

**REPRESENTATION OF SYMBOLIC IDENTITY IN TED HUGHE'S
POETRY****SK.REHENA**

Asst. Professor of English

P.V.P.Siddhartha Institute of Technology

Kanuru, Vijayawada

jarina.2005@gmail.com

Abstract

Edward James Hughes or Ted Hughes poetic career began with a volume of poems named "The Hawk in the Rain". In these poems Hughes has employed vivid metaphors to convey the idea which is the theme of the particular poem; and the metaphors are highly original. Such as a thought entering a poet's mind like a fox attacking its victim and also house as a ship sailing on a wildly treacherous sea. Hughes thoughts from the early poetry "The Hawk in the Rain" to the later poetry "The River" were essential signs of life in the animals as well as in the poetic imagination. In my paper I focused on how most of the Hughes poems reflected his early impressions of rural surroundings like animals, birds, Calder valley and also World War 1 & II. If war was a profound influence on Ted Hughes as a child, the region, where he was born, was another strong influence. He was born in the Calder Valley and his childhood impressions of this valley remained permanently engraved on his mind and which appeared in the volume entitled "The River". This paper elaborates and inspects these metaphors to disclose the symbolic identity created in the back of animal visage.

Key words: Myths, metaphors, animals, imagination and symbolism.

Introduction:

In the writings of Ted Hughes, a reader may find certain different aspects but his most celebrated and discussed ones are- 'war' and 'animal' subject matters. Of these two, if one takes the second area, it will be found that no other poet excelled as much as Ted Hughes to create metaphors in animal imageries. Ted Hughes has twenty eight animal poems which present his indirect attempt to describe the animal identity in human beings. In many of these twenty eight poems, he glorified the instinctive, impulsive nature of vulnerable and sometimes exotic animals. He glorified the animal view of the surroundings. He presented animals as daunting, dominating and unafraid in any circumstances. Sometimes, he positively described the cruelty, the vehemence in them. The readers of Ted Hughes often shared a different view of animals and their nature in interpreting his poems. Many went on to say that this glorification of animal life is a kind of satire to the rigid and chained life of human beings. Human beings have to camouflage their basic instincts as those are sometimes considered to be inherent flaws and weaknesses, demeaning their worth as the nature's best creations but such is not the case with the animals. Animals are free to be the slaves of their instincts unlike the superior creations, who are not allowed to respond to their inner calls and are restrained by the social restraints. So, thinkers often compare animal and human nature. But the question arises whether these animals have any further identity as a whole except this comparison. The study tries to find out the best suitable answer to this question by interpreting the violent animals directly as humans instead of only comparing them with humans.

For the argument raised above, there will be detailed analysis of the following poems: "Pike", venting the cruelty and the killer instinct of this fish; "The Jaguar", offering an



imprisoned Jaguar but surprisingly very expressive for the visitors; “The Thought Fox”, conveying a very unusual way of describing the production of a poem; “Hawk Roosting”, expressing controversy in the critics’ opinions about the interpretation of the hawk; “The Crow” poems, suggesting an alternative voice in this rigid, “industrialized mass society”.

According to A Critic, a myth may be regarded as “archaic superstition”. Every poet, says this critic, is a myth-maker or a person who renames the world by re-ordering familiar words or making new names. By putting words, words with new meanings, together, a poet may articulate mythic utterances in his poems. Hughes has himself tried to throw some light on the reason why he has had recourse to myths in his poetry. He has said that the human mind has been rejecting religion as a fraud because of the advances made by scientific knowledge, and that the human mind has, on modern times, been discarding the world of man as a bundle of fairy tales and as a relic of primeval superstitions. Without religion the energies of instinct and feeling in man have become dehumanized, and the whole inner world has become elemental, chaotic, and more primitive, beyond our control. The result of all this, according to Hughes, is a culture out of touch with Nature, or Very little touch with Nature. Then Nature Appears to man chaotic and dangerous. Freudian psychology, says Hughes, cures mentally sick persons by bringing into their conscious minds what had been repressed by them and what had, therefore travelled down into their subconscious minds where it works havoc. The best way to bring the submerged feelings, thoughts or desires into the conscious mind is to give them some shape so that they can become a part of their personalities. This can be done by means of a fantasy, that is, myths in the poems and stories.

The use of myth aims at either expelling or accommodating some evil, such as the alienation of mind and body, or the cruel stare of Nature. The poet According to Hughes is the healer of the community as well as of himself. The poet is a medicine- man, or a “shaman” using myths to accomplish his mission of healing or of dispelling fear or a sense of danger or a feeling of insecurity from the minds of human beings. And the poet restores not only others to achieve mental equilibrium and tranquility, but helps himself also. One of the myths which always inspired Hughes, relates to “the white goddess” or “the Nature goddess” in her three aspects of maiden, mother and crone, (Persephone, Demeter and Hecate).This goddess is both Beneficent and destructive. He uses this myth like that of Wordsworth’s view as Nature is both terrifying and consoling.

Hughes Presented different dimensions in his poems. If we consider “Crow” and “River”, entirely variant moods can be observed. The poems in the volume Entitled “Crow”, though seemingly about the bird known as the Crow, actually have a deeply philosophical significance. The poems in this volume cannot merely be classified as animal poems, though the bird Crow certainly belongs to the animal world. These poems are much more than animal poems; and they have much wider and deeper implications. These poems are a satire on the prevailing religious beliefs of the people and more particularly on the biblical doctrines regarding the Creation of man, and man’s fall from grace. They are also a satire on Christianity and Christian beliefs. As Keith Sagar Points out, these poems are mainly about Crow’s mistakes, his mutually destructive encounters with the “Energies”, His ego-death, his first perceptions of conscience, his initial steps towards reconstituting himself and re-



interpreting the world. In one of the Crow poem called Crow Blacker than Ever is a kind of final summary of Crow's original mythic propose on the earth. Creation is proving a failure; God and man have turned away from each other in mutual disgust; but Crow steps in and nail them together forever:

Then heaven and earth creaked at the joint

Which became gangrenous and stank_____

A horror beyond redemption

Crow here achieved the impossible union of divinity and earthly flesh, Crow in his role as bicolor, which means handy manor one who believes in doing things by one's own initiative and efforts, feels jubilant: "This is my Creation". In this poem Hughes Flashed on most of the errors committed by mankind, so that this search for the black beast gradually assumes the proportions of man's recent ecological devastation of Mother Nature.

Crow roasted the earth to a clinker, he charged into space_____

Where is the Black Beast?

Crow does not know that the black beast may after all be found in his own being. According to Stan Smith "Crow offers a grim, sardonic vision of a world in which the worst has already happened: in the raucous acerbic tones of Donne's satires it submits all human pretensions to Crow's cold nihilistic scrutiny." Finally The Protagonist Crow remains unredeemed and appears as a one-legged, brainless creature, a rag of himself. This poem presents dark tone of Hughes poetry and Critics say that it has little personal element because he lost his wife.

Hughes shifts his mood in his later poems like "Remains of Elmet" and "The River". Hughes here shows himself in a rare mood. These poems essentially Words worthian because of their emphasis on the tranquilizing effect of a silent scene of Nature. Hughe's attitude to, and treatment of, Nature distinguishes him from almost all other poets. Nature as an independent theme in poetry came into prominence in the work of the Romantic poets____ Words worth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelly and Keats. Each of the Romantic Poets had a distinctive attitude to Nature in his own way though, of course, there were certain marked similarities in their treatment of the subject. Shelly showed a preference for the dynamic aspects of Nature, such as the West wind and the cloud. Byron had a preference for the huge and gigantic aspects of Nature, such as mountains, lakes and oceans. Keats dwelt mainly upon the tranquil and peaceful aspects of Nature, such as the landscape in calm weather and mainly he was attracted by the aesthetic appeal of Nature as illustrated in his poems. Words, the greatest of all the Nature poets in English literature, saw the existence of a divine spirit in all objects of Nature and at the same time, he believed in the educative and moral value of Nature for human beings. In his view, Nature was the best mother, guardian, and nurse of man.

Hughes's Nature imagery is most graphic. We find his Nature- imagery not only to be most vivid but also couched in striking words and original phrases. He uses all his impressions linguistic power and skill to convey to us his close observation of Nature and his



observations of nature scenery. Both subjectively and objectively, "The River" is more unified than any other poem. This poem deals with the theme, the River. The River is a naturalist Psalter. Where, the black and white photographs of Remains of Elmet suggested a quest through memory of symbols and values as mysterious characters and spaces of some ancient text. Many lush colour photographs by Peter Keen complement a new endeavor__ to tell about a real world that exists, fully adequate right before the eyes.

Conclusion:

Hughes is aware of all aspects of Nature. Hughes presented violence or crude side of the Nature in the Crow but in the River tranquility and hope for the new and real world. It is undoubted that Ted Hughes is a gifted poet who has rich imagination and originality of expression. The Symbolism of animal world in his works leaves with reader a sense of primitive impulse, which deeply affected both our emotions and ration. His works help modern man recognize their own identity as both human and animals, though they might be reluctant to acknowledge their deepest, instinctual side as animals is gradually losing. His increasingly deep concerns about the relationship between human and animals also enlighten human beings' living way in this world that they should combine both human nature and animal nature to be wholeness. Human and animals can genially live together to establish a peaceful, new world, since human beings are also animals somehow.

References:

1. Hasan, S. M. (2012). *Ted Hughes' Animal Poems: An Embodiment of Violence or Vitality? The Dawn Journal*, 1 (2), 174-188.
2. Hughes, T. (1960). *Lupercal*. London: Faber and Faber. Hughes, T. (1967). *Poetry in the Making*. London: Faber and Faber.
3. Hughes, T. (1982). *Selected Poems 1957-1981*. London: Faber and Faber Limited. Hughes, T. (1957). *The Hawk in the Rain*. London: Faber and Faber.
4. Jonson, B. (1967). *Volpone or The Fox*. (D. Cook, Ed.) London: Routledge.
5. Lovelace, R., & Wilkinson, C. H. (1925). *The Poems of Richard Lovelace*. The Calrendon Press . Naeem, M. (2010, December 10). *Major Themes in the Poetry of Ted Hughes*. Retrieved from
6. <http://neoenglishsystem.blogspot.com/2010/12/major-themes-in-poetry-of-ted-hughes.html> Sagar, K. (n.d.). *Keith Sagar Literary Critic and Poet*. Retrieved from Keith Sagar: <http://www.keithsagar.co.uk/Downloads/Hughes/Ted%20Hughes%20Fishing%20and%20Poetry.pdf>
7. Shekhawat, P. A. (2012). *The Cohesive Use of Animal Imagery in the Poems of Ted Hughes A Study*. (G. B. Prof, Ed.) *The Indian Review of World Literature in English*, 8, 5.
8. Walcott, D. A. (1962). *In a Green Night: Poems 1948-1960*. London: London, J. Cape. Walder, D. (1987). *Open Guide to Literature*. Philadelphia: Open University Press.
9. John Lucas (1986). "Modern English Poetry from Hardy to Hughes".
10. Keityh Sagar (1985). "The Art of Ted Hughes". Orient Longman Pvt. Ltd.
11. Keith Sagar (1990). "The Achievements of Ted Hughes". Orient Longman Pvt. Ltd.