

Themes in ted hughes poetry:-

[Life](#), [Death](#)



THEMES IN TED HUGHES POETRY:- Unlike some modern poets so believe that a poem should not mean but be, Ted Hughes is profoundly concerned with the subject matter of his poetry. The major theme of his poetry as well as short stories and plays is of course man, that is, the question of human existence, man's relation with the universe, with the natural world and with his own inner self. He is awfully serious about this last aspect of the problem of being, namely, the problem of human consciousness. As Terry Gifford and Neil Roberts have observed, Ted Hughes's "endeavour is to gain access to, and give expression to, a level of being at which the continuity between the processes of nature experienced within and observed without is unimpeded by consciousness. Here lies the source of all energy, creativity and delight. Individual consciousness, insisting all the time on its separateness, is the cause of painful and destructive alienation from this inner life—the obscure unhappiness of many of the human protagonists of Hughes's poems and stories. But consciousness is inescapable, and poems are ultimately acts of consciousness. The subterranean world that Hughes's poems explore can never be completely projected into language, nor can anyone permanently live in it. " Poetry for Hughes has been a life-long vocation and commitment, as he himself has written, " You choose a subject because it serves, because you need it. We go on writing poems because one poem never gets the whole account right. There is always something missed. At the end of the ritual up comes a goblin. " That goblin is a new perspective to look at the same subject afresh. The subjects he prefers to write on are, however, several: man in relation to the animal world, man and nature, war and death. Let us now explore Hughes's treatment of these subjects in some detail.

Animals in Ted Hughes's Poetry Right from his childhood, Ted Hughes has been interested in animals. When his parents lived in the Calder valley, Ted Hughes had a chance to see the world of the animals from close quarters. As he later recalled, he had a brother whose "one interest in life was creeping about on the hillside with a rifle. He took me along as a retriever and I had to scramble into all kinds of places collecting animals: An animal I never succeeded in keeping alive is the fox. I was always frustrated, twice by a farmer who killed cubs I had caught before I could not get to them, and once by a poultry keeper who freed my cub while his dog waited. Here, Hughes learnt the first lesson that animals were by and large victims. The wild world of the animals was at the mercy of the ordered human world. Yet, as Hughes realized and emphasized in his poetry, the human world was fascinated by the world of the animals because it had pushed into the unconscious what the animal world still possessed: vast, untapped energies. It was this close intimacy with the interest in animals that informed Hughes's poetry collected in *The Hawk in the Rain* and *Lupercal*. The title poem of the first collection itself announces the major themes: man in relation to the animals, the earth, the weather, time, and mortality. In the first poem, as Keith Sagar comments on it, "The 'eye of the hawk hangs as still as a polestar, at the eye of the storm the still centre round which all that violence threatens. The poet's eyes are his most vulnerable part, tumbled by wind and rain, but the hawk's seems as impervious as immortal diamond." Symbolically, "the eye is the 'I', the window of the soul, the outward expression of the hawk's innermost being, its unquestionable identity, its concentrated, inflexible being." Other animal poems establish a similar connection between man and animals. Like

" The Hawk in the Rain, " " The Horses" too is concerned with the poet-perceiver's view of the patience and endurance of the horses during a cold winter night. In " The Thought-Fox" the fox that the poet-perceiver visualized is a symbol of the poetic inspiration which intrudes into the dark, lonely room and then into the mind of the poet and causes the poem to be written. Symbolically, the movement of the fox pervades and describes the process of the composition of a poem, not only a particular poem but all poems in general: Across clearings, an eye, A widening deepening greenness, Brilliantly, concentratedly, Coming about its own business, Till, with a sudden sharp hot stink of fox It enters the dark hole of the head, The window is starless still; the clock ticks, The page is printed. " The Jaguar" is of course the nearest thing to what can be called an orthodox animal-poem, in that a real jaguar with all its characteristics is described and a particular setting is provided for it: But who runs like the rest past these arrives At a cage where the crowd stands, stares, mesmerized, As a child at a dream, at a jaguar hurrying engaged Through prison darkness after the drill of his eyes. On a short fierce fuse. Not is boredom- The eye satisfied to be blind in fire, By the bag of blood in the brain deaf the ear- He spins from the bars, but there's no cage to him... But even this poem, as Terry Gifford and Neil Roberts have noted, " is not a poem just of observation but of longing and affirmation, particularly in its final lines which broaden out to suggest a human possibility: an enticing possibility but one that entails preserving intact the predatory ferocity, rage, blindness and deafness of our own nature. " Ted Hughes himself emphasized the symbolic nature of " The Jaguar" thus: A jaguar after all can be received in several different

aspects..... he is a beautiful, powerful nature spirit, he is a homicidal maniac, he is a supercharged piece of cosmic machinery, he is a symbol of man's baser nature shoved down into the id and growing cannibal murderous with deprivation, he is an ancient symbol of Dionysus since he is a leopard raised to the ninth power, he is a precise historical symbol to the bloody-minded Aztecs and so on. Or he is simply a demon.... a lump of ectoplasm. A lump of astral energy. This is also true of another animal, the hawk in " Hawk Roosting" who was taken as a symbol of fascism. But in this London Magazine interview Ted Hughes explained what he thought of the hawk: Actually what I had in mind was that in this hawk Nature is thinking. Simply Nature. It's not so simple maybe because Nature is no longer so simple. I intended some Creator like the Jehovah in Job but more feminine. When Christianity kicked the devil out of Job what they actually kicked out was Nature...and Nature became the devil. He doesn't sound like Isis, mother of the gods, which he is. He sounds like Hitler's familiar spirit. There is a line in the poem almost verbatim from Job. This is quite right since as the hawk speaks of his centrality what he means is the centrality of Nature; otherwise, a hawk is as mortal as any other creature and his description of himself as the centre of the creation would be an example of misguided, inflated ego: It took the whole of Creation To produce my foot, my each feather: Now I hold Creation in my foot Or fly up, and revolve it all slowly- The sun is behind me. Nothing has changed since I began. My eye has permitted no change. I am going to keep things like this. It is this ferocity of Nature, the Darwinian Nature " red in tooth and claw" that elicits Hughes's praise. In " The Thrushes, " he speaks of the mechanical energy of the simple birds in the

following manner: Terrifying are the attent sleek thrushes on the lawn, More coiled steel than living—a poised Dark deadly eye, those delicate legs Triggered to stirrings beyond sense—with a strt, a bounce, a stab Overtake the instant and drag out some writhing thing. No indolent procrastinations and no yawning stares, No sighs or head-scratchings. Nothing but bounce and stab And a ravening second. As Gifford and Roberts comment, “ The stanza is hinged on the double perception of the predatoriness of the thrushes and their delicacy, brilliantly fused in the word “ triggered’. To be so ‘ triggered’ to the beyond-sense stirrings is to be in a state of bliss: In an interview in the Guardian (23 March 1965), Hughes described the animals in his poems as ‘ living the redeemed life of joy’. On the practical level this joy is perfect adaptation to the needs of life, and the total absorption of being in action. ” “ The Thrushes” is also an example of Hughes’s assertion that it is a human tendency to associate ideas with animals of which they may not at all be aware. But apart from this several of Hughes’s poems about animals also contain an arra of mystery when this mystery is associated with the objects of description. This is how “ Bull Moss” moves from external reality about the bull to the mystery surrounding his meekness and submissiveness: Each dusk the farmer led him Down to the pond to drink and smell the air, And he took no pace but the farmer Led him to take it, as if he knew nothing Of the ages and continents of his fathers, Shut, while he wombed, to a dark shed And steps between his door and the duckpond. The mystery hedging the bull remains unsolved. In case of “ An Otter, ” the very process of arriving at the definition of this amphibian is a problem: Underwater eyes, an eel’s Oil of water body, neither fish nor beast is the

otter: Four-legged yet water-gifted, to outfish fish; With webbed feet and long ruddering tail And a round head like an old tomcat. Brings the legend of himself From before wars or burials, in spite of bounds and vermin-poles; Does not take root like the badger. Wanders, cries; Gallops along land he no longer belongs to; Re-enters the water by melting. Once again Hughes follows the method which, according to Roberts and Gifford, is exemplified in " Bull Moses" by which Hughes " characteristically moves from physical detail to general idea, from a specific moment to universal processes. In later poems, found in Wodow, Ted Hughes continues to show his interest in the animals in the same way and takes them as representatives of the Nature that human beings have suppressed and which Christianity has described as diabolical. In the Crowgroup of poems, the nightmare itself is presented through the eyes of the crow, himself a creation of nightmare, as Hughes suggests in an interview. It needs to be noted, by way of conclusion, that Hughes's interest in animals is quite central to his poetic vision. For these animals, the crow, the jaguar, the tomcat, skylark, the hawk, the thrushes, the pike and, the horses, all are in one way or another representatives of Nature. Nature that once belonged to man but now lies deep-buried in the human consciousness. This is not to detract from Hughes's skilful capturing of animals in verse. But, as emphasized earlier, animals in Hughes's poetry do operate on several levels: literal, mythical and symbolic. 2. Nature Just as Hughes explores the relations between the animal world and the human world, he also thinks of Nature as part of this universe to which man is closely related. In this respect, Hughes continues the tradition of Nature poetry which starts with the pastoral and reaches the twentieth

century via Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Blake, and Tennyson. In his plays Shakespeare tries to establish a harmony between the human world and the world of Nature. A disorder in the one is often reflected in another. But it would be difficult to say that Shakespeare agrees with the Duke Senior of *As You Like It* who finds sermons in stones, tongues, in trees and good in everything. For, as Hughes comments on *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*, Shakespeare does not hesitate to present a certain ambivalence about Nature. After all, it is Nature which produces a Cordelia and Goneril and makes them sisters. Wordsworth, who is known as the greatest poet of Nature in English, is rather limited in his view, a view which Duke Senior of *As You Like It* anticipated. Wordsworth's attitude to Nature in his own words makes it rather narrow. In a letter cited by A. P. Rossiter, Wordsworth refers to "the spirituality with which I have endeavoured to invest the material universe, and the moral relations under which I have wished to exhibit its most ordinary appearances." And to prove his point, Wordsworth often chose to select a "favoured corner" in his own countryside landscape, which could convince him that "Nature never did betray the heart that loved her." In contrast to Wordsworth, poets like Tennyson were aware of the presence of Nature which was not a moral teacher, nurse and guardian, but instead, a terrible force, "red in tooth and claw." This version is close to the Schopenhauer's concept which treats Nature as a nightmarish force. Much earlier than Tennyson and Schopenhauer, Hume had spoken of blind Nature in the following words: Look around this Universe. What an immense profusion of Beings, animated and organized, sensible and active! You admire this prodigious variety and fecundity. But inspect a little more

narrowly these living Existences, the only beings worth regarding. How hostile and destructive to each other! How insufficient all of them are for their own Happiness! How contemptible or odious to the Spectator! The whole presents nothing but the idea of a blind Nature impregnated by a great vivifying Principle, and pouring forth from her lap without Discernment or parental Care, her maim'd and abortive Children. But Ted Hughes unlike Hume, Schopenhauer, Wordsworth and Tennyson, but like Shakespeare on the one hand and Robert Grave on the other, consider Nature an ambivalent force. This is why Ted Hughes looks at Nature with various, differing attitudes. In a poem like " The Horses, " Ted Hughes describes a natural landscape in winter as vividly and pictorially as Wordsworth: But the valleys were draining the darkness Till the moorline-blackening dregs of the brightening gry Halved the sky ahead. I listened in emptiness on the moor-ridge. The curlew's tear turned its edge on the silence. Slowly detail leafed from the darkness. Then the sun Orange, red, red erupted. In " October Dawn" he describes the onset of winter by creating a veritable myth: October is marigold, and yet A glass half full of win left out To the dark heaven all night, by dawn Has dreamed a premonition, Of ice across its eye as if The ice-age had begun its heave. The myth of a wedding party in the lawn that Hughes creates in this poem is necessary to emphasize the continuum that he finds in the world of Nature. But, unlike Wordsworth, Hughes is aware of the destructive forces of Nature as well. In " Wind, " for example, the security that a man seeks in the hills in order to avoid the storm is precarious indeed: This house has been far out at sea all night, The woods crashing through darkness, the booming hills, Winds stampeding the

fields under the window Floundering black astride and blinding wet Till day
rose: then under an orange sky The hills had new places, and wind wielded
Blade-light, luminous black and emerald Flexing like the lens of a mad eye.
The description here is as vivid as it is terrific. But external Nature in this
poem, as Keith Sagar has noted, is symbolic of the violence that lies inside
man, deep in his subconsciousness: " The wind is representative of all those
natural forces we try to shut out of our lives, which, if let in on our sense
would leave to blind, floundering or mad. " Hughes often sees this violence
and restless energy in Nature in which, according to Darwin, the rule of the
survival of the fittest prevails. In " Hawk Roosting" as discussed in the
preceding section of this chapter, the hawk is symbolic of the thinking of
Nature itself, which, treats everything as a means to its end. The predatory
nature of the thrushes, the otter, and the jaguar are sings of the law of
jungle. In yet another poem, " The Relic, " the vast sea demonstrates the
Darwinian view of Nature by devouring everything in it: I found this jawbone
at the sea's edge: The crabs, dogfish, broken by the breakers or tossed To
flap for half an hour and turn to a crust Continue the beginning. The deeps
are cold: In that darkness camaraderie does not hold: Nothing touches but,
clutching, devours. And the jaws Before they are satisfied or their stretched
purpose Slacken, go down jaws; go gnawn bare. Jaws Eat and are finished
and the jawbone comes to the beach; Vertebrae, claws, carapaces, skulls. As
Terry Gifford and Neil Roberts comment, " The matter-of-fact tone of the
poem is consistent with the vision that is expressed in these statements:
that all life in the sea eats and is eaten, and that this must be accepted
without sentimentality or imposing values such as ' camaraderie.' All efforts

to understand Nature in terms of human morality are as doomed as Job's effort to understand his God. His successors decided to remake God in their own image, separating out and exalting the Logos, leaving the dark side of God, unacknowledged, marauding destructively as Satan, serpent, dragon, God, unredeemable Nature and the ghosts of all pagan gods and goddesses. And it is this process which Hughes sees as having more to do with the sad state of the world than the adoration of Job's savage God which Richard strangely imagines to have characterized the last two thousand years. " But Hughes feels that the dark, inscrutable forces of Nature can be negotiated with provided we learn how to do that. For one thing, he, like Robert Graves, takes external Nature as representative of all the violence, horror, and nightmare that lies deeply buried within the human consciousness. The jaguar fascinates the viewers largely because they find in him what they feel they once possessed but have been deprived of by Puritans who dismissed all Nature as evil. For this reason, Hughes admires all those who show courage and adjustment enough to live with Nature. Dick Straightup is, for example, one such strong person, as strong as the earth, who finds himself invulnerable in open Nature: But this one, With no more application than sitting And drinking, and singing, fell in the sleet, late, Damned the pouring gutter, and slept there and throughout A night searched by shouts and lamps, froze, Grew to the road with welts of ice. He was shipped out at dawn Warm as a pie and snoring. This is also true of the tramps in " November" and " Crag Jack's Apostasy. " Similarly, the " Acrobats" defy gravity by adapting themselves to it: Out onto nothing, snap, jerk Fulcrumed without fall On axes immaterial as Only geometry should use. Crag Jack comes clear

of the world because of his physical toughness. Hughes' point is that once we learn to negotiate with the forces of Nature we can find peace within ourselves, for these forces are symbolic of what lies deep-seated in our own consciousness. All in all, the subject of Nature fascinates Hughes much that whether he depicts Nature as Wordsworth did, or uses it as symbolic of the internal human condition, he looks at Nature from varying perspectives. Nature informs his poetry from *The Hawk in the Rain* to *What is Truth*. And with the experience and knowledge of Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Tennyson, Hume and Schopenhauer behind him, Hughes. As Graham Bradshaw says, "The poems repeatedly explore those ways in which even as we apprehend this nature as something outside humanity...we are brought to recognize something that is also inside us in inner hinterland that ordinary consciousness excludes. So, although it will be no recommendation to those who warble about Elizabethan world pictures and think that *Macbeth* shows a reassuringly inevitable triumph of good over evil, Hughes is exceptionally alive to the terrifying Shakespearean evocations of an unaccommodated universe. Moreover, his preoccupation with mythology makes Hughes peculiarly sensitive to the long tails Shakespearean comets trail: whatever we think of Hughes's use of the world 'puritan'.... he sees how the 'quarrel about the nature of Nature' opened archaic mythological dimension beyond the immediate theological one. " 3. War When the Second World War started Ted Hughes was only nine; and when the War ended he was scarcely fifteen. Ted Hughes therefore did not have much experience of the World War II. But his father had fought in World War I and was one of the seventeen lucky men of his regiment to have survived death in the Gallipoli battle. When Hughes

was still young, his father told him of how a shrapnel which would have killed him was diverted by his paybook in the breast-pocket. Afterwards he took several months to recover the physical injuries and the mental horror that he had undergone during the war. All this left an indelible impression on the mind of the young, sensitive poet. When World War II had caused a great havoc, especially in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and when Hughes learnt of the large scale massacre of the Jews by the Nazis, his poetic mind felt a great revolt against all this man-made calamity. But his response to the nightmare created by World War II was quite different from that of the movement poets, such as Auden and Lowell, who felt quite benumbed by the war, took refuge in avoiding any talk of the war, and insisted on the faithful depiction of an urban reality. Ted Hughes felt that this was not the right attitude because one could not avoid the problem by simply shutting one's eyes to it. Hughes, therefore, depicts faithful pictures of the nightmare that the War had created and the vision of a nightmarish world it had left behind. This is how he recalled the experience of his childhood when he described it in "Out".

My father sat in his chair recovering
From the four-year mastication by
gunfire and mud, Body buffeted worldless,
estranged by long soaking
In the colours of mutilation. His outer perforations
Were valiantly healed, but he
and the hearth-fire, its blood-flicker
On biscuit-bowl and piano and table leg,
Moved into strong and stronger possession
Of minute after minute, as the
clock's tiny cog
Labouring and on the thread of his listening
Dragged him
bodily from under
The mortised four-year strata of dead Englishmen
He belonged with. Similarly in "Six Young Men" Hughes brings out the contrast between what these six young men in a holiday mood were before the war,

and what became of them during it: This one was shot in an attack and lay
Calling in the wire, then this one, his best friend, Went out to bring him in
and was shot too; And this one, the very moment he was warned From
potting at tin-cans in no-man's land. Fell back dead with his refle-shights
shot away. The rest nobody knows what they came to, But come to the worst
they must have done, and held Closer than their hope; all were killed. There
is no air of sentimentality here, but the matter-of-fact tone points out the
horrible end of their norms and values, and of the youth, festivity and gaiety
that belonged to them a little while ago. " bayonet Charge" is close to
Wilfred Owen's war poems but its second stanza gives glimpses of the
mature Ted Hughes: In bewilderment then he almost stopped- In what cold
clockwork of the stars and the nations Was he the hand pointing that
second? He was running Like a man who has jumped up in the dark and runs
Listening between his footfalls for the reason Of his still running, and his foot
hung like Statuary in mid-stride. This is clearly a vivid picture of the
senselessness of war and the havoc it brings to young man. In " Grief for
Dead Soldiers" Hughes first paints and ironically grandiloquent picture of the
unveiling of a cenotaph. But the real strength and point of the poem lies in
its second section wherein the focus is on the widow of a soldier. The cold
master-of-fact manner in which Hughes brings out her grief avoids
sentimentality and gains in bitter poignancy: The doors and windows open
like great gates to hell. Still she will carry cups from table to sink. She cannot
build her sorrow into a monument And walk away from it. Closer than
thinking The dead man hangs around her neck, but never Close enough to be
touched, or thanked even, For being all that remains in a world smashed.

The general horror created by the World War receives its telling description in "Crow's Account of the Battle" wherein Hughes writes, And when the smoke cleared it became clear This had happened too often before And was going to happen too often in future And happened too easily Bones were too like lath and twigs Blood was too like water Cries were too like silence The most terrible grimaces too like footprints in mud And shooting somebody through the midriff Was too like striking a match Too like spotting a snooker ball Too like tearing up a bill Blasting the whole world to bits Was too like slamming a door Too like dropping in a chair Exhausted with rage Too like being down to bits yourself Which happened too easily With too like no consequence. Hughes shows a rare boldness in facing the situation and in expressing the horror that war had created. While the Movement poets were shutting their imagination from this ugly reality, Hughes decided to face it. And since East European poets, many of whom had fought in the war and lost their lives in the process, Hughes felt attracted towards them. Hughes wrote: The Western poet perhaps envies his brother in East, for while he sings of comparative comfort, comparative freedom, comparative despair, the reality of the threat and the disaster is not his. There is a tendency for the Western poet to become isolated and turn inwards, whereas the poet of the East is in tune with the rhythms of his people in a much more direct and dynamic way. 4. Death Another recurrent theme in the poetry of Ted Hughes is death. Hughes examines its various facets, ranging from death in war to the death of an animal and brings out the sorrow as well as the fulfilment of a process that death generally means for him. In his early poetry he writes of the death of the "Six Young Men" and contrasts their holiday mood with

their premature death; in " Grief for Dead Soldiers" he poignantly brings out the ironical contrast between the remembering of war heroes and the grief and despair which they leave behind for the widows and orphans. In " The Pig" he speaks of the death of an animal and discusses it without any sentimentality and pathos. In " Bishop Nicholas Ferrar" he celebrates the death of a martyr for a cause. The shadow of death lengthens itself on many poems in Wodow and Crow. Again, an elegiac tone enters the Moortown poems. In the five sections of " Stations" Hughes explores the mystery of death. In the first of these he looks simultaneously with pathos and ironic wit at a dying man: Suddenly his poor body Had Its drowsy mind no longer For insulation. Before the funeral service foundered The lifeboat coffin had shaken to pieces And the great stars were swimming through where he had been. Grief of the wife of the dead man is vividly captured: For a while The stalk of the tulip at the door that had outlived him. And his jacket, and his wife, and his last pillow Clung to each other, " The Green Wolf" similarly paints a realistic and grim picture of death: Your neighbour moves less and less, attempts less. If his right hand still moves, it is a farewell Already days posthumous. But the left hand seems to freeze, And the left leg with its crude plumbing, And the left half jaw and the left eyelid and the words, all the huge cries Frozen in his brain his tongue cannot unfreeze- While somewhere through a dark heaven The dark bloodclot moves in. As Terry Gifford and Neil Roberts comment on this poem, with greater realism, more detailed concentration on the dying man himself, Hughes again achieves, as in the first part of " Stations, " a modern elegiac language, which combines poignancy and wit, expressing sympathetic

improvement with the dying individual, and a firm objectivity about the fact of death. Hughes-expresses the sense of loss and poignancy that death brings but he often avoids sentimentality and morbidity by putting death in an ironical context. In " that Moment" form Crow, for example, Hughes describes a death in a series of subordinate phrases, which fill the first twelve lines, and then gives the main clause in the thirteenth: Crow had to start searching for something to eat. This last line provides an altogether ironic perspective by emphasizing the hunger of the crow. In " The Stone, " Hughes emphasizes the central experience of loss- Because she will never move now Till it is not worn out. She will not move now Till everything is worn out. In later poems, especially those in Moortown and Cave Birds, Hughes thinks of death as a culmination of the reality of life. For Hughes beings to see a connection between physical extinction and the religious experience, that of a shaman. In " The Knight" he shows an acceptance of death: His sacrifice is perfect, He reserves nothing. Skylines tug him apart, winds drink him, Earth itself unravels him from beneath- His submission is flawless. Blueflies lift off his beauty. Beetles and ants officiate Pester him with instructions. His patience grows only more vast, In such poems Hughes shows signs of his capacity to understand and negotiate, poetically, with death. What he says about the poetry of an East European poet becomes true of his own attitude towards poetry: I think it was Milosz, the Polish poet, who when he lay in a doorway and watched the bullets lifting the cobbles out of the street beside him realized that most poetry is not equipped for life in a world where people actually do die. His later poetry reveals Hughes's own attempt to write about a world where people do indeed actually die. And he

writes with a greater realism and less sentimentality and pathos; for, like the Sufis, Hughes has begun to treat death as a process of life itself. In this respect he is quite close to American poet Wallace Stevens who described death as the culmination of life. Conclusion: Hughes' Poetic Vision As the above discussion of Hughes' major themes will have shown, Ted Hughes is primarily concerned with material reality not simply the reality of a superficial urbanity but the one that governs larger questions of life and death, Nature and the animal world, and above all, the inner world of man. Instead of shutting his eyes to the metaphysical and spiritual questions about life, Hughes tries to go to their bottom. Like Blake he shows a fourfold vision which progresses from a knowledge of the surfaces seen from a singular and therefore one-sided perspectives to the mature philosophic perspective which goes to the heart of the matter. One of his recent books of poetry is most suitably entitled *What is the Truth?* Significantly, during the past thirty years during which Hughes has remained a poet thoroughly dedicated to the art of poetry, he has shown clear signs of a maturing vision. Beginning as a watcher and keeper of animals in his childhood, he is at first fascinated by their energy and then, in later poetry, finds a kinship between this animal energy and the vast reservoirs of inner energy that mankind has suppressed. Similarly, though his love for Nature began more or less on Wordsworthian lines, Hughes' concept of Nature has sufficiently matured during the past years. His view is a comprehensive one which simultaneously accounts for the Wordsworthian, Schopenhauerian and Darwinian aspects of nature. At the same time he finds a close kinship between the ambivalent but powerful time he finds a close kinship between the ambivalent but

powerful forces within man and the inscrutable and terrible working of the world of Nature. Equally remarkable is the fact that Hughes has treated of many modern concerns, like war and violence, with an awareness which is lacking in many of his contemporary poets. No wonder, then, that Hughes has become a major poet during the last thirty years and been appointed the Poet Laureate.