

Ted Hughes : A Critical Study of His Poetry

تيد هيوز : دراسة نقدية لشعره

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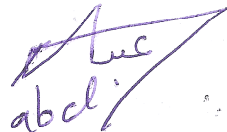
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Thesis Committee Decision

This thesis has been discussed under its title " Ted Hughes : A
Critical Study of His Poetry " and has been approved on 13th of
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Researcher

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my family and the people who supported me in taking each step of my life and taught me to trust Allah, believed in hard work, and encouraged me to believe in myself.

Researcher

Table of Contents

Chapter	Subject	Page Number
	Title	I
	Authorization Form	II
	Committee Decision	III
	Acknowledgements	IV
	Dedication	V
	Table of Contents	VI - VIII
	Abstract in the English Language	IX
	Abstract in the Arabic Language	X
Chapter One		
1.0	Introduction	1
1.1	Background of the Study	1-3
1.2	Ted Hughes - Sylvia Plath Relationship	3-5
1.3	Ted Hughes : The Poet	5-10

1.4	The Animal's World in Hughes's Poetry	11-16
1.5	Ted Hughes as a visionary	16-25
1.6	The Statement of the Problem	25
1.7	The Questions of The Study	25
1.8	The Objectives of the Study	26
1.9	Significance of the Study	26
1.10	Limits of the Study	26
1.11	Limitations of the Study	27
1.12	Definitions of the Study	27,28
Chapter Two	Review of Literature	
2.0	Overview	29
2.1	Theoretical Studies	29-37
2.2	Empirical Studies	37-47

Chapter Three	Methods and Procedures	
3.0	Overview	48
3.1	Methods of the Study	48,49
3.2	Procedures of the Study	49,50
3.3	Population and Sample of the study	50
Chapter Four	Analyzing and Criticizing Some of Ted Hughes's Poems	
4.0	Introduction	51
4.1	Animals and their implication in Ted Hughes's Poetry.	51-64
4.2	Violence in Ted Hughes's Poetry.	64-71
4.3	Lyrical Poems-Birthday Letters	71-85
Chapter Five	Conclusion and Recommendations	
5.1	Conclusion	86-89
5.2	Recommendations	90
	References	91- 99

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Abstract

The significance of Ted Hughes's poetry is discussed in this study, Its aim is to study Hughes's Literary works which made him England's Laureate in his time. It also studies the relation between animal and man that has been emphasized in his poetry, in addition to the role played by his wife, Sylvia Plath. Her suicide affected him and his way of writing. The study makes use of the descriptive and analytical methods in dealing with and assessing Ted Hughes's poetry and its significance and symbolism. The sample of the study is some of Ted Hughes's poetry as determined by the requirements of the research.

This study analyses Hughes's poetry from three aspects:

- Animalism and its role in his achievement .
- His visionary poems about man's position in this world.
- The lyrical poems of *Birthday Letters* are explored as well.

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الملخص

إن أعمال تيد هيوز الأدبية كما هي موضحة في هذه الدراسة، لها دلالات أدبية مهمة ومميزة، تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحليل و مناقشة أعماله الشعرية التي جعلته شاعر البلاط الملكي لانجلترا في ذلك الوقت. وأيضا تدرس هذه الدراسة أهمية علاقة الإنسان بالحيوانات و التي ركز عليها في شعره بشكل عام ، بالإضافة إلى دور زوجته ، سيلفيا بلاث، في حياته وتأثير انتحارها على كتاباته. استخدمت هذه الدراسة المنهج التحليلي و الوصفي للتعامل مع قصائد تيد هيوز و أهميتها ودلالاتها الرمزية. عينة الدراسة هي بعض قصائد تيد هيوز التي نحتاجها كأمثلة لدعم وتعزيز متطلبات هذا البحث.

تحلل هذه الدراسة قصائد تيد هيوز من ثلاثة جوانب:

- أسلوب الحيوانات في قصائده، و عن دورها من خلال إنجازاته الشعرية،
- الرؤية أو التصور في شعره عن مكانة الإنسان في هذا العالم،
- و تستعرض قصائده الغنائية المشهورة (رسائل يوم الميلاد).

Chapter One

Introduction

The following is an introductory chapter dealing with some aspects of Ted Hughes , the poet , the man, public figure and writer. It begins with providing some biographical information, followed by his great reputation and different experiences which are reflected on his own writings.

1.1- Background of the Study

Being laureate of England from 1984 until his death, and the poet of nature, Edward James (Ted) Hughes (1930-1998) is consistently described as one of the twentieth century's greatest English poets. He was born in 1930 in Mytholmroyd, Yorkshire. He attended Mexborough grammar school, the time his family moved to Mexborough when he was seven to run a newspaper and tobacco shop. He wrote his first poems from the age of fifteen. According to a report, he could recite by heart poems of Shakespeare the time he spent reading and rereading them before beginning English studies at Cambridge University "had nothing to do but read and re-read Shakespeare and watch the grass grow-"

(Hughes, 1971 : 1)

With his military service completed, Hughes entered Pembroke College, Cambridge University. There he met his future bride, Sylvia Plath, a brilliant honor student from Smith College in Massachusetts who had won a Fulbright-Hays Fellowship to study at Cambridge. In 1954, he graduated with a B. A. from Pembroke, and then tried a variety of occupations. In 1956, he married Sylvia at the Church of St. George the Martyr, Holborn, London.

He taught English at the University of Massachusetts before he returned to England with his wife. In 1959, he received his M. A. from Cambridge. Alfred Alvarez, poetry critic for *The Observer*, also a noted author and personal friend of Hughes, said that Hughes had never seriously contemplated a profession in university life. Evidently Mr. Alvarez was making reference to Hughes's unwillingness to pursue the career of a university teacher. This statement could possibly just be purely conjectural, based on an outsider's view of Hughes.

With his education behind him, Hughes settled down to a career as a full-time writer. The next four years saw him become a somewhat steady producer of poetry and children's books. In 1960, he published his second volume of collected works, *Lupercal*. In 1961, the children's book *Meet My Folks* was published by Faber and Faber. In 1962, *Selected Poems* by Thom Gunn and Ted Hughes appeared. The year 1963 was

perhaps the most prolific, yet tragic year of Ted Hughes's life. Here Today (Hutchinson), *Five American Poets* (Faber and Faber), *The Earth-Owl and other Moon-People* (Faber and Faber), and *Nessie the Mannerless Monster* (Faber and Faber) were all published in 1963. Hughes was definitely becoming a well-known figure in literary circles. But in 1963, Sylvia killed herself.

1.2- Ted Hughes – Sylvia Plath Relationship

No doubt any study about Ted Hughes and his poetry cannot avoid this relationship between two famous poets,(Ted Hughes – Sylvia Plath) who are from the two sides of the Atlantic . Sylvia is an American poet whose meeting with Ted Hughes and crowned eventually with their marriage provided much material for feminists, psychologists and critics. Indeed many feminists have accused Ted Hughes of being responsible of her depression and suicide. Critic Neil Roberts (2007 : 19) drew the reader's attention to the damage Sylvia Plath has brought to Hughes's life and reputation . Indeed Roberts showed that an American critic who accuses Ted Hughes directly of murder. (P.19). Also there are series of biographies which Ted Hughes felt to be a sort of intruding on his private life.

In spite of all the pains caused by Sylvia Plath's suicide, Ted Hughes could not prevent himself from remembering his first wife and defending himself against the charges of destroying her . In his *Birthday Letters* (1998) he wrote, in the same year he himself is going to die, poems about their lost joys, memories, and daily activities they shared. In his poem “The Machine” , he shows that he still misses her although she has been dead for a long time and at the same time he views that their situation is deterministic , beyond their will and control:

The dark ate at you. And the fear

Of being crushed. ' A huge dark machine '.

' The grinding indifferent

Millstone of circumstances'. After

Watching the orange sunset, these were the words

You put on a page. They had come to you

when I did not. (Hughes, 1998:15).

What is surprising about a relation which has colored Ted Hughes' life up to the end is that he avoids the talking about this subject except when he feels that others have gone too far in accusing him of causing her suicide. However, there are moments when he would refer to Plath's

psychological problem. In his view, she has suffered all her life from a kind of fixation on her father's death and his abandonment of her. This resulted in anger at other males who might abandon her as well in her own emptiness, 'A tendency toward violence buried up in her German generic roots' (Moulin, 2005:X).

When Hughes judges his wife's poetic achievement, one can easily notice that there is a sense of jealousy. He does not praise her work and finds that it is completely self-obsessed, “a deeply secluded mythic and symbolic inner theatre ” (Bentley, 2014 a : 122).

1.3- Ted Hughes : The Poet

Hughes's poetry engages a special position in modern British literary scene as it employs a fresh style, imagery and many new topics related to man and his world. Hughes, at the age of forty-three, appears as one of the most gifted poets of twentieth-century English writing.

(Animals, in the poems of Hughes, are a metaphor for his views on life. The animals that Ted Hughes captures in his poems reflect the conflict between violence and tenderness, the manner in which humans strive for ascendancy and success. The diction of his poems matches the animals that he is picturing. In *The Modern Poet: Essays from "the*

Review," Colin Falck says that Hughes's poetic language has Shakespearean resonance to explore themes which were natural and ferocious speaking about the innocent savagery of animals. His works reflect beauty and violence in the natural world. A word ought to be said about Ted Hughes's use of animals and the purpose behind that. It is through the animals and practices that the poet comments on what is there in human world. The conflict and violence of these animals can be taken as a comment on the struggles of the human beings and endless violence.

In contrast to many poets of his generation , Ted Hughes has a specific view of poetry and its function . In his years at Cambridge , Ted Hughes was very much fascinated by Shakespeare's poetry. Of course Shakespeare poetry is highly romantic . Ted Hughes's own early poems are romantic . They are full of images of creatures and subjects and the four elements (earth, water, air and fire). Also it pays much attention to passions and violent feelings of love, jealousy, fear and great admiration. For instance in his poem “ Wind ” Ted Hughes shows his great admiration of the violent power of wind which reminds the reader of Shelley's 'Ode to the Western Wind ' :

This house has been far out at sea all night,

The woods crashing through darkness, the booming hill,

Winds stampeding the fields the under the window

Floundering black astride and blinding wet

In interviews and critical judgments , Ted Hughes makes it clear that he admires great romantic names in English poetry such as Shakespeare , Marlowe, Blake , Wordsworth , Keats , Coleridge, Hopkins , and Yeats .
(Roberts : 24)

This romantic side of Ted Hughes's poetry can be shown through referring to his poem “ The Bear ” . Here again the poet describes a natural element , a storm , and its mysterious and violent effects :

The thousand mile humping of mountains

That looked immovable was in frenzy,

Metabolism of stars, melt of snows

Was shivering to its ecstasy in the steelhead

This actually was the love – act that had brought them

Out of everywhere squiring and leaping .

And that had brought us too- besotted voyeurs-

Trying to book ourselves into it.

Leaving aside this fine description of the storm in ' The Bear ' his
'For Mary and Sam' admires the river and celebrates its fascinating
wonder . The images of beauty are typically romantic :

Sixty years ago

Veins of Viking and Celt

Conlowed, and the river Mc Ginn

enriched the earth

Winding through the hills of

Kilmacolm. The eddies flowered , offspring strong

and rooted lifted heads of auburn and gold

Marrying stream and bank.

Winds of passing seasons

Sowed their seed over the spring current.

The river's mouth

Gave them to the Atlantic.

However, it is necessary to state that Ted Hughes lived at a time
when the Movement in poetry was popular, led by poets like Philip
Larkin, Donald Davie, Basil Bunting, and Thom Gunn. In fact Ted

Hughes competed with Philip Larkin who wrote poetry which is logical, quiet, reasonable and has nothing to do with wild passions one finds in Ted Hughes. He did not follow the tradition made by the Movement poets with more or less equal power “ for dominance among contemporary poets and continuity with a tradition of English literary masters”.

(Hibbett : 9)

As a result of the tense relation with other poets , Ted Hughes began to admire poets from Eastern Europe such as Vasko Popa, Miroslav Holub, Zbigniew Herbert and Janos Pilinszky. Ted Hughes's admiration of Vasko Popa's poetry is shown in the following, “His poems are trying to find out what does exist , and what conditions really are, the movement of his verse is part of his method of investigating something fearful apprehended ,fearfully discovered .” (Bentley , 2014 b : 4) All this shows that Ted Hughes , as an artist, is always restless and in continuous search of new experiments and fields in poetry .

The poems of Hughes depict the wilderness, the untamed spirit, but the same poems reveal a perfectly controlled syntax. His poetry, for the most part, displays extreme seriousness, vivid violence, bursts of painfully accurate analogies, and appropriate metaphor.

Critics have difficulty in placing his poetry in any specific category. It does not fit in with poetic genres. Such thundering, strong, masculine poetry is new to the “only-see-formulas” eyes of the critics.

Hughes appears as combining the practices of many different poets. Three poets that easily come to mind are Dryden, Dickenson, and Eliot. Hughes has the wit of Dryden, the diction of Dickenson, and the imagination of Eliot. (Bently,2014,*Ted Hughes: class and Violence*) Hughes's wit is always ready to inject new interest into his poetry. His diction is free, expressive, and varies greatly from one poem to another. He uses any word available, and invariably chooses the exact word, like Dickenson. Hughes can imagine any situation that involves an animal. Eliot could place himself easily in any situation. Such a comparison of the two brings to mind a phrase invented by Eliot, “Objective Correlative”, which is defined as the concretely realized thing or the situation that objectifies, symbolizes, and recreates the emotion that the poet wishes to note. In other words , Ted Hughes's poetry has many common points with other poets, dead and living. Even so, there is a special distinction marking his poems and their uncommon world.

1.4- The Animal's World in Hughes's Poetry .

The poems of Ted Hughes show that “ his world is full of mystery and he always wants to explore the tremendous energy manifested in the world of nature and animals, birds and plants. He has even paid attention to a small plant or flower like snowdrop or water lily.” (Laurence, 2000:13) .

“ He loves creating a myth with different animals like the 'crow' that gives a new dimension to the readers”. “He also advocates animal rights in his poems which also secure his position as an Eco-critic” . It is this great emphasis on the position of animals which makes work come under Eco-criticism with special attention to his poems like “The Hawk Roosting”, “The Hawk in the Rain”, “An Otter”, “Thrushes”, and “The Jaguar”. ” (Laurence, 2000:17) .

The nature poems of Hughes exemplify the superiority of nature and animal world to the human world. He has been rightly classified as an Eco-critic because of his preoccupation with the wild life.

In Hughes's view, animals do not pretend as human beings always. They do not hide their violence and cruelty. “ D.H. Lawrence in contrast has also studied the power, energy, and single mindedness of animals in his “Birds, Beast, and Flowers”. However, Hughes does

not sentimentalize or rationalize animals. His animal poems are informed by empathy as well as detachment. ” (Laurence,2000:19). In comparison with Samuel Beckett who has used animals like sheep, dogs, and parrots in his plays to express his disgust and contempt for the human and the rational, Ted Hughes's animals have a central position in forcing the reader to think of the differences between what is natural and human and man-made. His animal world has a deep philosophical and intellectual message to convey to the reader . In his early poems he tells the reader that they (animals) were living the redeemed life of joy " as he stated in 1965. (Gifford : 7)

As a typical poet of nature in all its good or bad sides , Ted Hughes finds that the only cure for modern man's psychological and emotional problems is to have intimacy with the world of nature and its creatures . It is a possible solution for man's distance from fellow creatures . The reason behind all this is that there is a deep connection between animals and the divine world " and that humans are separated from a world that is sometimes termed " The animal / Spiritual consciousness " (Gifford : 40)

It is important to note that industrialization and technology played a bad role in destroying nature and its mysterious and fascinating world . Then Ted Hughes's emphasis is on this return to nature , instincts , free

desires and liberation from calls to nature by French philosopher Rousseau and the English romantic poet William Wordsworth . However , as will be shown in the following pages , Ted Hughes's natural world is not always fine and noble . It often has savagery , cruelty , and destruction sides as seen in his " Hawk Roosting " for instance .

Ted Hughes's animal poetry matures with the poet himself. His vision of life, man, animal and the world can be clearly traced if we read his poems chronologically. That is the reason why this chapter will primarily use a chronological criterion as the only means of imposing some logical pattern on the development of Ted Hughes's "violent" art.

Hughes's poetry engages a special position in modern British literary scene as it employs a fresh style, imagery and many new topics related to man and his world. Hughes, at forty-three, appears as one of the most gifted poets of twentieth-century English writing. As seen through his animal poems, he incorporates such a great amount of animal imagery and of such force into his poetry that the reader cannot help but view himself, in every phase, reflected both on the outside and inside of those animal eyes. References to animals appear as the technique for increasing the impact of the poetry.

Ted Hughes's animals are the clear manifestations of a life force that is distinctly non-human or rather non-rational in its source of power. By

exploring the animal energies of these animals, Hughes probably attempts to seek a re-alignment with the unknown forces governing the universe. S.Hirschberg points out that through his animal poems Hughes " immerses himself in the dark, irrational forces around and within him in order to purge himself of the artificial social construct, the personality." (Hirscheberg , 1981 : 12)

One of the admirable qualities which Hughes finds in animals is the fact that they live completely as the physical level. Accordingly there is daily violence and continuous struggle to defeat or force its will.

The bull in 'The Bull Moses' (Hughes , 37) inspires not only fear but also fascination in the poet. While he celebrates the tremendous sense of the bull's vital and potent energies of its animal life, he is also aware of the bull's hidden, dangerous force 'in the locked black of his powers'. Like his hawk, the bull is also single-minded, vital, undeterred by conscience or self-consciousness, and violent in function. He lives in a world that has no time or death. The blackness of bull's powers in fact, corresponds to the darkness within us:

The warm weight of his breathing,

The ammoniac reek of his litter, the holy-tongued

The dark, vicious, and uncontrollable forces embedded in one's subconscious also invade one's dreams and nightmares as crabs. 'Ghost Crabs' (King , 1979: 124) creates a sense of 'weird phantasmagoria' (King , 1979 : 124) in which crabs are the symbolic representations of these destructive forces that lurk in our subconscious. They come out of the sea at nightfall when the sea darkens. They belong to the subterranean world of the 'Pike'. With slow, and powerful advance, these ghost-crabs invade the land, moving towards the sleeping town. They fasten on all human lives, dominating men's thoughts and inducing their nightmares. They hunt, fight and breed in man's mind. They are the forces of that continuum which connects man with the non-human world and which he prefers to deny. Both 'Ghost Crabs' and 'Pike' (Faber : 1960 , 56).

'Crow' is Hughes's highly complex personal symbol an objective correlative, through which he expresses his powerful emotions and complex ideas. Hughes's choice of 'Crow' as his personal symbol is quite interesting. In folk mythology the crow is an animal figure associated with the twin motifs of death and guilt. He is black, ugly, solitary, the largest, the most intelligent and the least musical of all birds. He is the embodiment of boldness, intelligence, adaptability to change and twisted vitality. But for Hughes, Crow functions on a number of levels: he is an elemental force in the universe as a projection of man's instinctual nature

and as a symbol for destruction and death. Thus, to sum up, Crow is a demon, and a human all at once. This symbol helps Hughes to explore the realm of the unconscious of human beings.

1.5- Ted Hughes as visionary.

It is important to understand Hughes's characteristics in order to understand and interpret his work. Hughes's visionary perspective which transforms reality may be unusual but this does not mean that he fails to see the material world accurately and clearly. A visionary person is one who can envision the future, also can be a person with a clear, distinctive vision of the future, usually connected with advances in technology or social/political arrangements. A poet such as Hughes uses all forms of love, of suffering, of madness; he examines himself, and he exhausts within himself all poisons, and preserves their quintessence. This type of art does not aim to capture a moment in time; it aims to reveal it and share it. Ted Hughes as a visionary poet writes his vision of nature as always containing a passion for the beauty of the created world. "Ravens" from *Mooretown Diary (1989)*, which describes the death of a lamb, is essentially, Hughes in its visionary account of the lamb's short experience of this world as fortunate because of the darkness associated with raven; the short experience of the lamb in life didn't make him see

the hardships instead he went to the divine world and never experienced the downs and cruelties of life that experienced during his life.

Over here is something else. But you are still interested

In that new one, and its new spark of voice,

And its tininess.

Now over here, where the raven was,

Is what interests you next. Born dead,

Twisted like a scarf, a lamb of an hour or two...

(Hughes, *Moortown Diary*, 1979)

The harsh landscape of the northern England moors had a strong influence in Hughes' poetry. Elaine Feinstein published her book only three years after Hughes's death *Ted Hughes: The Life of a Poet*. Feinstein mentioned *Moortown Diary* in the 70's context: "It was in the context of the upheaval around *Bitter Fame* that some of Hughes' finest writing in his post as Laureate was published. It is as if he has now totally recovered his early lyricism. His vision of Nature, however terrible the accidents described, always contained a passion for the elemental final beauty of the created world. Ravens' from *Moortown Diary* (1989), which describes the death of a lamb, is quintessentially

Hughes in its visionary account of the lamb's brief experience of this world as fortunate, since the day was blue and warm". (Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2001:224)

Writing from much the same point of view, Geoffrey Thurley finds *Crow* "a somewhat inhuman, even brutal book, with none of the broad strength of the best of Hughes's earlier poems. It remains to be seen whether Hughes's abandonment of a human perspective is ultimately justifiable". (Bentley, Academic Journal Article, 1997:39)

As already indicated in Hughes's poems, his presentation of the imagery of animal became his trademark in most of his poems such as 'The Jaguar', 'The Thought-Fox' and 'Ghost Crabs'. He believes in the purity of animals, which also functions as their strength and also as their superiority to man. He used his animal imagery as a symbolic comparison to human beings and how animals are in closer to the nature. He portrays animals as strong creatures; Hughes draws the picture of man as limited and distant from natural instincts. In his poem "The Jaguar", the poet describes animals in a zoo and their psychological states. Hughes begins his poem by describing various animals such as monkeys and parrots and finally mentions the Jaguar, which he spots lights more than to the other animals.

The apes yawn and adore their fleas in the sun'

The parrots shriek as if they were on fire, or strut

Like cheap tarts to attract the stroller with the nut/

Fatigued with indolence, tiger and lion (Hughes, 'The Jaguar')

This poem describes the different types of lifestyles of animals at a zoo and expresses how the animals who roar and bleat in cages feel being trapped. Most of the time, these animals in the zoo sleep and pay no attention to the visitors looking in on them. As some visitors gather before the cage of parrot, they "strut like cheap tarts." Hughes describes that birds in the cages pace back in forth in order to get the visitors attention most likely for some sort of food.

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 dream, at a jaguar hurrying enraged

Through prison darkness after the drills of his eyes (Hughes, 'The Jaguar')

Ted Hughes's perception of human life has always been expressed by means of animals and their practices. As the reader notices the aspects of violence, struggle, instinctual behaviour in the animal kingdom, one is instantly reminded of the world of man and all his moral and physical sides such as anger and selfishness.

In Ted Hughes's poem 'The Jaguar', the Jaguar stands for all the visionaries of the world who have kept alive the desire for freedom in every other man for ages. (James, 1967:200)

More than to the visionary his cell;
 His strides is wildernesses of freedom;
 The world rolls under the long thrust of his heel.
 Over the cage floor the horizons come.
 (Hughes, 'The Jaguar' 1957:39)

In his poetry Ted Hughes pictures a world which is losing its qualities, an absurd, incomprehensible, dark and frantic world. However, by giving us a negative vision of the universe by means of a "violent language" (Sagar, 1979:18) he seems to want to awake other men to the ugliness, the destructiveness mechanization has made. Furthermore, it seems he wants us to share this sinister vision with him not for a sadistic pleasure in enjoying the world's nothingness, but rather as an assertion that man may rise from the nihilism surrounding him , and create a more healthy and fruitful world. It is with the myth of Crow that he transmits this positive message. When 'The Hawk in the Rain' and '*Lupercal*' appeared, most critics approved, of the attacks of more traditional critics who condemned the use he made of a figurative violence. In *Wodwo* Hughes no longer used predators as his heroes. He chose small animals of prey to represent the victims of man and society. In Crow he chose this very bird which is not beautiful, "decent" or innocent to represent modern man. However, maybe because Crow lacks those "virtues" which characterize the predators and make them admirable, he developed other

"virtues" which made him fit to cope with the negativeness of the modern world, "virtues" such as toughness, intelligence, vitality. (Rodrigues, 1978:100)

With the myth of Crow, Ted Hughes gives us a human vision of a non-human cosmos. For Hughes men are destroying the world with their mechanization, their barren intellectuality, their alienation and their murderous wars. But, apparently everything is not lost yet. The poet confides in the few natural men who have managed to survive the barrenness of the wasteland and he confides above all in Crow who, with his intelligence and vigor, may be able to recreate a human healthy world. So far, darkness reigns over his wasteland, yet Hughes is still alive and active. "The Thought Fox" has often been acknowledged as one of the most completely realized and artistically satisfying of the poems in Ted Hughes's first collection, *The Hawk in the Rain*. The poet in this poem senses a presence which disturbs him:

Through the window I see no star:
 Something more near
 Though deeper within darkness
 Is entering the loneliness. (The Thought Fox)

Indeed this is a very good example on the visionary poetry that Ted Hughes has written for a long time. Hughes draws images from the world of man such as war and domestic life, suffering and death. Likewise,

animals, myth and folklore and archetypes, serve as source of symbols and objective correlatives of Hughes's own feelings and ideas. Through his nature and animal imagery, he attempts to suggest nurturing aspects of nature and conveys his concept of the primal energies of the natural world and the relationship between these energies and the divided nature of man. When man is not in touch with them, nature and its elements can become unfriendly. Hughes, himself records the value of landscapes in 'Poetry in the Making' as follows:

It is only there that the ancient instincts and feelings in which most of our body lives can feel at home on their own groundThose pre-historic feelings, satisfactions we are hardly aware of except as a sensation of pleasure...these are like a blood transfusion to us, and in wild surroundings they rise to the surface and refresh us, renew us. (King, 1979:76)

Ted Hughes is not satisfied with the Western culture. With little or no spiritual values, a culture like the western culture can mean only emptiness, dismemberment, suffering and death. Death is contemplated as a process operating in the material world, rather than as the inevitable end of individual human life. Hughes draws many images that suggest emptiness, suffering and death that the spiritually alienated western culture can breed. Terry Gifford and Neil Roberts commenting on the

theme of suffering and death in Hughes's poems write that death, resolutely contemplated, is the type of ultimate unity of the inner self and external nature which he attempts to express in his poems celebrating internal life (p.100). Hughes associates his home village Heptonstall, (where Sylvia Plath was buried) with a centre of his pessimistic universe and a sound of decaying death. The village, for Hughes, represents one of inescapable gloom and tears of despair:

Black village of grave stones.

The hill's collapsed skull

Whose dreams die back

Where they were born. ('Heptonstall Village', *Wodwo*, p.165).

Rewritten over two or three years (Tape, 1978), 'Earth-numb' is both a powerful visionary poem and a transition from 'Stealing Trout on a May Morning' to River. The poem depends upon a perhaps sentimentalized equality of fisher and river, 'Hunting... And [the] hunted', conscious and unconscious. The persona resembles Prometheus' vulture, the bird and mistaken as Krogon, and Prometheus, free and bound: his 'searching' is 'Like the slow sun... A surgeon operating/ On an open heart, with needles', but also 'a flower opening whilst the river grabs, 'A mouth-flash... trying to rip life [a 'liver'] off [him]. This is one of the poems where Hughes actually tries to compare his role to the shaman's: when his song came suddenly right (Tape, 1978). It seemed to work as a hunting

charm; having 'offered himself' to nature, he feels himself her priest, linking 'the river to the sky. ..the sky into the river' - Hoan and Moa, spirit and flux, united by means of 'fallen' consciousness. He is the 'surgeon', the alchemist, and the smith, making a homunculus, a 'steel spectre of purples/ From the forge of water'. (Gaudete, 196)

Enlightenment is the mind's numbness to, and paradoxically therefore its self-discovery within, the Earth: 'an unconscious kind of consciousness' (Tape, 1978). The next poems show representatives of our society mismanaging these essential negotiations with earth and time. 'That girl' (1974), whom consumerism's travesty of Panta Rhei, she hurries towards mating to meet then death that ends everything. And she has been no more 'joyful' or 'coddled' or significantly married alive than dead, never having known the 'warm' of shamanic inspiration. (Johnson, 1991:233)

In conclusion, it is certain that Hughes was a great poet because he possesses the kind of imagination issues in the purest poetry, visionary, revelatory poetry that sees into life of things ,that takes over where all other modes of apprehending reality falter. It is imagination, which draws on his unconscious, on the racial unconscious (Sagar, 2000:107), on his sixth sense and perhaps innumerable further senses, speaks through him. He is, in a word, inspired. Ted Hughes's imagery and symbolism are greatly drawn from a wide variety of sources; yet the fineness of his sole

that claims suffering, unites them all. There is inevitability about his obsessive standing up to the problem of modern man's self-alienation from nature and the result of spiritual numbness.

1.6- The statement of the problem

Ted Hughes's poetry engages a special position in modern British literary scene as it employs a fresh style, imagery and many new topics related to man and his world. The present study seeks to shed some light on these thematic and technical elements in his poetry.

1.7- Questions of the study

1. How does the relation between the recurrent images of animals arouse various feelings and meanings in Ted Hughes's poetry?
2. To what extent is the duality of cordiality and aversion a central issue in Ted Hughes's poetry?
3. What are the symbols informing Ted Hughes's poetry?

1.8- The objectives of study

1. To show the relation between the imagery of animals and the feeling in the reader's mind.
2. To emphasize the duality of cordiality and a version as a control point in Ted Hughes's poetry.
3. To point out the main symbols informing Ted Hughes's Poetry.

1.9- Significance of the study

To the best knowledge of the researcher, Ted Hughes's poetry was not given enough in research at least in this part of the world. Therefore it is expected that the present study may fill a gap.

1.10- Limits of the study

The study is exclusively devoted to representative poems and works of Ted Hughes. Therefore it does not claim to cover everything he has written, especially translation and children books.

1.11- Limitations of the study

The limitation of this study is attributed to the nature of methodology and the study sample.

Time : - The time of the study will be limited to Ted Hughes's lifetime 1930-1998.

Place :- : The place of the study will be limited to Ted Hughes's life in England.

1.12- Definitions of the study

Poetry :- a form of literary art in which language is used for its aesthetic and evocative qualities in addition to, or in lieu of, its apparent meaning. Poetry may be written independently, as discrete poems, or may occur in conjunction with other arts, as in verse drama, hymns, lyrics, or prose poetry (Tizhoosh & Sahba & Dara, 2008).

Critical Studies: - The term means how to judge severely by some standard or criterion. (Webster *Encyclopedia*, 2012).

The operational definition of the term for the current study includes the images of animals, the duality of admiration and aversion, and the symbols informing Ted Hughes's poetry.

Chapter Two

Review of Literature

2.0- Overview

This chapter is divided into two sections : theoretical review of literature and empirical studies. Both sections aim to provide a sufficient view about Ted Hughes's writings and how critics perceive them.

2.1- Theoretical studies

Tyson (1951) defines sociological criticism as criticism that focuses on the social context that the literature is created in. It analyzes social issues and uses the literature as social commentary. Each text is part of a continuum of texts which are functions of the society they are created in. Comparing the texts can reveal the ideologies and experiences of people who lived in that time and culture. Each text contributes a different viewpoint of society. Sociological criticism analyzes the way individuals are molded and mold their societies and their institutions.

Mauron (1963) conceives a structured method to interpret literary works via psychoanalysis. The study implied four different phases:

1. The creative process is akin to daydreaming : as such, it is a mimetic, and cathartic representation of an innate desire that is best expressed and revealed by metaphors symbolically.
2. Then, the juxtaposition of a writer's works leads the critic to define symbolical themes.
3. These metaphorical networks are significant of a latent inner reality.
4. They point at an obsession just as dreams can do. The last phase consists in linking the writer's literary creation to his own personal life.

Adams (1875) argues that "In the new Code of Laws which I suppose it will be necessary for you to make I desire you would Remember the Ladies, and be more generous and favorable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the Husbands. Remember all Men would be tyrants if they could. If particular care and attention is not paid to the Ladies we are determined to foment a Rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any Laws in which we have no voice, or Representation." (pp.72)

Frye (1957) establishes his theory of modes, he proposes five levels, or phases, of symbolism. These phases are based on the four levels of medieval allegory (the first two phases constituting the first level). Also, Frye relates the five phases with the ages of man laid out in the first

essay. Frye defines a literary symbol as: "Any unit of any literary structure that can be isolated for critical attention." (pp. 255)

He takes a different approach to structuralism by exploring ways in which genres of Western literature fall into his four mythoi (also see Jungian criticism in the Freudian Literary Criticism resource):

1. Theory of modes, or historical criticism (tragic, comic, and thematic);
2. Theory of symbols, or ethical criticism (literal/descriptive, formal, mythical, and anagogic);
3. Theory of myths, or archetypal criticism (comedy, romance, tragedy, irony/satire);
4. Theory of genres, or rhetorical criticism (epic, prose, drama, lyric)

Bushell (1961) argues that " Let's imagine a poem as if it were an animal. When animals run, they have considerable flowing rhythms. Also they have bodies. An image is simply a body where psychic energy is free to move around. Psychic energy can't move well in a non-image statement." (pp.180)

Sagar (1990) suggests that our 'standard critical equipment' expects 'kinds of rational, paraphrasable meaning the poems don't in fact offer Such analyses (where criticism aspires to the absolute objectivity of

the sciences) will in one way certainly insult the poems, imposing a single solution upon them and trampling over linguistic subtleties. Hughes' poetry seem large enough to accommodate and respond to this kind of criticism, as well as any number of other kinds. appears curiously a skew. Most critics seem puzzled by Hughes' poetry because, it is far more 'rational'.

Faas (1980) argues that 'It's easy enough [for him] to give interpretations [of Crow poems]... but whether they'd be the real explanations [he does not] know' .Here he still posits a 'real' (objective) explanation; but misreading can single handedly illuminates it: 'in one main sense., ['Truth Kills Everybody] is about just the sort of misreading it seems to provoke - the cuttlefish ink-clouds, behind which the real nature of the thing escapes are Rorschach blots, of a kind' (1981 'A Reply' p. 6). Often, however, 'as far as interpretation goes[, he leaves] all options open'... part of its meaning, no matter how New Critical purist we try to be' (pp. 182).

Eliade (1960) holds that 'Judged in the perspective of the primitive religions', writes Mircea Eliade, a novelist and anthropologist who is not in the way of making sensational claims, 'the anguish of the modern world is the sign of an imminent death, but of a death that is necessary

and redemptive, for it will be followed by a resurrection and the possibility of attaining a new mode of being, that of maturity and responsibility'. (pp. 237) As already mentioned, human ecology suggests, with an older, aggressive, goalorientated patriarchy, our sensate culture - where the objective scientism of Bacon, Descartes and Newton lingers to preside over a depotentiating dualism of mind and matter, spirit and matter, and mind and body - has interpreted the universe as waste matter for our consumption, an agglomeration of discrete, rigidly-related atoms. The realm of thought is reduced to as many, discrete disciplines; illness, time and death are attacked with technology, and the affective life and the non-human world are jeopardized through the singleminded pursuit of bodily comforts by means of consumerism and unremitting economic growth.

Foos (1980) states that 'They are not the spoiled brats of civilisation disappointed of impossible and unreal expectations' (ibid.pp. 183), but only in odd poems is Hughes' 'positive' their simple, heroic stoicism: 'they have gone back to the simple animal courage of accepting the odds' (ibid.); 'in Pilinszky's love poems "he" is separated from "her" as the flesh is separated from meaning and hope, and as the spirit is separated from any form of consolation' Incomparable Marriage is always Hughes' eventual goal; an elaborately-rationalized safety-net of

psychology, alchemy, social history and faith in Nature lies under the tightrope, for him, of 'unalterable horror' and his two odd suggestions that 'their world' too is the world of the little pagan religions and cults'. Foos seems a misrepresentation to obscure as much: only occasionally, as in Holub's 'The Fly' or 'Experimental Animals' do these poets evoke obviously! (pp. 205- 207)

Journal of Humanities and Social Science (2013) sheds light on Hughes's attempts to express the inner life or the depths of human unconscious. Hughes's poetic philosophy goes in line with Sigmund Freud's theory of psychoanalysis. Freud's 'id' suggested a more subtle way in which the bestial and the instinctive could figure in human psyche. The interaction of the human and the beast worlds have taken the form of depicting human life in terms of some notion of animal behavior. This has served many purposes-to embody specific human emotions, often uncontrolled emotions, to depict a way of escaping human limitations, especially seeming narrowness of city life, morality or purely intellectual discernments. Similarly Hughes's poems depict a breaking free from some perceived set of social or political limitations that the writer wishes to expose and change. By revolutionizing our understanding of the inner workings of the unconscious Ted Hughes was a major influence on the twentieth century thought (pp.29).

Sagar (2000) argues that Ted Hughes is the greatest British writer of the second half of twentieth century and one of the latest addition to the great tradition of Western Literature which includes, among many others, Homer, the Greek tragic poet, Shakespeare, Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, Whitman, Hopkins, Yeats, Eliot and the other post-war East European poets. In accordance with Eliot's dictum that every new great writer added to the tradition, changes the tradition, Hughes has changed the way we read all the writers and he possesses the kind of imagination which issues in the purest poetry, charged poetry, visionary, revelatory poetry that sees into the life of things, that takes over where all other modes of apprehending reality falter. Words, though controlled up to a point, are allowed to retain a life of their own and express more than the poet consciously knows. "His imagination", as said by Keith Sagar, "which draws on his unconscious, on the racial unconscious, on his sixth sense and perhaps innumerable further senses speaks through him."

Journal of Humanities and Social Science (2013). Different critics have approached Hughes's poems from different angles. Some critics like Thomas Nye (London Times Contributor) has tried to find out the reasons of Hughes's too much obsession with animals and discovered that apparently. Hughes's love of animals was one of the catalysts in his decision to become a poet. He further said that Hughes began writing

poems in adolescence, when it dawned upon him that his earlier passion for hunting animals in his native Yorkshire ended either in the possession of a dead animal, or at best a trapped one. Hughes wanted to capture not just live animals, but the aliveness of animals in their natural state: their wilderness, the fox-ness of the fox and the crow-ness of the crow. PR King said that Hughes showed us the tie that exists between the human world and the animal world. He said that Hughes's concentration on animals is his attempt to clarify his feelings on the human condition. In fact Hughes's poetry broke upon a dead decade in English Literature into the social-democratic sheepishness of "The Movement" and the *New Lines* anthology and brought "a sudden sharp hot stink of "fox" reiterating the perennial romantic notion of poetic inspiration as something atavistic and instinctual, a thing of the blood and gut. (pp. 29)

West (2011) defines biographical criticism as a critical approach that uses the events of an author's life to explain meaning in the author's work. Although this type of criticism is very old , its use in Ted Hughes's case is very useful . One reason for this emphasis is the fact that Hughes's poetry carries a biographical touch. He is a writer whose experience are always reflected in his poetry and his poetry should be seen from this angle. Ted Hughes was mostly criticized after the death of his wife

(Sylvia Plath). This points out that his work changed. He used a different tone and his symbolism was always related to darkness, pessimism, and violence. This shows how the death of his beloved has a dramatic impact on his life. When she died he stayed silent for a long time. The main reasons for that were, the emptiness, and the feminists accusing him of her suicide. This forced him to stay in his own solitary confinement for some time. This isolation gave him the chance to wake up and have courage to write again regardless of the changes that may have happened or what is expected to happen after people read his poetry. But some critics might argue that he just wanted to express his grief and to defend himself against the accusations and the way he did it was through his writing.

2.2- Empirical studies

Thurley (1975) argues that most of Hughes's poetry is characterized by an aggressive, distinctly masculine energy, though he is a critic of the masculine consciousness and a worshipper of the nature goddess. This he was led to remark perceptively that "Hughes, like Lawrence...can never bring himself to submit to the law of the feminine". (pp.188) Indeed he belongs to the virile world of masculinity and violence.

Since Hughes conceives of violence as an inner source of energy seen universally in nature, for him it is an affirmation of life on this earth. The hypothesis that violence is synonymous with life and energy and to be cut off from this source of energy is suicidal to human existence stands on the firm foundation of science and philosophy. To a great extent, religious ritual symbolizes energy, vitality and regeneration. Hughes too makes use of these religious rituals in a symbolic way. The study intends to employ poetic techniques like surrealism, symbolism, allegory and parallelism to extract the essence of the text from its linguistic event.

Hughes's work is a determination to acknowledge the predatory, distinctive character of nature, of which man is a part. That's the reason after "violence" in his work but not to moralize about it. Through studying his poems intends to delve deep into the fabric of the poetic creations of Hughes and to understand the psyche of violence embodied in them. It is an investigation directed towards a detailed and in-depth examination of his poetical works in a chronological order to discover the patterns of violence in them. The study has the special objective of assessing the impact of his poetry on common readers, especially in relation to modern life. The analytical strategies employed in this study also include a semiotic reading of the text from an ecological perspective, thereby unlocking the great psychic and spiritual power these poems embody.

Gifford & Roberts (1980) argue that the characteristic virtues can be seen in a remarkably large proportion of Hughes's work. He is a poet who has developed from an early reliance on external nature to a greater metaphysical assurance and the creator of a distinctive imaginative world, although many critics regretted this development. This chapter is not among them while other significant poems have made by time been seem greater such as *Woodwo* poems that produced such work as "Crow's Account of the Battle (pp.11)

When Gifford and Roberts suggest 'the function of the poet's theories is to assist the production of good poetry' (1981 pp. 35), even they seem to underestimate Hughes' convictions. The Earth, in short, comes before Speaking; which is why in this thesis the exploration of ideas has at least to take precedence over the study of Hughes' style. It seems characteristic of critics with a partial understanding of Hughes to dismiss the place in the production of his poetry of these 'theories'; and sometimes, with a kind of out-dated\ aesthetic human solipsism, the theories themselves.

Faas (1980) argues that Hughes claims the same sense of hope for Vasko Popa, Miroslav Holub,Zbigniew Herbert and J gnos Pilinszky: 'finally, with delicate manoeuvring, they precipitate, out of a world of

malicious negatives a happy positive' . (pp. 184) Thus one can notice how Ted Hughes has chosen to follow of these East European poets as they put in action what he has in mind.

Garfitt (1981) states in his informed 'Desolation and Development', 'the two halves of Hughes's imagination, his modern existential awareness of the "boundless, godless, cavernous nothingness" [John Cowper Powys' *The Brazen Head*], and his recovery of the ancient, religious sense of the universe' . (pp. 849)

Haffenden, (1981) maintains that " I think Ted Hughes is probably a traditional English nature poet in his heart, but because of contemporary humbug, as well as the humiliations and upheavals of the twentieth century, and the distortions upon the imagination which they've produced - the affront of recent history he's been deflected away from an attention to nature and creatures which I think is his love, in order to orchestrate feelings within kind of Lawrencian ideology: it shouldn't really be necessary." (pp .33)

Thwaite (1985) holds that what he does not explore is how precisely the latter answers the former, how far Hughes exposes the 'desolation' simply as a Cartesian anachronism's myopia. Crow and the 'materialist

disillusionment' of Beckett's 'Black Comedy' 'are in fact absolute opposites' (1981 'A Reply' pp. 4): 'as with the paintings of Francis Bacon, a totality of horror is narrowly and intensely insisted'/in Crow, Anthony Thwaite assumes Hughes, however, '[likes Bacon] very much.... Because in a way like Eliot and Beckett he's suffering the disintegration.... Yet one doesn't at all have a feeling of desolation, emptiness, or hopelessness'

Lomas(1987) discusses certain poems that reveal the effect on sylvia Plath's effect on Ted Hughes life. (pp.409-26) Lomas's argument goes in line with West's in that both have tried to look Hughes's poetry from a biographical side.

Bentley (1997) explains that "Depression and Ted Hughes's Crow, or through the Looking Glass and What Crow Found There." (pp. 27-40) As seen in form, a very important component marking Ted Hughes's poetry, and the very title , one can notice that Ted Hughes used the animal as symbols. He most often used the crow. The crow is related to darkness and pessimism but this is important because of the depression of Ted Hughes at that time. As a great poet, Ted Hughes changed this pessimism into very impressive and successful poems.

Churchwell (1998) raises the paradoxical relation with Ted Hughes and Sylvia Plath and how it eventually affected his poetry. (pp. 99-132) Indeed this is a very serious argument as it highlights a particular side of Ted Hughes's writings and its far-reaching effects on his poetic output.

Wagner (1998) maintains that "After nearly thirty five years of silence on the subject, it was revealed towards the end of January 1998 that Hughes was finally going to speak out, by publishing a hitherto unsuspected collection of poems written over the years since Plath died, about his life with her" (pp.68)

Of course the writer has in mind Ted Hughes's collection of verse, *Birthday letters* (1998). This view concentrates on this part because we see the development of Ted Hughes and how his life changed when his wife died. Also after many years of silence he finally spoke out.

Clanchy (1999) states that "The Nationalization of Ted Hughes." On teaching Ted Hughes in Britain, the author asks "why, then, are we as a nation so anxious to expose the young to Hughes?

The author answers the question, "why, then, are we as a nation so

anxious to expose the young to Hughes?" and got full information about Ted life study and culture in his time.

This view suggests that it is important to expose the young to Ted Hughes to provide them with a look at the outside world. It can give them a chance to hear and imagine what exists in the outside world, names of animals that they would consider and as fellow creatures.

Gifford (1999) holds that "The Fate of Ted Hughes's Papers." "It seems to have gone unnoticed in the UK that in spring 1997 Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia bought, for an undisclosed sum, the entire collection of Ted Hughes's papers—all 2.5 tons of manuscripts, notebooks and letters." (pp.34-36)

The above mentioned view shows that because Ted Hughes wrote a great amount of work in poetry and prose, it was natural that part would not be noticed while Ted Hughes was alive and writing poetry continuously.

Eddins (1999) argues that "Ted Hughes and Schopenhauer: The Poetry of the Will." Eddies contends that Schopenhauer's pessimism "finds its fullest poetic realization, however, in our own

time, in the verse of Ted Hughes. His menagerie—the hawk, the jaguar, the shark, and their ilk—fits even better than [D. H.] Lawrence's birds, beasts, and flowers into Schopenhauer's 'bellum omnium' of predation." (pp. 94-109)

This view sheds light on this topic a lot because comparison and contrast of how Ted Hughes' poetry can be a very useful and valuable exercise. Many animals are related to darkness in folklore and tradition and can now fit better into his literature because now people have tend to see the implications of the presence of such animals in his poetry .

Kinsella (2003) maintains that "Beguiled by the wild: Ted Hughes' tone varied little over 50 years—but does that matter? He finds the authority of a master in his Collected Poems." (pp.7)

This view here says that this topic is debatable because when a tone varies a person can find that a person may have lost his skills. Although, the authority of a master was found in his collected poems, one might see that this isn't what Ted Hughes was famous or honored for.

Loizeaux (2004) states that "Reading Word, Image, and the Body of the Book: Ted Hughes and Leonard Baskin's Cave Birds discusses the collaboration of author Ted Hughes and illustrator Leonard Baskin for the book "Cave Birds." conditions on poems integrated in the book, counting "The Baptist"; psychoanalysis of the submission of the treat of corrosion in the book; Information on several lettering described in the book." (p.18) This argument is interesting in that it draws the reader's attention to the interrelation between painting and writing in Ted Hughes's poetry.

Bere(2004) *Literary Encyclopedia* "Ted Hughes." An introduction to Ted Hughes, from a database that provides signed literary criticism by experts in their field. This study devotes much space to the elaboration of this point to see how Ted Hughes was criticized and if his critics were able to understand his work to criticize him.

Stigen (2005) discusses the relation between Ted Hughes' poetry and The Romantic Era. The Romantic Era was when symbolism really flourished. There was always something to symbolize whether it is related to darkness or brightness, Pessimism or Optimism. (pp. 108-120)

Scruton (2011) argues in "Ted Hughes's Poetry Foundation. An encyclopedia-type article on Ted Hughes: biography, list of works and suggested readings, and text for some of his most famous poems."

This article repeats the earlier arguments rose in this review about the significance of Ted Hughes's biography and its great effect on his poetry.

Schulman (2011) states that "Ted Hughes to be honored at Poets' Corner: Ted Hughes is to be honored with a memorial at Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey following a campaign led by Seamus Heaney and Sir Andrew Motion." (pp.7)

This view mentions the honoring of Ted Hughes because he was one of the few writers in his time that used animals as symbols and their great effect in widening his vision and perception of the world at large. In his writings he would mostly use animals related to darkness. In fact, Ted Hughes deserves to be honored because his writing can give society a chance to look at serious issues . The symbolism that he used in relation to animals can be described in many different ways. The crow which he used a lot in his poetry was usually related to darkness, pessimism, and

violence. On the other hand, some people might argue that this can be related to freedom because the crow can fly with no one getting in its way for it is a very powerful creature. When his wife (Sylvia Plath) died his work changed. This is because she left a huge impact on his life. She wasn't just his wife; she was considered his beloved, his wife, and his life partner. So her sudden and unexpectedly departure represents a nightmare for Ted Hughes and his gloomy life.

Chapter Three

Methods and Procedures

3.0- Overview

This chapter is divided into three sections : methods of the Study , procedures of the study , and population and sample .

3.1- Methods of the Study

In general the study makes use of the descriptive and analytical methods in dealing with and assessing Ted Hughes's poetry and its significance. The study uses content analysis technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the material in question. Content analysis is a research tool that focuses on the actual content . It is used to determine the presence of certain words, concepts, themes, phrases, characters, illusions, or sentences within the poetries and to quantify their presence in an objective manner .

Poetries can be defined broadly as books, book chapters, essays, interviews, discussions, newspaper headlines and articles, historical documents, speeches, and conversations; advertisement and internal

conversation also fall under this category, informal conversation, or really any occurrence of communicative language.

To conduct a content analysis on a poem, the poem is decoded, or broken down into manageable categories on a variety of levels: word sense, phrase, sentence, or theme. Then, it's examined using one of content analysis' basic methods: conceptual analysis or relational analysis. The results are then used to make inferences about the messages within the poem , the writer, the audience, and even the culture and time of which these are part .

3.2- Procedures of the study

The researcher goes through the following steps in conducting this research :

1. Reading the biography of Ted Hughes and some of his poems.
2. Reading theoretical and empirical studies related to the topic of research.
3. Giving description and analysis to Ted Hughes's poetry.
4. Studying his time, situation, and audience .
5. Contrast and comparison of criticizing poetry.
6. Analyzing the themes and the technical aspects of some of Ted Hughes's poems
7. Discussing the findings

8. Concluding and recommendations .

9. Listing references according to APA style.

3.3- Population and Sample of the study

Population : Some representative examples of Ted Hughes's Poetry.

Sample of the study : Some of Ted Hughes's Poetry as necessitated by the requirements of the research.

Chapter Four

Analyzing and Criticizing some of Ted Hughes's Poems

4.0- Introduction

As noticed through Hughes's animal poems he incorporates such a great amount of animal imagery and of such force into his poetry that the reader cannot help but view himself in every phase, reflected both on the outside and inside of those animal eyes. References to animals appear recurrent topics which the present chapter explores first.

4.1- Animals and their implication in Ted Hughes's Poetry.

The poems of Hughes depict wildness, the untamed spirit, but the same poems reveal a perfectly controlled syntax. His poetry, for the most part displays extreme seriousness, vivid violence, bursts of painfully accurate analogies, and appropriate metaphor.

(a) The Horses

It starts in the following:

Into darkness that was avalanching to horses

And a quake of hooves. Our lantern's little orange

flare

Made a round mask of our each sleep-dazed face,

Bodiless, or else bodied by horses

That whinnied and bit and cannoned the world from

its place. (Hughes, "A Dream of Horses", *Lupercal*, 1956, p. 21)

The violent appearance of the horses does man good. The heavy hooves of the horses satisfy man's desires and make him sleep. In this way the human response to violence seems to be masochistic or sadist:

And we longed for a death trampled by such horses

As every grain of the earth had hooves and mane

We must have fallen like drunkards into a dream

Of listening, lulled by the thunder of the horses

We awoke stiff; broad day had come. (Hughes, p.21)

This longing for what the “horses” do even if it is death, has become an obsession to man and the poet uses an interesting technique to point it out. Every second line of the first eight stanzas is closed with the word “horses” and the three lines of the last stanza also ended up with the word “horses”.

In fact, what happens in this poem makes up the central theme of Hughes’s early poetry, which, as Neil Roberts rightly observes, is ‘the usurpation that is represented as greater and ultimately more real’. Roberts’s use of such words seems to reveal Hughes’s view of nature at that time as something powerfully fascinating and inescapable, and threatening. The grooms in “A Dream of Horses” are more passive, or perhaps more instinctive in accepting the wild power potent in dreams. The masks made of “little orange flare” of the grooms’ lanterns around their ‘each sleep-dazed face’ became an initiation to the horses / That whinnied and bit and cannoned the world from its place’. The attack of these wild horses on the human psyche seemed to be full of violence, but the grooms were submissive to their power as they ‘longed for a death trampled by such horses’, or when they kept ‘listening’ to ‘the thunder of the horses’ in their dream. (Cambridge University Press, 2011)

The "black horse" looks determined to persecute the young man who wants to isolate himself from his native place. Wherever he goes, there will be the "black horse" is, "tall as a statue"(Hughes, p.50), threatening him. The young man tries to run away from him, but the horse is so devilish that he does not give him a chance, not is the kind to that young man:

He got one snapshot glimpse of the red-veined eye-
ball as he flung himself backwards around the
tree. Then he was away up the slops, whipped by
oak twigs as he leapt the brambles and brush-
wood, twisting between the close trees till he
tripped and sprawled.

It is obvious that Ted Hughes as all the admirable sides of horses which have been traditionally associated with these animals. However, he mixes this admiration with awe and wonder at their great beauty, grace and power. In other words, they have qualities human beings lack. The horse is inexhaustible. He returns and the youngster starts a "bombardment" (Hughes, Wodow, p.53) of stones at the animal till he gets tired with the "unaccustomed exercise" just to find the horse there staring at him:

As he felt the warning
flashed through his head that he must at all
costs keep his suit out of the leaf-mould, but
a more urgent instinct was already rolling him
violently sideways. He spun around, sat up
and looked back, ready to scramble off in a
flash to one side. He was panting from the
sudden excitement and effort. The horse had
disappeared. ("The Rain Horse", Wodow, p.49)

The author gives such a vivid description of the fight that one wonders whether the horse is real or an image of the "otherness" of man. It seems that by persecuting the animal, the man is persecuting "the other" that tries to possess him. When one considers that, the horse, like man, is a domestic animal we realize how great man's rebellion is. He has become so sophisticated that he wants to ignore nature.

The exhausting fight, in which man has the opportunity to release his "savage energy", reconciles man with himself and he becomes whole again. It brings him some peace or, at least, resignations:

Piece by piece he began to take off his clothes,
 wringing the grey water out of them, but soon he
 stopped that and just sat staring at the ground,
 as if some important part had been cut out of
 his brain. ("The Rain Horse", Wodow, p.55)

(b) The Crow

If 'horses' is associated with the qualities people admire the word 'crow' has references to metaphysically and religious background. For instance the poem, 'Theology', introduces into Hughes' published poetry his own interpretation of the Biblical God (Hughes, 1967:149). This imperfect, figure, however, had appeared already in *How the Whale Became and Other Stories* (Hughes, 1960), a book of children's fables. There, Hughes depicted God as a friendly character who manufactured the creatures of the earth out of clay which was then baked in the ovens of the sun (*How the Tortoise Became*).

In 'Crow Blacker than Ever' 'Hughes probes the consequences of the relationship between man and God, following man's eating of the forbidden fruit. Things looked like falling apart 'as God Turned towards heaven' and man Turned towards Eve'. This situation remains as it is :

Crow nailed them together

Nailing Heaven and earth together

So man cried, but with God's voice.

And God bled, but with man's blood. (Crow, p. 62)

Here he is using *Genesis* as means by which he portrays humanity's relationship with notions of God. In doing so, Hughes is able to capture both the best and worst of this relationship: the great art of man crying with God's voice, but also the terrible suffering of violence and warfare went on in the name of religion: A 'horror beyond redemption' (Crow 62), a horror that will remain as long as God and man are nailed together. In this sense, he is probing the very roots of Genesis, which is essentially a story of man's paradoxical relationship with God. It is the black flag of Crow, who is the product of God's nightmare, Crying: 'This is my Creation'.

In a review of Max Nicholson's *The Environmental Revolution*, Hughes writes: Imperatively, 'Crow' was originally planned as a quest:

Crow's quest to find his creator, who turns out to be not a male creator, but a female one. Individuation for the male, of course, involves the integration of the animus, the female aspect of the male psyche; many of the published *Crow* poems see Crow encountering and attempting to come to terms with various female figures (largely without success). Hence, When Crow cried his mother's ear/ Scorched to a stump. /When he laughed she wept/ Blood' (Crow and Mama', *Crow* 5). Whilst Crow's quest is a personal Oedipal drama, it is also symbolic of this condition of Western civilization.

Hughes goes on to argue:

When something abandons or is abandoned by Nature, it has lost touch with its creator, and is called an evolutionary dead-end. According to this, our Civilization is an evolutionary error. Sure enough, when the modern mediumistic artist looks into his crystal, he sees always the same thing. He sees the last nightmare of mental disintegration and spiritual emptiness.... This is the soul state of our civilization. (Hughes, *Winter Pollen*, 1995:129–30)

The origin of *Crow* is well documented. In an article written in 1985 Hughes explains:

Crow grew out of an invitation by Leonard Baskin to make a book with him simply about crows. He wanted an occasion to

add more crows to all the crows that flock through his sculpture, drawings, and engravings in their various transformations. As the protagonist of a book, a crow would become symbolic in any author's hands. And a symbolic crow lives a legendary life. That is how Crow took off. (Hughes, p.243)

The poems included in *Crow* are part of a large number of poems which make up a "vast folk epic" which tells the story of Crow. Hughes began this story at the suggestion of American artist, Leonard Baskin, who wanted an accompanying text for some of his anthropomorphic bird engravings. Elsewhere, Hughes explains the symbolic suggestion his poems about Crow reveal. Speaking on the BBC before the publication of *Crow* Hughes explains something of the Crow story and the nature of Crow:

Nobody knows quite how he was created or how he appeared
 He was created by God's nightmare. What exactly that is I
 tried to define through the length of the poem, or the
 succession of poems. (BBC Radio 3 broadcast, Poetry Now, 6 July
 1970)

In these quotations from Radin and Garner we can see the characteristics of Hughes' Crow and his connection with Man, but the

psychological implications of Crow's character are broader still. As Sagar noted, "Crow is Everyman who will not acknowledge that everything he most hates and fears – The Black Beast – is within him" (Sagar, 1972).

(c) The Hawk

In Ted Hughes's first book, *The Hawk in the Rain*, the animals are happy and free. They live in a world which has room enough for them:

The apes yawn and adore their fleas in the sun.

The parrots shriek as if they were on fire, or strut

Like cheap tarts to attract the stroller with the nut.

Fatigued with indolence, tiger and lion

Lie still in the sun. (Hughes, 1957:12)

These animals, however, will rebel at anyone's attempt to invade their privacy. Violently they preserve their dignity, their right to live undisturbed:

All day he stares at his furnace

With eyes red-raw, but when she comes they close

"Polly. Pretty Poll", she cajoles, and rocks him

gently.

She caresses, whispers kisses. The blue lids stay

shut.

She strikes the cage in a tantrum and swirls out:

Instantly beak, wings, talons crash

The bars in conflagration and frenzy,

And his shriek shakes the house. (Hughes, 1957:13)

All the animals' in *The Hawk in the Rain* care about is to live their own life as they like. In this way, the hawk in the first poem of the book flies higher and higher, relaxed, powerful, challenging the hacking rain:

His wings hold all creation on a weightless quiet,

Steady as a hallucination in the streaming air.

Regardless of the fact that eventually the hawk, trapped by the horizon, falls down and his "heart's blood" is mixed with the "mire of the land", the hawk's power is envied by man who can only watch the bird's "hallucination". He contemplates the high position of the white bird who does not accept interference of anyone, not even of the weather. While the hawk chooses his own destiny, the man, sticks to earth and feels unable to match the hawk.

Bloodily grabbed dazed last-moment-counting

Morsel in the earth's mouth, strain toward the master-

Fulcrum of violence where the hawk hangs still.

(Hughes, 1957:11)

In his second collection *Lupercal*, the hawk looks quite different. Egocentric, proud, boastful, too conscious of being self-sufficient, the hawk worries only about imposing his position on the world:

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.

(Hughes, 1957:26)

Here the hawk expresses his uncommon ability to destroy and kill violently. The hawk here is terrible and blood-thirsty. A.E. Dyson comments on his role in saying "... in 'Hawk Roosting' we find words and statements suggesting animal consciousness" (Dyson, *Englishness and national culture*, 1975:427)

The hawk becomes the Creator himself, everything revolves around him. This emphasis is given by the repetitive use of pronouns of the first person to show the extent of his selfishness and pride:

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 -

I kill where I please because it is all mine.

In *The Hawk in the Rain* the animals are instinctive, violent in defense of their freedom and their individuality. For instance, “The Jaguar”: despite being caged, the jaguar is free. It is the crowd who “stands, stares, mesmerized” at him who is imprisoned. Like the hawk, he is lonely, free, and genuinely violent:

But who runs like the rest past these arrives
 At a cage where the crowd stands5 stares, mesmerized.
 As a child at a dream, at a jaguar hurrying enraged
 Through prison darkness after the drills of his eyes
 Or a short fierce fuse. Not in. boredom -
 The eye satisfied to be blind in fire,
 By the bang of blood in the brain deaf the ear -
 He spins from the bars, but there’s no cage to him
 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 the horizons come.

Out of the different images of animals that Ted Hughes has presented in his poems for many years , it is possible to conclude that animals here serve a certain thematic side . They are not merely used for metaphoric or

proverbial functions as seen in the works of philosophers and allegorists like Aesop or Swift . In Ted Hughes's poetry, animals have their own independent characters, moods and ways of living which might shed some light on their correspondences in the human world.

4.2- Violence in Ted Hughes's Poetry.

Hughes draws an instinctual world of animals where he displays an obsession with vigorous and violent images. The vivid descriptions of animals and their struggle for survival in a hostile world of elemental powers, together with the vigor and vitality displayed in his verses may prompt us to accept the above labels. The primary concern of Hughes is undoubtedly man's life and its quality, although he talks about animals on the surface.

Introducing his first book in the Poetry Book Society Bulletin for September 1957 he declared: "What excites my imagination is the war between vitality and death, and my poems may be said to celebrate the exploits of warriors on either side" (Rawson, 1966:124). For Hughes, life is a continual struggle against odds. What is commonly seen as violence becomes an expression of vitality in Hughes. This principle of vitality is reinforced even by the style and structure of the verses. The poet's obsession with violent images is only a desperate desire to affirm life and vitality, "Hughes's has moved on to express a sense of sterility and

nihilism in modern man's response to life, a response which he connects with the dominance of man's rational objective intellect at the expense of the life of emotion and imagination.” (King, 1979:110)

Violence as depicted by Hughes is the principle of life in Nature. Modern man has distanced himself from this vital source of energy. Since Hughes sees animals as embodiments of energy, his poetic landscape is peopled with animals of various attributes that appear as effective metaphors for a particular human vision. The manifestation of energy in Nature is best exemplified in the life of animals. Man, on the other hand refuses this vital source of energy as something dangerous. Since the poet feels that his generation is deprived of the vital source of energy in Nature, he is all for opening up negotiations. It is these negotiations which resulted in powerful animal poems like "The Hawk in the Rain" and "The Jaguar".

The poems of "Crow Hill" and "November" explore the fury and vitality of the elements of Nature. The poet endows nature with a peculiar vitality that one may notice in the most unlikely places.

The farms are oozing craters in

Sheer sides under the sodden moors:

When *it* is not the wind it is rain,

Neither of which will stop at doors:

One will damp beds and the other shake. (Hughes, 1960: 14)

When Nature releases its elemental energy, both animals and men try to escape from its attack in their own timid ways. This vital aspect of Nature which transcends human understanding is metaphorically depicted in the poem "November":

... In a moment

The fields were jumping and smoking; the thorns

Quivered, riddled with glassy verticals.

I stand on under the welding cold

Watching the tramps face glisten and the drop

on his coat Flash and darken (Hughes, 1960: 49-50)

Both these poems though basically are about the vitality and the elemental energy in Nature, their real functions are to create awareness in man of the superiority of this force. This is achieved even by using verbs and participles in continuous succession variously signifying movement, force and vitality.

In his early poetry Hughes was seen as poet of violence rather than a specifically 'animal' poet. The violence of his imagery attracted the attention of his critics and reviewers besides the technical aspects of his verse. For instance, the volume was reviewed alongside Richard

Eberhart's volume *Great Praises in The Listener* (23 January 1958). "The Hawk in the Rain", in its opinion, was: 'evidently a work of a poet with personality and variety in him' ('Great Praises', *The Listener*.) The reviewer sees the influence of Auden and Hopkins but finds 'the variety, the bold leaps of thought and expression' in the poetry 'hard to deal with'. The reviewer concludes: 'one reads this book with some excitement but also with some reservations' ('Great Praises', *The Listener*, 1958, pp. 169-170).

The Times Literary Supplement (18 October 1957), reviewing the volume along with Dannie Abse's *Tenants of the House*, gives a more enthusiastic reception, recognizing Hughes's worth as a young writer, and states: 'He is a country man sensitive and accurate in his observation of the world; his imagination has been submitted to a natural discipline'. The reviewer obviously sees in Hughes identification with the wildlife of the natural world, but this is put down to the location of Hughes's background. The review goes on to point out what is seen as early weaknesses in the technical side of the writing, 'The rhythm is monotonously loose, and the sensuousness of the imagery meets with no corresponding sensuousness of language'. ('Poems of Substance', 1957:626)

Graham Hough, writing for *Encounter* (November 1957), reviewed Hughes with Robert Graves, Marianne Moore, Dannie Abse, and Thom Gunn's *The Sense of Movement*: 'Generally the rhythms are those of compressed, energetic speech, with long sentences running through many lines, even stanzas, and occasional approaches, not very close or very frequent, to a standard verse line'. (Hough, *Encounter*, 1957:83-87) Hough also prefers the more lyrical poems of the volume: 'It may be only an alien viewpoint that makes me find such poems more finally satisfying than the ones where there is more tumbling violence of imagery and movement'.

The language of these reviews indicates that none of the writers have in any way come to terms with Hughes's subject matter. It is not that they were wrong about what we can see in hindsight as the enduring quality of 'The Thought-Fox' or 'The Jaguar' from this collection, for instance, but that they did not immediately address the moral implications of Hughes's treatment of violence, or animals.

It is the title poem of the volume, 'The Hawk in the Rain', that provides many of the clues to what we can describe as essentially Hughesian animal poetry. In this poem is contained an early development of Hughes's vision of the relation of the animal world and the human world to the whole of creation, and the differences between them. Also,

the alliteration in the first few lines shows the helplessness of the speaker: Words like 'drown', 'drumming' and 'drag up' carry indication of lack of motion and total weakness:

I drown in the drumming plough land, I drag up

Heel after heel from the swallowing of the earth's mouth,

From clay that clutches my each step to the ankle

With the habit of the dogged grave, but the hawk

Effortlessly at height hangs his still eye.

The speaker's progress is then compared to the easy flotation of the bird of prey, its natural airy aptitude in the storm coming as a beautiful opposite. This is the crucial point.

The speaker, the human element in the poem, is all too earth-bound, struggling against the elements, whereas the hawk is above this, literally, perfectly at ease in such tempestuous conditions. This essential difference between the poet and the bird is further developed, the conclusion being that the poet would wish for the hawk's gravity-defying abilities:

While banging wind kills these stubborn hedges,

Thumbs my eyes, throws my breath, tackles my heart,

And rain hacks my head to the bone, the hawk hangs

The diamond point of will that polestars

The sea drowner's endurance: and I,

Bloodily grabbed dazed last-moment-counting

Morsel in the earth's mouth, strain towards the master

Fulcrum of violence where the hawk hangs still.

In this poem there are further stages of the development of his animal themes. One is the idea of the enduring and harsh aspect of Nature, and the attempts of man and beast to fight it. An example of this is seen in a later poem, 'Crow Hill' from *Lupercal*, which deals with the efforts of farmers and animals alike to 'hold off the elements. In the final lines of this piece Hughes returns to the image of the hawk wrestling with the weather ('When it is not wind it is rain / Neither of which will stop at doors') as an example of the struggle against the overpower of the force of Nature:

What humbles these hills has raised

The arrogance of blood and bone,

And thrown the hawk upon the wind,

And lit the fox in the dripping ground.

Here the hawk's struggle is with the power of the air. But in 'The Hawk in the Rain' the bird is shown to have perfectly balanced itself against this force, which is contrasted with the less successful struggle of the 'I' in the poem. This is emphasized in the repetition and insistence on the idea of the hawk hanging, still, against the sky ('hangs his still eye', 'hangs the diamond point of will'). The violence and death are contained within the poem. The author is yearning for that 'master-fulcrum of violence' which the hawk has totally within its control, and of which it is an essential part. The idea of laboring has already been mentioned, and will become an important part of Hughes's later ideas about man's place within the natural world, but here the poet is laboring, pounding the language into form to achieve the effect of driving rain, and in describing the physical and mental struggle towards an end that couldn't be achieved.

4.3 - Lyrical Poems

Birthday Letters

As anyone who has read about Ted Hughes knows, *Birthday Letters* is Hughes's account of his marriage to Sylvia Plath, which began as a love match between two gifted and ambitious young poets and ended with Plath's suicide in 1963 at the age of thirty, after Hughes had left her for another woman. When Ted Hughes met Sylvia Plath at a party in

Cambridge in 1956, she was a twenty-four year old Fulbright Scholar at Newnham College, a tense, lovely girl with long American legs and a small scar on her face. The tall, dourly handsome Hughes, Plath wrote, was “the only man I’ve met yet here who’d be strong enough to be equal with” (Malcolm, 1994: 36). Their attraction was immediate and volcanic. Their first kiss ended with Plath biting Hughes on the cheek so hard that she drew blood. “The swelling ring moat of tooth-marks,” he writes in “St Botolph’s,” “. . . was to brand my face for the next month” (pp. 15).

Four months after their first meeting, Hughes and Plath were married. While she completed the second year of her Fulbright, he taught at a secondary school in Cambridge. The following year they moved to Boston, not far from where Plath had grown up and gone to college. Plath taught at Smith College and studied poetry with Robert Lowell. Hughes got a teaching job at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. They traveled in the United States and Europe and in 1959 returned to England. In 1960 they had their first child, a girl named Frieda Rebecca. A son, Nicholas Farrer, was born in 1962. (*The Times*, 1998:19)

Birthday Letters has gained the attention of many poets, critics, feminists, and journalists in a positive and negative manner. In fact, this collection of poems was notably recognized not only because of its poetic significance but also mostly for unveiling the secrets of the life of its

writer. Hughes wrote these poems 35 years after the death of his wife Sylvia Plath. From a modern psychoanalytical perspective, it is interpreted later the motivation that urged Hughes to break his long silence and communicate the tragedy of his life. Hughes descends into his own deep world in an attempt, maybe, to mourn his beloved wife and to relieve him-self from the burden of guilt that might have haunted him through all these years. Finally, his motivation might have been a desire to free himself from the burden of his trauma. Hughes's letters can be interpreted from different points of views depending on how the reader judges Hughes's relationship with his wife Plath; was he her murderer, or was he the victim?

The story of their marriage, at least from Plath's point of view, was already very familiar. *Birthday Letters* is an attempt to adjust the public record in the wake of her confessions and the mass of commentary which has grown up around them. 'From the time Sylvia became a cultural heroine, and was taken over by the feminists', Hughes had observed:

I have been portrayed as the villain of the piece
and nothing will help in the slightest. So I have
preferred to remain silent and not to give my

version, avoiding adding fuel to the blaze. (*The Daily Telegraph* (Interview),1998)

The journey that Hughes chooses to end his pain began when he decided to publish *Birthday Letters*, not when he started to compose the text. When he kept these particular poems imprisoned in his own papers for 35 years, he was not yet able to release his sorrows, and remained trapped in his traumatic situation. Although he continued his life producing poetry, and although he was capable of marrying other women, he appeared to be haunted by the soul of his deceased wife Plath. In fact, the title of these poems suggests the birth of a new “self”. As Freud suggests: “the fact is... that when the work of mourning is completed, the ego becomes free and inhabited again” (Fiorini, 2009:166). The first poem of his collection is entitled “The Fulbright Scholar”, and the title hints at the fascination that Hughes held for education and excellence.

The language Hughes uses shows uncertainty, for example he uses the word “maybe” twice, indicating his confused perception:

Your face. No doubt I scanned particularly

The girls. Maybe I noticed you.

Maybe I weighed you up, feeling unlikely.

Noted your long hair, loose waves

You Veronica lake bang. Not what it hid. (Hughes, "Fulbright Scholars", 1998:8-9)

It is this confusion that struggles inside the adult Hughes, not the youthful one. This poem presents a flashback of incidents in an attempt to comprehend or analyze the remote past. Hughes is giving a double interpretation because he wants to show that what once seemed clear, noble, magnificent, and breathtaking might be just the misinterpretations of a fascinated, 25-year-old. Also, he addresses his wife's double personality in an attempt to accuse her:

And your grin

Your exaggerated American

Grin for the cameras, the judges, the strangers, the frightener

(Hughes, "Fulbright Scholars", 1998:8-9)

He is suggesting that her real personality is hidden behind this smile which she shows to the public which in turn accused Hughes of driving her to suicide. Then, he moves to give a symbolic image alluding to Eve's apple that deprived Adam of Eden. The peach that he describes as the "first fresh" fruit he ever tasted resembles the first impression of

love that later dragged him to his hell. Finally, the full-grown Hughes confesses the misinterpretation and ill judgment of the 25-year-old lover he used to be:

At twenty-five I was dumbfounded afresh

By my ignorance of the simplest things (Hughes, 1998:8-9)

Hughes continues to analyze Plath's psychiatric disorders and unstable personality in a way to relieve his own sense of guilt. He is not only screaming out loud his innocence but also blaming her for his own misery. In "Sam", he juxtaposes himself with the horse that once belonged to Plath.

It was all of a piece to you

That was your horse, the white claim stallion, Sam,

Decided he'd had enough

And started home at a gallop. I can live

Your incredulity, your certainly

That this was it, you lost your

Stirrups. He galloped

Straight down the white line of the Barton Road.

You lost your reins. You lost your seat. (Hughes, Sam, 1998:10)

In the poem, Hughes claims that the horse “decided he’d had enough” of Plath antics. Indeed, this line shows that Hughes, like her horse, cannot sustain the befuddled woman who lost her “rein,” her “stirrup,” and her “seat.” Hughes refers to her unstable condition by indicating to her the polar opposites of her personality: “incredulity” and “certainty.” All these images combine to show that Hughes understands Plath’s mental illness which led to her suicide. He reveals his admiration of her poetry and he claims that her talent as a poet was the only sober part of her brain. Later, Hughes asks Plath a rhetorical question, “How did you hang on?” This question reflects Hughes’s astonishment as to how this vulnerable, fragile creature could save herself from a brutal unhorsing, yet put an end to her life later on? Hughes ends his poem with the lines:

When I jumped a fence you strangled me

One giddy moment, then fell off

Flung yourself off and under my feet to trip me

And tripped me and lay dead. Over in a flash (Hughes, "Sam", 1998:10)

These closing lines appear to function as a self-defense mechanism not only for the benefit of his accusers but also for his own self and consciousness. The choice of his vocabulary in this stanza presents him as a mad woman's prey rather than a murderer. In fact, this must be understood in accordance with what Freud pointed out about the traumatic event. E. Ann Kaplan interprets Freudian theory as arguing that the way a person reacts to a traumatic event depends on "one's individual psychic history, on memories inevitably mixed with fantasies of prior catastrophes, and on the particular cultural and political context with which a catastrophe takes place" (Kaplan, 2005: 1-20). In remembering the old incident, Hughes is indirectly reacting to the traumatic event caused by Plath's life with him and her suicide later. Plath is portrayed as suffering from traumatic events that she could not overcome, and they eventually led to her death.

In "18 Rugby Street," Hughes continues to recall the memories of his relationship with Plath and he points to their first sexual encounter in the eponymous 18, Rugby Street. He portrays the setting in interesting descriptive images of the four floors where the "love-struggles" begins.

He explains that at that period of time, he thought of his love for Plath as an ordinary love affair, just another exciting adventure. However, as he grows up and becomes mature, he reaches the truth that their love is unusual, or unordinary. In this poem, Hughes reveals his admiration for the ancient Cretan site of Knossos and interestingly identifies Plath with legendary images:

Whoever enters it [the house] enters a labyrinth

A Knossos of coincidence! And you are in it. (Hughes, "The 18 Rugby Street", 1998:22)

Hughes is trying to convey that entering this labyrinth, he became possessed and this possession provoked him to write this poem and other poems on his relation with Plath. The house he recalls as having his first intimate relation with Plath in is identified as the labyrinth. It is a cursed place because Hughes presents the depressing fate of the two other women who used to live in that place. The Belgian girl Hughes mentions is one whom he did not take much notice of at that time, gassed her-self just like Plath would. As for Suzan, the other woman, she died of leukemia. The image of Plath's father is recalled in this poem to stress the idea that the real conflict of Plath's disorder was the image of her dead father, and not Hughes's relation with her, claiming, "your journal told

me the story of your torture”. In this line, Hughes continues to convey that Plath was a mysterious person and that it is obvious that he could not understand her at that point in time. Her trip which he “guessed” to be to a “euphoric American Europe” was in fact a fleeting visit to London on her way to Paris to see Richard Sassoon with whom she had a love affair. This information was mentioned in her journal.

The common focus of most of the poems in *Birthday Letters* should not obscure Hughes’s specific approach to his subject and the range of style. While it is an anatomy of an unhappy matrimony, the collection also embraces nostalgic remembrances (as in ‘Fulbright Scholars’); Hughes’ delight in details of place and setting in the context of extensive narratives (‘18 Rugby Street’); celebratory observations of Plath’s appearance and attire (as in the beautiful wedding poem, ‘A Pink Wool Knitted Dress’), and a sequence of poems about American landscapes in which Hughes responds to the new world and its creatures. Darker elements colour some of these works: in Dakota, the Badlands (in the poem with that title) force the couple to confront their own emotional desolation:

‘Maybe it’s the earth’,

You said. ‘Or maybe it’s ourselves.

This emptiness is sucking something out of us.

Here where there's only death, maybe our life

Is terrifying. Maybe it's the life

In us

Frightening the earth, and frightening us'.

Hughes always seems to misunderstand his wife at that time. As a matter of fact, the image of love as labyrinth or a metaphorical place that is inescapable reappears in his poem "Your Paris"⁷⁸:

Was a desk in a pension

Where your letters

Waited for him unopened. Was a labyrinth

Where you still hurtled, scattering tears.

Was a dream where you could not

Wake or find the exit or

The Minotaur to put a blessed end

To the torment.

Indeed, in this poem Hughes reveals his own perception of how Plath saw Paris. Apparently, Hughes was not convinced of Plath's perception of Paris because he writes, "I kept my Paris from you". It should be noted that at that time Paris was recovering from the carnage of WWII and the Nazi occupation. Indeed, Hughes is trying to present that Plath was living in an illusionary world far from reality. He intently presents the image of the "Hotel des Deux Continents" in an excellent metaphorical way to hint at the duality of Plath's personality. Hughes's Paris was more real because he could see the damaged buildings and could feel the impact of devastation on its citizens where he says "I was a ghost watcher". The people were really traumatized by the war, so it was as though they turned into ghosts. However, her Paris was "anecdotal aesthetic;" a distorted image out of her unstable psychological condition that urged her to see what she believed, not the real world. Hughes continues to justify himself and proposes the image of the dog as a symbol of him being the loyally protective and true lover regardless of her distorted images and illogical perception.

The haunting of Plath by her father's death is raised again. Hughes calls her father "your torture" in an implication of her deep attachment to a past long gone. This vision is presented to understand why Hughes

describes her as “what walked besides me was flayed”. Hughes wants to stress the idea that she was like a ghost in his life and he did not understand this fact until he had matured. As a result, he accuses her of using misleading language:

Into a language, utterly new to me

With conjectural, hopelessly wrong meanings

You gave me no hint how, at every corner.

He is deceived by her calm appearance and her strange language that became clear after her death.

Hughes’s *Birthday Letters* is the imprisoned trauma that needed to be healed and set free. Psychoanalytic theories suggest that when the wound is buried in our unconscious, it haunts us and prevents us from understanding it. However, when it is spoken out loud, the life becomes ready to proceed. As Derrida suggests in his book *Specters of Marx*:

If I am getting ready to speak at length about ghosts, inheritance, and generations, generations of ghosts, which is to say about certain others who are not present, nor presently living, either to us or to outside, it is in the name of justice. And this being- with specters would also be, not only, a politics of memory, of inheritance, and of generations (1994:xviii).

After burying his emotions for 35 years, Hughes wanted to speak about that ghost that haunted him in order to be loyal to the memory of his beloved, yet more to his own self. His publication of the poems freed himself from a very long descent and it succeeded to help him overcome the scars that overwhelmed and trapped him for years. *Birthday Letters* resembles the anabasis of Hughes that was achieved just a couple of years before his death. Whether the truth was revealed in Hughes's Letters or not remains a mystery since what has been quoted reflects only a single side of the story.

Erica Wagner, in her commentary on the story of *Birthday Letters* entitled *Ariel's Gift*, says that:

The difficulty and peculiarity of this poem reflect the complex feelings that jolt the poet like electricity: the joy of his son's bloody birth tangled with the blood of death, with the imagery of a hare killed not once but twice. The swift, elfin hare is a mythic animal in many cultures. To the ancient Egyptians, its hieroglyph signified the concept of being; in ancient Greece the lunar goddess, Hecate, was associated with the hare - the Chinese; too associate it with the moon and augury. It is also a symbol of fecundity and therefore particularly appropriate to this poem, though its image has drawn Hughes before. (Wagner, 2000:140)

She then goes on to quote a portion from 'The Hare' from *What is the Truth?* Interesting though the hare associations are, there is nothing to suggest the Greek or Chinese myths in this particular poem, however. Sometimes Hughes takes up animal imagery that Plath had used in her poetry, for instance in the poem 'The Bee God', which reflects Plath's poem 'The Bee Meeting', where he associates the bees with her father. The bees too, carry the capacity for electricity ('As bees planted their volts, their thudding electrodes'), however in this poem the bees are invested with a religiosity, as the salmon are in *River*, and described as: 'Fanatics for their God, the God of the Bees'. 'Trophies', like Plath's 'Pursuit' both deal with a panther. Plath wrote her poem for Hughes shortly after their first meeting, and dedicated it to him. It is to Plath's panther that Hughes makes reference in the lines:

After forty years

The whiff of that beast, off the dry pages,

Lifts the hair on the back of my hands.

Chapter Five

Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1- Conclusion

It has become clear that Hughes's poetry is marked by "violence". His diction and metaphors are often so brutal and the main emphasis of his poetry is given to the animal world. It is not the world of the poor with its material and economic needs, but the modern over-civilized world where man is oppressed by the very progress he has aspired to create. And Ted Hughes portrays man as weak and helpless individual in brutal world. Yet, no matter how meaningless these duties are, man goes on. They bring him money, material comfort, physical rest, but also uneasiness, dissatisfaction and frustration. Everything is apparently so easy that mechanical man does not dare to rebel against those devices which make him less and less human.

Ted Hughes pictures a world which is losing its qualities, an absurd, dark and frantic world. However, by giving us a negative vision of the universe by means of a "violent" language he seems to want to awake other men to the ugliness, the destructiveness mechanization that has been made. Furthermore, it seems he wants us to share this sinister

vision with him not for a sadistic pleasure in enjoying the world's nothingness; it is with the myth of Crow that he transmits this positive message.

When *The Hawk in the Rain* and *Lupercal* appeared, most critics approved, of the "violence" contained in these books. In them Ted Hughes focuses on the violence of the big, predatory animals and the "violence" of the World War One. This literal "violence" of the animals and of a distant war was then appreciated, though a few critics complained of some of the "violent" linguistic devices used by Hughes. In *Wodow* Hughes no longer used predators as his heroes. He chose small animals of prey to represent the victims of man and society.

Perhaps one of the facts that shocks most readers is the contrast Hughes draws between the animal violence which is direct and honest and man's violence, which is indirect, and treacherous. The animal's violence is a flexible and spontaneous instinct to survive, whereas man's violence is the monomaniacal wish to annihilate, to smash and to kill.

His poetry is the "truthful" expression of a man faithful to the values he believes in. Hughes is a man who never tries to minimize his emotions, feelings and thoughts. He presents the world and man as he sees and feels them. And Hughes is a tough, complex man who rejects any form of compromise.

(1) How does the relation between the recurrent images of animals arouse various feelings and meanings?

Ted Hughes's poetry is widely known for its animal imagery; by juxtaposing the image of wild animals such as the hawk, the fox or the deer to ambiguous vocabulary, he manages to describe the process of writing a poem. But it is not always done following the same pattern; indeed each poem uses animals in different ways, which allows the poet to depict different facets of the process of writing poems. The Thought-Fox constructs a parallel between this process and a wild fox. As part from writing, his animals do comment on the position of man which is miserable and painful.

(2) To what extent is the duality of cordiality and aversion a central issue in Ted Hughes's poetry?

If Ted Hughes writes, emphasizing animals, one can easily notice that he is not happy with human beings. Thus he shows a great interest in animals life; crows, ravens, jaguars and horses. Using these and many others is evidence that he admires the graceful and powerful sides of animals which are absent in human beings.

(3) What are the symbols informing Ted Hughes's poetry?

The way Ted Hughes writes his poems is marked by using symbols such as "The Thought Fox". The fox that the poet perceives is a symbol 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 describes the process of the composition of a poem 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 subject of nature fascinates Hughes much that whether he depicts nature or using 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*.

5.2- Recommendations

Anyone who reads Ted Hughes's poetry must understand its significance, what exactly he means with it and how he relates animalism to the man world. The reader must know Hughes's vision shown through his writing. His poetry was affected by his personal life, especially the suicide of his beloved wife, Sylvia Plath. These reasons attract researchers to discover the significances and symbols in his poems.

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