CHAPTER-III : HURRY ON DOWN

If Philip Larkin assumes an unhealed split between the educational system and society, the twin obsession with education and life is also evident in John Wain’s *Hurry On Down* (1953). Wain, in *Declaration*, described *Hurry on Down* simply as an examination of the conflict between education and life. The gulf between the portals of university and life is widened by the barriers and hypocrisies of class. Charles Lumley, the hero, is so much sick of the class-structure that he strives to become neutral and classless emotionally and economically, if not socially. His readiness to change jobs rather than his loyalties makes him a job-hopper who becomes, by turn, window-cleaner, truck driver, chauffeur, a bouncer in a combination night club and whore house, a hospital-worker and finally, a writer for a popular entertainer. However, switching jobs is not so much a matter of protest for Lumley as a form of aimless drifting. He is less of a rebel than a misfit. So he keeps drifting until survival becomes the biggest victory for him.

Charles Lumley is a fresh graduate with a mediocre degree in history. In the beginning of the novel the hero seems dissatisfied and dejected. He has “no jobs or future prospects” (*Hurry On Down*, 1). He has reached a dead end and there seems to be no way out of the impasse. Analysing the causes of his failure, he reflects:
Why was this? Why had he failed? he asked himself as he dragged the heavy suitcase down the main street towards the station. The answer, like everything else, was fragmentary: partly because the university had, by its three years random and shapeless cramming, unfitted his mind for serious thinking, partly because of the continued nagging of his circumstances; and partly for the blunt, simple reason that his problems did not really admit of any solution (4).

The findings of the hero point towards a rejection of the contemporary settings of the ‘welfare state’. The young man doesn’t seem to be happy with the establishment which has proved inefficient to provide a job, even to a graduate. A despairing Lumley leaves his rented rooms and decides to go to his native town to meet his dear ones. He needs Sheila, his love, for “a return, a recognition, a point of rest” (6). He buys a ticket from his last pound note, boards the train and occupies a seat in the corner of the compartment. Soon a middle aged couple greets him. They are Mrs. and Mr. Hutchins, parents of George Hutchins (one of his college mates). Within no time Lumley remembers an incident related to them and their son. He recalls, how George tried to conceal their identity from him, “evidently in the hope that Charles would not realize the relationship… George had been so abjectly and obviously ashamed of his parents’ working class appearance and manner that he had tried
to avoid introducing them” (5). The recallings make Lumley sad. He feels tight with them and attempts to change the compartment at the next station. However, on facing hostility from some blue chin men, occupying the next compartment, he comes back. There after, he spends the remaining forty minutes of his journey in the lavatory. After disembarking, he goes to meet Sheila at her sister’s residence. He again faces bad luck as Sheila is not at home. He decides to wait for her, as there is no other place to go to. This makes Edith, Sheila’s sister, and her husband irritated. They cannot bear with him any more. Soon a verbal bout begins among them and Lumley has to leave the place. All is over. He fails to seek the company of his beloved too. In a great bewilderment he moves towards a pub. There he gets an idea of becoming a window cleaner in order to earn his living.

The first few pages of the novel help us to understand the psyche of the hero to some extent. He makes a change whenever caught in a crisis. Detachment can be a way out of the impasse in which he gets caught. For momentary relief it can prove beneficial, but he proves a misfit in every situation. He has his own likes and dislikes too. He doesn’t like upper class people for their hostile attitude. That distances him from blue chin men and Robert Tharkles. He is also allergic to people like George Hutchins who are ashamed of their origin and try to hide their background. He has little patience with petty bourgeois values. His protest appears funny and childlike but it points towards his will power to oppose. He is a little bit stronger than John Kemp, the protagonist of *Jill*, who sacrifices his values in order to be a part of
the upper class society. Instead of adopting a wish-fulfillment fantasy like Kemp, Lumley chooses to be a practical man. He rejects the upper class world and becomes a window cleaner. By doing so he rejects his educational upbringing as well as his middle class expectations holding that “the individual and his own values are more important than any badges of class” (Lee 27). And thus starts the picaresque progress of our unheroic hero.

During the course of the novel Lumley proves to be a shrewd window cleaner. He works sincerely and skillfully. Being aware of the fact that he had shortage of money he buys an old ladder and an old cart but does not compromise with the quality of the pail. The pail is new and of the finest quality. To fetch work he even goes to his school but he has to return empty handed as the headmaster does not provide him a contract. How could the headmaster employ an old student of the school as a window cleaner? However Charles Lumley demolishes the claim satirically uttering, “May their seed time be yielding year by year a rich store!” (15) – the words spoken as a protocol, at the farewell of senior students. In the meantime Lumley meets Froulish, an eccentric mate of his college days, one day. As they talk it is discovered that Froulish had been living with Betty, another college mate of Lumley, in a rented shed at a nearby place. Together they move towards the rented place. Froulish needs him for financial help whereas Lumley takes the shed as,

an escape that seemed to be offering itself from the problem of environment, of the clash of outlook and
status. He who had rejected and been rejected by both the class of his origin and the life of the worker might find the classless setting of his dreams in sharing a roof with a neurotic sham artist and a trousered tart (21).

Class is an important issue in *Hurry On Down* too. Here the protagonist’s dream is not to rise to a higher class, but instead, he is in search of a classless world: “What Lumley is trying to do is to be outside the class structure altogether,” (Allsop 73), says Kenneth Allsop. Whether he would succeed is still to be seen.

On reaching the shed occupied by Froulish and Betty, he notices a verbal bout. The landlady is on a business tour to collect the rent unpaid for two weeks. Lumley hurriedly pays for three weeks, thereby buying shelter for himself. For sometime life runs smoothly with the earnings of Lumley and Betty. Betty’s allowance is £2 10s which she gathers from her elderly maiden aunt, once a week. Froulish is busy with his work in progress (i.e. writing a novel). Incidentally, one day, George Hutchins comes with his friend John Veeber, to invite Froulish to deliver a lecture at the proposed meeting of the literary society. Betty is not happy to see Veeber. She bids her early farewell with a warning not to visit the place again. The proposed meeting of the shabby artists is highly comical. In the meantime Lumley expands his business by joining hands with Ern Ollershaw, another worker. He is happy to find himself
earning his bread honestly through a useful craft and looking the world in the eyes.

As winter arrives the pace of life slows down. Days become Colder and wetter. One evening, on the advice of Froulish, Charles Lumley decides to move out of his narrow life for a change. A change in season brings a change in the attitude of the hero. He puts on the uniform of the class he had renounced. Ready to raid into “enemy territory” (38), he enters the town’s Grand Hotel at dinner time. He appears cautious as he makes necessary modifications in his personality and attitude. He is determined to live at the rate of thousand a year for the next few hours. Similar kind of modifications is made by John Kemp when he buys a bow tie and decides to move in higher circles. He sips at a glass of good sherry and breaks into a packet of expensive cigarettes. Suddenly he notices a girl with a man, entering the Oak Lounge. Her first sight proves dangerous for him. He gets enamoured with the girl. Her personality makes him “paralyzed into stillness with his eyes staring fixedly” (39). She is a small, dark beautiful girl, with an oval face. Her eyes are huge and dark. The clothes are simple but expensive. Under her spell Lumley stays there till she remains before him. He orders dishes randomly in a mechanical way but he couldn’t swallow anything. His throat muscles tighten, his mouth dries up, and his heart hammers. His condition is critical but it can’t stop him from noticing that her fingers have no ring. Nobody knows how he managed to pay the bill and return to the loft.
Attraction towards women is common in youth. However, a woman belonging to a higher class is a special attraction in the debut novels selected for this study. Almost all the heroes of these novels are obsessed with women of higher class. John Kemp was mad about Gillian whereas Jim Dixon (Lucky Jim) hopelessly desires Christine Callaghan. Joe Lampton sacrifices his self for Susan (Room at the Top) whereas Charles Lumley is attracted towards the girl described above. Hypergamy can be an easy route to success. Moreover, to win the girl of enemy territory can be a matter of pride. The girl has melted the previous resolutions of Lumley. He will have to move into the upper class arena in order to possess her. In the evening, he goes to the hotel to seek information about her. The barman supplies him the required information. She is a niece of Mr. Roderick, the managing director of a local factory. The girl has been brought up by him. The revelations do not suit the hero. It is not easy for a window-cleaner to win a rich girl. There lies a huge gap between their social positions. Lumley regrets his social status. He remains in pensive mood for long. “Snow fell, froze, thawed and fell again. The aching darkness within him matched that without” (41). It becomes difficult for Lumley to forget the girl. He takes drinks, goes to cinema and reads detective stories to relieve himself. Finally, he goes to countryside in the lap of nature. Somehow, he acquires a rust eaten bicycle to go out. Cycling proves beneficial in easing his pain but it can’t be done all the time. His mind remains occupied with her thoughts quite often. One afternoon, on his way to the countryside, he gets an idea to win over the girl: Apply to Mr. Roderick for a job—work fantastically
hard – become managing director with the social entry into his household – and ultimately carry off the niece in legitimate courtship. But soon the foolish notion vanishes and he squirms with disgust at the prospect. After a while he again thinks about “some blasted plutocrat! Some hog with enough money to get at the Roderick girl and have a chance to impress her” (42)! Suddenly his dreams get broken by the horn of a car. He turns angrily to scowl but controls himself as he watches Betty and Robert Tharkles occupying the car. He weaves the whole story within seconds. It is the day for Betty to draw allowance from her distant relative. The said relative is none other than Robert Tharkles with whom she has been engaged for “a source of material advantage” (43). Suddenly he becomes angry on the prospect that “his own attempt to break out of net had failed utterly” (43). And soon he follows the car to know more.

One cannot fail to notice here that the passion for the rich girl has brought drastic change in the attitude of Charles Lumley. He is thinking to be part of the materialistic world in order to have the girl. He very well knows that only money can fill the gap between them and to earn money he will have to put his values and previous resolutions on stake. He will have to enter the upper class arena, the arena which he had denounced earlier. To support his decision he evaluates the position of man in relation to money, in this way:

Money. The network everywhere: no, a web sticky and cunningly arranged. You were either a spider sitting comfortably in the middle or waiting with malicious
joy in hiding, or you were a fly, struggling amid the clinging threads (45).

As the story proceeds Lumley’s way to an alien world becomes clear. After observing the immoral engagements of Betty and Robert Tharkles in ‘Ye Olde Oake Tree’ (44) he does not want to continue a living based on the immoral earnings of a woman. He will have to leave the shed occupied by Froulish and Betty. Moreover, thoughts related to the rich world have started attracting him towards the fancy. He sometimes imagines the warmth and light of the hotel enjoyed by the rich people. He finds himself sitting in the Oak Lounge and drinking with Mr. Roderick. The situations in the story at the moment, also favour his decision. Ern Ollershaw, his business partner, has gone out of his life. He has been arrested by police on charges of helping thieves steal a powerful saloon car. He is free to move ahead. On the advice of an unknown person, Lumley agrees to be an export delivery driver. By doing so he might be able to “move in circles not far below those inhabited by the Rodericks” (51).

A change in profession changes Lumley’s circles of life. He starts leading life with a new outlook. He gets readily impressed by rich people. One day he meets Mr. Blearney, a millionaire, while going to his town. He gets impressed with his “rich, husky voice” (54). Together they move to Grand Hotel. There, Lumley finds the girl he was enamoured with. He gets an opportunity to talk to Veronica Roderick. He is overjoyed. After bidding them
farewell, he goes straight to meet Teddy Bunder. He offers him to join them in their racket of making “big money” (59). His offer is accepted and Charles Lumley becomes a drug-runner – a smuggler of heroin, marijuana or whatever the vile stuff is.

The following reflection gives a clue to Lumley’s choice of smuggling as a profession:

The vision of Veronica Roderick flashed with blinding intensity upon the screen of his mind, and at once his whole being down to the smallest reflex and gesture, was drawn into the violent whirlpool of his longing for her. He knows that he would commit any crime, that he would steal, kill, maim, or ruin the lives of people who had never done him harm, for the sake of giving himself a remote chance of possessing her. He knows that neither his mind nor his body could recognize any thing as evil, nor as good, except in direct relation to that desire. And he was helpless and aghast (61).

It will not be wrong to say that Charles Lumley is obsessed with Veronica Roderick. He has a violent passion for her. He is determined to go to any extent to possess her. He can commit any crime to earn big money in order to attain her. The obsession with woman has forced him to be obsessed with
money thereby directing him to cross every kind of moral checks to win her. He is “helpless and aghast” (61).

Alan Sinfield says, “Lumley’s journey is... an inward Dostoevskyian one, compelled by his passion for a wealthy young woman whom he meets by chance in a pub” (Sinfield 25). He does, indeed, commit crime to gain money and possess her. With the passage of time he goes down morally to grab material gains. He succeeds in earning big money and he is happy to see things going better than he had imagined. For the first time his wallet is “crammed full of notes” (62). It provides him an unfamiliar sensation. He finds himself “rising with the aid of his suddenly improved finances to a social position which would give him the cachet required to penetrate the Roderick circle” (67). Things shape out exactly as he had hoped. He attends big parties full of millionaires and meets Veronica every week. What else could he ask for? He has ultimately succeeded in attaining big money and a rich woman. However to get these possessions he had to be a smuggler of drugs, a slow poison which kills innocent persons. Now the question arises – can this type of wish-fulfillment be justified? Frederick Karl has something to say:

The search for values that these pseudo rebels undertake is invalidated by their selfishness and the author rarely indicates whether their egoism is condemnable because it is generated by a competitive society which squeezes out all naturalness, or
admirable because it enables the protagonists to survive. The reader recognizes that they do not really want values, they simply desire to find a place for themselves – to find room at the top, in the middle, at the bottom... Right and wrong are blurred not by the ambiguous quality of life itself but by the desires of the protagonist, who makes value judgments based not on mature evaluation but on personal need (Karl 226).

The observation of Frederick Karl seems pertinent in case of Charles Lumley, the protagonist of *Hurry On Down*, too. Lumley passionately needs Veronica. Hypergamy can lead to success and a class change. That interest makes him notice that, “there was no ring in any of her fingers” (39), earlier in the story. Therefore he can sacrifice all his values to possess her.

As we read the next part of the story we find that spring follows winter giving a promise of the summer beyond. One day Lumley meets Harry Dogson, one of his schoolmates, in a pub. Dogson is a reporter on a local evening paper. Lumley is shocked to hear that Dogson is there to expose a drug racket going on in that area. He tries to dissuade him from doing so but fails. After a few days when the smugglers are busy at the docks, Dogson appears. He is caught and killed by Bunder, one of the associates of Lumley. As the police is expected to be near, everyone gets alarmed and tries to escape as early as possible. The running car occupied by Bunder and Charles is followed by the
police. In an attempt to drive fast they meet with an accident and Lumley finds himself in a hospital. His condition is serious.

It takes long for Lumley to recover from his illness. His stay at the hospital is of much significance. It is here that he experiences the “oppressive power of class, money and bureaucracy,” (Sinfield 25) says Alan Sinfield. The money for his treatment is provided by Mr. Roderick and when Lumley comes to know everything he could not deny the help as it was done on the request of Veronica. Mr. Roderick has demanded their separation, in return. Lumley is not happy with the happenings but he behaves intelligently. The place is a refuge for him. He does not disclose anything related to his past life before the hospital staff. He skips a question about his past: “I’m too clever… I won’t remember. I’ve forgotten all about it” (89). Regarding his woman he knows: “Either the Loss of Veronica would kill him, or it would set him free; and give meaning to his decisions to sweep the violent and senseless elements from his life” (93).

At present it appears that the accident had set Lumley right. A recurrent pain has provided him a release and new strength to make a new beginning. A long stay at the hospital provides him an opportunity to mix up with the staff. With their help he succeeds in getting the job of a hospital orderly. Gradually he becomes friendly with Rosa, a menial worker. Soon the friendship changes into love. The lovers often go for roundabouts. Lumley also visits the house of Rosa and meets her family members. However the petty bourgeois attitude
shown by Rosa’s brother and father makes him uncomfortable. He doesn’t like “cheap smartness” (104) shown by Stan to “better himself” (104). As time passes Lumley gets acquainted with Mr. Braceweight, a millionaire patient. He offers him the job of a chauffeur. Lumley keeps the offer for some other day. Incidentally he happens to see a woman opening her hand bag, in a pub, one day. The “wrong fingers” (108) bring Veronica to his mind thereby making him tense. He undergoes a series of flashbacks related to Veronica and Rosa. It is difficult to make a choice between the two. He has to take a number of drinks to comfort himself. Ultimately he asks Mr. Braceweight to give him the job alluded to earlier. The millionaire asks him to drive him to Sussex, the next day. It becomes really hard for Lumley and Rosa to bid farewell to each other, while parting.

It is interesting to find out here that Charles Lumley has not succeeded in forgetting Veronica. The “wrong fingers” (108) and the “coiled golden serpent” (108) have reminded him of the girl he was obsessed with. It becomes difficult for him to make a choice between Rosa and Veronica. Rosa can provide him “a home, a place where he could be received and left to root himself in peace” (101), whereas Veronica, although not available presently, can prove a breather to a man who “was dying” (108). It is a situation similar to the one in Room at the Top where Joe Lampton has to make a choice between Alice and Susan. There he succeeds in choosing Susan but here Lumley chooses neutrality. He leaves the place and goes to Sussex.
As a chauffeur in Sussex, Lumley performs his duty with full sincerity. One day he goes to receive a guest of Mr. Braceweight at the station. Finding George Hutchins as guest, he puts his cap immediately in his pocket. Soon a verbal bout starts between them. The issue of bout is related to their jobs. Each explains his position in his own way. Hutchins explains that he has been there to give tuitions to Walter, son of Mr. Braceweight. To him it is one of the ways to earn money to support the family. Lumley takes it otherwise. It is to find “friends and patrons among the rich” (115), this way. George Hutchins then argues saying, “Social climbing isn’t unworthy” (116). Soon Lumley takes the position of a chauffeur by putting on his cap; standing grotesquely at the salute saying, “Yes, as one parasite to another, I’ll confide I’m the chauffeur” (116).

Here we again notice that Lumley has an uncomfortable conscience in moments of moral crisis. However, why he considers himself a parasite is not easy to interpret. That may be a result of his class consciousness or inferiority complex. Here it has become difficult for him to welcome Hutchins, his arch enemy, standing at a higher rank (tutor to Braceweight’s son Walter). However, as usual he tries to come out of the maze and takes the position of the chauffeur, imagining both of them as parasites. The equation has perhaps provided him enough inner strength required to face a person he disliked the most for his pettiness.

As the story proceeds it becomes difficult to understand the psyche of Charles Lumley. He still appears discontented and dejected. It is obvious that
he is allergic to Hutchins but why he holds himself responsible for the accident caused by the mistake of Warner, is unclear. He also offers half a month’s salary to cover up the damage. He resigns on the issue and comes again on road. It is not easy to sleep on a bench in the open, in a severely cold night, however he tries to manage by stuffing the bottom of his trousers and the inside of his jacket with sheets of newspaper. He also tries to earn money by selling cigarettes at Piccadilly circus but he has to leave the business and the place as there ensues a fight. On the way he meets Mr. Blearney, his old acquaintance. Mr. Blearney helps him get the job of a bouncer at Golden Peach Club. The club is a depressing spectacle for him as, majority of the people appear sad and frustrated to him. This time, instead of rushing things he decides to “develop a hard shell to cover what remained of his moral and aesthetic sensibilities altogether” (133). Incidentally he meets Froulish at the same club. As they talk, Lumley accompanies him to join the job of a radiogag-writer in which Froulish is already engaged.

“Charles Lumley does not fit into ordinary life,” (Karl 224), says Frederick Karl. Charles Lumley also admits it while talking to Mr. Blearney after joining the job of a radio-gag-writer. “I never rebelled against ordinary life: it just never admitted me that’s all. I never even got into it,” (142) says Lumley. The cause of his being a misfit is perhaps easy to interpret at this moment. He is obsessed with class in the sense that his “aim is to be neutral and classless – emotionally, socially and economically” (Karl 224). Due to his obsession there ensues a fight between him and society. Caught in the maze of
old grand class designs, he discovers detachment as a tool to deal with the society. That makes him change his jobs and place of residence frequently. In the course of the novel it is also seen that he is critical towards phony persons having double standards. He does not like, George Hutchins for indulging in petty bourgeoisie, Robert Tharkles for being critical of him; and also for having an affair with Betty, Hutchins for being a phony teacher; and Roderick for having an illicit relation with his stated to be niece. He thinks he has dealt with everyone, with his job of radio-gag-writing. In the last chapter of the novel Lumley claims that the “running fight between himself and society… ended in a draw” (143). To him the job is –

an armistice obviously leading to a permanent armed truce. There could be no forgiveness but neither party would, in the forceable future, launch an offensive. Tharkles, Hutchins, Lockwood, Roderick, none of these could either despise or respect him now. All they could do would be to look at him in bewilderment, shake their heads and envy him his salary (143).

The claims made by Lumley in the paragraph given above reveal that Lumley is trying to detach from the phoney persons throughout the novel. It is believable, save one issue, i.e. the issue related to Veronica Roderick. Charles Lumley rebels against society when he gets obsessed with Veronica. “He does,
indeed commit crime to gain money” (Sinfield 25), says Alan Sinfield. He becomes obsessed with money to attain “big money” (60) in order to possess her. That is the reason behind his becoming a smuggler. He also leaves Rosa, his love, for Veronica. It is Lumley’s obsession with Veronica that forces him “to accept her with death and catastrophe in the same packet” (145), at the end of the story.

Charles Lumley is not emotional like John Kemp, the protagonist of *Jill* (Philip Larkin). When he finds things difficult, he adopts a withdrawal and moves away. That is why he changes jobs frequently and keeps on moving throughout the novel. However, like Jim Dixon he immerses himself in violent fantasies occasionally. For example “cut off that silly moustache of yours … waste pipe” (8) is a violent fantasy.

*Hurry On Down* is not an even novel. It has many interesting features. One of the features deals with the problems of the youngsters in a post war world. These youngsters are trying to find a source of earning to make their life more tolerable. Charles Lumley, the protagonist is portrayed as a dissatisfied and dejected young man with “no jobs and no prospects” (1), here. “On the whole money” is “his biggest worry” (24) and he is “always hungry” (23). He is a university graduate in history but fails to get a job. According to him, the fault lies in the system. The university education has made him “unfitted for life” with its “random and shapeless cramming” (11) according to him. So he turns his back and decides to be a window cleaner a job which does not require
any educational qualification. He is happy to think that he earned his bread at an honest, useful craft” (26). He starts living with Edwin Froulish, one of his college mates who meets him by chance one day (19). Edwin Froulish and Betty, another collegiates live in a rented shed and he decides to live with them as he “might find the classless setting of his dreams in sharing a roof with a neurotic sham artist and a trousered tart” (21). With time moving he also gets a partner in the form of Ern Ollershaw.

The problem with Lumley is not of earning only. He also dreams of a society with no class distinctions. He imagines that “the individual and his own values are more important than any badges of class” (Lee 27). On becoming a window cleaner he may “have shed all other middle class attributes, but the ideal of the fine quality of a good job well done (always a bourgeois rather than working-class ideal)” (15) accompanies him into the new world.

With the passage of time Lumley becomes a professional driver, a drug-trafficker, a hospital orderly, a chauffeur, a bouncer and a radio gag writer. He becomes a reckless job-hopper. Actually he has an uncomfortable “conscience” (94) in moments of moral crisis. He gives up the job of window cleaning as he wants to move away from Betty, who is involved in illicit affairs. He becomes a smuggler because he wants to earn big money to win over Veronica Roderick, the niece of a rich businessman. When he finds a classless setting in the hospital in which he is admitted after his accident, he decides to be a hospital orderly. He really likes the atmosphere there and starts liking Rosa, a
menial worker. He is about to marry her; but when he sees the handbag of the girl similar to that of Veronica Roderick he decides to leave the place immediately to be a chauffeur to Mr. Braceweight. Finally he becomes a radio gag-writer after leaving the jobs of a chauffeur and bouncer as he couldn’t cope up with the pressures in moments of moral crisis. And then he also accepts Veronica as “death and catastrophic” (145) in the same packet.

The living of Froulish and Betty is also not easy. One “can’t have everything, of course”, (20) admits Froulish. He is a neurotic sham artist who tries his hand at writing a novel. He has no source of income and lives on the money earned by Betty. They live in “a sort of shed that used to be a part of a builder’s yard. The bottom part consists of just one big room, without any partition – that’s where the timber used to be kept. The upper floor – you go up to it by a ladder – was divided into small rooms as offices” (21). Betty has somehow managed to rent the upper part for a guinea a week. The predicament is that they are unable to pay even the rent sometimes as Betty’s allowance is just £2 10s a week and that too she earns by having sexual engagements with Robert Tharkles. It is like “hell” (21) admits Froulish at a point in the novel. Once Charles Lumley has to pay three weeks’ rent when he finds the landlady quarrelling with them (23). Later in the novel, we find Froulish as a member of the team of gag-writers. What happens to Betty is not known.

Other “down and outs” (25) include George Hutchins and June Veeber. They are also found wandering for a source of earning in the novel. Once we
meet them when they visit Betty’s shed (28) and the other time when they appear in Mr Braceweight’s house during night (117). When they come to Betty’s rented shed they have to face great humiliation as Betty treats June Veeber unfairly and asks them not to visit the place again. At that time they are found to be arranging a meeting on behalf of “Stotwell Literary Society” (29). They might be earning something from there. Later we find that George Hutchins has come to Mr. Braceweight’s house as a tutor to his son Walter. At that time it is also disclosed that he is planning to go to America in the near future. So the permanent source of earning remains still questionable. On the other hand June Veeber is traced by Lumley, moving in darkness with Hutchins, through the bushes in darkness (117). “June Veeber game” still goes on, “after a year” (117) comments Lumley at that point.

In the novel *Hurry On Down* characterization has been done very carefully. It suits the requirement of the theme. The characters are mainly two types. One consists of the post war disillusioned youngsters including Charles Lumley, Edwin Froulish, Betty, George Hutchin, June Veeber and Veronica Roderick, while the other includes Robert Thakles, Bernard Roderick, Arthur Blearney and Mr. Bracewright. The former are portrayed as vagrants in search of home and work while the later are comfortably placed as far as money and a living is concerned. Everything seems to be related to money, observes Lumley at a point in the novel: “Money. The network everywhere: no, a web, sticky and cunningly arranged. You were either a spider, sitting comfortably in the
middle or waiting with malicious joy in hiding, or you were a fly, struggling amid the clinging threads” (45).

People like Robert Tharkles and Bernard Roderick are comfortably enjoying the luxuries of life. The have cars, rich dresses and young girls to sleep with. Robert Tharkles is engaged with Betty while Bernard Roderick keeps the beautiful Veronica as mistress. On the other hand youngsters like Lumley, Froulish, Betty, June Veeber and Hutchins have to face harsh realities of life to earn their livelihood. Each one is like a “parasite” (116) dependent on someone else for his living. Pressures of life have made them different kind of persons. Their attitude doesn’t appear normal. Charles Lumley is a disgruntled young man who hates the system to a greater extent. He remains in search of a system with no flaws and that is why he changes jobs frequently. He wants a society with no class distinctions. He wants honest and good persons everywhere. He is allergic to phoney persons like George Hutchins who are ashamed of their origins and Stan who becomes petty to better himself. Charles, on the other hand, is straightforward and never hesitates in calling a spade a spade. He is not ashamed of anything. For example he frankly admits his being a window cleaner to Veronica Roderick and refuses to sleep with June Veeber. However, it is ironical that he never discloses the matter of his being a smuggler once. Charles Lumley is sincere to his profession. He dabbles with various professions but always remains sincere to the profession. He has no hesitation in going to his school for having a contract for window cleaning. He remains loyal to his profession of smuggling and doesn’t disclose anything
to Dogson, his ex-schoolmate. He does menial work at the hospital with full sincerity.

Edwin Froulish is portrayed as a “neurotic sham artist” (21). In his college days he

had exploited his natural gift for self advertisement with tremendous perseverance and zeal. From early adolescence he had seen himself as the boy who, though as yet undistinguished in the eyes of the world, would reveal himself in due season as a great novelist. At the university everything had been easy. The machinery of self-display was so much more accessible; within three weeks of his arrival he had managed to get himself talked about, and by his second term he was a recognized eccentric. And all done so easily! merely by a few random pantomime tricks, such as carrying a grey parrot in a cage wherever he went, wearing a bowler hat indoors, standing motionless for hours on end in the exact centre of the quadrangle, and so forth (19).

Now he remains busy in writing a novel which has not been out yet. He lives with Betty in a rented shed. At the end of the story he appears in Golden
Peach Club and discloses that he works as a radio gag-writer in the company of Terence Frush.

George Hutchins is another university, graduate who has been part of the story. He was “an unpleasantly dogged and humourless young man” (6) in his college days. He is a phoney person who tried to hide his identity from Charles once in the novel (3). He was “so abjectly and obviously ashamed of his parents’ working class appearance and manner that he had tried to avoid introducing them, evidently in the hope that Charles would not realize the relationship” (5). Nowadays he has engaged himself with June Veeber, another college mate, and earns his livelihood as a tutor of Walter, Mr. Bracewright’s son. Charles Lumley is allergic to him for his being a parasite indulged in petty bourgeoisie.

Betty and June Veeber are the other important characters in the novel. They are portrayed as “trouserered” tarts (21) who adopt immoral ways to have “a source of material advantage” (43). Betty is illicitly engaged with Robert Tharkles for £2 10s where as June Veeber sticks to George Hutchins wherever he goes.

Charles Lumley has affinity with two woman characters named Veronica Roderick and Rosa; he loves the first and likes the second. Veronica is small and dark, a miraculously neat girl with huge dark eyes and an oval face while Rosa is a sturdily built girl of twenty, not pretty but alive. Lumley is ready to marry either at various points in the novel. At the end of the story
when he sees Veronica who eventually comes to meet him, he accepts her as “death and catastrophe” (145) in the same packet.

We find rich portrayal of the rich men in this novel. Bertrand Roderick, stated to be uncle of Veronica Roderick is a fleshy man of forty five. His well cut dark suit, neat bow tie and horn – rimmed glasses mark him as a prosperous businessman. He is a phoney person who takes the credit of bringing up an orphan girl but keeps her as his mistress. He always keeps an eye on her. He spends money on Lumley’s treatment when he is admitted to hospital just in exchange of Veronica’s refusal to meet him again. Mr. Bracewright is a “proper millionaire” with lot of “power and wealth” (96). He has “no personality at all” (96). His son Walter is an eccentric with “no trace of intelligence or sensibility” (112). He wants to be a mechanic. His “juggernaut” (121) an electrical timing device, his creation, destroys their Daimler at a point in the novel when he rides on that at full speed (124). Lumley has to leave immediately as he thinks himself responsible for the damage in the absence of his father.

Another important character in the novel is Mr. Arthur Blearney. He is huge and squarely built with a broad face. He has loud cheerful clothes, worn loudly and cheerfully. He has a rich husky voice. He is the man behind important developments in Lumley’s life. His invitation to his party makes Lumley interact with Veronica Roderick. Later, he arranges a job for him in Golden Peach Club. He is the man who celebrates Lumley’s permanent job at
the end of the novel. He is the man who had known Lumley well (143). He discloses at a point that Lumley was in search of ‘neutrality’ and at last succeeds in finding that (142).

Most of Hurry On Down is set in a town named Stotwell. There are ten chapters unfolding the experiences of Charles Lumley episodically. These include his taking various jobs and also his visiting his school and college. Time moves with passing of months. The story starts in August (23) and ends in October with autumn passing into winter (141), covering a time span of almost one year.

The love theme is present in both Jill and Hurry On Down. Ironically, love becomes the source of the hero’s corruption in both the novels. If John Kemp keeps alive the fantasy of Jill for the sake of love, Charles Lumley needs big money to win a girl with money. That is how he becomes a drug-runner. As a hopeless romantic indulging in immoral activity for success in love, Charles Lumley brings to mind the failed romantic in an illustrious predecessor, Jay Gatsby in F. Scott Fitzgerald’s masterpiece The Great Gatsby (1925). Perhaps John Wain borrowed the idea of Lumley’s drug-running also from Gatsby’s connection with the underworld. However, the inter-relation of success and morality is examined far more artistically and successfully in The Great Gatsby. The hero of Hurry On Down, in comparison, looks shallow and the novel seldom rises above a superficial analysis of the issues of class, love, success, money and morality.