosphere is tense and strained. Each of them is brooding over their own personal problem and even the drugs and music cannot alter the artificial situation.

The men in Hughes's poems do not naturally love their neighbours or fellow-beings as they are expected to. In "Law in the Country of the Cats" (HR), he speaks of the instinctive dislike experienced by some men on meeting each other even for the first time:

When two men meet for the first time in all Eternity and outright hate each other, Not as a beggar-man and a rich man, Not as cucold-maker and cucold, Not as bully and delicate boy, but As dog and wolf because their blood before They are aware has bristled into their hackles

Though there is clearly no reason for them to dislike each other, they do for their mistrust is not rational but emotional and unreasonable. When such men pass each other on the streets, it is only natural for them to avoid each other rather than make
polite conversation. When they are thrown together by chance "violent incredible action" leading to murder, bloodshed is the natural outcome from which there is no escape.

The father-son relationship in the *Crow* poems is likewise mainly one of instant or instinctive dislike. An offshoot of the Oedipal complex, it is combined with intensely close and loving mother-son relationships. For instance, in "Song for a Phallus" (*Crow*), the father is full of hatred for him and tries to prevent his birth, for the father is afraid of being treated as a 'turd' by the son. In this rather casual and humorous poem set on the model of a nursery rhyme, the mother's pleadings are ignored and he is thrown to the cat, but suffers no mishap:

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But Oedipus he had the luck
For when he hit the ground
He bounced up like a jackinabox
And knocked his Daddy down
Mamma Mamma

He hit his Daddy such a whack
Stone dead his Daddy fell
His cry went straight to God above
His ghost it went to Hell
Mamma Mamma
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The Oedipus of the poem goes on to split the sphinx and conquer it. Then he goes on to stab his "Mammy" with a smile and finally kills her outright only to find himself curled inside as if he were unborn, when he splits her.

The situation which Hughes highlights in his poems is one in which the vital energies are lost. The female and male aspects of human nature are not able to balance each other and co-exist in peaceful harmony. On the one hand there is uncontrolled
debauchery, on the other there is sheer passivity. When the two extremes try to meet at a point, a bloody clash is inevitable.

In the modern situation, it is the battlefield which necessarily reduces man to his primitive animalistic state, making him shed the vestiges of his civilization. There man returns to his aboriginal state, resorting to murder and violence in order to survive. Among post-war writers, for instance, William Golding has made a mark with his early novel *The Lord of the Flies* (1954) which projects this fundamental vision.

Hughes's concern with the negative features of war is evident in his poems dealing with the war and its victims. Though Hughes himself could not directly participate in any battle he was quite familiar with the trials and traumas of those who did. His father, William Hughes, one of only seventeen out of a whole regiment to have escaped death at Gallipoli in the First World War, filled his mind with images of Flanders during the war and provided a ghostly vision of the ruthless and horrorsome aspects of the war. War supplies plentiful occasions of extreme situations where man is placed in direct confrontation with death, when the trappings of civilization fall away and he comes face to face with his true self. In moments of extreme danger which call for immediate action, patriotism and narrow communal emotions imposed upon him by social constraints lose significance, and man reverts to his primitive impulses. The only obvious option for him is to fight for survival and for this he has to trust his instinct rather than the indoctrinated values of society.
The soldier of "Bayonet Charge" (HR) is placed in such a situation. Thus far he had blindly and mechanically followed the dictates of an authoritarian leadership without stopping to think about his situation or understand his position. When thrown into a desperate position, he was like a man in a sleep befuddled stage, unsure of his loyalties, and of what his following actions were to be. Having lost his bearings after a period of automatic obedience of orders from superior officers, he is dazed and confused. His first semi-conscious impulses set him

Stumbling across a field of clods towards a green hedge
That dazzled with rifle fire, hearing
Bullets smacking the belly out of the air—
He lugged a rifle numb as a smashed arm;
The patriotic tear that has brimmed in his eye
Sweating like molten iron from the centre of his chest,—
In bewilderment then he almost stopped—

This state of drugged stupor and confusion does not last very long in the battlefield. Fastomoving, destructive bullets and the sights and sounds of the war rouse his natural instinct for self-protection which prompts him to run

Like a man who has jumped up in the dark and runs
Listening between his footfalls for the reason
Of his still running, and the foot hung like
Statuary in mid-stride.

His actions are blindly instinctive and devoid of reasoning. The uncertainty and bewilderment are quickly dissolved only by the close experience of death. Death and fear of death are alike in both man and beast. Hemmingway points out this significant fact in The Natural History of the Dead when he writes: "I do not know but most men die like animals not men." To the soldier,
the war then takes on the proportions of a hunt, and like a wounded animal he turns on the attacker without thinking of the consequences of his actions in terms of personal repercussions or patriotism or dignity:

He plunged past with his bayonet toward the green hedge. King, honour, human dignity, etcetera
Dropped like luxuries in a yelling alarm
To get out of that blue crackling air
His terror's touchy dynamite.

To him, at that decisive moment, nothing matters other than his frightened and suffering self. The primitive survival instinct ingrained in him as in all living creatures rises to the forefront pushing all other considerations to the background.

The destruction and waste wrought by war and its meaninglessness are repeatedly stressed by Hughes through his focus on the war-victims. In "Six Young Men" (HR), he reflects upon the waste of youthful energy and untimely death necessitated by war. By vividly describing the photograph of the six young men killed in battle, Hughes attempts to shock the reader out of his complacency into a realization of the folly involved in the game of warring indulged in by nations. Though the photograph itself has become "faded and ochre-tinged" with the passage of four decades, the men, whose picture was captured in the celluloid, look evergreen and full of vigour. The details regarding their expression and their attire bring them vibrantly alive before the viewer:

Though their cocked hats are not now fashionable, Their shoes shine. One imparts an intimate smile, One chews a grass, one lowers his eyes, bashful, One is ridiculous with cocky pride--
The liveliness of the portrait makes the knowledge of their death doubly shocking, for by its very vitality it is trying to deny the truth of their non-existence. A detailed exploration into the background of the picture makes the discovery more painful, for Hughes is quite familiar with the landscape which has not changed at all. The only difference lies in the absence of the human factor, rudely taken away in the pride of their youth by the suddenness of death. These pictures of the men when they were robust and boisterously alive are then juxtaposed with detailed expositions of their gruesome deaths, either in the battlefield or as a mangled heap on a hospital bed, in order to make the horror of the experience more appalling. The implications of the single photographs and the truth lying behind it are so terrifying that the poet begins to question the truth of the existence of any person he meets:

That man's not more alive whom you confront
And shake by the hand, see hale, hear speak loud,
Than any of these six celluloid smiles are,
Nor prehistoric or fabulous beast more dead;
No thought so vivid as their smoking blood:
To regard this photograph might well dement,
Such contradictory permanent horrors here
Smile from the single exposure and shoulder out
One's own body from its instant and heat.

Looking at the vitality of the men in the portrait, it is difficult to remember that they are actually dead. The poet is so aghast by the realization that the men looking so vigorously alive in the photograph are really dead, that he even begins to question the truth of his own aliveness. The photograph represents "contradictory permanent horrors" that could drive a normal man insaition.
In war, little importance is given to life or the individual. There is little chance for the individual to be heroic or dramatic. He is given hardly any recognition or honourable treatment. Death is regarded as mere "desertion in the face of a bullet" and the dead are just "Buried without honours" ("Bowled Over", Wodwo). The person "Bowled Over/By kiss of death, bullet or brow" does not even realize that his time is up. When his relation to the world and infatuation with

Spinning its patched fields, churches,
Trees where nightingales sang in broad daylight
And vast flaring blue skirts of seas--
come to a sudden unexpected end, only very ordinary things are recollected such as

... the eyes could not find their keys
Or the neck remember what mother whispered
Or the body stand to its word.

The glory of the world and its splendorous beauty become insignificant when even the daily activities, usually taken for granted, become difficult to perform. The world is quite indifferent to his personal problems or the death of any single person.

The community supplants the importance of the individual with the notion of the greatness of the ideal. The public distances itself from private bereavement and accepts no responsibility for the mass massacre by turning a blind eye to the reality just as at one time

Queen Victoria refused the blame
For the Emperors of Chou herding their rubbish
Into battle roped together. ("Karma", Wodwo)
In a world where humanitarianism is buried underground and love cannot unite, the individual is constantly crushed under the weight of supposedly larger concerns. Personal tragedy is treated with indifference in the battle for power and predominance. The people who create wars, the people in authority, care little about the suffering populace and are concerned only with personal gain. Under the pretext of planning the strategy for battle, they fill their own pockets, caring little for the suffering multitudes.

The two generals in Hughes's poem "Two Wise Generals" (HR) personify the self-centred leadership. They possess no valour and adhere to no recognized principles. They are the epitome of a betraying leadership. Unlike the villains of yore, who arrived with much fanfare and created much bloodshed, the two timid and ageing generals are quiet and unhurried in their approach. Under cover of darkness, and away from the squalour of the battlefield, they meet

To parley, and to divide the territory
Upon a map, and get honour, and by
This satisfaction part with regiments whole.

The generals get together to assure personal safety and well being and spend much time in enjoying themselves and celebrating their friendship. When finally their job is done, "The treaty sealed, lands allotted (and a good third/Stuffed down their tunic fronts' private estate), and they return to their territories, it is too late for, "Both/Have found their sleeping armies massacred." The generals had obviously gained much by their
encounter, but they had no thought of their soldiers for they had made no effort to prevent such a massacre. They had taken no safety precautions for their men though they had reinforced their own position. The whole picture is suggestive of a modern war, where no victory is possible and all the participants suffer the consequences equally. The leaders often barter the peace and prosperity of a nation in order to achieve personal gain. Though they hold talks in public and private, spending much time, money and effort in entertainment and show of amity, there is little advantage to the men on the front who are destroyed by the continuing battle. Despite the fact that their partings are punctuated with smiles and promises of a better future, there is little improvement in the conditions of the general populace. The tragedy of modern war can be summed up in terms of individual selfishness at the cost of mass deprivation.

The callous attitude of an indifferent society towards the sufferings of an individual are described vividly by Hughes in "The Casualty" (HR), where he portrays the gruesome death of an individual, an offshoot of the war. The farmers and housewives who watch the burning aircraft floating across the sky are full of curiosity and wait with interest for the evening news. While the birds and animals react with fear and confusion and try to flee the place, the human beings crowd closer to drink in the details and satisfy their curiosity. Drawn to the site of the crash by the smoke from the burning aircraft,
They jostle above,
They peer down a sunbeam as if they expected there
A snake in the gloom of the brambles or a rare flower,—
their interest is the dispassionate interest of a passive
onlooker at a museum exhibit. Even when they discover the
dreadful fact that it was a man, grievously wounded and dying,
they can find no identification with him. They are complacent
and unmoved at his plight. They do what little they can to
alleviate his pain and then stand around to watch him die out
of a detached, almost scientific interest.

It was a man fell out of the air alive,
Hear now his groans and senses groping. They rip
The slum of weeds, leaves, barbed coils; they raise
A body that as the breeze touches it glows,
Branding their hands on his bones. Now that he has
No spine, against heaped sheaves they prop him up,

Arrange his limbs in order, open his eye,
Then stand helpless as ghosts.

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
Here's no heart more
Open or large than a fist clenched, and in there
Holding close complacency its most dear
Unscratchable diamond.

The crowd presses closer, not out of sympathy for a fellow-being
or large heartedness, but out of selfish considerations, for the
news value. They are "Greedy to share all that is undergone,/Grimace, gasp, gesture of death." The dying man's pains do
not touch the instinctive core of his audience, for they are
distanced from the circumstances of the death, the field of
battle. Since they do not fear for their own life in their
normal surroundings, they can act calmly and rationally to lessen
his pain. But their indifference suffers a severe blow and
emotion breaks out of their frozen surface when they notice "the handkerchief at which his eye stares up." It is only the thought of a loved one who will grieve his death that makes identification possible for the crowd, for they can now relate to him as one human being to another. Hughes's concern seems to be more for the detached attitude of the people rather than the dying pilot.

It is not in these portraits of people at the moment of death, however gruesome it may be, that Hughes is most convincing. His poems are more convincing when he views death through the eyes of the living, the mourners. In "Griefs for Dead Soldiers" (HR), Hughes separately discusses three different approaches to mourning the death of soldiers and the varying responses of individuals to the calamity. In this poem, the accent is on the mourners and their suffering rather than the dead. In the first part of the poem, he describes a public ceremony where the dead are mourned and their patriotism extolled by the nation. Though the crowds are impressive and their collective grief "mightiest", the ceremonial preparations make genuine sorrow impossible.

Mightiest, like some universal cataclysm,
Will be the unveiling of their cenotaph:
The crowds will stand struck, like the painting of a terror
. . . . . . . . . . . . .
Each move, each sound, a fresh-cut epitaph--
Monstrousness of the moment making the air stone.

The grandeur of the occasion and the careful preplanning of every detail--even the expression of the crowd is decided--makes the function a formality rather than a genuine tribute. Though the homage is sincere, its intensity is dissipated by the very vastness
of the group. The display of national sorrow and the glorification of the war heroes are just another occasion to convince the people of "Permanent stupendous victory." Their grief is too ritualized for genuine emotion. The widow's sorrow described in the second section of the poem is the smallest and most private of the griefs. Unlike the grieving public

She cannot build her sorrow into a monument
And walk away from it. Closer than thinking
The dead man hangs around her neck, but never
Close enough to be touched, or thanked even,
For being all that remains in a world smashed.

She has to live constantly with the knowledge of her loss, for it is a genuine physical fact she has to face. The telegram announcing the death had shaken her world to its very foundations due to the changes it wrought in her life. But the sorrow is selfish for it is only for herself and what she has lost. It is the loneliness and drudgery that her life has deteriorated to that she mourns. In Hughes's opinion the "truest" and most genuine grief lies in the physical remains of death, the dead bodies awaiting burial. Though the diggers grunt and sweat, "Cursing the sun that makes their work long," there are pretty flowers blooming naturally at the edge of the mass grave and the bodies wait passively "like brides/To surrender their limbs." The real grief comes at the time of burial, a "Moment that could annihilate a watcher" as the body is lowered down to the grave by the burial party "with a craftsman calm/Weighing their grief by the ounce, and burying it." When the body is swallowed up by the earth and returns to its origins, then the dreadful finality
of death becomes physically overpowering, an unmistakeable fact.

But the mass suffering and grief does not end even when the war does and the majority of the participants in the war continue to suffer not merely through the agony of loss but also the torment of physical and mental disablement. After the war, some of the soldiers are wounded and maimed, some rendered derelict. The prolonged agony suffered by Hughes's father after the First World War, is vividly described in "Out" (Wodwo). The poor man's travails were not limited merely to the war when he endured

... the four-year mastication by gunfire and mud,
Body buffeted wordless, estranged by long soaking
In the colours of mutilation. His outer perforations
Were valiantly healed, but he ...

He survived the physical wounds of the war, but there was no escape from the lasting mental and emotional handicap he had earned in the war. Hughes could only partake of the trauma by reliving his father's pain emotionally while listening to his horroresome experiences:

While I, small and four,
Lay on the carpet as his luckless double,
His memory's buried, immovable anchor,
Among jawbones and blown-off boots, tree-stumps,
shell-cases and craters,
Under rain that goes on drumming its rods and thickening
Its kingdom where the sun has abandoned, and where nobody
Can ever again move from shelter.

The old man goes through the travails of the warfields time and again suffering the prolonged agony repeatedly and is unable to escape from the tortures. After each renewed seizure, when he
goes back to normalcy, it is like being born again after an experience that is tiring and wearisome:

As after being blasted to bits
The reassembled infantry man
Tentatively totters out, gazing around with the eyes
Of an exhausted clerk.

The maimed soldier is like a helpless infant and has to be treated with great care and kindness. After his recovery he has to learn to live afresh and pick up the threads of a life that has collapsed. His condition is pathetic.

Even those who have survived the war both physically and without mental handicaps cannot adjust to the new life. They remain misfits and have a genuine difficulty in adjusting to their civilian surroundings. Hughes's portrait of an ageing colonel in "The Retired Colonel" (Lupercal) immortalizes such an individual. Though he puts on a show with "kept rage" and lives "Honouring his own caricature," he survives merely as a stereotype, a "Mafeking stereotype." After his wife passed away and his daughters left him, he lives on with only his whisky to keep up his "ancient courage." In a situation where the glorious "man-eating British lion" has been completely subjugated by a worthless "pimply age" he survives as a mere exhibit, remembered and respected only by the patriotic poet:

Here's his head mounted, though only in shyness,
Beside the head of the last English Wolf (those starved gloomy times!)
And the last sturgeon of Thames.

The only value given to him now is that of a showpiece, a clumsy and awkward relic of the war.
Hughes also comments on the horror of the vacancy experienced by a post-war generation. In "A Motorbike" (Moortown), Hughes portrays a young man unable to reconcile himself with the peaceful quiet of a post-war civilian world where

The men surrendered their weapons
And hung around limply.
Peace took them all prisoner. 
They were herded into their home towns. 
A horrible privation began
Of working a life up out of the avenues
And the holiday resorts and the dance halls.

In sheer frustration at all the passivity, the "Quiet Young man" bought himself a motorbike, once a symbol of "thunder, flight, disruption," but now old and rusted and outclassed by the missiles used in the war. The motorbike erupted into life with difficulty after a six year period of "sleep", and provided the man with a taste of the sound and fury he had become accustomed to. But the temporary peace and reconciliation with the new world could not last long, and

A week later, astride it, before dawn,
A misty frosty morning,
He escaped

Into a telegraph pole
On the long straight west of Swinton.

Since he is unable to adjust to the demands of a constraining "civilized world, death is for him a release from the torturous demands of a post-war torpor; which he was ill-equipped to cope with.

His preoccupation with survival and vitality are more clearly evident in his portraits of rustic characters. In rural life, where man and nature are constantly thrown together,
adaptability and compromise with the natural world are as essential as breathing. To a person accustomed to the vagaries of nature, man-made shelters are irrelevant. The tramp in Hughes's "Things Present" (Lupercal) looks pathetic with no shoes, honour or hope, but his will to survive is incredible. He needs no house to protect him from the elements as the terrified couple in "Wind" (HR) do, for he is himself "A roof treed to deflect death." He is perfectly at home in the ditch even though it is sodden and he can dream of a glorious past when his sires had "towers and great names." He exemplifies Faulkner's belief that "man will not merely endure: he will prevail." His capacity for endurance described in "November" (Lupercal) is even more amazing. On a rainy November day, the poet comes across a tramp "bundled asleep" in a ditch full of muddy, foaming rain water. Initially he thinks the man is dead, for he is still and none can sleep in such a place.

In the let of the ditch a tramp was bundled asleep:
Face tucked down into beard, drawn in
Under his hair like a hedgehog's. I took him for dead,

But his stillness separated from the death
Of the rotting grass and the ground. A wind chilled,
And a fresh comfort tightened through him,
Each hand stuffed deeper into the other sleeve.

His ankles bound with sacking and hairy band,
Rubbed each other, resettling.

The tramp is not only able to relax comfortably in the ditch, but also seems to enjoy the chilling wind and take the rain which "plastered the land till it was shining/Like hammered lead" in his stride. While the poet ran for shelter at such
a violent onslaught from a hostile environment, he could not help admiring the strength of the weather-beaten tramp capable of braving the elements in their fury:

I thought what strong trust  
Slept in him—as the trickling furrows slept,  
And the thorn-roots in their grip on darkness;

And the buried stones, taking the weight of winter;  
The hill where the hare crouched with clenched teeth.

The inner strength and moral courage seen in this gesture of the tramp and his absolute childlike identity with the natural world was indeed an enviable trait in the man.

The tramp is not merely an isolated instance where the human and natural worlds coexist peaceably in the Hughesian scheme. Dick Straight up ("Dick Straight up", Lupercal) is a hardy and rugged country man who had become almost legendary. He is an eighty-year-old man with a white head yet his zest for life, strong back and upright walk are powerful. The younger men look like cheap imitations when compared to him for he is still as healthy and alert as he always was—a giant against whom they look

White is his head,  
But his cheek high, hale as when he emptied  
Every Saturday the twelve-pint tankard at a tilt,  
Swallowed the whole serving of thirty eggs,  
And banged the big bass drum for Heptonstall—  
With a hundred other great works, still talked of.  
Age has stiffened him, but not dazed or bent,  
The blue eye has come clear of time:  
At a single pint, now, his memory sips slowly,  
His belly strong as a tree bole.

Age has thus only added to his prowess, and he has grown into a legend. It is not through hard work, heavy exercise, or a
planned diet that he has developed such strength. It is drawn from his surroundings, the hills among which he survives "nourished by stone and height." Hughes narrates an instance to show his resilience to the harshness of nature, and tells of how the man

... drinking and singing, fell in the sleet, late,
Dammed the pouring gutter; and slept there; and throughout
A night searched by shouts and lamps, froze,
Grew to road with welts of ice. He was chipped out at dawn
Warm as a pie and snoring.

Such an experience, which would have killed an ordinary man, is no surprising feat for Dick, for his inner fire and instinct for survival are strong enough to pull him out of any such catastrophe. When such a man dies, he is not lost, but gathered into the folds of the earth where he rightly belongs.

Though a great deal of hostility exists between man and nature most of the time, this is not always the case. *Moortown Elegies* (1979) is dedicated to a man who was able to link the natural world with the human harmoniously. The poems written to mourn the death of Jack Orchard, a close friend and later his father-in-law, depict him as an ideal of farmerhood. He was able to identify with the natural world around him in terms of power as and gentleness. In the words of Craig Robinson, "he appears tirelessly strong, selflessly devoted to his role, precise, capable of great gentleness, stubborn, savage, quick-tempered."13 He is the farmer who remained in the background in the earlier *Moortown* poems as helper to nature. He is portrayed not merely as an ideal but as a real live human being. He is strong, gentle
and clever with hands that are "lumpish roots of earth cunning."
In "The day he died," a Dickinsonian elegy, he describes the
effect of Orchard's death on the landscape:

The bright fields look dazed.
Their expression is changed.
They have been somewhere awful
And come back without him.

The animals are also completely at a loss when faced with the
fact of his death. Being domesticated creatures they have been
absolutely dependant on him for their physical as well as emotional
needs and so their loss is heavy

The trustful cattle, with frost on their backs,
Waiting for hay, waiting for warmth,
Stand in a new emptiness.

Their reactions are indeed pathetic. According to Craig Robinson,
Hughes intensifies the motif of the good shepherd into an image
of parenthood, making the farm a newly orphaned child. Hughes
does indeed personify the landscape and attribute emotions to it
that seem realistic and create a great sense of pathos when he
writes

From now on the land
Will have to manage without him
But it hesitates, in this slow realization of light,
Childlike, too naked, in a frail sun,
With roots cut
And a great blank in its memory.

The poem carries several echoes from Emily Dickinson, and a
sustained elegiac note.

In the *Moortown* poems, Hughes succeeds in unifying the
human and the natural worlds on a practical plane. Craig
Robinson summarizes the situation of the poems thus:
With *Moortown Elegies* a new and important category is opened up: the farmers. The rationale of farming draws together previously divergent strands in the pattern of Hughes's thinking. For it is the farm, par excellence, that is the meeting place of the two worlds, natural and human. And the meeting is not a confrontation, since the farm can be seen as a working laboratory of co-operation between man and nature. Hughes has discovered in these poems the utility of a real situation perfectly apt for expressing practical ecological awareness, the sanctity of nature, and the value of man's being in touch with natural energies. Where the independent and exotic predator, the jaguar seems likely only to ignore or attack (or be attacked by) man, cows and sheep, because domesticated, stand in need of man's supervision. Nor is this situation, so suitable to Hughes' central meanings, one of his own devising. Farms of the non-industrialised kind he writes about really exist, representing a way of approaching nature sanctioned by long usage. Better still, this farm is English—an oasis of relatedness within the urban malaise, a seed all the more hopeful for being indigenous.  

This kind of farm life, once central to English life, is fast disappearing from the British setting. So by using this backdrop, Hughes is issuing a warning and at the same time offering an alternative to the dissatisfied urbanized populace willing to be committed to a justifiable cause. In these poems, Hughes emphasizes man's importance in the rural world as well as the power of nature capable of reinvigorating people and instilling infinite creativity normally denied to modern man.  

Hughes's affinity for the rural situation and his insistence on its relevance to the contemporary situation in England is explained by Daniel Hoffman thus:

The agricultural life may not seem to count for much in modern Britain but perhaps Hughes finds it appealing exactly because it is so little like the depersonalized existence of urban man. A
country man at least is in touch with brute realities and turns real clods of actual earth with his hoe. .. The rural life like the archaic dialects .., is attuned to savage sources, ancient truths, instinctual behests ..

In the farm yard, it is necessary for man and animal to live together in peaceful coexistence and mutual trust. But the ideal situation Hughes imagines does not always exist. The rural folk are not always loving and considerate towards animals as one may expect. The real situation is exposed by Hughes in What is the Truth?

In this book subtitled "a farmyard fable for the young," the poems about farm animals are interspersed with comments and dialogue relating the human beings to the beasts. The poems are spoken by the persons who reveal their hidden nature and views, consciously or unconsciously, through their attitudes towards the animals. These persons from a rural background are given greater individuality by Hughes. Though their physical appearance is not described in detail, we are able to envisage them with clarity and study their essential psychological framework.

In the "fable," God and his son descend to a hilltop on the boy's insistence and invite the people of the vicinity to talk to them about their life. God prefers to talk to the men when they are asleep for he believes that

\[
\text{When they are awake, they are deepest asleep} \\
\text{When they are asleep, they are widest awake} \quad (p. 9)
\]

So their sleeping souls are summoned to the place "where God and his Son sat on a log under the full moon" to speak to the divine audience. Initially God refers to them in the plural as a single
unit. They are "mankind" who make claims to great knowledge, but actually know very little. Later they come to be separated out into individuals.

The farmer is quite different from the gentle, fatherly and loving man of Moortown. He is obviously a very practical and utilitarian person with a sensible approach to life. He responds to the heavenly beings with "blank astonishment" (p. 11), yet he is sane enough to study the surroundings closely, recognize the log of wood where they sat, and wonder if they might be scorching it, for he had been planning to put it to more practical use:

He recognised that log. It was the trunk of a fir-tree that had blown down last winter. He had trimmed it only a week ago, where it lay between two oak-trees. He wasn't sure yet how he would use it, but it was a good log, and as he gazed at the two men he wondered if they might be scorching the wood where they sat. (p. 11)

With not much respect for the divine and full of his earthly interests, he has a great store of pragmatic ideas and useful tips. He chooses to speak of the Partridge for it is "a son of the soil," cheap to maintain and useful on the land. He makes a list of the good qualities of the bird:

A grand bird is the Partridge, a wild weed of a sort,
The cheapest weed on all my ground, it never costs a thought.
And when it puffs and flies it's Bang! and Bang! and pretty sport. (p. 11)

The reasons he gives for his choice of the bird are themselves indicative of his own temperament. The birds appeal to him only because they provide good sport and good meat, and are not
bothersome or expensive to maintain. His utilitarian nature and astute practicality are also reflected in his attitude to the cows. He appreciates them for the milk, meat, butter and cheese that they provide, but dislikes their noisy behaviour:

    The cow is but a bagpipe,
    All bag, all bones all blort.
    They bawl me out of bed at dawn
    And never give a thought
    a thought
    They never give a thought. (p. 22)

He hates any creature that disturbs his smug relaxation, be it the cow or the buzzing fly. Yet, despite his apparently churlish behaviour, he is not insensible to God's displeasure and hastens to make amends for his irreverently materialistic account about the cows by extolling the virtues of horses in the former times. But even this description is punctuated with a truth clearly unsavoury to God, for it was mechanization that drove these creatures away from earth, for they were too angelic and sensitive to withstand the metallic touch of tractors:

    Our last friendly angels— that's what they were,
    Their toil was a kind of worship, every step a bowing
    of prayer
    Hidden under tangled hair and sweat. But the tractor
    shoved them all
    Straight back to God. It didn't take much to undo them
    They were made of the stuff of souls, and the little grey
    Ferguson rattled straight through them
    Now you will not see them. But I saw them. (p. 27)

He accepts the tractors as a very natural and essential part of the world he lives in, however unwilling God may be to accept the fact. The farmer is also astute enough to stop his son from talking about the calf whose tail was frozen and broke off
because it was born in the snow. Yet he protests violently and indignantly about creatures that harm his crop whether they be the rooks or the pigeons, and justifies his callous action towards them:

With his clothes-peg beak and his bald face
The Rook tramples all over my place.
He also pulls up the seed those creatures clutch
Just as it's starting to sprout--and that is such

Vandalism I go with my gun,
Seventy rooks whirl up but down comes one. (p. 30)

The very fact that he feels the need to justify his actions on the grounds that the Rooks harm other creatures, is itself an unconfessed acceptance of his own guilty. His argument that he is only defending his grain and the "crawlers and creepers" among the "earth clods" covers a selfish motive and denies the rook the right to survive as one of God's creatures. To him, it is merely a personal enemy to be stopped from doing him harm. Yet he tries to pacify God by speaking of the fox as a "jolly farmer", dwelling upon its goodness, making light of its natural thievery, and leaving the real truth unsaid. He admires the quality of industriousness in all creatures, be it the fox or the swallow, despite what he considers their negative traits:

I'll say this for swallows, they're marvellous workers.
You think they're sunning by the pond--but No!
They're down there gathering balls of mud--in their mouths!
They're building their huts with their beaks! (p. 55)

Though the practical, down-to-earth attitude predominates in him, he is sensitive enough to appreciate the small and tender mice, and forgive their truant nature for "they're dear little things"
He is also against unnecessarily injuring or killing any creature as evident from his attitude to the hare:

You'll never hurt a hare after you've heard her cry in pain. A mother's scream, a baby's scream, and a needle slips in through your ear and brain. To prick and prick your heart when you even hear of the hurt of a hare again. (p. 105)

Proximity to death had always frightened him, whether it was in the cry of a hare or the touch of a fly. The fly was to his mind always associated with death and therefore its presence served to unnerve him:

I don't like to see a fly
Wandering about in the air
Outside a rabbit-hole, then going in.
Somebody's died down there.

... . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
And I hate to feel a fly
When I'm taking a snooze after lunch
Walk to my mouth-corner--
As if just checking a hunch. (p. 72)

As death was something intangible and a fly made him conscious of his relation to this concept, he was wary of it. He was a practical person, to whom death was an unfamiliar territory, and he therefore preferred to bury himself in his daily chores and stay well within his familiar routine. He has perforce to fill his waking hours with hard labour to ensure a plentiful supply of food and other luxuries. He is envious of the worm that can afford to laze all day and yet earn its means of livelihood:

Worms riot and revel in their rude and naked hordes.
And most of what I fatten, far, far more than my farm affords Falls into their idle mouths, and the whole lot live like lords. (p. 94)

Though independent in nature and free thinking, he is quite Christian in his adherence and admiration for work. In spite of
his dislike for the stern and dictatorial side of God, he, like a godfearing Christian, is dutifully obedient and hurries to make amends and please Him for his natural waywardness. He is a variant of the typical modern Apollonian man.

But his son, follows an entirely different path with his genuine concern for the wild animal, indicative of a hopeful turn of events in the immediate future. In his attempts to preserve the natural vitality of living beings, he acquires a domesticated Badger and strives "unteach her tameness" after letting her free. His efforts are so successful that she is now independent of human beings and confident of herself in her world. From being a helpless pet, she has developed first into a "houseproud lodger" and then takes command of the whole establishment.

She's our houseproud lodger, deepening her rooms.

Or are we her lodgers? To her
Our farm-buildings are her wild jumble of caves, Infested by big monkeys. And she puts up with us--Big noisy monkeys, addicted to diesel and daylight. (p. 14)

Now that she is familiar with her own world she finds the human world alien and corrupted with artificiality. The boy's view of his own world and his identity with the natural world are evident in his narrations. His emotional affinity to the animal is so great that he even attributes human feelings such as misery and loneliness to her. But unlike his sister he does not romanticize the creatures but appreciates their beauty and vitality. He admires the rooks whose turbulent activity adds to their splendor:
Rooks love excitement. When I walked in under the rookery
A gale churned the silvery, muscular boughs of the
beeches, and the wet leaves streamed--
It was like a big sea heaving through wreckage--

And the whole crew of rooks lifted off with a shout
and floated clear.
I could see the oiled lights in their waterproofs
As the blue spilled them this way and that, and
their cries stormed. (p. 33)

Unlike his father, he is not unduly perturbed by the damage done
by the birds, for the destruction is fully compensated for by
the hope and cheer he gets by watching their display of wildly
overpowering animal vigour. Yet he is practical and sensible
as evident from his description of the fly who does a great deal,
without costing much:

He costs nothing, needs no special attention,
Just gets on with the job, totting up the dirt.

All he needs is a lick of sugar
Maybe a dab of meat--
Which is fuel for his apparatus
We never miss what he asks for. He can manage
With so little you can't even tell
Whether he's taken it. (p. 70)

He is shrewd enough to recognize the worth of such virtues as
utilitarianism and cheapness which are so important to the older
generation. But those are not the only considerations for
weighing their worth in his eyes. Beauty, vitality and a touch
of romance are equally important to him. Like any normal and
healthy young boy, he is robust and playful, producing teasing
puzzles and delightful tricks to entertain the gathering.
The elders are not so humoured by his cheeky pranks they cannot
curb his enthusiasm and he pokes fun at the vicar's sober and
pompous religiosity by his innuendoes.
Like the farmer's son, the shepherd is also full of admiration for the beauty and power of birds and animals. Though tired after a long hard day of shearing and wearied by the problems created by his flock, he can extoll the virtues of the sheep when called upon by God to do so:

The sheep is a mobile heaven, it nibbles the hill,
A manageable cloud,
A cloud for a lawn, or a field-corner.
A small, patient cloud

In whose shade the Shepherd's dog can rest.
A cloud going nowhere,
Growing on the hillside, fading from it--
A cloud who teaches quiet. (p. 41)

Its soft dreaminess, its delicate dexterity and trustful fearlessness arouses the protective instinct within him. But, when truthful, he is full of complaints against the creatures, for they represent for him the dullness and monotony of daily routine life. To him, other creatures like the swallows stand for the silent, alien power of nature, exciting, yet just out of reach. He admires the exotic swirling flight of the swallows, which are not "mad like swifts" but controlled and stylish in their movements and have a store of natural energy and subdued force, just held in check:

There's thunder too in swallows.
Glitter-dark, flickering over the white hay
Where the flies hide from the lightning
When the air tightens, and the whole sky sags low
like a big, warm drop. (p. 51)

He is full of appreciation for the naturalness of creatures and at the same time fully aware of the alienness of human presence in the natural world. While describing the union of two blue-nosed
lobworms, he is sincerely carried away by their carefree abandon and their unselfconsciously passionate movements:

O they twisted together like two loving tongues
And they had not a care for the world and its wrongs.

O they clung in a spittle, like passionate lips
From their separate holes, as from separate ships.

And that was a wonder to watch in the dawn
In the world wet with dew, like a garden new-born.

It was Adam and Eve in the earliest light--
And I was like Satan, for they suddenly took fright.

Their loving was chilled at the touch of my stare--
O I almost could hear it, their cry of despair . . . (p. 119)

Lost in the wonder of the event, he is quite distressed to have inadvertently become the instrument of their separation and the collapse of the delightful atmosphere in "that dreadful place."

As a representative human being, he is alien and evil to them, just like the legendary serpent at the Garden of Eden. The unassuming Shepherd, conscious of the beauty of Nature, wishes to relate himself to it, but cannot as Nature is fearful of him. He recognizes with heartfelt grief, the fact of his alienness to the creatures.

The poacher is another individual who is closely associated with the natural world. He is clearly familiar with the animals and their natural habitat. His careful and painstaking study of the characteristic habits of the creatures are evident in his descriptions of the animals as in the case of the Weasel. It is quick-footed and nimble in its movements, and appears loveable, but is in fact bloodthirsty and ferocious:
The Weasel never waits to wonder what it is he's after. It's butchery he wants, and BLOOD, and merry belly laughter.

That's all, that's all, it's no good thinking he's a darling creature. Weight for weight he's twice a tiger, which he'd like to teach you. (p. 65)

Being so well acquainted with the wild, the poacher knows that violence and treachery are an unsavory part of the laws of the countryside. Bloodshed is an accepted way of life, however distasteful it appears to an outsider. The poacher himself is guilty of it as obvious when he speaks about the hare. He is anxious whether God can see through his facade. When he narrates his feelings towards the Hare, he tries to dwell upon her beauty but finds himself describing her death

Witch-maiden
Heavy with trembling blood--astounding
How much blood there is in her body!
She is a moony pond of quaking blood

Twitched with spells, her gold-ringed eye spellbound (p. 103).

He is so accustomed to the ways of the wilderness that he often forgets his human conscience and its dictates. Despite the rough exterior and waywardness he is tender at heart and quick to defend his dumb companions. He is full of sympathy for the slow Buzzard and encourages it to fly higher for "Slowness comes from God" (p. 42):

O beggared eagle!
O down-and-out falcon! Up!
Let's see you up there--up! Up!
That's better!

Now let your flags unfurl,
Mew at the sun--give us that eagle feeling! (p. 44)
He is religious in the natural sense, of "going, all along", as Emily Dickinson has phrased it, and strongly allies himself with the creatures. He has little respect for the conventional institutionalized religion, and constantly challenges the vicar's religiosity with his bold and irreverently caustic remarks. He is quite unprepared to brush away the goat as Satanic and argues that as it was "one half of the great God Pan" (p. 81), it should possess divine qualities rather than evil. He also extolls its practical virtues by concluding that "The Nanny Goat's milk is still the sweetest of milks/And her cheese of cheeses" (p. 81).

Being a hunter himself, he has much respect for the good hunting qualities in the criminals like the badger which is strong and powerfully built:

Packed in muscle a crash-helmet of muscle
His head is actually one terrific muscle
With a shocking chomp and sleepy little eyes
To make it seem harmless. But he is harmless enough
Even if he acts guilty. (p. 60)

The badger, though apparently guilty, is strongly defended by the poacher who seems to have an innate affinity for him. This strong identity is probably due to the fact of its being a night creature like himself. To him it is a symbol of romance and beauty.

My Dad said
Kill a badger kill your granny. Kill a badger never see
The moon in your sleep. And so it is.
They disappear under their hill but they work a lot
inside people. (p. 60)

He is quite superstitious and almost fanatical in his adherence
to the faith that badgers should be preserved. But it is almost unnatural for him to be so, as he is normally a practical person, admiring the sincerity and devotion of honey bees who can be regarded as the most religious of all creatures for its humble and selfless devotion to fatten a leader as the ordinary man to his stone idol.

The bees fall
On to their knees, and humbly head-down crawl
Into their crammed church
Where they are fattening
With the earth's root-sweetness
A pale idol, many-breasted,
Made of wax. The One
Who'll make their swarm immortal. (p. 58)

He admires them for their ceaseless and tireless work for a common cause. Unlike them his activities are almost antisocial and he is quite lazy and unwilling to work.

The School teacher's reactions and views are quite different from those of the majority of the community. Though respected in the area and hardworking, he keeps his distance from all the other folk. He is an intellectual, almost the type of an Apollonian man. He is careful and meticulous in his statements which are deliberate and pertinent. Basically reticent, he makes relevant remarks based on his careful study of animal behaviour when called upon by God to do so. His observations are expressed in a logical and rational manner, along with a punctilious marking out of the main points he has already mentally recorded. He appears almost stubbornly insistent in his methodicity as evident in his mannerisms:
Then he began, and as he spoke, in his measured way, he stuck out first his thumb, then his forefinger, then his middle finger, and so on, as he counted off the points about the Mouse. (p. 65)

He goes on to give a detailed account of the activities of the Mouse around the farm, its sweet intense look, its dumb panic and its courageous initiatives in stealing all night "with a good conscience" (p. 66). Though this narration serves to give God an insight into his character, it is through his description of the Tree-creeper which is that he presents almost a self-portrait:

Busy as a shrew, moth-modest as lichen.

Inchmeal medical examination
Of the tree's skin.

. . . . . . .

. . . he can't dawdle. He jabs, dabs, checks essentials, Magnet-safe on undersides, then swings

In a blur of tiny machinery
To the next patient's foot, and trickles upwards, Murmuring "Good, good!" and "Good, good!"

Into the huge, satisfying mass of work. (p. 63)

The bird, though "easily overlooked" is meticulous and hardworking, for the work is satisfying. Being learned, he can embellish his arguments with historical allusions and statements from the Bible thus giving them greater credibility for the common man. But the statements themselves are often spurious and have no basis in actual fact as his comment on the Goat:

Out of the dusty fall of Babylon the Great
Walked the Goat, still searching for something to eat.

Out of the tombs of Egypt stepped forth
The Goat, chewing a scrap of mummy cloth.

Into the cave, from which Christ's body had flown,
The Goat peered, evil-eyed with his horns on. (p. 78)
Steeped in legend and superstition like any common man, he attempts to justify his standpoint by means of name-dropping, by hiding under a mask of erudition. But his careful study of the animals has not made him charitable or tender-hearted towards them. He has only supercilious contempt for the geese who though dirty and clumsy are full of pride:

Lifting out of mud bare feet that were
More like rubber frogfeet, these two queens
Held their noses high--blue eyes always
Peering over something--or bowed, studying

Mud for another egg. (pp. 84-87)

The geese are like him in their affected superiority and false values. Though largely Apollonian, he reveals traces of the Dionysian in his instinctive and impulsive killing of a beautiful fox. Giving in to the primitive impulses buried within them, the School teacher and his friend hunt down the animal and later bury it to cover up their guilt. Unable to reason out the needlessly brutal and insensible nature of his action, he tries to lay the blame on the gun but fools no one:

And the gun is thinking. The gun
Is working its hunter's magic.
It is transforming us, there in the dull mist,
To two suits of cold armour--
Empty of all but a strange new humming,
A mosquito of primaeval exictements. (p. 116)

Obviously a good storyteller, he can recapture with vivid detail the mood and atmosphere of the hunt and tell a long tale without any flagging in the interests of the listener. He has little respect for God or his earthly representatives.
Like the School teacher, the majority of Hughes's men reflect a sense of alienation from the vital energetic core of the universe. Barring a few outstanding individuals, they are hesitant actors, fearful of any violent display of passion, and lead very sterile and monotonous lives. Though the rural folk of *What is the Truth* are mostly able to identify with their surroundings at least partially, they cannot relate to God and the teachings of religion at all. The basic qualities of human understanding and fellow-feeling which constitute the essentials of almost all religious faith are forgotten both by the religious men and their followers. In their anxiety to further the cause of individual creeds, they lay stress on the superficial and lesser important features of conventional religion, forgetting the essentials in their fanatical adherence to superfluous dogma, with the result that the common man tends to take an aversion to religion itself.

This is what happens in the case of Crag Jack, an individual modelled on Hughes's own grandfather. In the poem "Crag Jack's Apostasy" (*Lupercal*), the protagonist explains his escape from the oppressive control of conventional religion and dogma. The structure of the church, once meant to shelter the God and His followers had now come to represent a stone-like impassive body crushing everything under its heavy weight and incapable of humanity or the warmth of genuine love.

> I came clear, but my God's down
> Under the weight of all that stone:
> Both my power and my luck since
> Have kicked at the world and slept in ditches.
By leaving the church, he had given up his claims for shelter and had to survive in ditches and suffer the antagonism of a disapproving society, but had no regrets. On the other hand, he had now become aware of the submerged divine power in the natural world of which he had so far received only stray glimpses. He now pleads with this hidden deity which surfaces time and again in his dreams, to appear in its full manifestation during his waking hours so that he can experience the exhibition of a real power:

I do not desire to change my ways,
But now call continually
On you, god or not god, who
Come to my sleeping body through
The world under my world; pray
That I may see more than your eyes

In an animal's dreamed head; that I shall—
Waking, dragged suddenly
From a choir-shaken height
By the world, lord, and its dayfall—
Keep more than the memory
Of a wolf's head, of eagle's feet.

His unconscious state which carried elements of the ritual dance during a shamanistic seance indicates that such forces do exist and therefore he is full of hope despite his rejection of the existing religions, for this new faith is to him more holy and sanctified than the repressive orthodox dogmas.

Such an awareness of the failure of conventional institutionalized religion seems to have penetrated even the orthodoxy of the church. This is what Hughes portrays in "The Conversion of the Reverend Skinner" (HR). The clergyman begins by pretentiously deriding a woman he considers "low" for her
audacity and lack of religious fervour. But the blow she gives him goes far deeper than her intention, for it makes him view himself and his church in entirely fresh perspective:

"Dare you reach so high, girl, from the gutter of the street."
She slapped his cheek and turned his tongue right over:
"Your church has cursed me till I am black as it:
The devil has my preference forever."
She spoke. An upstart gentleman
Flashed his golden palm to her and she ran.

He realizes that it is the lack of humanitarianism and understanding shown by the church that has forced the girl into such an immoral and debased state. Accepting his guilt in her fall, he tries to make amends by mortifying himself and living on "dog-licks for ten years," but there is no improvement in the prevailing situation. So he recognizes the fact that his church cannot provide the necessary solution and ends up cursing everything good and blessing everything that was defiled, for he consided only the defiled purified enough by virtue of their refining mental or physical suffering. His state of mind reflects the feelings of a whole generation of people, which is methodically analysed by Joseph Campbell in his book *Creative Mythology*:

... there has now spread throughout the Christian world a desolating sense not only of no divinity within (mythic dissociation), but also of no participation in divinity without (social identification dissolved): and that in short is the mythological base of the Wasteland of the modern soul, or, as it is being called these days, our "alienation."

The sense of desolation is experienced on two levels: First the social, in a loss of identification with any spiritually compelling, structuring group; and beyond that, the metaphysical, in a loss of any sense either of identity or of relationship with a dimension of experience, being, and rapture any more awesome
than that provided by an empirically classifiable conglomerate of self-enclosed separate, mutually irritating organisms held together only by lust (crude or sublimated) and fear (of pain and death or of boredom). 17

It is due to Hughes's recognition of such a degraded state of modern life that the Bible has to be recreated in Crow and Reverend Lumb of Gaudete makes an attempt to create a new religion to replace the demoralized old one. Reverend Lumb himself is a development on the converted Reverend Skinner but appears to be a more creative and optimistic version of the fallen cleric. In Lumb, the two contradictory forces of life are most uniquely portrayed, for he combines in him the constraints of a repressive orthodox church and the wantonness of an uncontrolled Dionysian element in society.

Being the central character of Gaudete, Lumb's role in the poem is explained in the Argument:

An Anglican Clergyman, the Reverend Nicholas Lumb, is carried away into the other world by elemental spirits. Just as in the Folktale, these spirits want him for some work in their world.

To fill his place in this world, for the time of his absence, the spirits make an exact duplicate of him out of an oak log, and fill it with elemental spirit life. This new Nicholas Lumb is to all appearances exactly the same as the old, has the same knowledge and mannerisms, but he is a log. A changeling.

This changeling proceeds to interpret the job of ministering the Gospel of love in his own log-like way.

He organises the women of his parish into a coven, a love-society. And the purpose of this society, evidently, is the birth of a Messiah to be fathered by Lumb. (Gaudete, p. 9)
The clergyman is an interesting person whose character changes and develops gradually as the poem progresses.

The book is comprised of three parts—the Prologue, the main section and the epilogue—the style alternating between prose and verse. At the very beginning, the original Lumb finds himself walking alone down unfamiliar and lonely cobbled streets "with deliberate vigour, searching in himself for control and vigour" (p. 11). His fear rises to a crescendo when he suddenly finds himself surrounded by fresh corpses and he takes to his heels. He runs into an old man in "scarecrow rags" who claimed to have been searching for him and leads him to a "woman tangled in the skins of wolves." But Lumb fails to recognize the beautiful woman who though alive lies inert (discussed in Chapter II of this thesis), and confesses his inability to do anything to save her, for "He is not a doctor. He can only pray" (p. 15). His failure is indicative of the deterioration of the church whose main function involved the healing of the ailing spirit, and of the absence of blind faith or true belief even in the clergy, for he does not recognize prayer as a source of deliverance from the troubles. Terry Gifford and Neil Roberts explain Lumb's crisis thus:

It is Lumb's Christian separation of the spirit from Nature that makes him helpless in the face of the female who we come to realize is the Goddess of Nature. His seeing the roles of doctor and priest as separate indicate the divisions he makes between the physical and the psychological, the rational scientific and the Christian spiritual in his sense of self. 18
By portraying Lumb's incapability, Hughes presents his criticism of the religious institution that betrayed its flock by denying the natural and the emotional aspects of man. But the church man is still essential to both the spirits and the humans, which is the reason why the spirits take away the real individual who is replaced by an earthly counterpart. The ritualistic procedure by which the log is made human is very much akin to the process described by Robert Graves as a necessity for poetic inspiration:

No poet can hope to understand the nature of poetry unless he has had a vision of the Naked King crucified to the lopped oak, and watched the dancers, red-eyed from the acrid smoke of the sacrificial fires, stamping out the measure of the dance, their bodies bent uncouthly forward with a monotonous chant of 'Kill! kill! kill!' and 'Blood! blood! blood!'

The real priest has to undergo a similar ceremonial process which includes both his death and rebirth in order to revive the instinctive creative spirit within him. He reappears in his human form only to the Epilogue of the poem, which is significantly set in Ireland, the land of the Celtic spirit, associated with natural magic and folklore, with druids and heroic bards. When Lumb resurfaces into this world, he looks exactly as he did earlier, but behaves quite differently. His sudden appearance on the scene and unusual behaviour frightens three little girls, but no harm comes to them. He is now able not only to recognize creatures from the animal world but also to communicate with them. His experiences in the spirit world have clearly changed him for he now "roams about composing hymns and psalms to a nameless female deity" (p. 9). He displays his miraculous powers of communion
with the natural world by calling up an otter from the water. The local priest is not initially impressed by the story of this miracle, for he has God's feat of creation as an example of a truly great miracle:

'If that is miracle,' he said finally, 'To bring an otter up out of the lough, then what must the poor man think of the great world itself, this giant, shining beauty that God whistled up out of the waters of chaos?' (Gaudete, p. 175)

But even as he speaks these words, he is overcome by a deluge of creative imagination. His sermon becomes a highly poetic outpouring and he is so astonished at his own impassioned volubility that he begins to recognize the fact that "something supernatural has happened" and goes on to copy out the verses. The poems testify to the drastic change undergone by Reverend Lumb. The original Lumb, once incapable of aiding any spiritual regeneration, is now transformed into a poet who can inspire creativity in even mundane mortals by his poems. Some of the poems glorify the female goddess and sing her praises:

She rides the earth
On an ass, on a lion.
She rides the heavens
On a great white bull.

This attitude corresponds well with Graves's view that the poet ought to be in love with the White Goddess. In his words: "The poet is in love with the White Goddess, with Truth: his heart breaks with longing and love for her." Several other poems speak of his sinfulness in ignoring her so long and effuse a sense of remorse and repentance at his neglect:
I neglected to come to degree of nature
In the patience of things.
I forestalled God—
I assailed his daughter. (Gaudete, p. 179)

His contrition leads him to denounce the church for it has now become an institution that separates man from nature. This is the reason why churches collapse and man is estranged from religion for the church in its various manifestations comes between man and his naturally creative inner self:

Churches topple
Like the temples before them.

The reverberations of worship
Seem to help
Collapse such erections.

True religion would only be strengthened by sincere worship, in his view and it was because of the lack of genuine faith and dependence on artificial man-made structures that the institution of Christianity was going down in shambles.

The changeling, on the other hand, is not kept back by any kind of regrets or compunctions. He cannot be held in check by religious doctrines or testimonies. He goes about preaching and practising the Gospel of love as he understands it. If this results in licentiousness, it is only because he is over-enthusiastic in his duties. Excesses are a natural reaction to extreme suppression and physical repression. When the Dionysian comes to rule, obscenity may result. Hughes makes this view clear by employing the quotation from Heraclitus as his epigraph:

If it were not Hades, the god of the dead and the underworld, for whom these obscene songs are sung and festivals are made, it would be a shocking thing, but Hades and Dionysos are one. (Gaudete, p. 8)
Vulgarit. Y was an essential part of primitive religious ritual and therefore its presence in the parish not entirely new or revolutionary. In his efforts to rekindle the vital creative energy in the townsfolk, Lumb releases the instinctive violent forces, which once liberated, would run amuck unless reined in. But by the very virtue of his origins, his interpretation of the Gospel of love is limited and partial and his efforts to improve the society usher in greater chaos and destruction. Keith Sagar explains the situation in *The Art of Ted Hughes*:

> Life seems worthless without the energies Lumb releases; but, once released, those energies cannot be controlled, and destroy life. The women are in a trap. And so is Lumb. He cannot escape his own essential nature. All that underworld energy that vegetable and animal procreative urge, channelled into a narrow man, can only express itself as frantic, priapic sexuality.

The state of extreme licentiousness and moral depravity come to an abrupt end when the immorality reaches its peak and Lumb suffers the natural but brutal consequences of his activities.

Physically the changeling looks very much like the man he replaced, with a shining bald pate marked by welts. Although in his actions, behaviour and mannerisms he is very human, one is constantly reminded of his origins in the vegetative world. His body reverts to its tree-like essence in times of stress and his thoughts are couched in images from plant life:

> Between the root in immovable earth
> And the coming and going leaf
> Stands the tree
> Of what he cannot alter.
> As his heart surges after his reverie, with lofty cries and lifting wingbeats
Suddenly he comes against the old trees
And feels the branches in his throat, and the
leaves at his life. *(Gaudete*, pp. 50-51)

His identification with the natural world is instinctive and complete. He feels "surrounded by still-empty, never-used limitless freedom" of the human world. The awareness of the freedom only makes him feel more limited and constrained for he can never make full use of it. His efforts to free himself from these bounds are completely fruitless. As a last resort, he turns to God and prayer, but even there his attempts are foiled:

He prays
To be guided. He feels his prayer claw at the air,
as at glass
Like a bettle in a bottle. *(Gaudete*, p. 51)

Since he finds that his prayers to God are in vain, he has to return to himself and his tree origins for strength. "He sinks his prayer into the strong tree and the tree stands as his prayer." His god is the 'not-god' of Crag Jack. His promiscuous animality appears degrading and unworthy even to himself and he begins to lose faith in his own cause. He longs for the freedom of an ordinary human life and towards the end of the poem, he neglects his cause, and plans to run away with Felicity, his chosen bride to lead a normal married life. He goes fishing one day in her company, and finds her being attacked by a beast who turns out to be his double. The beast appears out of the water and withdraws into it suggesting its existence in Lumb's hidden consciousness.

The double and other such manifestations from the spirit world always appear in the vicinity of some body of water which
is suggestive of their existence in his own consciousness. Both
the rational being and the irrational forces are contained within
the same individual although one is not necessarily conscious of
the other, Hughes himself indicates that the changeling is not
entirely different or cut off from the man carried away by the
spirits through his second quotation in the epigraph to the poem.

These lines which are from *Parzival* (Book XV) run thus:

> Their battle had come to the point where I cannot
> refrain from speaking up. And I mourn for this,
> for they were the two sons of one man. One could
> say that 'they' were fighting in this way if one
> wished to speak of two. These two, however, were
> one, for 'my brother and I' is one body, like good
> man and good wife. Contending here from loyalty
> of heart, flesh, blood, was doing itself much harm.

The epigraph suggests that the two sides of one man are personified
separately in the two Lumbs. By denying one, it is not possible
for the other to survive, since both aspects of human life, the
Apollonian and the Dionysian, the ordered and the wild, the
rational and the irrational, have to be given equal importance,
unlike the present state of affairs where one is given precedence
over the other.

Lumb runs his course of adultery and debauchery to its
climax when it is rudely cut off. After an emotionally charged
ritualistic drama enacted at the basement of the church, at the
end of which Lumb ceremoniously unites with Felicity who is then
murdered in cold blood without prior notice by Maud with the
knife sacred to him, the situation takes a different turn. The
drugged women and Lumb are brought back to their senses by the
dreadful act. Lumb makes an effort to undo the damage, but
Felicity is beyond help. Maud publicly denounces Lumb for his intention to abandon the cause, and the women attack him with vengeful fury. He escapes from their clutching arms to his bedroom, where he tries to reason out a way to normalcy:

While second after second splutters burning in the room,
  like a fuse, and hot thoughts grab at him,
  reflecting from every surface,
That somehow
Everything has to be cooled, everything has to be dismantled,
Everybody back into their clothes and their discretion.  

(Gaudete, p. 150)

But very soon he abandons all thought of reason and reverts to his primitive instincts when he is chased not only by the women, but also their indignant husbands and the other men of the parish. They hunt him out like an animal and he is shot down with the aid of Hagen's Mannlicher. 318, "slender goddess/Of Hagen's devotions/And the unfailing bride/Of his ecstasies in the primal paradise, . . ." (p. 167)

Maud Bodkin, while discussing the function of sacrifice in religion states:

In the ritual shedding of blood it is not the taking of life that is fundamental, but the giving of life to promote and preserve life and to establish union between the individual and the unseen forces that surround him.21

The killing of Felicity and later Lumb, and Maud's suicide have served as an impetus for a peaceful coexistence of the two extremes of violent fury and sterile stagnation where one could nullify the destructive or the strangulating influence of the other. The energy released by Lumb's efforts in both the men
and women are under control and therefore more creative. The relationships between people and between man and nature are reestablished. The White Goddess has her revenge on the changeling for his divided loyalties and the original priest is reborn in Ireland, a better and more accomplished man. The situation presented at the close of the poem is a positive one full of hope for the future of mankind, for even the conventional priest is inspired to passionate outpourings and emotional descriptions of miracles by the vicar's verses.

The poem concludes on an optimistic note, but Hughes does not persist in the same vein, for the cleric he portrays in What is the Truth is a conventional church man lacking the capacity to relate to the natural world and displaying no sense of human brotherhood and amity. He actively dislikes the bat who cohabits the church with him. Unlike the farmer's son who can see something divine even in a filthy fly, the vicar is full of contempt and quite hostile towards the bat whose condition appears pathetic:

The beggarly Bat, a cut out, scattily
Begs at the lamp's light
A lit moth-mote. (p. 42)

According to him, the bat which is 'jittery' and poverty-striken is "Determined to burst/Into day, like the sun", but he can never get past "The dawn's black posts", and the vicar, whose main aim is life should have been to lead people towards God and light makes no effort to help the creature. The vicar's very appearance confirms his nature, for he is a flame within
a glassy form. His light is confined to the bounds of the conventional church and not meant for all. He is far from charitable towards the beast even though it is "batered about" all night long by "the rackets of ghosts" who treat it as a shuttlecock. Instead he looks upon it with aversion and antipathy prompting the poacher to hint that the church houses the Devil. Yet he is not always so unChristian in his attitude to animals and birds. He likes swallows for they appear noble and have an innocent and "chirruppy chicken-sweet expression" and cause little trouble:

I agree
There's nothing verminous, or pestilential about swallows.
Swallows are the aristocrats
The thoroughbreds of summer. (p. 53)

Yet he is suspicious of them, because their structure is "futuristic" and resembles the jet engine, a war machine, which he mistrusts being a man of peace. But despite all his scepticism, he can solemnly affirm that "All birds sleep in God" and invite sarcastic comment from the Poacher. He has a high esteem for the hen who he feels can find God everywhere and is uncaring of the generality:

The Hen
Worships the dust. She finds God everywhere.
Everywhere she finds his jewels.
And she does not care
What the cabbage thinks. (p. 76)

She is the epitome of the practical and down-to-earth person who prefers earthly skirmishes to 'a future of empty sky' and chooses to work rather than sing. Her egocentric nature and selfishness appeal to the vicar for she is single-minded in her
devotion to her job. Besides, she is stern and righteous, almost like himself:

And she is stern. Her eye is fierce—blood
(That weakness) is punished instantly
She is a hard bronze of uprightness.
And indulges herself in nothing (p. 78)

She is cold and hard, with no place for gentleness or emotionalism in her life. The vicar is in full sympathy with the fowl, probably because she reflects his own 'virtues'. He is like Nietzsche's Apollonian man, who divorces emotions and intuition from his life, and replaces them with stern uprightness and religious dedication. He imagines himself to be like a dutiful sheepdog, guarding God's flock. His interest lies not in the welfare of the sheep but in earning God's favour at all costs, for that was how he earned his keep. His dream vision is a picturization of his ideas and methods of forcing unsuspecting parishioners into the fold of organized religion:

I had every single mutton helpless
Under my ideas.
I threw in a few dodges—
Spinning them on one hoof,
Rolling the flock up on three sides at once
Like a pasty,
Pouring them through a nozzle. (p. 110)

Force is a necessary ingredient of his formula of conversion, where love is absent. Being aware of the shortcomings of his methods, he is hesitant to narrate the dream to God. He is becoming gradually conscious of the limitations of his approach to people. He feels constrained by his robes of office and longs for the warmth of a family atmosphere with its carefree humour.
and loving companionship as evident from his description of the Hedgehog. For once he sings with gusto, full of emotion and warmth revealing his hidden aspirations:

The Hedgehog has Itchy the Hedgehog to hug
And a hedgehog bug has a hedgehog bug.

Hedgehog with hedgehog is happy at ease
And hedgehogs with fleas, and fleas with fleas

And so they enjoy their mutual joke
With a pricklety itch and a scratchety poke. (p. 99)

God seems completely disillusioned by the fact of the absence of warmth between men and their brothers and between men and animals evidenced from the vicar's words. Theodore Roszak's prediction that the "energy of religions renewal" would generate another politics and probably "the final radicalism of our society" seems to have been proved false as even the allotted representatives of God on earth have become corrupted by their adherence to superficialities and false values. The only solution to the absence of genuine warmth and fellow-feeling is a conscious effort by mankind to promote love and brotherhood not only among themselves but towards the natural world as well.
NOTES


2 Ibid., p. 228.

3 A poem with the same title collected in Moortown is different from the one published in Recklings quoted here.


7 Ibid., p. 5.


9 Ibid., p. 174.

10 Keith Sagar, The Art of Ted Hughes, p. 173.


14 Ibid., p. 262.

16 Emily Dickinson, "Some Keep the Sabbath Going to Church" (324) (So, instead of getting to Heaven, at last-/I'm going, all along.)


20 Keith Sagar, The Art of Ted Hughes, p. 198.
