



Ted Hugh's "Hawk Roosting" – A Perspective Study Through Dark Romanticism Approach.

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Date of Submission: 03-02-2026

Date of Acceptance: 12-02-2026

Abstract

Dark Romanticism emerged as a 19th-century offshoot of Romanticism, diving into humanity's shadowy aspects like sin, evil, madness, the grotesque, and the supernatural. Unlike mainstream Romanticism's celebration of nature's beauty and innate goodness, it spotlights human flaws, guilt, and self-destruction through tormented protagonists, weird atmospheres, and brooding psychological depths. This genre was used by the English writers include Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Herman Melville. Ted Hughes is outwardly designated or commonly understood as an animal lover & poet. It focused on human faults, psychological dilemma, and beliefs in Supernatural aspects. Ted Hugh has admiration towards the nature. In his poem "Hawk Roosting" he depicts the cruel side of the nature and compares it with the appropriate human characteristics. On the literal level, this poem seems to celebrate the selfishness, cunningness, and violence, which are the typical characteristics of the bird. But at the symbolic level, they address the brutality and haughtiness of man and Nature. This bird seems to have provided him with the signifying metaphors he searched for as Keith Sagar, a famous scholar on Ted Hughes, points out, "The poet is engaged in finding metaphors for his own nature, his only touchstone for human nature" ("Hughes and His Landscape", p.212. Certainly, the poet uses such birds and animals as a vehicle to carry the connotation beyond the surface meaning of his poems.

Keywords: Psychological characteristics, violence and Human Faults, Comparison of Man and Nature.

Ted Hughes was an English poet, translator and children's writer. He has taken Nature as a prominent theme in his poems. He is certainly the greatest nature poet who writing about the natural world which is capable of cruelty and brutality. He also expressed the power and fear of nature in his writings. He has depicted nature into two sub-sections: animals and natural elements. Hughes uses the theme of nature in many of his poems to literally

describe an interesting part of the world. He also used it to highlight or question aspects of society through the presentation of nature as an allegory or metaphor. The theme of nature in Hughes' poems often takes the form of an analogy about either animals or birds. The poem "Hawk Roosting" is all about Eagle's perspective and its own view point as it looks with different lenses. The Eagle as the central bird of the poem eventually, the speaker, which then raises the question of who the dominant and how they relate to the bird itself or as a human being, in which case the imagery is flipped on its head. It expresses the nature's dominance over the human beings and superiority over other creatures.

'Hawk Roosting' is written as a dramatic monologue and is told from the point of view of a hawk. The hawk details all the things in nature that are available to him. He claims everything is under his control. The hawk is the speaker of this poem; his tone is confident and almost proud at times, although his belief in his superiority appears to be more steeped in honesty than it does in false audacity. The hawk continuously uses the pronoun "I" throughout the course of the work. Another interesting fact to note about the poem is that Hughes has written it entirely in the present tense, which adds to the sense that the hawk has always been, and will always be, at the top of the food chain. He perches in the tall trees, sleeping and looking for his prey. He believes all that is around him exists for him and only for him. He felt proud of his predatory nature, fearing nothing and staking his claim on everything. He sees himself as almost god-like. All that is around him is the way it is because he wishes it to be that way. The speaker's addressing to his self-importance scales another height in the following lines:

To produce my foot, my each feather,
Now I hold Creation in my foot. (LL.10-12)

The speaker's high opinion about the creation of his body is declaring its egoistic and self-centred attitude. Here the bird of prey seems to convey that he has been created with the utmost care and craftsmanship that lacks in any other creations.



This thought supports his feeling of being the centre of creation. Literally, the hawk's thinking in this vein reveals that he considers himself to be the best of all creatures, which is why, he holds, he has the mastery over all other beings on earth. He believes in his supremacy over others so much so that he thinks he got the right to kill anyone he chooses; he is omniscient too: "I kill where I please because it is all mine" (L.14). The poem is revealing its honest portrayal of power and authority. What strikes the most is how Hughes allows the hawk to speak with such pride and certainty, using a tone that drips with arrogance and self-importance. The hawk's words make us question how nature and perhaps even humanity operates on brute strength and domination. The one has the strength and skilled could do any harm to inferior in strength. The poem's calm, assertive tone raises questions about humanity's relationship with nature, whether we would be like the hawk, view the world as a force to dominate, rather than something to coexist with. It's a notice that how easily power could shape our beliefs and actions.

According to Edward Albert, the poet "sees the certainties, the pointlessness, and violence that are part of man's life" (History of English Literature, p. 641). "Hughes often used the brutality and nature of animals as a metaphor for life itself." If the symbolic layer of his poems is being stripped away, and the animals and birds fall silent, losing their wild, primal voice. Poetry in nature has two level of interpretation- one is of surface meaning and another is inner meaning. In this regard, "Hawk Roosting", metaphorically represents a dangerously powerful human agent of war or a capitalist. The hawk's voice is kind of harsh, growling sound, echoing human arrogance and brutality – like a dictator's cold, oppressive tone. Since hawk is a bird of prey, it does not care of others' suffering. Similarly, a capitalist is indifferent to the pain and afflictions of others who were being suffered by hard work and poverty. Sympathy cannot be drawn from the greedy dictators. Such emotions are foreign to them, and the expectation of such humane feeling is consciously thwarted by the poet by negating such claim in the poem– "no falsifying dream" (L.2). Again, the dictator who thinks himself to be placed on a high position to spy on everything and regulate his subjects or victims or enemies or subordinates just because of his position informs the same attitude of the bird of prey i.e. the hawk as expressed in the very first line of the poem under discussion– "I sit in the top of the wood, my eyes closed." Here, the second part of the line, "my eyes closed" does not mean that he has taken his face

away from what are happening around him and is indifferent to the worldly affairs. But it shows the degree of his confidence over his perfect surveillance as it happens in contemporary time, which is beautifully dealt with in W.H. Auden's "The Unknown Citizen" (1939). Ted Hughes here might have been influenced by Auden. In the second stanza of "Hawk Roosting", the speaker's egocentric disposition is revealed in a more pronounced manner:

The convenience of the high tree!
The air's buoyancy and the sun's ray
Are of advantage to me;
And the earth's face upward for my
inspection. (LL.4-8).

On the literal level, this poem seems to celebrate the selfishness, cunningness and violence, which are the typical characteristics of a bird. But at the symbolic level, it addresses the brutality and haughtiness of man and Nature. Such kind of animals and birds seem to have provided him with the signifying metaphors he searched for as Keith Sagar, a famous scholar on Ted Hughes, points out, "The poet is engaged in finding metaphors for his own nature, his only touchstone for human nature" ("Hughes and His Landscape", p.2). Certainly, the poet uses the bird and as a vehicle to carry the connotation beyond the surface meaning of the poem. Again, the poet presents the animalistic behaviour in the poem mentioned above as per its nature with an end in view to reflecting the true nature of man signified by such metaphors. In Hughes's opinion, the bird behaves as per its natural characteristics. There is no artificiality or change of course in its life style. It acts by its instinct. The hawk leading its life naturally, without any affectation. On the other side, human beings are not humane in the true sense of the term. They have also some traits of beastliness apart from their good virtues. They too have the traits like animalistic selfishness, cunningness, cruelty, which they tend to hide. They do have the ability to submissive of the evil side and make decision over their actions. People have their emotional intelligence to know and understand others situation and find out if something going out of the track and they could change their behaviour accordingly. That ability lacks in the predatory bird. n animals and birds, violence is raw and unmistakable, evident in every pounce and screech. The characteristics of hawk metaphorically represents human being or man in a central position among the creatures. It also claims the supremacy and right of man over everything. Man is permitted to do anything to survive without taking others' pain and misery into account. As of



Dark Romanticism theory emphasize the darker aspects of the human nature. Truly, if the hawk is taken as a personified representative of man, then human being is no longer humanitarian. As the poem pronounce the language of violence, man cannot be the crown of creation. Consequently, his claim to be positive, sophisticated, reasonable becomes weak. The line—"There is no sophistry in my body" (L.15)—betrays the ugly aspect of man. The shameless utterance—"no sophistry"—thwarts his right to be called "the beauty of the world." Again, a more ferocious mind-set finds expression in the lines that follow: My manners are tearing off heads— The allotment of death. For the one path of my flight is direct Through the bones of the living. (LL.16-20). The evil dominant view is reflected in its addressing the world- "Now I hold Creation in my foot" (L.12)

As the cruel attitude lurking within man is unfolding itself, the so-called noble qualities of man seem to be deserting him. They are fading away past his body and mind. His central position gets, therefore, decentralized in the process. Here, Ted Hughes very purposefully pushes man towards the margin. Certainly, man's position in the "great chain of being" goes downwards and is conspicuously degraded for his unmanly dealing with other beings or even other human beings. Human beings are more often driven by their earthly spirit—by their animal like selfish and wild traits.

To conclude, Ted Hughes consistently exposes the ugly aspect of human nature by deliberately focusing on man's beastliness and vanity through the cloak of symbol in the poem under discussion. He makes the reader realize the true spirit of man, which crashes the portrayal of man with a humanist brushwork. His resentment at human being and the subsequent treatment of man

under the mask of symbol account for his strong condemnation on any philosophy that advocates for man's loftiness and sublimity. He does not value humanism. He portrayed the survival struggles in nature. The strongest has the power. It is about the survival of the fittest. The beauty of this life/nature lies in the harsh and endangering unpromising surroundings. As Alvarez has rightly said, "Hughes gives the compression of a being congenitally indifferent to humanism, a mind on the outskirts of civilization" (p.194.) Hughes's mind is rather preoccupied by dark humanistic thinking.

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