CHAPTER V

VIOLENCE: AN APOCALYPTIC CEREMONY

Genuine poetic quest for truth often results in a variety of experiments. At times such experiments may contradict and even invalidate the existing corpus of knowledge arrived at by commonly acceptable modes of operation. The poetic development of Hughes vindicates this observation in a real sense. Hughes's faith in the Cartesian dictum that pure reason, rightly applied, yields all truth to man as clear and indubitable as the truth of an arithmetical sum, undergoes a radical re-definition in Gaudete (1977). Realizing the limitations of the Cartesian bifurcation of the self and the world, in Gaudete, Hughes denounces the well-established philosophical dualism in favour of a unified and organic self inseparable from the world of Nature.

This shift in perspective realized in Gaudete is a marked development in the poetic art of Hughes. The exploration of truth through experimental process by an application of the intellect is replaced by a unified and organic self that relies on the intuitive mystical mode of perception rather than the deductions of reason based on the empirical reality. The so called logos or the pure good and pure truth divorced from the world of Nature has not satisfied the poet. Therefore, in Gaudete, Hughes views reality from a different perspective.

The tension arising out of the dichotomy between matter and spirit, body and soul should be resolved not by repressing or divorcing one from the other but by a meaningful fusion and co-existence. "The motive power behind the gradually unfold-
ing pattern of poems and narratives is a nightmare impulse searching for the pristine bliss of the divine harmony." 1 This amounts to the negation of the fundamental tenets of Christianity. It thus undertakes the challenging task of revaluing a well-established doctrine of faith. Keith Sagar calls it "an amazing and unique poem.... the most important poetic work in English in our time." 2 Terry Gifford and Neil Roberts modestly claim that the work merits our attention "as a major advance in Hughes's narrative achievement." 3 However, the work calls for a detailed analysis to grasp its full significance.

Edward Larissy views the volume as a harmonious fusion of opposites resulting in a great synthesis that ushers in solace to the wound of division of man. Larissy maintains that the whole book is based on the Alchemical Principle of the union of opposites resulting in the birth of a new essence. This new essence is invariably superior to the components in every respect. Thus he says:

In Gaudete, Hughes has found the philosopher's stone of spiritual renewal, as the title implies. The right relationship with the feminine, so necessary for this, can be discerned in the alchemical union of opposites necessary for the great work. The opposites are, alchemically, Sulphur and Mercury. But the symbols of them are legion: Fire and Water, Eagle and Serpent, Sun and Moon, King and Queen, Bride and Groom. The union of these opposites necessary to create the philosopher's stone,

is called in alchemical parlance, a 'marriage', as in alchemical tradition. 4

The book opens with two epigraphs and an argument followed by a brief prologue. The long central narrative and the epilogue are the other sections of the book. "The interaction of these hints, themes and information about the story, immediately challenges the reader to find meaning not only in what happens but in how the story is told. It is a challenge for the reader to examine his own responses to what he is to read." 5 In the light of this statement, one can definitely perceive a logical continuation of Hughes's preoccupation with violence. Violence achieves an apocalyptic dimension through the events that result in Lumb's re-emergence as a changed being capable of living in complete harmony with Nature.

In Crow, violence is a paradox of creation and destruction as has been pointed out. In Gaudete, violence becomes an apocalyptic ceremony. Interestingly, this can be considered as an explanation also of the enigmatic reply of Hughes to the query of Ekbert Faas. When Faas asked Hughes whether Gaudete continues the main issues of Crow with an ongoing mythic narrative Hughes said: "Gaudete obviously is connected to Crow. Crow in full, with big developments, would be the yolk, and Gaudete would be the shell. I projected the life of Lumb in the under-world, and it became entangled with Crow, and the episodes became like the real events of which the Gaudete events are like the shadow on the wall in the cave." 6 Thus

6 Quoted in Ekbert Faas, op. cit., pp. 122-123
violence in *Crow* appears in an entirely different manner from
*Gaudete*. In the former it is a paradox of creation and
destruction and in the latter it becomes an apocalyptic
ceremony. This can be illustrated by a detailed analysis of
the three different sections of the book.

1. The epigraphs, the argument and the prologue

2. The central narrative

3. The epilogue

**The Epigraphs**

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.

Heraclitus

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. Contend-
ing here from loyalty of heart, one flesh, one
blood, was doing itself much harm.

Parzival (Book XV)

**The Argument**

An Anglican clergyman is abducted by the spirits
into the underworld. The spirits create a dupli-
cate of him to take his place in this world, during
his absence, and to carry on his work. This
changeling interprets the role of minister in his
own way. The narrative recounts the final day of
events which led to his cancellation by the powers
of both worlds. The original man reappears in this
world, but changed.

*Gaudete* opens with the above epigraphs and the argument.

The first epigraph from the ancient Greek philosopher
Heraclitus advocates that life is a perpetual warfare between opposing forces. According to him motion and change are the basic laws of life. It is this philosophy of change that made him declare that one cannot step into the same river twice. He argues that the continuous flow of water prevents such a possibility. It is significant that Hughes opens the volume with an epigraph from Heraclitus. The Heraclitan notion of motion and change as the basis of life is similar to the Hughesian notion of the flow of energy or violence as the basis of life. When Heraclitus says that mutually opposing forces like Dionysus and Hades are one he communicates an important truth.

Dionysus is not only the God of wine but also a symbol of everlasting life. "His domain is not only the liquid fire in the grape, but the sap thrusting in an young free, the blood pounding in the veins of a young animal, all the mysterious and uncontrollable tides that ebb and flow in Nature." By undergoing an apocalyptic ceremony of violence, he becomes one with Hades, the underworld of the dead. Thus it is his ceremonial death which makes him the symbol of everlasting life. Thus, the first epigraph sets the tone of the whole book by suggesting that mutually opposing principles can be brought into a harmonious fusion by an apocalyptic ceremony of violence as in the case of Dionysus, who "is most often viewed as the god who is destroyed, who disappears, who relinquishes life and then is born again, who becomes the symbol of everlasting life."  

7Keith Sagar, The Art of Ted Hughes, p. 187.
The second epigraph, which is from Wolfram Von Eschenbach's Parzival further emphasizes the need to harmonize the mutually warring factions. Here also violence becomes an apocalyptic ceremony necessitated by the crisis which the protagonist faces. Parzival, in his quest for the legendary holy grail battles with the Moslem knight who is his own brother. Similarly the Anglican priest, Reverend Nicholas Lumb, in the story, wages a psychic battle which reaches a crisis point splitting his psyche into two separate selves. As the argument follows, immediately after the second epigraph, the intention of Hughes is clear. "The epigraph from Wolfram Von Eschenbach's Parzival confirms that both Lumbs are one."\(^9\)

The two epigraphs and the argument present scenes of violence and clash of mutually warring factions. The argument also speaks of the violent split in Reverend Nicholas Lumb. Though Hughes's perception of reality undergoes a radical change in Gaudete, his mode of approach is via energy in the form of perceptible violence as the epigraphs and the argument clearly demonstrate. As Roger Eklin views, the explicit aim of the book is "the psychological and spiritual catharses that are to be gained from a total submission to and immersion in the forces of nature as a stage in the recreation of harmony between inner and outer worlds, self and others."\(^10\) Still, one cannot ignore the views of such critics as Gavin Ewart and Julian Moynahan. Gavin Ewart says: "Gaudete was on

\(^9\) Keith Sagar, The Art of Ted Hughes, p. 190.

the whole over-dramatic and not a success."¹¹ According to Moynahan, "The story is very sordid, once one strips away the mythic, pseudo-religious and magical hocus-pocus accompanying its telling. As certain events transpire—the seduction, impregnation and degradation of an entire village of English women by a tireless, pre-potent clergyman." ¹² These criticisms are of little significance when one views the whole work as the inevitable outcome of Hughes's poetic vision of violence. In fact the whole book is concerned with violence as an apocalyptic ceremony right from the beginning of the split in Lumb to his re-emergence as a changed man in the epilogue.

The Prologue

The Prologue presents a phantasmagoric description of a street in the north of England. The protagonist is Reverend Nicholas Lumb. He walks hurriedly through an empty street. Suddenly this empty street turns into a mass-grave of oppressive silence carpeted with corpses. The thought pattern of Lumb reveals the dislocation of his mind aggravated by the eerie atmosphere. Even then he searches in himself for control and decision.

The whole episode eclipses the rational integrity of Lumb and he is conducted into the underworld. There what greets him is the strange sight of a dying woman. Lumb feels for her pulse but when he lifts her moist eyelid the startling brilliant gaze "knife" into him. Hughes's description of this

dying female deity is directly related to the White Goddess, of which Robert Graves gives an elaborate description. According to Graves the desecration of this Goddess is caused by the philosophical and theological dichotomy that enthroned the God logos as supreme:

The new God claimed to be dominant as Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, Pure Holiness, Pure Good, Pure logic able to exist without the aid of woman; but it was natural to identify him with one of the original rivals of the Theme and to ally the woman and the other rivals permanently against him. 13

When the pure God of Logos dethroned the White Goddess and her primacy as the mother of all life, he was actually denying the basic principle of life itself. This denial of life principle is not only damaging but destructive in the ultimate analysis. Lumb's helplessness results from this damaging bifurcation of spirit from Nature. So, Lumb finally declares that he can do nothing because he is not a doctor. His helplessness is made manifest when he says he can only pray. "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 indicates the divisions he makes between the physical and the psychological, the rational scientific and the Christian spiritual in his sense of self." 14

To restore this dying woman, who is the goddess of Natural law, the goddess of all sensation and organic life,

Lumb has to purge himself of the division in him. "So here it is neither doctoring nor prayer which is required of Lumb. Parzival had only to ask what ailed Anfortas to heal him. He asked no questions and Lumb asks none. The powers of that world must go a longer way about with him, and purge him of his own sickness first." 15 Thus Lumb has to undergo first an apocalyptic ceremony of violence, which can bring about a complete transformation in himself, if he is to perform the healing. The violent metamorphosis of Lumb reborn from a female form can be traced to Jungian influence on Hughes. It is parallel to the concept of "chymical marriage" in Jung. Thus Lumb's metamorphosis can be seen as "the union of opposites in the archetypal form of the hieros gamos or "chymical marriage". Here the supreme opposites, male and female (as in the Chinese Yang and Yin) are melted into a unity purified of all opposition and thus incorruptible." 16

To enable Lumb to perform his task of restoring health to the dying female deity, Lumb undergoes a ceremony of violent apocalypse. Lumb is flogged and beaten by the primitive aboriginal beings in the underworld. They force him to choose a tree which is felled and lopped into the shape of a mutilated man with two raised arms. They tie Lumb to this tree-bole and flog his skull until he loses consciousness. When he regains his consciousness he sees his own double emerging from the lopped oak which is tied to him. The changeling double of

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15 Keith Sagar, The Art of Ted Hughes, p. 191.

Reverend Lumb is then drenched in the sacrificial blood of a white bull.

We hear again of the original Lumb only in the epilogue. Meanwhile the changeling fills the gap left by him and interprets his ministry in his log-like manner, leading to his cancellation by the spirits who made him. The original Lumb emerges again in the west coast of Ireland, composing hymns to a nameless female deity. Reverend Lumb's abduction into the underworld and his act of choosing the oak tree followed by the bull sacrifice to drench the changeling in its sacrificial blood strike the key note of the whole narrative. "The Oak means to any English man masculine unbending strength, the vegetable world at its most thrusting and powerful. And the bull is the animal world at its most potent, full-blooded and dangerous." 17

Hughes, by choosing the oak and bull for the creation and ritual initiation of Reverend Lumb, affirms his belief in energy or violence as an indestructible principle in this world. In order to revitalize the dying feminine principle Lumb is infused with the most potent energies in the animal and vegetable kingdom. Lumb undergoes a violent ritual initiation aided by the most potent energy in Nature symbolized in the oak resulting in the apocalyptic ceremony of the changeling's birth. The changeling is further strengthened by the sacrificial blood of the bull. Thus, the new Lumb is flogged into life and is baptized by the blood of the bull.

Thus he embodies the vitality of Nature in its full measure, capable of renewing and revitalizing the dying Goddess.

Lumb's tragedy emanates from the total split of the thinking self and the acting self in him. The changeling symbolizes only the vital acting self. The thinking self which controls and channelizes the potent vitality is lacking in him, so he misinterprets his ministry and brings havoc leading to his cancellation. The main narrative centres on the activities of this changeling who fills the absence of the original Lumb. Like the epigraphs and the prologue the main narrative also shows the dangers of accepting the division of body and soul as diametrically opposed principles that assert the primacy of objective imagination. Alexander Davis offers a convincing explanation of it thus:

The main narrative of Gaudete, in large part, a critique of what Hughes declares, in 'Myth and Education, to be the ultimate expression of the objective imagination, that is the morality of the camera... (which) has imprisoned us in the lens. It is thus no coincidence that the catastrophic conclusion to the narrative of Gaudete is precipitated by a photograph taken by Garten of Lumb and Mrs. Evans enjoying sex. Garten's voyeurism, however, is only one example in a text that is littered with references to male scopophilia. 18

Thus, in Gaudete, Hughes pleads for a meaningful fusion of the two, instead of a mutually destructive dichotomy. The failure of the changeling emanates from such an exclusive division.

The Central Narrative

The title *Gaudete* is taken from an ancient Christmas hymn that begins with the word "Gaudete", which means rejoice. It also means birth from the loins. Apart from the title's correspondence to the Christmas hymn, Hirschberg offers another explanation:

A gaud is a large bead on the rosary necklace on which the 'Our Father' is said as a prayer. Between each of the large beads are ten small beads on which 'Hail Mary's' are said. Thus, gaudete is a necklace of prayers in separate scenes, strung together the way beads in rosary are strung on a necklace. The structure of entire work resembles a series of meditations or separate images." 19

Thus, the messianic role of Lumb is evident from the title. Lumb comes to the bleak English countryside parish in the month of May when the orgiastic revels in honour of fertility gods are celebrated. Obviously, Lumb's presence in this bleak countryside parish matches his mission of bringing communal fertility through his extraordinary outbursts of sexual recklessness. Lumb finds acceptance because he is able to provide the much needed vitality to the sterile and stagnant lives of the villagers. Evidently, the women of the parish are brought under the spell of the vicar, who recharges their sterile lives with his Dionysian vitality.

Lumb organizes the women of the parish into a coven under the guise of the Women's Institute. Meetings of this institute become occasions for orgiastic revels of fertility rites. He makes the women believe that one of them is going to be the mother of a messiah to be fathered by him. Consequently

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violent passions are evoked in the women. Keith Sagar outlines the effect of Lumb's energy thus:

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.20

The enormous life-energy in Lumb, expressed through his violent sexual acts brings about apocalyptic changes in the women. They undergo total transformation, sometimes against their own will. Though Pauline Hagen is disgusted with her relationship with Lumb, she can't help seeing him, and she believes that she has been hypnotised or forced into it. Similar is the case with Mrs. Westlake. Among the several women impregnated by Lumb, though some of them contemplate suicide, most of them are happily in love with him, being susceptible to his charm and obedient to his will.

Lumb's energy is basically a unified synthesis of the most potent energies of the vegetable and animal kingdom. The oak tree and the blood of the bull through an apocalyptic ceremony form the inexhaustible fountain of Lumb's phallic energy. It is this energy that permeates the atmosphere of the narrative bringing about apocalyptic transformation in the lives of the characters who come within the radius of his energy.

20 Keith Sagar, The Art of Ted Hughes, p. 198.
i) Direct and Indirect Effects of Lumb's Energy

The first character who appears in the main narrative is Major Hagen. He is followed by the other men of the parish in different contexts. Hagen has many hunting expeditions to his credit. He uses the painted skull of a tiger as a paper weight. It is Hagen who ultimately kills Lumb. He is the first to spot Lumb's activities by the aid of his powerful binoculars. Strangely enough, he sees the vicar in close intimacy with his own wife Pauline through the powerful glass of his binoculars. "Hagen, like so many of the men, is a voyeur. The world is looked at through lenses or glass—a window, a camera, the telescopic sight of a high velocity rifle.... He breeds bulls by artificial insemination. Other men in the village are also hunters and farmers. Nature is there to be used for human purposes, or abused." All the men in the parish lack vitality and the will to execute their desires. Mr. Dunworth, Mr. Evans, Dr. Westlake and even Garten want to wreak vengeance on Lumb.

The enormous life-energy in Lumb makes the townsmen helpless and incapacitated. In front of Lumb's Dionysian vitality, they all find themselves shielded by their scopophilia. Their spiritual, emotional and sensual sterility is cleverly hidden under this mantle. According to Alexander Davis, all observing characters in Gaudete are males whose fruitless objective perception gives rise to equally vacuous acts of objective imagination. These scopophilic males are

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21 Ibid., p. 194.
thus incapable of communal regeneration which Lumb successfully carries out. So Alexander Davis says:

The scopic males in Gaudete are those who seek to turn the object of their gaze into a subjugated being, to whom they confer an identity or give a nature. This is the phallic power Freud locates in the scopophilac, who likewise desires to master the object of perception. In Gaudete, Estridge, for example, watching Mrs. Holroyd through his telescope, projects an identity on to the woman in order to make her fit within his collection of ideals. She reminds him of the country love of his youth, who never appeared. 22

Against this background of bleakness and sterility in the lives of the men and women of the parish is the lush and fertile nature which unfolds itself in poetic prose:

The parkland unrolls, lush with the full ripeness of the last week in May, under the wet mid morning light. The newly plumped glass shivers and flees. Giant wheels of light ride into the chestnuts, and the poplars lift and pour like the tails of horses. Distance blues beyond distance. 23

The description of the interior of the houses and their surroundings reflects the nature of the people who live in them. Thus, Dr. Westlake's house has a grey sterile lounge and a dingy hall. The furniture in the house of Dunworth is like the demoralized organs of the body. In such surrealistic setting, the events of the narrative unfold in quick succession leading to the death of Lumb. "Gaudete is a mythical story in a contemporary setting, a dream journey that subjects the changling Lumb to ritualistic orgies, violence and finally

22 Alexander Davis, op. cit., p. 78.
23 Ted Hughes, Gaudete, p. 23.
death. Events implausible in themselves are transformed by Hughes's approach which is both apocalyptic and sacramental. 

Violence in the narrative emanates from Lumb's actions. He draws others into a vortex of energy which is in himself. Whoever comes within the radius of Lumb's energy experiences its apocalyptic effects. The major characters who establish contact with Lumb directly or indirectly can be taken up for analysis to see how violence becomes an apocalyptic ceremony in the narrative.

Major Hagen is the first character one meets in the main narrative. His world is far removed from the natural order of things. It is dominated by mechanical artifices like binoculars and high velocity rifles. The stuffed creatures in the glass-fronted cupboard in hibernation bespeak a reality far removed from the familiar village landscape. The description of Hagen's meticulous handling of binoculars like the artillery target watching portends his destiny:

A perfunctory campaign leatheriness
A frontal viking weather proof
Drained of the vanities, pickled in mess alcohol and smoked dark
Anaesthetized
For ultimate cancellations. 

Through his lens Hagen watches his wife immersing herself in "the placeless limitless warmth ... shutting away the painful edges and clarities of the gusty distance." Her union with Lumb is like a violent immersion of herself in the

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24 Stuart Hirschberg, op. cit., p. 188.
creative energy of Nature which brings about an apocalyptic change in her, like the pulsating life in the flora and fauna of the village:

The vista quivers
Decorative and ordered, it tugs at a leash.
A purplish turbulence
Boils from the stirred chestnut, and the spasms of the
New grass, and the dark nodes of bulls. 27

Though Hagen watches the entire scene of his wife's union with Lumb through the lens of his binoculars, even the glass medium doesn't shield him from the radiation of Lumb's energy. The cold-hearted stiff commander senses the beginning of an apocalyptic change:

Hagen
Undergoes the smallness and fixity
Of tweed and shoes and distance. And the cruelty
Of the wet midmorning light. The perfection
Of the lens
And a tremor
Like a remote approaching express
In the roots of his teeth. 28

When the vicar, comes along with Pauline, all Hagen does is to offer a dying pigeon shot by him first to his wife and then to the vicar in a symbolic gesture and walk away. The radiation of Lumb's energy even through the indirect glass medium makes Hagen helpless in reacting to Lumb. Though Lumb's Dionysian excess produces ripples of determination in Hagen, he remains a virtual slave of objective perception that incapacitates him from mastering the situation. In contrast,

the direct radiation of Lumb's vital energy, by necessity produces perceptible and even apocalyptic changes in the victims. The total transformation of the women characters in the narrative bears testimony to this fact.

The next male character who appears is Joe Garten, a petty poacher, who lying concentrated sees Mrs. Westlake, the doctor's wife waiting tensely in her car for someone. Momentarily, he slips into a voyeuristic fantasy "he fastens himself to her, as if to a magnification, fading from himself, like a motionless lizard." Garten appears frequently in the narrative, but he doesn't seem to be much affected by Lumb. His role is more of a catalyst than a victim. Though he fails in dissuading Felicity from falling a victim to Lumb, he succeeds in bringing the men together by showing the questionable photograph and thus becomes instrumental in Lumb's final destruction.

Pauline Hagen, back home, realizes that she has come into contact with an energy that has transformed her completely. In an effort to be away from it she shuts her eyes tightly but the image of Lumb reappears with greater clarity and vividness:

She has closed her eyes
Where Lumb is still with her
His presence strays all over her body, like a flame on oil,
His after-nearness, the after-caress of his voice
As if she breathed inside the silk of his nearness.30

29 Ibid., p. 30.
30 Ibid., p. 31.
Pauline's transformation is so total that, the once familiar house now wears a bleak look and she feels weirdly oppressed. Hagen tries to match Lumb's Dionysian energy by his volcanic sound and by killing his pet dog in his baffled fury:

Arsenals of crazier energy open
Depth charges
Of incredulity and righteousness
Search the taciturn walls and furniture.
Finally he just stands, gripping her shoulders,
Blasting her from all sides with voice. 31

Hagen's outburst of meaningless syllables doesn't make any impact on his wife. It can never match the apocalyptic quality of Lumb's creative energy. Pauline who has experienced this energy makes the difference clear by her attitude:

His wife is watching him
As if it were all something behind the nearly unbreakable Screen glass of a television.
With sound turned off.
Lumb's voice
Is stroking her deeply,
Touching at her heart and lungs and bowels
Glancingly
She goes on sipping her coffee. 32

The condition of Mrs. Westlake is not different from that of Pauline. She too has experienced the apocalyptic nature of Lumb's phallic energy and can no longer remain a normal person. "She feels the finality of it all, and the nearness and greatness of death. Sea-burned, sandy cartilage, draughty stars, galaxies from beyond the world's edge. She feels the moment of killing herself grow sweet and ripe, close and perfect." 33 Despite such violent and murderous passion she

31 Ibid., p. 34.
32 Ibid., p. 35.
33 Ibid., p. 39.
cherishes each moment of her union with Lumb. "She is watching herself now, with richer satisfaction, in Lumb's bedroom, tugging a knife through her throat. She plans her splayed last, carefully ghastly position."\(^{34}\)

Janet and Jennifer, the beautiful daughters of Commander Estridge are also under the spell of Lumb's phallic energy. Jennifer manifests her apocalyptic change by transferring her energy to the keyboard of the piano which breaks into Beethoven's Sonata opus 109. The effect of the music frightens the commander and he realizes that his dream of having beautiful daughters has become a reality:

But the reality is beyond him. Unmanageable and frightening. Like leopard cubs suddenly full grown, come into their adult power and burdened with it. \(^{35}\)

Like Hagen, Commander Estridge also takes refuge in his telescope. His elder daughter Janet is already impregnated by the vicar. She commits suicide, simultaneously releasing her father's caged birds. Like Hagen, Estridge too gets a glimpse of Lumb's energy through his telescope. The medium of the glass lens doesn't shield him from the apocalyptic effect of Lumb's energy. He sees Lumb getting inside the house of Holroyd with Mrs. Holroyd:

Now he watches Lumb Following her closely to the house-door. Within the hallway, within the magnified circle, Turning, she sets Lumb's hand on her breasts and bites his neck.

His hands gather up her skirts As his foot closes the door And Estridge's brain wrings

\(^{34}\) Ibid., p. 40.
\(^{35}\) Ibid., pp. 41-42
To a needling pang, as if a wire might snap. 36

The moment when Estridge undergoes this experience, his elder daughter hangs herself inside his own house.

The pub-owner's wife Mrs. Walsall with her starved Syrian face and the blue socketed eyes is deeply in love with the vicar. She too has been changed completely by the vicar whose seed grows in her. She has lost her interest in everything else and wants to dedicate herself like a sacrifice to his great love. Mrs. Holroyd, like Mrs. Walsall is happy about her whole affair:

She knows she is suspended, as in a warm solution, in the confidence of it. She lies back in her deck chair, helpless in the languor of it, just as the chill-edged sun holds her, for these moments unable to move.... She wants it to go on. She lies there with a slightly foolish smile on her face. She wants nothing to change. She does not want to think about anything, or to open her eyes. 37

In Holroyd, the transformation doesn't bring about any tension. The apocalyptic change she undergoes through the orgiastic energy drugs her to forgetful bliss. Mrs. Garten, ten years a widow, and Betty the barmaid become ecstatic like Mrs. Walsall, sharing Lumb's energy. Their otherwise bleak lives have undergone apocalyptic changes by the orgiastic ceremony of Lumb.

Dr. Westlake, after listening to Jennifer's account of Lumb's activities senses a strange agitation within himself by watching the girl's brimming energy and her full-grown womanhood:

36 Ibid., p. 47.
37 Ibid., pp. 58-59.
He follows what he can of her cascading explanations. Her creamy satin blouse, stretching and flexing like a skin.

.... Noting .. again, between the inflamed eyelids, Her irises clear and nimble-delicate as a baboon's. And the insanity there, the steel cutting acetylene Of religious mania. 38

He evidently gathers much from the girl about the vicar's mission and the purpose of Women's Institute meetings. He then picks up his car keys and races towards his home. In his hurry, he has broken one glass of his spectacles. When he reaches home, he finds the vicar's van parked outside his house. He hurries into the house with determination. What he finds belies his expectation. He sees his wife fully clothed and rolling on the bed in her familiar hysterical style and the vicar sitting at the foot of the bed trying to comfort her like a baffled doctor.

Westlake doesn't look through the glass medium alone. As one of the glasses of his spectacles has been broken a little while ago, significantly, he is able to detect more than what he sees:

Through the vicar's humbug solemn visage And his wife's actress tragedy mask It would be plain That her writhing and cries are actually sexual spasm,

And the Reverend Lumb, who seems to be gazing at him in such cool spiritual composure And mild secular surprise Is actually copulating with her Probably through that hand on her ankle In some devilish spiritual way. 39

38 Ibid., pp. 56-57.
39 Ibid., p. 75.
As Westlake is aware of the vicar's real intentions, he detects half of what takes place through his unshielded eye, he is able to wound the vicar in the scuffle that ensues. Westlake goes out in his fury and on the way finds the vicar's van parked near the house of Dunworth the architect. He goes to a public booth and informs Dunworth about it.

Dunworth rushes home fully prepared to meet the eventuality. He enters the house and goes straight to his studio, loads his pistol, calls his wife and moves to the lounge. There he discovers Lumb and his wife in intimate union. The sight baffles him, all his plans evaporate confusedly. Lumb watches him supporting himself on the elbows, as if waiting for him. Dunworth undergoes a violent apocalypse in front of the strange spectacle:

Dunworth gazes back at his wife
Almost forgetting where he is or what he is doing.
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 irrepressible 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. 40

Lumb's phallic energy has not only stunned Dunworth but has given him an irrepressible joy. His dull wife looks like an open furnace infused by the orgiastic energy of Lumb.

The male and female characters who appear in the main narrative can be broadly categorized into two sections. The first is a group that comes in direct contact with Lumb's

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40 Ibid., p. 87.
energy and its apocalyptic effects. They are all invariably women characters. Lumb has possessed and controlled them completely, irrespective of their social and marital status. Paradoxically, most of these characters do not seem victims, they appear to have discovered the meaning of life.

The effect of Lumb's energy as an apocalyptic ceremony is fully manifested in the women who come into direct contact with him. Some of them have willingly embraced Lumb as the source of their happiness in life and are ready to lay down their life for him. Most of them are happy in their frenzied ecstasy of Dionysian energy. On the other extreme, some of them contemplate suicide because of social considerations. The unmarried daughters of Commander Estridge provide such examples. One of them is already impregnated by Lumb and she commits suicide. The other, even after knowing well the consequence of Lumb's energy, is irresistibly drawn to him. All these demonstrate amply enough that the energy of Lumb operates apocalyptically in ceremonial violence.

The male characters in the narrative do not feel the direct impact of Lumb's energy. Some of them have occasional glimpse of it, via their wives and daughters. Those like Commander Estridge and Major Hagen perceive it through the glass medium of the binoculars. Since the male characters do not fall within the group of active participants of Lumb's energy, they could overcome its apocalyptic effect through collective effort. Even then, when Lumb is at his best, no male character finds himself capable of resisting the violent radiations of Lumb's phallic energy. In short, it can be said that the direct and indirect effects of Lumb's energy is cumulatively apocalyptic in essence.
ii) The Fall of Lumb

The women who are the direct victims of Lumb, played the crucial role leading to his downfall. Maud is the chief force behind the fall of Lumb. Felicity becomes only a passive instrument that hasten the process. Hence the victims themselves find a way out by inducing the male characters who are passive spectators in the drama. Though the death of Lumb is effected by the male characters, it is the women who played the key role in Lumb's fall.

Lumb's downfall begins with Garten's initiative. Garten shows the photograph of Evan's wife with Lumb to Evans. The enraged blacksmith beats the truth out of her. She says it has nothing to do with loving the vicar and she doesn't love him at all and believes that he must have hypnotized her into it. Both Garten and Evans listen to her account of Lumb's mission:

Mr. Lumb has a new religion. He is starting christianity all over again, right from the start. He has persuaded all the women in the parish. Only women can belong to it. They are all in it and he makes love to them all, all the time. Because a saviour is to be born in this village, and Mr. Lumb is to be the earthly father. So all the women in the village must give him a child. Because nobody knows which one the saviour will be.41

Garten is only a catalyst in the fall of Lumb. Felicity and Maud are inseparably linked with the death of the vicar. Lumb's love for Felicity is both his hope and doom. Felicity's uniqueness stems from the fact that Lumb has kept

41 Ibid., pp-113-14
her away from his phallic energy to be the virginal mother of the Messiah to be fathered by him. Thus Stuart Hirschberg says: "Alone among all the characters in the story Felicity makes direct contact with both the original Rev. Lumb and the changeling. The fact that she encounters both sides of Lumb's nature immediately sets her apart from all the other women in the story. In this way, Hughes tells us that Felicity is Lumb's only hope. She alone possesses the capacity to return Lumb to unity by her innocence and affection."\(^{42}\)

The importance of Felicity is further shown by the episode where the changeling fights with the original Lumb in the lake to rescue Felicity. In the scuffle that ensues, the changeling overpowers the other and rips off his one hand.

Felicity meets her doom through the hands of Maud, the protector of Lumb himself. The violence of her death in the orgiastic ceremony at the church basement is apocalyptic. Felicity, in her genuine love for Lumb, has persuaded him to run away with her to a safe place. The eighteen-year old granddaughter of old Smayle has come prepared with her suitcase, which she hides in the car. She has not believed a single word which Garten said about Lumb and the other women of the parish. Maud, in her typical role of the hag, begins to sense the failure of Lumb's mission, she throws away Felicity's suitcase and hides the keys of Lumb's car to foil their plan of escape.

The murder of Felicity by Maud seals the fate of Lumb. Instead of running away with her, he instructs Maud to prepare her for the ceremony of her induction into the Women's

\(^{42}\) Stuart Hirschberg, op. cit., p. 195.
Institute. Though Felicity was apprehensive about attending the ceremony at first, her trust in Lumb makes her participate in it. Maud prepares Felicity for the ceremony in the ritualistic garb and serves her a charm drink and then the customary mushroom sandwich. The already drugged Felicity is transported into another reality in the maze of smoke and the drumming music:

What she has eaten and drunk
Is flying her through great heights and dropping her from gulf to gulf
Wings lift through her and go off
A tiger
is trying to adjust its maniac flame-barred strength to her body.43

Felicity, being the chosen woman of Lumb, the virginal maiden who is to bring forth the messiah, the violence of her transformation is described with the greatness of a ceremonial apocalypse:

Felicity understands that she is a small anonymous creature which is now going to be killed
She starts to cry, feeling the greatness and nobility of her role.
She knows she herself is to be the sacramental thing
She herself is already holy
And drifting at a great depth, a great remoteness, like a spark in space.44

Thus, towards the end of the ceremony, Felicity willingly embraces her role as the sacramental thing. She feels with greater clarity, the visible presence of violence as an apocalyptic ceremony transforming her into a goddess. At this moment, the whole congregation of the drugged and hypnotized

43 Ted Hughes, *Gaudete*, p. 140.
44 Ibid., p. 141.
women break themselves into orgiastic revels with Dionysian energy:

The clapping no longer uses human energy. It is like the steel oiled parts of music, like a generator pulsing radiance into her, solid and dazzling, fringing her whole body with flame. Somehow she has become a goddess. She is now the sacred doll of a slow infinite solemnity. She knows she is a constellation very far off and cold.

Moving through this burrow of smoke and faces. She moves robed invisibly with gorgeous richness. She knows she is burning plasma and infinitely tiny, that she and all these women are moving inside the body of an incandescent creature of love, that they are brightening, and that the crisis is close.

They are the cells in the glands of an inconceivably huge and urgent love-animal. And some final crisis of earth's life is now to be enacted. Faithfully and selflessly by them all. 45

This scene enacted by all the women, presided over by Lumb, is a literal manifestation of violence as an apocalyptic ceremony. First, it is made manifest in Felicity, which gradually develops into a mass orgy of communal hysteria, making each and every woman a totally transformed being ready to perform the prompting of the urgent love-animal Lumb. The gradual transformation of energy into ceremonial violence of an apocalyptic nature is made possible by the spell of Lumb's potent energy. It is the energy of Nature at its most powerful which he has acquired at the time of his ritual initiation. This orgiastic revel is central to the narrative.

as it exposes the apocalyptic nature of violence in the most effective manner.

This experience of apocalyptic transformation is a higher reality of life amidst the ordinariness of day-to-day mundane existence. Carlos Castenda gives a detailed description of such experience in his book *A Separate Reality*. The apocalyptic transformation in *Gaudete* can be related to Castenda's description of the Mexican shaman's act of 'seeing'. In this act of seeing, the familiar object assumes unfamiliar significations as the experience of the drugged women and Felicity testify at the ceremony in the church basement. Describing this apocalyptic process Castenda says:

> When I focussed my eyes on his face I did not see don Juan as I am accustomed to seeing him; instead I saw a large object in front of my eyes.... What I was looking at was a round object which had luminosity of its own. Every part of it moved. I perceived a contained, undulatory, rhythmical flow; it was as if the flowing was enclosed within itself, never moving beyond its limits, and yet the object in front of my eyes was oozing with movement at any place on its surface. 46

Finally, Maud, Lumb's housekeeper and his divine protectress kills Felicity with Lumb's own sacrificial dagger, the weapon of weapons. She not only kills Felicity with whom Lumb plans to escape but exposes his plan to the other women. She also prevents his escape by hiding the keys of his car. The role of Maud is crucial in the narrative as she embodies the triple aspects of feminine principle. "She brings into the story another manifestation of the 'triple goddess, mother,

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bride, layer out--she who sees you into the world, whom you wed and she who ushers you out of the world."  Though Maud functions as a mother figure in the narrative, assisting and looking after Lumb's needs on his earthly mission, she embodies in herself the role of the bride and the outraged female wreaking vengeance.

Lumb, after a minor car crash, comes back to his room, relaxes and is transported into a dream world in which he sees a sinking cathedral on the top of a hill with a mass of despairing women crying for his help. He sees himself in the priestly garb of purple and gold. When he looks at the faces of beseeching women, suddenly Maud appears beside him as a beautiful maiden and he kisses her immediately, the cathedral bursts into flame and at the same time Maud and Lumb awake in their separate rooms from this mutually shared fantasy, alerted by the knocking of Felicity on the door.

Maud's role as an outraged female principle is shown symbolically when she cuts off the head of a pigeon and sponges her body with its blood. Maud literally wreaks her vengeance on Lumb by killing Felicity and revealing to the other women about Lumb's plan of escape with Felicity:

Maud starts to speak  
The music prevents her, she speaks above the music in a throat-gouging scream.  
She is announcing  
That this girl is not one of them  
That she is his selected wife  
That he is going to abandon them and run away with his girl

Like an ordinary man  
With his ordinary wife

48 Ted Hughes, *Gaudete*, p. 147.
What enrages Maud is not his physical relations with other women but the lowering of his status by directing his affection on a human scale towards Felicity. In her triple role as mother, bride and avenger, Maud undergoes apocalyptic changes through violent ceremonies such as the burning of the cathedral in the fantasy of Lumb and the actual wrenching of the head of the pigeon by herself. Finally she makes violence an apocalyptic ceremony in its extremity by her own self-imposed death.

When Lumb directs his affections on a human level towards Felicity, forgetting his mission and disregarding his Dionysian energy, his mantle of protection vanishes. Maud exposes him and the enraged men of the village hunt him down and kill him. Lumb has unleashed his phallic energy on every woman of the parish regardless of their age and marital commitments and has left them helpless. Their condition is similar to that of the mysterious goddess in the underworld who languishes between death and life, whom the original Lumb finds at the beginning of the narrative.

iii) Lumb's Apocalypse

The failure of Lumb's mission modulates into a terrifying vision of violence where he finds himself under the grip of an apocalyptic transformation. In his guilt and fear Lumb imagines that hordes of men attack him in the darkness of a cattle yard. He shouts at them but they go on lashing him and finally one man hands him a sodden paper. Lumb could not make out anything, it disintegrates and they renew their attack. Finally he collapses in the mud and lies buried in it. When the heavy downpour washes him he comes into his senses. In
the slurry mud he first sees the bodies of the men in the village. Then the helpless women are seen buried up to their necks in the floor of a volcanic crater, each imploring for help:

One by one he finds them.  
The women of his parish are congregated here,  
Buried alive  
Around the rim of a crater  
Under the drumming downpour. 49

Though he is unable to help the congregation of women whom he has sexually possessed, he feels that he can save the mud-filled face in the middle of the crater. It begins calling to him and he reaches for it. The falling rain washes its face and he sees that it is a woman's face. It is the face of the abused Nature. The necessary pre-condition of Lumb's regeneration is the atonement of his crimes against the female principle in Nature. Joseph Campbell relates this process of atonement as a necessary concomitant of regeneration. Lumb's apocalypse precisely echoes Campbell's view of atonement. "We are taken from the mother, chewed into fragments and assimilated to the world-annihilating body of the ogre for whom all the precious forms and beings are only the course of a feast; but then miraculously reborn, we are more then we are." 50

The baboon face reminds us of the woman whom Reverend Lumb meets in the underworld. It was to heal her that the spirits had abducted him to the underworld. Here, the

49 ibid., p. 103.
changeling tries to rescue her and she so clings to him with all her might that he struggles to free himself from her. But she only clamps him tighter as if she were drowning. In the violence of the struggle, he undergoes an apocalyptic transformation as if under a stony anaesthetic and sees the woman gushing out between his legs:

The baboon woman
Flood-sudden, like the disembowelling of a cow
She gushes from between his legs, a hot splendour
In a glistening of oils,
In a radiance like phosphorus—he sees her crawl and tremble
... He crawls,
He frees his hands and face of blood-clotted roping tissues
He sees light.
He sees her face undeformed and perfect. 51

The violence of her birth is apocalyptic as Lumb fights to free himself from her. He thinks that he has been torn in at the waist and his own blood is spilled everywhere. Finally he struggles to free himself from her and crawls away. The baboon face of the woman becomes beautiful and perfect. This hallucination of Lumb protends his doom as a necessary condition for the revival of the outraged feminine principle. Thus, the violent death of the changeling and the subsequent burning of the dead bodies to destroy all the evidence make violence an apocalyptic ceremony in the narrative.

The Epilogue

In the epilogue another Lumb appears in another part of the country, singing hymns to an unknown female deity.

51 Ibid., pp. 105-106.
Nothing is left of the changeling and his cult. The original Lumb, on the other hand comes out successfully after his suffering and becomes the devotee of the White Goddess—a symbol of undivided nature. "The real Lumb fights his battles in consciousness, and comes through at the end, to a finely adjusted consciousness of nature and his place in it. His poems are the stages of his journey." 52 Thus, the epilogue poems speak of the apocalyptic change which one undergoes before one can achieve wholeness of being. Lumb in the under-world has had such experience as the epilogue poems illustrate.

The resurrected Lumb appears in the West Coast of Ireland, in the month of May. He meets three little girls and performs a miracle for them. These innocent girls give a report of the miracle to their priest who in turn dismisses it as a trivial incident. " 'If that is a miracle', he said finally, 'To bring an otter up out of the lough, what must that poor man think of the great world itself, this giant, shining beauty that God whistled up out of the waters of chaos.' " 53 The miracle of Lumb is a manifestation of the unified cosmic energy which whistled up the universe from the waters of chaos.

Lumb's act of whistling an otter out of the lough symbolises his present status and his mission. "The otter itself is a miracle. And the happy meeting of two worlds is a greater one, especially when we think of the earlier meeting

53 Ted Hughes, *Gaudete*, p. 175.
with the joyous-seal-like creature which came up out of lake."

Lumb's new-found status makes him a transmitter of energy which is apocalyptic in itself.

The effect of Lumb's energy as an apocalyptic ceremony is vividly realized in the meeting between the little girls and the priest. After witnessing the miracle of Lumb, the girls undergo such an apocalyptic transformation that the energy radiating from their flushed faces brings about a similar transformation in the priest who at first scoffed at the miracle of Lumb:

And as he spoke the priest was suddenly carried away by his words. His thoughts flew up into a great fiery space, and who knows what spark had jumped on to him from the flushed faces of the three girls. He seemed to be flying into an endless, blazing sunrise, and he described the first coming of creation, as it rose from the abyss, an infinite creature of miracles made of miracles and teeming miracles."  

The whole episode brings out the violent apocalypse the priest undergoes. Later, when the girls depart, he opens the notebook left by them and finds that it is full of verses which reminded him of the otter and the man Lumb. So he copies it afresh from the worn-out book.

The forty-five untitled short poems with which the book concludes speak of violence as an apocalyptic ceremony which brings about a harmonious co-existence of diametrically opposed principles like body and soul or instinct and intellect. Thus, Gaudete differs significantly from the earlier major collections in which these principles were depicted in a state of mutual warfare.

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54 Keith Sagar, The Art of Ted Hughes, p. 211.
55 Ted Hughes, Gaudete, p. 175.
All the poems in the epilogue speak of the need of reconciliation between instinct and intellect. Man has consciously built up this dichotomy through his religion and philosophy. Since it is a condition created by man himself he has to atone for it. Lumb has, undergone this purgation through an apocalyptic ceremony of violence. So in the first poem he exposes the futility of the destructive dichotomy of man:

What will you make a of half a man
Half a face
A ripped edge
... How will you correct
The veteran of negatives
And the survivor of cease. 56

Since this dichotomy has gone into the sub-conscious mind it is difficult to bring about a change in man's attitudes. As an Anglican priest, Lumb is originally a victim of such a division. This malady cannot be corrected by man-made remedies. The secret of the remedy can be detected in the rapture of animals. Their rapturous cries reflect their true feelings. These cries do not become syllables or syntax which man uses to hide his true feelings. They are really genuine expressions of pristine instincts. Thus the second poem speaks of the perfection of animal rapture and the ineffectiveness of man made-syntax:

Words buckle the voice in tighter, closer
Under the midriff
Till the cry rots, and speech
Is a fistula
Eking and deferring
Like a stupid or a crafty doctor
With his year after year
Of sanguinary rostrums

56 Ibid., p. 176.
Of almost and their tomorrows
Through a lifetime of fees. 57

This passage reminds us of Lumb's original situation when he is conducted into the presence of the ailing goddess. Lumb's immediate response is that he is not a doctor he can only pray. What is required of Lumb is prayer which brings about total healing. "Prayer was, in a sense, what was needed, but not the sort he had in mind the professional fromulas of his church. He is now occupied in learning how to pray, so that he can join her congregation." 58 Thus, in the epilogue Lumb learns that healing is the result of true speech which is prayer. It has nothing to do with the words of a doctor which are encased in the ineffective human syntax.

The next poem depicts the difference between killings by human beings and animals. As human killings are mostly prompted by ideology, they are unnatural: Animal killings are for the physical need of food and thus quite natural.

The spider clamps the blue-fly whose death panic
Becomes sudden soulful absorption
A stoat throbs at the nape of the lumped rabbit
Who watches the skyline fixedly
Photographs of people--open-mouthered
In the gust of being shot and falling. 59

Even the victims experience the difference. In the case of animals, the cries of the victims merge with the rhythm of Nature's rapture. But the death cries of human beings are unnatural. They are unwilling victims of their own species and their death is a crime against nature herself.

57 Ibid., pp. 176-177.
58 Keith Sagar, The Art of Ted Hughes, p. 214.
59 Ted Hughes, Gaudete, p. 177.
The next poem also speaks of man's cruelty against the White Goddess emanating from his logocentric vision of reality. Blinded by this false notion, he leaves behind the ailing female who groans in pain. In order to revive the ailing female principle, man has to atone for his mistakes. Here again, the inspiration comes from the world of animals as the next poem amplifies. Man gets this message from the prophecy of the lark's crested tongue and not from any man-made syntax. The extent of the damage caused by him is colossal. This destructive tendency emanates from his vision of the world as a conglomeration of opposing forces in constant warfare:

In a world where all is temporary
And must pass for its opposite
The trousseau of the Apple
Came by violence into my possession.
I neglected to come to degree of nature
In the patience of things.
I forestalled God
I assailed his daughter. 60

In the next poem also we see man's crime against Nature, resulting from his inflated ego and solipsistic blindness. He commits error upon error in his blind fury. "In Lumb's plight we can see the predicament of our age, deadened secularized searching for an integration that can reassert the wholeness of the self against the degraded condition of modern life." 61 Thus the first section of poems in the epilogue deals chiefly with man's crime against Nature emanating from his inflated ego.

60 Ibid., p. 179.
The second section of poems speaks of the need for atonement which demands total extinction of self. The violence of man's crime against Nature necessitates an apocalyptic ceremony essential for his transformation. This death of the ego is a necessary pre-condition for his regeneration and for the nourishment of the White Goddess or the abused female principle in Nature. "Those whom she favours experience her presence as a terrible dismemberment which Hughes expresses in metaphors of death. What she demands is nothing less than the purgation and death of the old ego cutting through the intellectual and emotional layers of the self until one is stripped to the heart's core." 62

From the seventeenth poem onwards the poet speaks of the death of the self through the shedding of the ego which can ultimately bring about total transformation in the protagonist. The White Goddess appears like an unearthly woman wading shorewards and Lumb prepares himself to undergo the sacrifice of his self, which is a violent apocalyptic ceremony. He says:

The one I hunt
The one
I shall rend to pieces
Whose blood I shall daub on your cheek
Is under my coat. 63

Lumb is ready to atone for his mistake by rending apart his ego. He sprinkles the ailing woman's cheek with his blood. It is a necessary pre-condition for her survival. This scene parallels Maud's act of wrenching the head of a pigeon and

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62 Ibid., p. 207.
63 Ted Hughes, Gaudete, p. 185.
daubing her body with its blood in the main narrative. Maud’s action is symbolic in the sense that Lumb has failed in his mission and so his death is unavoidable. But in the epilogue, the sacrifice necessary for the revival of the White Goddess is embraced willingly by Lumb. Lumb learns his lessons from Nature herself.

I arrived at light
Where I was shadowless
I saw the snowflake crucified
Upon the nails of nothing
I heard the atoms praying
To enter his kingdom
To be broken like bread
On a dark sill, and to bleed. 64

The poems that follow speak of Lumb’s gradual dismemberment which brings about the revival of the goddess. Sometimes this self-imposed willing sacrifice reaches such phantasmagoric proportions that violence becomes an apocalyptic ceremony for the victim:

A radiant goose dropped from a fire-quake heaven,
Slammed on to earth beside me
So hard, it bounced me off my feet.
Something dazzling crashed on the hill field,
Elk-antlered, golden-limbed, a gloving mass
That started to get up.
I stirred like a discarded foetus,
Already grey-haired.
In a blowing of bright particles. 65

Gradually this self purgation reaches a crescendo and becomes a permanent psychic reality of pain:

As for me
All I have
For an axle

64 Ibid., p. 186.
65 Ibid., p. 188.
is your needle
Through my brains.  

The total purgation of self is achieved through a total annihilation in which violence becomes an apocalyptic ceremony. The 38th poem is a literal explication of this idea. In it the death of the ego is projected through a series of visual images of the dismemberment of human body part by part:

1 skin the skin
Take the eye from the eye
Extract the entrails from entrails
1 scrape the flesh from the flesh
Pluck the heart
From the heart
Drain away the blood from the blood
Boil the bones till nothing is left
But the bones
1 pour away the sludge of brains
Leaving simply the brains.  

It is only through a violent apocalyptic ceremony of total consummation one can achieve the fullness of being. The discarded element of instinct and the exalted principle of intellect are in fact inseparable. One divorced from the other is incomplete like the Reverend Lumb and his double who appear in the prologue and the narrative respectively. The last three poems of the epilogue amplify this idea. The paradoxical nature of reality embodied in them thus speaks of a meaningful fusion and co-existence of diametrically opposed principles like instinct and intellect symbolizing the White Goddess and the pure God logos:

Every day the world gets more
And more beautiful
And uglier and uglier

66 Ibid., p. 189.
67 Ibid., p. 196.
Your comings get closer,
Your goings get worse. 69

The image of the oak tree and its significance in *Gaudete* is further emphasized by bringing in the same image at the end of the collection. The symbolic function of the oak tree as life-force at its zenith and its association with vegetation myths is in consonance with the central idea of *Gaudete*.

All vegetation myths demand dismemberment as a necessary pre-condition for the regeneration of Nature. Thus, Lumb, the changeling, undergoes a ritual destruction. The violence of his death is an apocalyptic ceremony resulting in the birth of the original Lumb in another part of the country propagating the cult of the White Goddess. The resurrected Lumb symbolises a harmonious fusion of mutually opposing principles in Nature. "The basic image of the work has been that of the split—the split psyche, the split between man and Nature, the profane and the sacred. This split is the wound to be healed." 69

In the epilogue, Lumb heals this wound in himself by undergoing the violence of self-purgation. Thus he is able to co-exist with Nature harmoniously. According to N. Viswanathan, this harmonious co-existence with the energies of Nature is made possible by "describing them not only in human terms but in Nature's terms also." 70 His act of

68 Ibid., p. 199.


whistling an otter out of a lough is like the miracle of God
whistling up this great world out of the waters of chaos. Thus, the dramatic narrative *Gaudete* becomes a supreme poetic
achievement as it resolves a vital theological dilemma. Thus, it fulfills the poetic function of catharsis in the divided
psyche of man, establishing its merit as an ongoing theologi-
cal quest. The synthesis of body and soul into a unified
organism that complements each other is in consonance with the
concept of an organic vision of the universe having an inner
spiritual unity. *Gaudete* by its faithfulness and adherence to
empirical proof of a high order is supported by its self-
sustained validations. It is like the functional Mother
Nature with her archetypal feminine energy. Since the synthesis
of mutually opposing elements entails energy, violence becomes
an apocalyptic ceremony throughout the narrative.