



War and Socio-Ecological Implications in the Poetry of Ted Hughes and Philip Larkin

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Abstract: This paper examines the horrors of war on man and the environment and holds that there is no justification for war. The paper maintains that those who encourage war have generally never experienced its disastrousness. From a New Historicist perspective, the paper explores how survivors or victims of war become indifferent and develop attitudes of apathy towards life as they are continually haunted by the fear of the imminent outbreak of another war in which they could die. Consequently, these war victims develop a pessimistic perception of life and contravene its norms. From an ecocritical standpoint, the paper explores how these survivors ruthlessly exploit nature, out of frustration, and deliberately carry out activities that endanger the flora and fauna.

Keywords: War, apathy, ecocide, new historicism, ecocriticism.

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INTRODUCTION

In the "Preface" to his collection of poems, Wilfred Owen writes; "my subject is war, and the pity of war". These lines resonate in the poetry of Larkin and Hughes who all present war as gruesome and unjustifiable. The horrors of World War II and the unforgettable memories it left on survivors shaped and reshaped their attitude towards life thenceforth. The physical and psychological effects of the war, and its nearly ineradicable memories, undoubtedly had an impact on the kind of poetry written in post Second World War Europe in general, and Britain in particular.

With the war over, survivors became overwhelmed by the magnitude of the destruction and loss of lives they had witnessed so that they developed attitudes of abnegation towards life. They felt that even if they took any step towards rebuilding their battered communities, these efforts would only be in vain. According to them, another war looms in which whatever might not have been smashed in the just-ended war would certainly be destroyed. With

the belief that their lives on earth are ephemeral, these victims of war indulged themselves in pleasurable activities which are destructive to the environment.

The Awfulness of War

Something is said to be awful when it is bad, dreadful or terrifying. These adjectives aptly describe the experiences of soldiers and other war victims depicted in the poetries of Hughes and Larkin. The destruction caused by the Second World War and the number of lives it claimed was one that had never been seen in the history of mankind. Almost every sector of the British society was affected by the war whose consequences were far greater than those of the First World War. In this vein, Kinley E. Roby (ed.) *British Poetry Since 1939* states that:

Unlike British battles of the 1914 war, this one involved the entire population: every social class, every age group, and almost every region of the nation. Not until the war was three years old had as many British soldiers died in battle as women and children at home.

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The bulk of the suffering, of course, occurred in London, where air raids became an expected night-time event from the Summer of 1940 until the following June. Compounding the death and destruction was the disruption of metropolitan life-of traffic, mail delivery, shopping, telephone service, and virtually every other facet of communication and commerce upon which a modern city depends. (14)

From this excerpt, it can be deciphered that World War II left an indelible mark on the British population be it soldiers, their relatives or the society as a whole. Germany's constant shelling of Britain's main cities became nightmarish to her inhabitants and even those who survived, undoubtedly, suffered from war shock. It is important to mention that during World War II, the Germans used a military tactic referred to as blitzkrieg that involved indiscriminate bombings of the major cities of Britain so as to inflict physical and psychological pain on the people and push the war to a speedy end. Venugopala B.N. in "Post War Disillusionment and English Poetry" intimates that during World War II, "the society was in a state of degradation and poetry could become a true criticism only when it tried to express the horror and complexities of such a world. (11) In this vein, Ted Hughes' "Six Young Men" describes the appalling manner in which six young soldiers die at a war front. Although Hughes was not yet born when World War I broke out, his experience of World War II and knowledge of the death of these soldiers spurred him into immortalizing their deaths through this poem. After all, Stephen Greenblatt in *Representing the English Renaissance* states that; "History is [...] found in the art works themselves" (iii). This implies that writers capture historical realities in their works. It can be deduced from this statement that the horrible experiences of the soldiers in this poem is suggestive of that of soldiers in World War II as a whole. The fact that these soldiers trained together and were in the same regiment means that they knew each other quite well as they were "familiar to their friends" (2). This makes their deaths more pathetic as they watched each other die.

Danny O'Connor in *Ted Hughes and Trauma: Burning the Foxes* reiterates Hughes' condemnation of war by stating that according to Hughes; "soldiers are brothers in arms against the national interests that sent them to war" (99). Consequently, they are actually brothers killing brothers because they have been sent to do so. According to O'Connor; "nation and empire" are to blame for the pains and trauma soldiers go through. Similarly, Binda Sah in "War, Violence and the Poetry of Ted Hughes: A Reflection", opines that from Hughes' perspective; "what pervades the world is not rationality but animality,

not light but dark, not urge for love but for power, and above all, not God but the devil" (3). By animality, Hughes means the instinct to fight and hurt others. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud refers to this instinct for violence as thanatos.

Generally, when animals destroy, it is assumed that they are not conscious of what they are doing. Also, being irrational implies behaving like an animal. Put differently, animality means a behaviour that does not conform to reason. One of the soldiers in this poem is shot while he; "lay/calling in the wire" probably for reinforcement. His best friend who; "went out to bring him in" out of show of comradeship; "was shot too". The third soldier also died not far from his rifle. As concerns the fate of the other three soldiers; "nobody knows what they came to" (24) or what happened to them but; "come to the worst they must have done" (25). Worst, in this context, euphemistically means death. Whether the information concerning their manner of deaths is debatable or not, what is certain is that they were all killed at the warfront and the pitiable manner of their deaths bespeaks of the gruesomeness of war.

Apart from the soldiers who die at the war front, those who are fortunate to survive have their lifestyles altered forever. This is the fate of a wounded soldier the speaker describes whose life has been; "turned overnight" (29) as a result of the wounds he sustained in battle. He, now, lies in hospital bedridden and can only feign a smile. Through the use of metaphor, the speaker simply calls his smile a "locket". This soldier can no longer do anything by himself and now seems like jewel abandoned on a heap of rubbish. According to Edward Hadley, Larkin; "openly confronts the pain and suffering experienced by the soldiers" (29) including this one on hospital bed. Having been wounded, he is now a; "mangled" or distorted figure in long "hours" of "agony" "mightier-than-a-man dead bulk and weight" (33). In this line, the word "bulk" is a dysphemistic reference to the body of this soldier. Although he may not be obese, Hughes is furious that he has become a burden to himself and his family since he cannot do anything by himself due to the life-threatening wounds, he sustained at the war front. In the light of this, Tom Paulin in "Ted Hughes: Laureate of the Free Market?" intimates that Hughes belongs to a generation of writers and people; "who took in the blood of the First World War with their mother's milk, and who, up to their middle age, knew Britain only as a country always at war, or inwardly expecting and preparing for war" (22). It should be recalled that Hughes was born during the interwar period and lived the Second World War witnessing his country constantly being bombarded. No matter what justification is given in favour of war, all the speaker knows is that some six

young men took a photograph and died six months later at a war front.

During wars, those who generally fight are the youths who are, most often, driven by jingoism masked in patriotism. Politicians encourage them to fight as proof of their love for their country. Given that most of these youths had never experienced war before, they eagerly go into battle unaware of its horrendous realities. This is the case with the soldiers in Larkin's "MCMXIV" which Cian Hogan says; "captures a moment [...] before the onset of one of the most horrendous episodes in human history – World War One" (23). In this poem, there is a long queue of excited youths eager to be enlisted into the military. The word "lines" indicates the huge number that is anxious to fight for England. The repugnant attitude of the speaker towards war is reminiscent of that of the Larkin. According to Mohammad Arifin in; "Larkin's Earlier Poetry: An Affirmation of War Circumstances", Larkin's "rejection in the Armed Forces provided some reasons for his disappointment and anxiety which took on the term of hatred for his own soldiers" (391). This probably explains why he depicts soldiers, not as heroes and patriots, but as tools in the hands of war mongers.

The euphoria of the youths betrays their sheepish conviction that war is glorious. In this connection, Gregory Fraser in "Larkin's Turn-and-Return Gambit in "MCMXIV" describes them as; "Lambs naively leading themselves to slaughter" (4) as they are ignorant of what awaits them at the battlefield. In this regard, Cian Hogan opines that this poem; "memorialises a generation that was virtually wiped out" (23-24). The expression "wiped out" paints a chilling visual image of countless inexperienced soldiers slaughtered at the battle field with some of them having just gotten married. The result is a long list of widows and orphans whose plight thereafter, once again, portrays the grim nature of war. Louis Montrose in "Professing the Renaissance" states that as critics, we are historically bound by our own mentality and that it is only through the filter of our own consciousness that we can reconstruct histories. This means that the experience of Larkin, especially after he visited his hometown of Coventry in 1943, that was bombed during World War II, undoubtedly shaped his poetry and the way he depicts war therein. According to Montrose; "our analysis and our understandings necessarily proceed from our own historically, socially and institutionally shaped vantage points; that the histories we reconstruct are the textual constructs of critics who are, ourselves, historical subjects" (23). It can be inferred from this that Larkin sympathises with these soldiers and members of their families especially the women they get married to just before going to war.

With the war over, survivors became haunted by the feeling that another war would soon break out in which they would all die. This makes them develop lukewarm attitudes toward taking any decision that would ameliorate their living conditions. This feeling of abnegation constitutes the main thrust of the second part of this paper.

Post-War Apathy

Apathy means not showing interest in something or not being bothered by whatever happens in one's life. It also implies displaying a lethargic or dispirited attitude towards life. After World War II, a general atmosphere of uncertainty loomed, not just across Britain, but the world as a whole. Consequently, those who survived became nonchalant towards taking any step that would help rebuild their battered lives.

The feeling of apathy is accompanied by frustration. War survivors think that if they cannot do anything to make their lives better, they should, at least, do whatever would give them pleasure during the short time they think they still have before their deaths. Carter and John McRae in *The Routledge History of Literature in English Britain and Ireland* emphatically state that; "the ending of the Second World War did not bring with it stability [...] the world was on a knife edge (sic) the world might end at any moment. This threat hung over the world until the end of the so-called cold war" (247). This indifference is evident in the poetries under study.

In Larkin's "At Grass" which, at the surface level, describes the return of horses from a race, the speaker says that the names of these horses; "were artficed/ To inlay faded, classic Junes" (11-12). This means that even though their names have been engraved on stones or clay, they will be forgotten soon. Their glorious days are over and what awaits them now is death. The two horses do not only look weary but also dejected. Their owner made them "legends in their life-time" and each time they took part in a race:

*Numbers and parasols: outside,
Squadrons of empty cars, and heat,
And littered grass: then the long cry
Hanging unhushed till it subside
To stop-press columns on the street. (14-18)*

In the stanza above, the horses are a metaphor for soldiers now living in misery. Like the soldiers, the horses; "have slipped their names, and stand at ease," (24) never to be noticed again after having taken part in popular races during which they were applauded. Presently, they have become a shadow of themselves as their supposed glory is now a thing of the past. In this poem, race is a metaphor for war while the horses, as earlier mentioned,

symbolise soldiers who have lost their self-esteem and know that they are no longer of any importance to their country. Winifred Alice Thomson in *The Collected Poetry of Philip Larkin 1945-1974* states that these; “horses accept their loss of fame and the fact of their uselessness” (62). This feeling of worthlessness discourages people from making any effort to better their lot in life. At the end of World War II, returning soldiers found it difficult adapting to the post war society. They might have been hailed as heroes but now old and on retirement, their glorious days are a thing of the past and there is nothing they aspire to acquire again. They painfully accept their fate and simply look on life with weariness. In this light, Alice Thomson adds that the; “stillness” of the horses is “a sign of their resignation” (62). In this case, all they wait for is death having been abandoned to themselves.

The lethargic attitude of war victims in Larkin’s poetry reveals a post war society bedevilled by despondency. In this light, Takako Haruki in *Absence and Presence in the Poems of Philip Larkin* states that; “the world he presents to the reader is dismal and dark” (180) because having lost so much in the war, survivors remained haunted by the fear of the imminent outbreak of another war which fear then eclipses their aspirations. Their lack of enthusiasm was compounded by the government’s inadequate measures in the provision of basic necessities to the population just like the horses that are not catered for in this poem. British soldiers and citizens who suffered severely from German bombardment of the country’s main cities felled abandoned by their government. This feeling of neglect dampened their hopes. As a result, they practically surrendered themselves to life’s challenges by refusing to take any decision that would make their lives better.

The solitary confinement of the horses also symbolises Britain’s loss of her territories. In this vein, Shabnum Iftikhar in *An Analysis of the Themes of Death, Decline and Disappointment in Philip Larkin’s Poetry* states that; “the retirement of some horses from the horse-race [...] symbolized Britain’s loss of power and glory” (372). It should be noted that George McCarthy in *An Account of Ireland* had described Britain as; “the vast empire on which the sun never sets”. However, with the magnitude of the destruction she suffered, her position on the global stage became threatened and she also felt abandoned like the horses in this poem. In this connection, Shubham Singh in “Pessimistic Worldview and Existential Nihilism in Philip Larkin’s Poetry” states that; “the overshadowing gloom and despair that resulted from the Second World War and the loss of the golden era of the British Empire” (1) characterizes the poetry of Larkin who; “was fully

alive to the harsh realities of the modernised world that post-war generation was living in. [...] he developed a deep-rooted pessimism [...] towards life and human existence in general” (1). This attitude is evident in the world of his poetry in which dejection is very preponderant.

Similarly, apathy permeates the world of Hughes’ poetry as evident in the poem “Song of a Rat” in which a rat, caught in a trap, shrieks as it struggles to free itself from it. The title of this poem is a mockery given that the scream of a rat is referred to as a song. This rat is a metaphor for war survivors while the trap is a metaphor for the socio-economic challenges, they go through in the post war era. In like manner, the rat fights desperately to set itself free from the trap to no avail. The trap, thus, stands as a symbol of the many hurdles war survivors were going through in Britain. The speaker says that this rat is practically gagged in this trap indicating how firm and painful the grip is. There is no gainsaying that the speaker simply stands by and watches it suffer. His insensitivity is influenced by the torture he certainly witnessed during the war so much so that he became used to it.

After struggling in vain, the rat pants and eventually stops struggling saying that; “it must be God” himself with; “iron jaws, strong as the whole earth” (8) that has gripped him and not a trap. With this thought, it feels defeated. Its submission to the trap is a metaphor for the apathy of war survivors who felt that any effort they make towards rebuilding their battered societies would only be in futility. Just like the rat that virtually begs for death, which it considers as an escape route from the throes it is undergoing, war survivors were convinced that another war was imminent in which they would die. The rat does not think that the pains it feels could be coming from the devil or that it might have been caught by the devil. This is because Hughes felt that Christianity was no longer assuring to humanity and that those who were supposed to be its torch bearers had abandoned their calling having been overwhelmed by the magnitude of the destruction, they witnessed during World War II. As such, they, like the rat, believe that they have been forgotten by God and by their government. In this regard, Blake Morrison, as quoted by Faria Tasnim Chowdhury in *Ted Hughes’ Poems as The Pessimistic Mirror of Nature* posits that Hughes’ “poetic universe was too brutal and nihilistic” (123). The suffering of the rat is attests to this brutality. As earlier mentioned, the fact that the speaker watches the rat unperturbed by its groaning and the rat’s resignation to fate confirms man’s insensitivity and apathy in the post Second World War society.

Moreover, Larkin's "Afternoons" presents a post-war society whose people feel downcast. Bapi Das in *Note of Alienation in the Poetry of Philip Larkin* attests that; "Larkin portrayed [...] the existential predicament of the British society just immediately after the Second World War." (62). This dilemma is evident in "Afternoons" that paints a picture of a people that look emaciated. They are survivors whose war experiences have conditioned their minds to believe that there is nothing in life worth fighting for. This feeling saddens them and make them appear helpless. In this connection, Bapi Das intimates that; Larkin's poetry depicts; "individuals trapped within an unsatisfactory and unsatisfying situation" (63). In these "unsatisfactory" situations that are characterised by low living standards, one is normally expected to struggle to survive. However, since these people think that any effort, they make, would be a sheer waste of time, they become despondent. Shabnum Iftikhar (ibid) throws light on this when he unequivocally states that Larkin's; "pessimistic approach is deeply rooted in the [...] predicament of human life that he saw around him" (374-375) as a result of the war that caused enormous material damage and loss of lives.

In "Afternoons", a number of children and their parents are suddenly gripped by fear that prevents them from stepping out of their houses on a fateful afternoon. Eventually, they all die in their homes just like was the case during the Second World War where many people died in their homes from stray bullets and from aerial bombings. According Shabnum Iftikhar, Larkin's; "poetry is greatly reinforced by the cataclysmic scenario of post-war England" (372). This is the kind of scenario that Larkin presents in "Afternoons" in which humanity watches all they have worked for slip out of its hands, including the lives of their brethren. In addition to this, Salem Kadhem Hassan in *Time, Tense and Structure in Contemporary English Poetry: Larkin and the Movement* states that Larkin's poetry focuses on; "the futility of life itself (ii). According to Hassan, Larkin believes that life is full of emptiness and that; "the only certainty about the future is that it brings old age and subsequent death" (iii) which is the fate of the family in this poem.

The attitude of apathy is also evident in Hughes' "Hawk Roosting" in which the speaker is a hawk personified and also used as a metaphor for dictators. The masses under him (the pronoun is ours) have no hope due to his egocentric attitude. It is a greedy hawk that assumes the first-person singular and authoritatively asserts; "I kill where I please because it is all mine" (14). This statement is not only a projection of the hawk's ego but also of his pride and arrogance. This leaves those around him in despair that makes them give up struggling.

Tongsukkaeng Chaiyon in; "Ecocritical Reading in the Poetry of Ted Hughes" intimates that the hawk is; "an extension of nature's immanent power" (30) given that the hawk considers himself superior over all other aspects of nature. He even brags that; "It took the whole of Creation/To produce my foot, my each feather" (10-11).

The word Creation symbolises God since it is capitalised. The hawk, as such, boasts about how much time it took God to create him as proof of his superiority. His oppressive attitude implies that it is the strong that survive in his world. In line with this, Peter Cash (ibid) points out that; "the eponymous bird of prey is a Darwinian hero, portrayed as being better fitted for survival than any other creature on Earth" (6). He has no respect for any other thing around him and does not wish to share with anything or anyone else. Cash describes the hawk as; "a domineering individual with an uncompromising attitude to opposition or resistance" (6).

Although we are not told the state of anything particular in this poem, the hawk's uncompromising attitude spells misery to any other thing around. It is only those who are strong like him that survive. However, since no one complains, it implies that everyone accepts their fates and submit themselves to live at his mercy. The menacing words of the hawk are again brought out in his assertion thus; "I kill where I please because it is all mine. There is no sophistry in my body;/My manners are tearing off heads" - (14-16). He does not want to work but prefers; "tearing off heads" to satisfy his greed. He emphatically states that; "No arguments assert my right" (20) implying that he would not tolerate any opposition from anybody whosoever. The idea of killing "where I please" is a pointer to the moral dryness of someone who kills for the fun of it. In this kind of world, any aspect of nature that is weak is susceptible and inevitably loses hope. The other animals, and indeed, every other person becomes apathetic because they believe that there is nothing, they can do to change the status quo. Consequently, they indulge in act that are destructive to nature that include plants, animals and water bodies.

Ecocide

The word ecocide means obliterating or shredding nature with impunity. The *Merriam Webster Dictionary* defines ecocide as; "the destruction of large areas of the natural environment as a consequence of human activity". This act endangers humanity given the important role nature plays in the life of man. The general atmosphere of post war societies is the feeling of defeatism that make people eager to do anything, they think, would give them momentary pleasure irrespective of the consequences of these actions. Ted Roberts Gurr in

Handbook of Political Conflict: Theory and Research states that wars; “affect generations of individuals, and there is quite extensive evidence that generational attitudinal changes persist long after the original stimulus is gone” (405). Consequently, war survivors want to assuage their angst or the horrifying experiences they had lived during war. Having lost so much, yet still being haunted by the fear of the impending outbreak of another one, they live in limbo and ruthlessly exploit nature with the feeling that there is no need leaving anything behind that would, according to them, be annihilated in another war that looms. The effects of their actions are borne by animals, plants and water.

World War II survivors adopted a consumerist approach to life that was motivated by their belief that they could die at any moment. This made them ruthlessly exploit nature with no regard for posterity. This attitude is evident in Hughes’ “The Jaguar”, that paints a tear-provoking picture of animals caged in a zoo. Here, the living condition of these animals is deplorable as they are deprived of their freedom and natural habitat. In this zoo, the “apes yawn and adore their fleas in the sun” (1). This yawning is symbolic of fatigue and hunger. Given the huge amount of money that this zoo generates, one would have expected that these animals be given the best treatment possible. However, man’s greed and war experiences have made him insensitive to the plight of others leave to talk of animals. In this vein, Abdullah Mohammed in “Ted Hughes: A Critical Study of His Poetry” posits that the treatment given the animals, is a reminder of man’s “aspects of violence” and “moral and physical sides such as anger and selfishness” (19). This violence is reminiscent of what he had witnessed during the war in which there were human rights violations of various sorts. More so, it is greed and the desire to have all that pushes man to bring the animals out of the wild where they naturally belong and to transform them into income-generating animals. They are now prisoners in a place that is entirely unaccommodating and artificial. In the light of this, Chaiyon Tongasukkaeng in “Ecocritical Reading in the Poetry of Ted Hughes” holds that by; “focusing on modes of freedom and captivity, Hughes tries to comprehend the jaguar’s thoughts” (37-38) as it is now in a cage.

Although the jaguar and the other animals may not die within a short time in this zoo, their loss of weight and difficulty to adapt to this new environment are life-threatening. As such, Bhupender Kumar in “Theme of War and Violence in Ted Hughes’ Poetry” points out that Hughes; “seems to suggest that the zoo is a prison where the animals are condemned to solitary confinement for their being non-human” (567). By this, Kumar insinuates that by putting them in this zoo, man simply wants to

prove to them that he is a superior creature. The idea of protecting them is no longer his priority because he believes that his days on earth are numbered. Consequently, he does not care about the role that animals play in the ecosystem to which he belongs. In like manner, Sarah E. Mac Farl in “Animal Studies, Literary Animals, and Yann Martel’s *Life of Pi*” states that; “modern [...] societies” imprison “animals’ bodies within the degrading walls of zoo enclosures [...] transforming their images into spectacles” (quoted in *The Cambridge Companion to Literature and Environment*, 158). This view is true of this poem in that although the animals generate a lot of income through the tourists that come there, the zoo remains unfit for their health as their physical condition bespeaks of weariness and starvation.

The degrading conditions of the zoo is also evident on the parrots that shriek “as if they were on fire”. A shriek is a sharp cry of pain or panic. It is the sort of scream that someone makes when hurt by fire, for example. The simile that is used in comparing the shrieking of the parrots to that of a person that has come in contact with a hot object or fire is not just indicative of their miserable condition but also depicts their discomfort.

The post Second World War society was largely a consumerist one in which those who had survived were ready to do anything that would offer them pleasure. Soren Kierkegaard in *Fear and Trembling* opines that people seek for pleasure as a solution to boredom and anxieties (quoted in Siefred Khan Nchifor, 381). Nchifor posits that this quest for pleasure is in order to; “assuage the pangs of trauma and [...] low spiritedness that results from depression”. This depression is due to the war experiences of the victims. Those who run the zoo are excited with the money they receive from the tourists who, themselves, do not seem bothered by the living conditions of the animals therein nor about the important role animals play in the lives of man. In this connection, Febrianti Synfitri and Najma Eva in “Representations of Human Violence Against Nature in Ted Hughes’ Selected Poems” caution that; “as social beings, humans need nature to survive their life because nature provides things that humans need. Meanwhile, nature needs human help to conserve it, not to destroy or exploit it”. (93-97). They urge humanity to treat nature kindly because both nature and man need each other for their wellbeing.

Apart from the degrading conditions of animals that are kept in zoos to generate money, others are kept in life-threatening conditions in pet shops for sale. Those who buy them exhibit acts of sadism as they derive pleasure in torturing them to death. This is the case with Larkin’s “Take One Home for the Kiddies” that describes pets in a pet shop

which the speaker sees through a glass window lying; "on shallow straw, in shadeless glass, /huddled by empty bowls, they sleep;/No dark, no dam, no earth, no grass" [1-3]. The appalling conditions in which they are kept and sold do not mean anything to their vendors whose only concern is the money they get from selling them. Once again, Febrianti Syafitri and Najma Eva point out that it is imperative to treat nature with care because; "Nature is very important in maintaining the balance of life. The environment will be destroyed and damaged when humans are only concerned with their own interests" (98). It can be deduced from this quotation that Febrianti Syafitri and Najma Eva lampoon the wanton destruction of nature and caution that nature be taken care of because whatever happens to it inevitably affects man.

Besides, the use of the upper-case letter "N" in the word Nature indicates the importance they have for nature. Moreso, Muzhafar Mohd Idrus and Iyad Mukahal in "Doing" Ecocriticism: Oppressions of Nature and Animals in Philip Larkin's Poetry" intimate that; "the words Larkin chose have created a gloomy atmosphere and despair concerning one important configuration of nature, animals" (6) and that this poem is; "a call to stabilise the relationship between humans and the more-than-human worlds" (6). This relationship largely depends on man's attitude towards nature that entails thinking about the future and the important role that animals play in the ecosystem to which man belongs. Muzhafar and Mukahal reiterate that the statement; "Mam, get us one of them to keep" which is a request from the children to their mother in this poem, "is an epitome of human hubris, an attitude that is abominably indifferent. The suffering of animals does not matter if it gives us some fleeting pleasure" (7). All the woman is concerned with is pleasing her children by buying the pet as requested. Given the post war world in which this poem is written, the children have probably witnessed many acts of human rights violations in the course of the war so that they find fun in torturing these animals.

Before the pets are sold, no measure is taken to ensure that their buyers are capable of taking care of them. Muzhafar and Mukahal observe that; "once a pet is in the hands of children, adult people are no longer responsible for its fate. In a sense, irresponsibility towards the non-human world is a common behaviour by adult humans" (7). This shows the impunity that humanity enjoys in treating animals the way it deems fit.

Apart from animals, other aspects of nature such as water bodies are polluted while trees are felled without others planted. Nature is, summarily, being auctioned as evident in Larkin's "Going Going".

In this poem, the speaker describes the imminent disappearance of nature especially in the countryside and the obvious effects this would have on the environment. The speaker says; "I thought it would last my time -/The sense that, beyond the town,/There would always be fields and farms" (1-3). The word "thought" implies false judgment, sadness and regret on the part of the speaker who thought that the natural environment he saw around him would not be tempered with. To his consternation, he watches it gradually disappear casting doubts on the future of his very existence. Muzhafar Idrus (ibid) holds that this poem is; "a harbinger of the gloomy fate the earth might suffer. It is a melancholic depiction of the degradation of the natural environment (5). This is especially so because humanity is obsessed with material benefits derived from industrialisation.

The advent of technology has posed a serious threat to nature due to the huge quantity of toxic substances machines release into to the air and in to water bodies while the expansion of towns and industries invariably mean the destruction of nature. Di W and Zhe L in *Ted Hughes and the Shamanistic Qualities in His Poetry and Poetics* point out that; "the scientific double-edged sword helps mankind in the face of mysterious nature, but it also inevitably stabs the mother of mankind, and accelerates the alienation of mankind from nature. It also hurts humanity itself, Caused the alienation of human beings". (quoted in Yan Yunxia, 88) Even though technological advancement led to the expansion of Britain, the persona had thought that the natural sites would never be ventured into and that away from the town, "there would always be fields and farms" (3) where little "louts" or kids like himself would live and play. Unfortunately, those who benefit from industrialization encourage many business persons to set up more cafes on the streets of M1. He refers to these opportunists as a group "of spectacled grins" (25) who:

[...] approve Some takeover bid that entails Five per cent profit (and ten Per cent more in the estuaries): move Your works to the unspoilt dales (Grey area grants)! And when (25-30)

The speaker expresses his contempt for the greedy old people who can barely see unless with the use of spectacles. In spite of their age, poor sight and senility, they cling to power like leeches and auction the country to capitalist industrialists for a meagre "five percent" from the profits these industrialists make. Because they are old do not have a long time to live, they do not care about their legacy and what would become of future generations now that they are letting business people hew nature with

impunity. Febrianti Syafitri and Najma Eva intimate that:

In the 20th century, the industrial sector developed very rapidly. Vacant land that should have been used for farming or gardening was converted into factories and buildings. In developing the industry, humans used raw materials that came from nature, as example human was using coals as fuel. Humans continued to exploit it and people became greedy for a long time [...] Smoke caused new problems for humans, such as coughing, shortness of breath, and even death. The environment was not be able to provide proper oxygen for humans because trees were also affected by air pollution. (7)

The countryside is natural and is supposed to be jealously protected given the importance of nature in the life of man. In this poem, however, nature is treated as if it were a commodity that has a price tag. Muzhafar and Mukahal state that; "one satirical element" in this poem:

is the picture of an invaluable landscape being subject to bargaining and sale [...]. it is properties and consumables that can be auctioned off. [...], the countryside is a national asset that no one can claim title to. With human greed reaching this far, auctioning the countryside and maintaining a healthy environment become more and more unattainable. (6)

As evident in this extract, Muzhafar and Mukahal bemoan the fact that the countryside has been reduced to a product subject to bargaining. It is being sold out by people whose capitalist mindsets are tilted towards amassing wealth notwithstanding the effects of their actions on the environment. The speaker firmly states that he had hitherto considered nature as; "things [...] tougher than we are," (13) and that "earth will always respond" (14) positively if treated with love. This echoes William Wordsworth's pantheistic belief in "Tintern Abbey" that; "nature never did betray, the heart that loved her." In "Going Going", the speaker had hitherto considered the sea to be so powerful that it could swallow all the waste pushed into it from industries and that; "however we mess it about" and "chuck filth the sea, [...] the tides will be clean beyond" (15-16) our expectation by the time we visit it the following morning. However, he warns that not seeing the waste should not make us happy because it is either in the sea or on the other side away from where we live. As such, the constant pollution of the water should be a serious concern because its effects would invariably come back to man. In the light of this, Muzhafar and Mukahal maintain that:

The poem sends a hard-hitting ecological message. Destruction to the natural world is inevitable if humans continue to behave irresponsibly. The title of the poem [...] suggests the death of something. Perhaps our domestic nature is not quite gone altogether, but it is being compromised in favour of industrialization. This is a warning of the vast demolition we are bringing to our planet. Perhaps this scare-mongering poem is a call to take action to stop human activities before the natural environment disappears. (6)

From this quotation, it can be deciphered that Larkin, according to Muzhafar and Mukahal, appeals to humanity to adopt a more friendly attitude towards nature not just for natures' sake but for his own existence as well. The speaker eventually laments that his earlier thoughts have changed and he now doubts if "the tides will be clean beyond" (17) the rate at which the sea is polluted. His tone becomes apologetic for his initial false belief that the sea and the rural sites could withstand the adverse effects of industrialisation. As the poem ends, the speaker calls on everyone to find out the various aspects of nature which he said were "going, going" have finally gone.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, we examined the dire consequences of war on soldiers, their family members and the society as a whole. and its unjustifiable nature. We submitted that the effects of war are far more than physical and that only those who have experienced it that can tell how horrible and unnecessary it is. We explored the misery of soldiers at the warfront and the effects of war on their families that have to live with the painful memories of having lost their brethren at the war front. With the war over, those who survive become downcast and develop a lukewarm attitude towards life. The develop consumerist attitudes and see no reason to invest in the future. With a feeling of dejection, hopelessness and an apocalyptic look at life, they torture animals, hew trees and pollute water with no consideration for posterity.

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