

The Cohesive Use of Animal Imagery in the Poems of Ted Hughes - A Study

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Edward James Hughes (17 August 1930 - 28 October 1998), popularly known as Ted Hughes, was the youngest child of William Henry Hughes and Edith Farrar Hughes. He was an English poet and a British Poet Laureate from 1984 until his death on 28 October 1998. Hughes was a multitalented poet and he is best acknowledged for creating influential poems that feature bold metaphors, echoing language, imagery, and speech rhythms. Hughes's poetry, according to Seamus Heaney reflects these traits along with, "racial memory, animal instinct and poetic imagination all flow into one another with an exact sensuousness." Hughes's poetry signals a spectacular departure from the prevailing modes of the period. Unlike R.S. Thomas & Tom Gunn who preferred to write on the bleak beauty of the British Landscapes Ted Hughes preferred to differ by choosing to focus his poetic works to root in nature and, in particular, the innocent coarseness of animals.

Ted Hughes has composed over fusion of elegance and fervor in the natural world. Animals in the poems of Hughes are metaphor for his views on life. The animals whom 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. Animals serve as a metaphor for his view on life. His poems show that animals struggle out for the survival of the fittest in the same way that humans strive for ascendancy and success.

To relate Ted Hughes Captures animal to express his thoughts I have taken the following poetry for my study: *Hawk Roosting*, this expresses the royal nature of animals who consider themselves superior over animals, *Lupercal*, sealed Hughes' including as a major poet and includes many of his most popular evocations of animals, including the Archive-featured *Pike* the poem with malicious grin, *Thought fox*, *Crow poems*, *the Hawk in the Rain*, *Moortown Diary*. The Animal imagery equipped in these poems show that Hughes was one of the greatest poets of the natural world. In the above mentioned remarkable collection of poems he gives voice to some of the animals around us. The animal characters that he creates are distinct like Fox, Horses amusing like the animals of *Moortown Diary*, Kingly like Hawk and ferocious like Pike. The marvelous lightness of the poems endears these animals to curious

readers who are inquisitive about them. Apart from the above mentioned ones Ted Hughes has written 28 whimsical, lyrical and robust animal poems the animals of these poems include: The mole, the cat, the squirrel, the donkey, and many others.

For the purpose of elaborate discussion I will take these poems one by one. I propose to begin with *Hawk Roosting*. The poem written in first person as a dramatic monologue creates a comparison in the readers mind, between the hawk and an egoistic dictator. In this poem Ted Hughes portrays the thought process that goes in the mind of the Hawk and relates it with the mind of every megalomaniac who considers other people around him as of no or little importance. The poem reverberates with despotic phrases and turns of expression. The hawk lives according to the rules designed by him and "No arguments assert" his "right." This poem shows that this is a world where might is right. The Hawk says in violent chillingly insightful manner, 'I kill where I please because it is all mine'. The massive egotism running through the poem is, again, telling in its implications for the human world. Yet the unstated theme lying underneath the hawk's soliloquy is this, that the hawk is a creation of Nature; its personality is framed and dictated by Nature. This Hawk is shown as a tyrant who does not listen to the people around. This has allegorical significance in reference to human beings that unrestrained power in human beings when twisted and deformed, leads only to tyranny and oppression. *Hawk Roosting* of Ted Hughes has similarity with imperial majesty of Tennyson's *Eagle* (1851). Ekbert Faas quotes Hughes who once said to him in an interview that poetry is "an exploration of the genuine self" is one way to "unlock the doors of those many mansions inside the head and express something-of the information that presses in on us". (82) Many scholars, such as Ben Howard, suggest that Hughes "has often seemed the celebrant, if not the proponent of violence and destruction" (253). This poem signifies self-assertion the following lines reveal it at fullest:

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.

"I", in the poem a sign of the Supreme Ego of the hawk as he sits on top of the 'wood' that stands for his kingdom. His world is limited between his hooked head and hooked feet. For action does not define him, rather, he defines action. This is no falsifying dream, a castle built in the air, but the universal truth. He dreams about "in sleep rehearse perfect kills and eat." Therefore, it is not the basic necessity of killing and eating that concerns him, but the style of it. Thus the hawk transforms into a metaphor of Supreme arrogance of Man where he is haunted by power. The trees are also symbol height or achievements, enabling him to reach new heights. The air's buoyancy enables him to float in the air, the

suns rays lend him hope. These metaphoric description shows that even circumstances support him. He as sits over the tree it appears to him as if the earth is laid down for his inspection.

My feet are locked upon the rough bark.
It took the whole of Creation
To produce my foot, my each feather:
Now I hold Creation in my foot.

Creation here refers to God (as the word is capitalized) and by his flying up he can revolve around Creation. The line is an example of a metaphysical conceit. Hawk asserts triumphantly: "I kill where I please because it is all mine." Critics like Carol Bere, Colin Falck, and Christopher Porterfield etc point out that these lines reflect Fascism. Hawk's way of life pertains to the tearing off all heads; suggesting that he is above all moral and social laws. He decides the allotment of death. The path of his flight through the bones of the living is direct; there are no two ways about it. On an ending note, he declares that the sun is behind him. He has eclipsed the sun. To put it further, the sun lives in his shadow. The composition of the entire universe is susceptible to change within fractions of seconds. Nothing is constant, as times passes. However, the Hawk states that nothing has changed here, as his eye has not permitted it to. The word eye denotes both 'vision' and "insight". The last line functions as an open challenge to the universal fact that change is inevitable:

"I am going to keep things like this."

In this poem the hawk is the I-narrator who identifies with images of earth and water, thus emphasizes about his emotional connection to the world. The hawk here apparently defies natural laws, yet finally succumbs to them. Hughes symbolizes the hawk as culture and nature, both the head and the heart of nature. The following lines reveals image of an imprisoned force:

He spins from the bars, but there's no cage to him
More than to the visionary his cell:
His stride is wildernesses of freedom:

The Hawk in the Rain is an example of use of small poetic charms which contain powerful animal energies. In an interview with Faas Hughes says that this poem is written "in an effort to create an absolutely still language," to express these small, "self-contained symbolic creatures who are so much full of energy." In this poem the poet expresses his feelings as he sees the Hawk.

"Bloodily grabbed dazed last-moment-counting
Morsel in the earth's mouth, strain to the master
Fulcrum of violence where the hawk hangs still"

The harsh rhythms and diction, is influenced by Anglo-Saxon style, its vivid, grandiose imagery established reputation of Ted Hughes as a poet of international importance. In this collection Hughes has used those themes which his contemporary movement poets thought should be repressed. He has used the primitive energy and the power of the unconscious which the Movement poets never used. This collection includes the title poem; *The Hawk in the Rain* this poem has a 'language that draws attention to itself. In this poem there is a thin line drawn over an image of an imprisoned force, and the inhibited violence of it, summarizes everything that is great about Hughes. Here the Hawk shown is not wild and ferocious as the Hawk of *Hawk Roosting*. This can be compared to *Wind Hover* (1860) by GM Hopkins. *The Thought-Fox* is another important animal allegory poem of this collection.

The poem *The Thought-Fox* is about journey of writing a poem. This all happens in the room of the poet where the poet is sitting trying to compose a poem. At this moment the poet senses presence of an animal probably a fox, though the body of this animal is invisible, but it walks its way forward nervously through the dark this disturbs the poet:

Through the window I see no star;
Something more near
Though deeper within darkness
Is entering the loneliness.

The fox that is seen hidden in these lines is covered with snow because of the snow the fox's nose had become cold and damp, twitching moistly and gently. Fox is breathing with this wet nose anxiously in the darkness. Here the poet uses simile, and withholds the subject with such clarity so that the fox emerges slowly out of the shapelessness of the snow. In the beginning of the poem the figure of Fox is not clearly visible however with the help of phrases like 'lame shadow' poet is able to evoke a more precise image of the fox. There are certain action phrases in the poem that explain peculiar movements of the fox such as holding one front-paw in mid-air, and then moves off again like a limping animal. Some of the words are intentionally left incomplete to show pausing moment of fox at the outer edge of some trees. The gap between the stanzas indicates effectively the manner in which the fox, after hesitating warily shoots across:

'Of a body that is bold to come/across clearings...'

In the last stanza of the poem the poet is seen very tensed and worried. Though by this stanza the poem is about to be fully composed yet at the same time it expresses an almost predatory thrill; it is as though the fox has successfully been lured into a hunter's trap. The final line-'the page is printed'-explains the defenseless death of the 'thought-fox'. Towards the end of the poem, the fox is completely and immediately

alive; this is because it has been pinned so artfully upon the page. And the moment any reader reads the poem the fox is alive and walks in the head of the readers. Richard Webster says that in the poem there is an impulse which underlies throughout it is an urge towards which Hughes has himself drawn attention by repeatedly comparing the act of poetic creation to the process of capturing or killing small animals. According to the critic in the last stanza poet is seen as playing a kind of imaginative game in which he attempts to outstare the fox looking straight into its eyes as it comes closer and closer and refusing to move, refusing to recoil. Similarly even the fox itself does not shy away or deviate from its course. It is almost as though, in doing this fox has successfully proved that though it was initially nervous, circumspect, and as soft and delicate as the dark snow, it is not 'feminine' after all but tough, manly and sturdy willed and brilliant, that its presence can be accepted by the poet without anxiety.

The beautiful 'final' nature of the poem allegorically indicates that poets are not in the presence of any untrained spontaneity, any primitive or naive vision. It might be suggested that the sensibility behind Hughes's poem is intellectual, his poems are sort of rebellion against his own ascetic rationalism that is the reason he feels which drives him to hunt down and capture an element for his own sensual and intuitive identity which he does not securely possess. The conflict of sensibility which Hughes unconsciously dramatizes in *'The Thought-Fox'* runs through all his poetry.

Towards the end of the poem the Fox is not described as unshaped being but as a creature attracted out of the darkness into full consciousness. Unlike earlier it is no longer anxious and vulnerable, but at home in the lair of the head, safe from extinction, perfectly, it's being caught forever on the page. This entire creation of the fox has allegorical significance. It can be understood in this manner that the fox is the poem, and the poem is the fox however it does not have the liberty of a wild animal. It cannot get up from the page and walk off to hold its young cubs unnoticed by the poet neither it can die in mortal, animal, style. P. R. King in *Nine Contemporary Poets: A Critical Introduction*, remarks that Hughes's emphasis on wild creatures and his concern for them is a clue to the importance the poet reserves of what animals symbolize in his work" it also reflect that animals are superior to man in dominance of their rational self.

The publication of *Lupercal* (1960) won a Somerset Maugham Award in year 1960 and Hawthornden Prize the 1961. This sealed Hughes' reputation as a major poet. This Collection includes many of his most popular representations of animals including the Dangerous '*Pike*'. The poem is explained by the hunting analogy the all time favorite of

Hughes with this style Hughes explains his own creative process with patient concentration.

In the poem *Pike* Hughes explains and introduces the superficial dimensions of the pike. He begins the poem by describing different types of Pike fishes: The poet describes the perfection of the Pike in the first stanza. The pike appears to be in measured dimension: "three inches long. The whole body of the pike has green and yellow stripes across it which appears like its identifying marks, "green tigering gold"; its habitat, "In ponds" under the heat-struck lily pads" The life of the pike is defined by this physical design; it is "subdued to its instrument." Pike has the killer-instinct that exists right from the hatching of the egg. In this manner Hughes transforms our acquaintance with the pike solely from a material, scientific perspective. According to the poet this violent nature of Pike is hereditary: "the malevolent aged grin." That they have can be traced to previous generation. They stage a dance on the surface attracting the flies, asserting their presence. Hughes has always utilized animals as an exaggerated metaphor for the instinctual inclination of Man.

Later the poet leads the readers closer to the pike by focusing on specific fish. The poet speaks of three pike he "kept behind glass" from the time they were in their first stage of being "three inches" long. Eventually, the confined violence of these captive pike turns inward and feeds on itself, three pike quickly become one "with a sag belly and the grin it was born with." Our view of the pike and its violence advances from a theoretical, external examination to a closer, more intimate observation. The fish-bowl that keeps Pike behind glass is a symbolic partition that effectively hurdles the interference of humans in the natural world. To prevent the reader from mistakenly assuming that the violence demonstrated by the pike "behind glass" was a result of their captivity, Hughes describes the same savagery manifested in the pond. In the pond there was a fight going on between pikes "One jammed past its gills down the other's gullet" this line shows the self-destructive dimension of violence. As one looks from above the waters, their shadow appears magnified and the length is pronounced "a hundred feet long in their world." This signifies the splendor of the pike. These fishes move glorified by their grandeur, the alga of pond appears as a bed of emerald for them. In the ponds, they are found also below the heat of the lily pads. They can be discovered in the shadow of the flower's stillness. Either they are attached as logs to last year's leaves or appear to hang in a cavern of weeds. The specific description of jaws is noteworthy. The poet writes that jaws are perfectly formed 'clamped' to easily prey upon their victims. These jaws are regarded as preying instruments. Similarly their kneading of the gills and the pectorals involuntarily performs their respective functions. The poet also gives details about the revengeful

nature of pike that is allegorically referred with some persons who cannot tolerate the competition and believe in demising off the competitor. The truth is that they spare nobody, even their own kind as the poet talks of two pikes "Six pounds each, over two feet long" They are dead in the willows as one gets choked while swallowing up the other. One jammed past its gills down the other's gullet. The part of the pike, being eaten, projected its eye as the film of the fish shrank in death, with the same firmness that was characteristic of the species.

In order to come in closer contact with the pike and appreciate the ultimate dimension of the violence it symbolizes, Hughes intensifies the degree of our involvement through the act of fishing. Symbolically, a line connects the world of light to the world of darkness. According to K. Sagar this feeble connection is necessary to understand the pike because one cannot apprehend the essential nature of the pike's violence while firmly rooted on land. Pike's great size highlights their mythic quality, and their immensity renders them motionless this is in great contrast to the furious violence they shown in earlier lines of the poem killing each other. In the Final Stanza the poets tells us that they are "so immense and old/that past nightfall I dared not cast". Still he goes with "hair frozen" on his head at this point, with this expression Hughes begins to dissolve the distinction between the fisherman and the fish.

This poem symbolizes violence according to Hughes it has lucid and sublime violence that cannot be studied or observed "behind glass. The final terror of the pike is evident when "malevolent aged grin" of the pike is noticed. In the Introduction of "Pike" Hughes regards it to be "one of my prize catches." He remembers the large pond where he went for fishing and which is referred here. The pond that the poet fished in had lilies and fishes that fore grounded the scene mentioned in the poem. The depth of the pond mentioned in the poem is itself 'legendary' as it is illustrative of the deep-rooted heritage that England is synonymous with. The depth of pond mentioned in the poem is 'stilled' or static not meant to change with ravages of time. The Pike has allegorical significance as an inherent part of man's basic nature as this violent streak is universal. The human-being also has this killer/survival instinct right after his birth. This instinct is inborn, but the sophistication that he develops is acquired. Nevertheless, this aggressive behavior remains in the subconscious. This killer instinct is a metaphor for the revolutionary instinct of England. In the last line the poet is shown as silently engaged in fishing. Here, fishing stands as a metaphor of 'self-discovery.' The hair that had grown after his birth was a symbol of his sophistication; as he probed his roots, it had frozen. In the darkness of the night, the poet 'fished' for the slightest sign of instinct- "for what might move, what eye might move." In contrast, to the deeper attentiveness of the poet, the splashes seemed prominent in the tranquil night. The nocturnal owls

seemed to be hushing up the floating woods that appeared to be floating to the poet in his partial dream. According to P. R. King "beneath the night's darkness another shade was revealed" and "that of the poet's inner conscious" that "rose slowly towards me, watching." This was the poet's other self that he encountered-his darker side.

The poem, *The Jaguar* written by Ted Hughes, is one of his most famous poems. 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. This poem also compares and contrasts certain animals in the zoo with each other. It shows the slow, lazy movements from some of the animals to the fast, rapid movement of some. Then the poet introduces the hero of the poem the Jaguar. In *'The Jaguar'*, Ted Hughes uses techniques such as tone, metaphors, and similes to portray the activities of the animals at the zoo. When the poem is comparing the laziness of the animals with the energetic Jaguar, he says that these animals are so lazy that they are "fatigued with indolence." Apart from this these animals are very bored; they are exhausted by the boredom and outrageous surrounding. Every single day the animals are put on show for people to come and see them, but they just get tired of doing nothing but sleeping or sitting or moving from one end to the other of the iron cage. 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. As the guests move from one cage to another they are tired until they reach the jaguar's cage, in which they see the fierce behavior. These visitors see that the Jaguar is not at all involved in "petty tricks" to win the attention of the visitors he has the attitude as if he were a wild beast found in the jungle. Although the jaguar is caged up, he maintains his kingly sublime. Here Hughes introduces the fact that even the beasts have emotions subdued down this is expressed when the poet explains that "Jaguar's heart still remains where he calls home." Ted Hughes has a brilliant way of looking into life. He expresses human follies, anger, and hatred through the animal kingdom. His themes are explored by means of image, myth and symbol all associated with animal world. The Jaguar is a poem about a fierce animal from the image of which Ted Hughes unearths something about human nature. On the surface, the poem is an animal poem which reminds of the wrath and violence of the Jaguar. It is a symbolic poem about any individual who is firm, fierce yet soft at heart in his imagination and strides along the path of the world. He may be caged objectively but subjectively he is liberated and free. His power to exceed the hostile situation as well as the chalk circle drawn around him by restriction could never be circumscribed. In Ted Hughes 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. Christopher Porterfield observed, that" Hughes in his poem *Jaguar* express the internalized violence with more imaginative power than any other modern poet, it is perhaps because he does so from within a poetic sensibility which is itself profoundly intellectual, and deeply marked by puritanical rationalism which he so frequently attacks.

The origin of Crow is well documented Hughes writes an article to explain the Creation of Crow. According to the poet Crow grew out of an invitation by Leonard Baskin to make a book which speaks all about crow in a folklore manner. It does not contain any of the various fragments of explanatory commentary added. As the protagonist of a book, crow becomes symbol and leads a legendary life. This collection includes sequence of poems within a framework which looks like folk-mythology. Ted Hughes hides beneath the figure of Crow, and continues his journey of exploration into the human psyche and, handles the themes of the death/rebirth theme in his poetry. According to the poet the entire sequence of *Crow Poems* deal with a quest, a journey to the underworld and this is the basic theme of many folktales, myths and narratives. The Poem begins with the God having an argument with his own Nightmare. The Nightmare accuses God about the adequacy of man as a creation. However God does not agree with it and is very defensive of man. According to Him man is a very good and successful invention and in given materials and situation in which he is created he's quite adequate and his performance is satisfactory. At this time a representative of Man comes to meet God and requests God to take back life because they have become very tired of their lives. This makes the God angry and He vows that with similar materials and situation from which he has created man he will create better being than man this is how Crow was created. When he first appears in front of God he looks like.

"Wretched, black, horrible, little nothing"

Later in the poem Hughes is imagines that he is a prince who wants to go on journey of exploration. This journey will lead him towards unfolding may mysteries associated with Human Life. For this Journey he needs a vehicle which is equally rational like him and finally decides to go on crow. Hughes gives reason for his choice of Crow he says that he has done for allegorical significance. Crow has many characteristics in common with Man. It is common figure in many mythologies apart from being interfering, a moral, destructive he is at times constructive personality. This crow of Hughes, laughs, sings and eats, and displays his supreme egotism by "Flying the black flag of himself" (Crow Blacker than Ever; C.p. 69) According to Caroline the entire character of crow reflects the havoc and horror which has created him.

According to Caroline and Sagar "Crow is Everyman who will not acknowledge that hates and fears everything within and around him". Later Crow starts interfering in the works of God. In 'A *Childish Prank*' God, Hughes explained in his story that at first was "rather indulgent" towards Crow. God shares his creation story of Adam and Eve with crow. "He tends to show it the beautiful aspect associated with creation of man." God wants lost happiness and enthusiasm back in life of man. *Crow: From the Life and Songs of the Crow* ends with Hughes invocation to the creative/destructive energies of nature which has helped him with creation of Crow to: "Sit on my finger, sing in my ear, O little blood". In this manner he returns to the theme of the quest and of spiritual rebirth.

The Crow poems deal with brutal violence though Hughes never supports violence but believes that it is a kind of necessary psychological amour to ward off anxiety. Richard Barrister says that *Crow poems*, are Hughes's most extraordinary poetic achievement. According to him in this collection, the poet assumes imaginative responsibility for the puritanical violence which is present in his poetry since the very beginning; the critic feels that in this Collection he deems to take full possession of his poetic powers. G.I James says that in these poems, the readers are made to view a shadowy and underworld existence, which is full of not only violence but also all that imaginative wealth and vitality one could think of.

The poem *Second Glance at a Jaguar* is from collection of poems called *Wodwo* (1967). In this poem Hughes embodies Jaguar's restlessness and passion, this effect is achieved by loading the lines with verbs to express like "shoving," "lifting," "hanging," "combing," "hurrying." The poem explores every aspect of Jaguar's physicality such as in and out of the hip joint, under the spine, in the socket of the hind legs, the back teeth, and the blackness of the mouth, fangs, bottom jaw, and club-tail.

The poem shows that it is only through an exploration of the physical aspect one can deduce about Jaguar's nature, the minute details enables the readers to understand the animal with deep intensity. The Poet uses swift diction that explains the noble aggression of the jaguar and describes its movements such as grinding, spinning, swiping, striding, club-swinging, coiling and flourishing. The jaguar's violence is compared with the gangsters, and his overwhelming, unstoppable energy is compared with the relentless drive of the body's engine, 'lifting the air up and shoving on under', muttering 'some drum song of murder'. Jamie McKendrick says that various images in this poem are unified by references to roundness such as the 'skinful of bowls', the stump-legged waddle that is 'trying to grind some square/Socket between his hind legs round'. The entire poem focuses on Jaguar's internal geometry; it

presents 'urgency of his hurry', as the jaguar practices at refining his movements towards a perfect though imaginary kill.

Moortown Diary (1989) is a group of thirty-four poems these poems record Hughes's experiences at his Devonshire farm; this collection of poems is dedicated to the memory of his late father-in-law, Jack Orchard. The poems here are filled with images of sheep and births of lambs and calves, the poems reveal Hughes as a tender observer of nature. *Moortown Diary*, in the words of its *Introduction* it, "more or less excludes the poetic process"-or at any rate it changes that process from one of recollection and reshaping to something more like documentary," It appears not like poetic compositions but like the quick jottings of a journalist. This writing trend was popular in 70s wherein by writing quickly and without corrections poets were able to avoid the falsifying input of the intellect.

However the critics say that gentleness of animals reflected here is not so meek and polite but beneath these poems brutal descriptions of the harsh realities of farm life can also be seen for instance Hughes describes a newborn lamb and its mother lying on the ground "face to face like two mortally wounded duelists." Joseph Parisi noted that Hughes has in depth knowledge of the animals which is seen here. In *Chicago Tribune Book World* he writes that these poems show Hughes "at the height of his powers," McPherson explained that the strength to the diction comes from Hughes's respect for and intimate knowledge of his subject matter. The critic says that the poems of Hughes which grow from close contact with their subject have the real healing effect and are as vigorous as if are written today." In a *Los Angeles Times Book Review critique of Moortown*, Peter Clothier note, "The weight and power of the book come in the title sequence." Christopher Ricks in *New York Time Book Review* stated, "Moortown' strikes me as one of (Hughes's) truest achievements in a very long time."

Hughes has written one more Poem with the name *Moortown* but it cannot be confused with *Moortown Diary*. *Moortown* (1979) is composed of four sequences of poems which was singled out for acclaim by critics, recounts in diary form Hughes's experiences as a dairy farmer deeply engaged in the birth and death cycles of animals. *River* (1983) offer vivid descriptions of animal life and nature and generally project a more positive view of humanity than Hughes's previous works. The poems in *River* follow a series of rivers through the course of a year, describing their sundry landscapes and animal life. These volumes reveal Hughes's finest qualities as a poet and his ability to evoke the natural world in rich, sensuous detail and his unsentimental yet respectful view of life.

To read Hughes's poetry is to enter a world dominated by nature especially by animals. This holds true for nearly all of his books, from *The Hawk in the Rain* to *Moortown*, an examination of life on a farm.

Speaking about Ted Hughes use of animal for allegorical significance *London Times* contributor Thomas Nye, said "Hughes once confessed" that "he began writing poems in adolescence, yet had love for wild animals and always wanted to possess one." He wanted to capture not just live animals, but the aliveness of animals in their natural state: Their wildness, their humidity, the fox-ness of the fox and the crow-ness of the crow." Hughes's apparent obsession with animals and nature in his poetry has incurred the disapproval of some critics. Tony Shaw saw Hughes's concentration on animals as his attempt to clarify his feelings on the human condition. Hughes, in his poems examines the isolated and insecure position of man in nature and his chances of overcoming his alienation from the world around him. In pursuit of these interests Hughes focuses frequently (and often brilliantly) upon animals." It is a fastidious virtue of Hughes's poetry that he shares with only the very best poets. In his poems complexity exists simultaneously with simplicity of expression. His view of the poet's role as shaman was one he took seriously, and many of his poems are unembarrassed shamanic flights of fancy into the animal world. These excursions to the Jungle enabled him to select his subject of Poem, be it Jaguar, Pike or Hawk. No one could ever accuse him of simplicity or superficiality, and yet his poems have closeness with plainness that students, even of a young age, find alluring and true. They draw the reader in, like black holes, whose event-horizons are instant, but whose intensities are infinite and utterly absorbing. His Noah-like cataloguing of the animal kingdom is of course a further lure to younger readers.

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