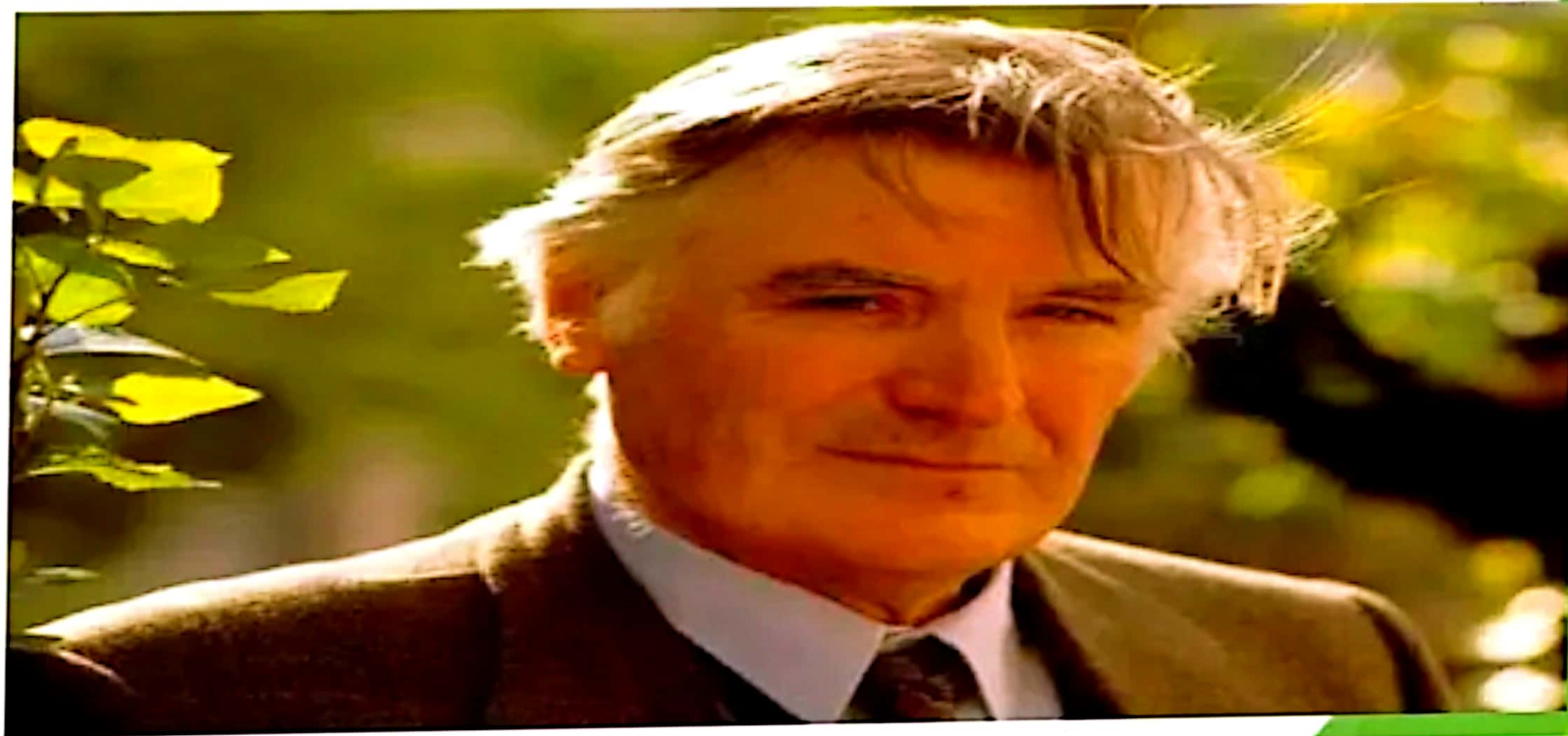


A photograph of a bird, possibly a thrush, standing in a grassy field with several white daisies. The bird has brown and white streaked plumage. The background is a dark, out-of-focus forest.

# **“THRUSHES” BY TED HUGHES**

# EDWARD JAMES HUGHES (1930- 1998)





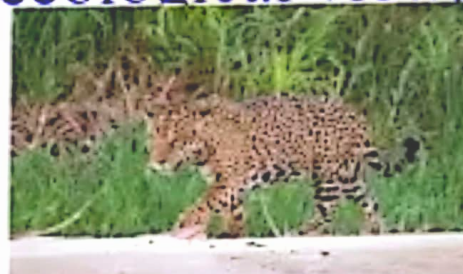
# TED HUGHES

- ❖ English poet, translator, and children's writer.
- ❖ Graduated from Cambridge in 1954
- ❖ In 1956 he met and married American poet Sylvia Plath
- ❖ British Poet Laureate from 1984 until his death on 28 October 1998
- ❖ Hughes was appointed a member of the Order of Merit by Queen Elizabeth II.

Poems are famous for the use of natural and animal imagery, complexity of thought, literary devices and free verse.

Depiction of animals - remarkable, vivid, startling and truthful and serve as metaphor for his views on life

- ❖ Hughes's poetry signals a stunning departure from the customary modes of the period.
- ❖ Hughes's later works are deeply reliant upon myth and the British bardic tradition, heavily inflected with a modernist, Jungian and ecological viewpoint.





## “Thrushes” Stanza I

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 start, a bounce, a stab  
Overtake the instant and drag out some writhing thing.  
No indolent procrastinations and no yawning states,  
No sighs or head-scratchings. Nothing but bounce and stab  
And a ravening second.



- ❖ Poet observes “sleek thrushes on the lawn”
- ❖ Their behavior is described as “terrifying”
- ❖ Refers to the birds as “more coiled steel than living”
- ❖ It produces startling image of the speed and almost robotic and mechanical nature of the thrush, focused on finding food.
- ❖ Unusual and striking use of “coiled steel”, “dark deadly eye”, and “triggered” produce the image of a gun,
- ❖ Like gun focusing its enemies thrushes waiting to capture their prey to eat and devour.



- ❖ Uses monosyllabic words such as “bounce and stab” to describe the quick sharp movements of the birds.
- ❖ It is contrasted with human behavior, “indolent procrastinations” and “yawning stares” of boredom.
- ❖ The “ravening” second sums up the instant of devouring.
- ❖ Swiftly according to impulse, they prey on the writhing thing.
- ❖ They indulge in no irresolution, no lethargy and no postponing; they are characterized by immense presence of mind.



## Stanza II

- Is it their single-mind-sized skulls, or a trained  
Body, or genius, or a nestful of brats  
Gives their days this bullet and automatic  
Purpose? Mozart's brain had it, and the shark's mouth  
That hungers down the blood-smell even to a leak of its own  
Side and devouring of itself: efficiency which  
Strikes too streamlined for any doubt to pluck at it  
Or obstruction deflect.





- ❖ Poet wonders what motivates this single-minded ruthless purpose of birds.
- ❖ Hughes moves on to consider what motivates the thrushes to behave in this instinctive way.
- ❖ Again uses the gun image of "bullet an automatic /purpose "
- ❖ But the birds share their instinctive response with the shark.
- ❖ The shark's automatic purpose is to attack the smell of blood, even if it is its own blood pouring from its side. The shark then devours itself.
- ❖ The shark is such a specialized predator and nothing can deflect it from the automatic purpose

- ❖ The genius of the birds reminds him of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, music composer of Classical Period.
- ❖ He seemed to have superhuman ability to produce perfect music apparently without trying.
- ❖ That is, he had the innate genius and artistic drive for music that was not out of any ulterior motive.
- ❖ His ability was so unique just like the thrushes whose act looks automated, mechanized and triggered.
- ❖ He also refers to the thrushes as “bullet” and “automatic” which effectively describes the speed and automations of the birds and emphasizes the single purpose of them to kill its prey.



### ► Stanza III

- With a man it is otherwise. Heroisms on horseback,  
Outstripping his desk-diary at a broad desk,  
Carving at a tiny ivory ornament  
For years: his act worships itself - while for him,  
Though he bends to be blent in the prayer, how loud and above what  
Furious spaces of fire do the distracting devils  
Ogry and hosannah, under what wilderness  
Of black silent waters weep.

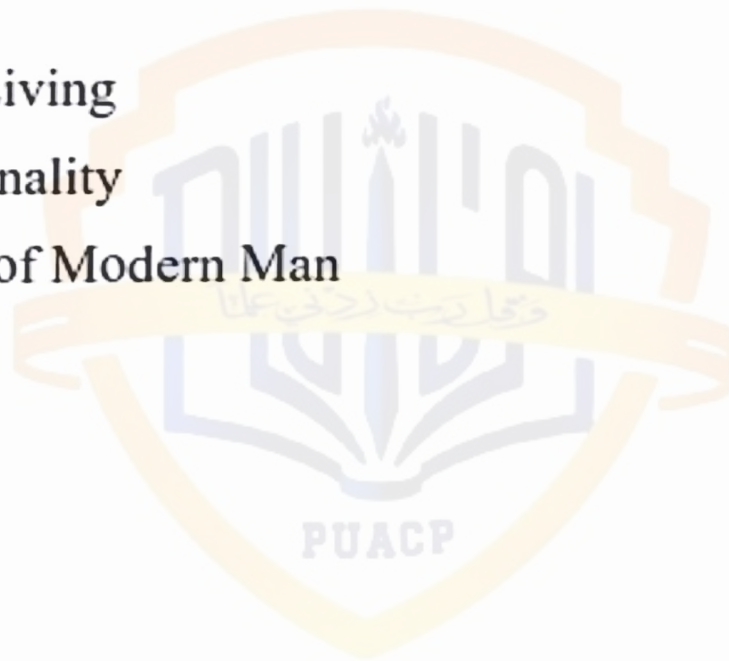
- ❖ The final stanza turns to human preoccupations: war
- ❖ The asperate alliteration of "heroism on horseback" help us to focus on the fact that we seem to need animals to help us to become heroes.
- ❖ The heroic businessman, single mindedly "outstripping his desk diary" or the artist, "carving at a tiny ivory ornament" and finally the devout and prayerful, all seem to need something upon which to focus our minds.
- ❖ Otherwise we have the fearful, the uncontrollable, the unknown, , waiting just outside our orderly lives.
- ❖ "Black silent waters weep" capture the idea of stillness which maybe seen on the outside but the huge expanses of depth where you have no idea what's going on, like a mans mind.
- ❖ Ultimately, the poet leads readers from an apparent admiration of the simplicities of the bird to a cry that is both anguished and celebratory of the complexity of being human.



- ❖ The language and imagery emphasise the deadliness of the thrush especially when compared to man who can never be devoted enough to concentrate on one task no matter how it seems to look from the outside there is still the inescapable temptation of everything around us.
- ❖ “Thrushes” describes something typical like a beautiful summer’s day but concentrates on the pain and suffering lurking underneath.
- ❖ Here poet indirectly says the mental condition of the people after the World Wars.
- ❖ Poet says that the mind of human beings must be so focused as the "Thrushes" otherwise the mind may explore new fields of joy and at last may results in the "weep" of the human beings.
- ❖ The people should control their emotions and must focused inorder to achieve their goals in their life.

# Modernist Features in the Poem

- ❖ Mechanical mode of Living
- ❖ Materialism and Rationality
- ❖ Spiritual Degradation of Modern Man
- ❖ Lack of Morality
- ❖ Disillusionment
- ❖ Absurdity
- ❖ Frustration
- ❖ Loss of instinctive energies in man
- ❖ Darwinian concept of Survival of the fittest





# Figures of Speech

- ❖ Onomatopoeia- start, bounce and stab to indicate movements of birds
- ❖ Synecdoche – Shark’s mouth instead of Shark
- ❖ Alliteration- “dark and deadly eye”, “single – mind- sizes skulls”, “Heroism on horseback”, “what wilderness- waters weep”.
- ❖ Repetition- No indolent procrastinations and no yawning states, No sighs (repetition of word ‘no’)

# Themes

- ❖ Animal/natural World
- ❖ Human World
- ❖ Violence
- ❖ War and Weapon
- ❖ Religion

