

**Ishfaq Hussain Bhat**

Ex Student

Department Of English

University Of Kashmir

**Ted Hughes' Poetic Vision: Celebration of The Animal World**

Abstract:

“Until one has loved an animal a part of one’s soul remains unawakened.”

(Anatole France)

Edward James Hughes (1930-1998) was one of the most prominent poets of the twentieth century. Ted Hughes poetic landscape was far removed from the urbane witticisms that so characterized the poetry of Modern period. The publication of his poems like “The Hawk In The Rain,”(1957) “Crow : From The Life And The Songs Of The Crow” (1970) etc., replete with the tendency of celebrating the animal world lead to a stirring within modern poetry itself

.It is this feature of his poetry which makes him a rebel in his own way : inventing a novel poetic idiom surcharged by the force of his poetic vision . The paper aims to study Ted Hughes’ poetic vision highlighting his fascination with the animal world-the feature which makes him a standout poet in the history of English literature.

Keywords: Modernism, rebel, poetic vision, animal world, stubborn and unfashionable style.

“Imagine what you are writing about. See it and live it. Do not think it up laboriously, as if you were working out mental arithmetic. Just look at it, touch it, smell it, listen to it, turn yourself into it, when you do this, the words look after themselves, like magic.”

(Ted Hughes)

Ted Hughes' poetic vision is often cited as archaic i.e., a pre-civilized understanding of the fundamental continuity that exists between man and nature but which modern man has squandered in order to restore what he perceives to be an atrophied soul. Ted Hughes actually

posits an alternative mood which is more in tune with nature. Ultimately, his pre-occupation with the non-human species which are an embodiment of all that modern man has repressed makes him a different and unparalleled poet. The portrayal of the Hawk in "The Hawk Roosting" as a symbol of human evils of arrogance, egotistical attitude, destructiveness, obsession of power and tyranny shows the agility of Hughes as a poet:

"It took the whole of Creation

To produce my foot, my each feather:

Now I hold Creation in my foot

Or fly up, and resolve it all slowly-

I kill where I please because it is all mine

There is no sophistry in my body:

My manners are tearing off heads-

The allotment of death."

Another remarkable poem “The Thought Fox” shows the simultaneous co-existence of clarity and complexity for it is a vivid impression of animal world and at the same time it is about poetic inspiration:

“ I imagine this midnight moment’s forest:

Something else is alive

Beside the clock’s loneliness

And this blank page where my fingers move.”

(Stanza I)

“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.”

(Stanza VI)

The honoring of the animal world is Ted Hughes’ main forte and is a permanent feature of all his anthologies. Whether as primordial or as aesthetic shapes they do succeed in conveying the poet’s extraordinary vision: They become life giving sources to counter the sterility of contemporary life and more specifically compelling alert, artistic shapes e.g. ,the arrogance and artistic shape of the Hawk:

“I sit in the top of the wood, my eyes closed.

inaction, no falsifying dream

Between my hooked head and hooked feet:

Or in sleep rehearse perfect kills and eat.

“The convenience of the high trees!

The air’s buoyancy and the sun’s rays

Are of advantage to me,

And the earth’s face upward for my inspection.”

And the majestic stride of the Jaguar in “The Jaguar”:

“More than to the visionary his cell:

His stride is wilderness of freedom: The

world rolls under the long thrust of his

heel.

Over the cage floor the horizons come.”

The inquisitive movements of the thrushes in “Thrushes” are produced with the aim of a corresponding energetic diction that often mimes the physicality of the animals:

“Terrifying are the attend sleek thrushes on

the lawn,

More coiled steel than living – a poised

Dark deadly eye, those delicate legs

Triggered to stirrings beyond sense...”

The aim of having an animal subject is very often a privilege of an animal consciousness itself which is appreciated for its authenticity, sincerity and spontaneity. The parallel with the animal world, however, should also be kept in mind in so far as they provide Ted Hughes with an emblem of a realm of being that rationality obstructs.

“The poet’s only hope is to be infinitely sensitive to what his gift is and this in itself seems to be another gift that few poets possess.”

(Ted Hughes)

The animal world presented by Hughes in his poems has its own special perfection despite his tendency of making them violent and unforgiving. Ted Hughes wrote about his own creative faculty in “Poetry in The Making”:

“So you see in some ways my fox is better than an ordinary fox. It will live forever, it will never suffer from hunger or hounds, I have it with me wherever I go. And I made it. And all through imagining it clearly enough and finding the living words.”

(Ted Hughes)

Ted Hughes broke the mood of modern poetry by introducing animal subject matter which some writers describe as elementary, attacking like an animal. There is nothing that resembles the genteel trend in English poetry prompting critics to comment that he had

“barbarized the location of being a poet.” In Ted Hughes’ poems the power and uninhibited, uncontrollable animal energy comes through by virtue of its rough diction, powerful metaphor, onomatopoeia, imagery, etc.

Seamus Heaney, the greatest admirer of Ted Hughes, while acknowledging his contribution to English literature in general and poetry in particular wrote:

“He had a deep sense of himself as the inheritor and guardian of the land and language of William Blake and William Shakespeare.”

(Seamus Heaney)

Acknowledging the literary merit of Ted Hughes' verse, Robert B. Shaw states: "Hughes' poetry signaled a dramatic departure from the prevailing modes of the period. The stereotypical poem of the time was determined not to risk too much: politely domestic in its subject matter, understated and mildly ironic in style. By contrast, Hughes marshaled a language of nearly Shakesporean resonance to explore themes which were mythic and elemental." As a Poet, Ted Hughes takes an elemental, primordial view of human experience and interprets homo sapiens in Darwinian sense. His themes were, therefore, at once grotesque and at the same time they were larger than the prettified poetry written by his contemporaries. In depicting the animal world in all its completeness and energy coupled with his stubborn, entrenched, unfashionable, anti-genteel style Ted Hughes has no parallel in English poetry. And it is this feature of his poetry which makes him a standout/unparalleled poet in the entire history of English literature.

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