

The Image of the Crow in Ted Hughes' Poetry¹

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ABSTRACT

One of the most widely read poets in England after World War II, Ted Hughes (1930–1998) constantly engaged in a discourse with the literary, party–political, spiritual, and intellectual traditions. Hughes' poetry addresses the most pressing issues of contemporary living in a world torn apart by a series of tedious and "big" wars while fusing scientific monitoring with artistic imagination. The recurring themes in the poem "Crow" are undoubtedly influenced by his interests in mythology and folklore, Sufism, and Indian mystic philosophy throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Interestingly, Hughes chose the Crow as his special symbol. In folk mythology, the crow is an animal figure associated with the dual concepts of mortality and guilt. Therefore, the goal of this study is to make explicit some hidden meanings included in the poem "Crow."

Keywords: *Ted Hughes; The Crow; poetry; animal; mythology*

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Edward James (Ted) Hughes (1930-1998) is widely regarded as one of the twentieth century's best English writers, having served as the Laureate of England from 1984 until his death. He was also known as the poet of nature. Before beginning English studies at Cambridge University, he would memorize Shakespearean poetry since he had nothing better to do than "read and re-read Shakespeare and watch the grass grow" (Hughes 1). Hughes' poetry occupies a unique place in the current British literary landscape because it utilizes a new format, symbolism, and many new issues about a man and his surroundings. Hughes looks to be one of the greatest vivid poets of twentieth-century English poetry at the age of 43. The most apparent side of Ted Hughes' poetry that grabs the typical readers' concentration is violence. However, in his "Hawk", "Jaguar", and "Crow poems", the poet associates incidents of violence with the outpouring of cosmic energy in the raw stratum of animal life. Ted Hughes, closely considered a poet of violence, denies the notion that his poetry is exclusively about violence. His well-known work "Hawk Roosting" is an indication of the fierce intensity that waits for us in his best poems. Dissatisfaction with current civilization can be perceived beneath the surface of aggressive animal poetry, which is densified, rather ambiguously, by the poet's venture into the reincarnation of vibrant vigor. Similarly, his battle poems, such as "Six Young Men" and "Bayonet Charge," demonstrate the power of perseverance and the resolve to survive in the face of impending death. The poet is not just concerned with violence; he is also concerned with the vibrancy of life, which vibrates with the irrepressible life force.

The "Crow" is Hughes' very complex emblem, an objective correlative by which he conveys his intense feelings and complicated concepts. Hughes' selection of the "Crow" as his particular symbol is intriguing. The crow is an animal image connected with the dual ideas of mortality and guilt in folk mythology. He is black, ugly, lonely, and the biggest, smartest, and least melodic of all birds. He embodies bravery, cleverness, adaptation to change, and twisted vigor. However, the Crow has a dual purpose for Hughes: he is an essential force in the cosmos, a manifestation

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of man's innate essence, as well as a sign of death and devastation. To summarize, Crow is both a demon and a human; he is an elemental force in the cosmos, a manifestation of man's innate essence, and a symbol of death and destruction.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Hughes seemed to be attempting to portray contemporary society as something that is both old and new in his poems. Utilizing poetry, he hopes to restore a bond he feels has been broken. Hughes chose the crow because it is irrelevant in the modern world and, in his own words, he pushed aside the eagles in favor of the crow in his attempts to create something beyond language. When understanding his "Crow" poetry, the experience is not always based on the poet Ted Hughes' viewpoint, but instead on an additional basic and another view of the universe and all of its components. Ted Hughes' myth of the Crow provides us with a human picture of a non-human universe. For Hughes, mankind is killing the earth via automation, sterile intellectualism, alienation, and violent warfare. However, it appears that not all is lost. The poet confides in the few natural men who have survived the wasteland's barrenness, and he confides most in the Crow, who, with his brilliance and vitality, may be able to restore a human flourishing world.

WHAT ARE THE CROW POEMS?

Hughes' collection of "Crow poems" can be one of his most highly respected literary works. Crow's behavior and attitude remained numerous hallmarks of the age of black comedy that preceded as a heritage of the war, even though Hughes himself asserted strenuously against the correlation between black comedy with Crow Trickster works. (Stevenson 193; Hughes 239). Many people, like English writer Roy Fuller, found Hughes' collection "Crow" difficult to read because of the "pathological ferocity of its language" besides its "anti-human thoughts and cruel images" (Bentley 39). But on the other hand, Hughes views it as a deliberate try at a "super-ugly" speech in the expectation that it would shed everything that (Crow) meant to communicate (Faas 208). Crow's lack of a human viewpoint might be one of the reasons for this impression of "anti-human" philosophy. The poems are narrated via the acts and perspectives of a crow rather than the authors, which Bentley claims help to establish a language free of material, linguistic, cultural, and unconscious variables (39).

Ted Hughes eliminates himself as the primary perspective from which poems are to be interpreted, releasing them from any circumstances of reinterpretation and allowing for a greater degree of independence from the possible realism that Hughes is so focused on avoiding. Another option for the repeating term "anti-humanity" is Hughes' emphasis on myth and mythology, with his mythos based on the old myths and folklore of mysticism and religion. Artist Leonard Baskin encouraged Hughes to compose poems to go along with his inscriptions of crows, and via this offer, Baskin completed providing a method and sign to what would go on to become a defining characteristic of Hughes. (Hughes 243). He approaches the subject through his mythology and the notion of the Crow as an intermediate, offering a fresh viewpoint on the roots and structures of current reality.

"Crow establishes all of the pre-existing conditions and preoccupations of Hughes as a mythic poet. Crow destroys Platonic philosophy and eats logic for breakfast. Crow deconstructs Christianity and tears the Bible apart. God, Adam, Eve, and the snake are like puppets in a play".
(Brandes 72-73)

Brandes outlines Crow's adventures and contacts with religion, prevailing philosophy, and the rationale underpinning upon which contemporary society operates. All these topics, in addition to elements of mankind's behavior like war and sex, are inverted, distorted, and re-presented as a portion of Crow's ridiculousness. explanation in the poems "Crow's First Lesson," "Crow's Account of the Battle," "Oedipus Crow" also "Crow's Theology," (Hughes 9, 15, 35, 27).

The fundamental underpinnings of reality, what may be defined as the heart of human worth, are rocked and perverted, resulting in an anti-human ideology. Hughes pointed a conductor for all his mythologies in Crow, one who changes juxtaposes, and expels all parts of the comfy dependence within a concrete world, which Hughes claims evolved into an expanding scourge on mankind.

WHO IS CROW?

To comprehend who or what Crow began as, one must first grasp Hughes' mythologies, namely his view that poetry is an animal. However, according to the situation, the origin of the poetry is the animal, not the poem itself. Crow's first inspiration was not a single poem, but rather a writing technique (Faas 208). The literary style was to be a portrayal of crow songs, songs along "no melody whatsoever" delivered over such a "super-simple" and "super-ugly" vocabulary (ibid.). As previously stated, this method was augmented by the author's metaphysical self-being

replaced with that of a squealing crow. He indeed remarked that it is a manner he wishes he had always employed; however, it is unclear whether this is related to the seeming harmony of this writing style with his mythology (212). As Hughes enlightened, he saw poems as spirits who reached him and were recorded on paper. Crow seemed to have taken a soul he felt he was equal to, one who interacted with him or indirectly and had an impact on more than one, nonetheless a sequence of poetry. Although Hughes thinks Crow was conceived first as a storytelling style, the Crow character ultimately manifested itself.

His "guiding metaphor" intended for creating the Crow persona was the notion of the Trickster from primal stories and myths (Hughes, 241; Bentley 40). Hughes did not need Crow to be associated with after the World War II movement of dark humor, despite their similarities since he still saw them as opposed (Hughes 239) per Hughes, the foundations of dark comedy are misery and pessimism, whereas the foundations of Trickster literature are optimism and creative delight (ibid). The perceptual discrepancies are analogous to what could give somebody the effect of the "anti-human" Crow. A reader who sees it as a black comedy might observe Crow just like the author's recognition of dying, or all that keeps us alive; however, what the Trickster reflects, and properly where Hughes' motives lie, remains in showing one of the most significant factors at the heart of such a tragedy, that is the reviving, "discovering towards new emergence and growth"(240). Rather than concentrating on contemporary society's misery and death, the Trickster, as previously defined, is attempting to accept the ailment in the hope of repair and reawakening.

Coupe defines a Trickster as a strangely shaped "mischievous guy" who participates in the genesis of the universe while also being connected with all of its calamities, bridging the gap between the universe and chaos (16). This concept might apply to the Crow since he fits the description in multiple poems, including "A Horrible Religious Error," "Childish Prank," and "Song for a Phallus" (Hughes 69). The Trickster is described in several myths; therefore, one must be mindful of the variations in the description. For the character of the Crow, we shall look at the tradition that gave rise to it. Hughes claims that the perspective on the Crow narrative that he provides in his piece "Crow on the Beach" is the one that the trickster came from. (Hughes 240). It relates to the immature besides reckless innocence of sexual love; at its foundation, it is an all-out devotion to saving lives in contrast to all obstacles; in addition to his existence is a succession of tragicomedies as an outcome of his repetitious and everlasting nature (240-1). Crow is a Trickster in the sense that he is deleterious, as Coupe mentioned; however, he is similarly hopeful and generally good-natured, as Hughes constantly notes.

Because of the Trickster's devious character, one begins to anticipate the unexpected; yet, this comes with the unintended consequence of turning what is desired from poetry, the stanzas or odes with compulsory end-rhymes, into somewhat odd. What is commonly given as a conventional understanding of poetry is the polar contrary of what Crow presents, hence any display of regular form or purpose, such as the shape of "Robin Song" and the ode in "Little Blood," is instantly suspect (Hughes 89). Crow is crossing the line between chaos and the cosmos, rendering the reader gets less conscious of his motive. This creates an instability fueled by ambiguity, and Hughes takes in his quest to communicate with the "unspeakable" (Bentley 4). Crow's character summary could be that of the Trickster, even though its nature is one of deception of staying away from inevitability and chasing mystery. A personality summary like this would deceive itself since a Trickster is merely a claim of an uncertain nature emanating from unknown intents. Crow, I suppose, manifests himself as a notion, as something outside of meaning and assurance, because of this distinguishing quality of an absence of description. Crow is an appropriate test subject, as evidenced by an analysis of the non-signifiable.

DATA FINDINGS & ANALYSIS

The first stage in correctly establishing the notion of Crow is the essential aspect of the personality. Crow's identity is based on the nature of the animal it is based on, as seen in "Crow Tyrannosaurus," whereby, in spite of his increased intellect and self-awareness, he remains a slave to the urge of wanting to eat (Hughes 13). His thought "To quit eating | And attempt to become the light?" reflects his character, yet his nature still triumphs as his head stabs, "trap sprung" at some grubs through all the sound of his own tears. Being the light might be a metaphor for the difficult task of altering what is fundamental in his appearance, namely his darkness. The urge to feed appears in "That Moment," appearing out of place with the rest of the poem, similar to how an intuitive drive arises not only out of setting but then again out of need (Hughes 11).

Crow also distinguishes himself from the other birds in "Crow and the Birds" via the simple nature of his actions:

“When the eagle soared clear through a dawn distilling of emerald
When the curlew trawled in
sea dusk through a chime of wineglasses”

(Hughes 29)

The curlew, eagle, and each of the other creatures of birds in the poem are accompanied by metaphors of elegance or confusion, that generate an outflow ideal of poetry, where thoughts and ideas engage the emotions. However, as it gets to Crow in the final sentence, all creativity appears to have vanished, the ambiguity has been abandoned, and the experience of soaring through the text's notions and meanings is abruptly halted as one approaches Crow.

“Crow spraddled head-down in the beach garbage,
guzzling a dropped ice cream”.

(Hughes 37)

This poem gives the idea that it is a portrayal of Crow, as a common noun, concerning other birds, similar to Hughes' comment about not choosing the eagle, but the bellowing crow. It also gives the impression of embodying this approach. Crow is the most accessible bird in this poem; whereas the others are soaring, gazing, and trawling through metaphor and fantasy, Crow spraddles and guzzles an ice cream. It is a crucial feature because of the basis it establishes in the reader; Crow doesn't appear to be remarkable; he is simply doing what comes so easily to him, which gives a sure appeal of routine.

Crow's incarnation as style is giving him life through the consistency of style as well as through the poems. Not simply as expressed by text, but rather solely by text. In his interpretation of "The Thought-Fox," Chen Hong defines the poem as comprising three animals: one physiological, one symbolic, and one textual (Gifford 41). According to Hong's analysis, the functions of the Animal-poem, in what some think to be its extremely ultimate form in "The Thought-Fox," are not just intended to show a text-based animal, but also to project which is the animal's "biological" practice, in addition to expressing a symbolic or even totemic purpose. These are a few of the traits that designate poetry as an Animal-poem from a standpoint that is outside of Hughes' creative method (István 72). Nobody can be anticipated to comprehend what Hughes considered when he composed the poetry of Crow; these "layers" of the animal may characterize them to viewers as an Animal-poem. It explains why, even if Crow isn't referenced in any way, the feeling remains distinct from any writer. The provided standpoint, or metaphysical self, is understood to be Crow's. An achievement that, in my opinion, contributes to the collection's uniqueness.

Crow's animalistic nature quickly grows into something more nuanced; via Crow's narratives, he is recognized both as an animal and as the originator of his mythology. Hughes writes in *Shakespeare and the Goddess of Complete Being* that he cannot yet find a good explanation of the term mythological (Gifford 108). For so many, it occurs when the subject matter includes mythology that is culturally rooted, although he believes that is not always true within poetry (ibid). Many poems, according to Hughes, incorporate myths as the topic or produce representations of personal experiences without even being classified as visionary or mythic.

In Crow, one might easily argue that Hughes is on a legendary quest, seeking this enlightening moment to gain access to some vital truth (Gifford 71). He meant for this spiritual epiphany to be therapeutic. We recognize the aim of his inventing a new mythology in Crow because he felt mythology might be a source of recovery.

As was already said, Crow has assumed the role of the Trickster of the primordial stories in the constructed mythology, which will further gain mythological elements. The Trickster myth is founded on historical mythology, as are the other mythical origins. However, based on Crow's treatment of Christianity and ancient Greek mythology, it seems more questionable that it is faithful to the source of rendition. Imposing a historically mythical explanation of the Trickster character on Crow has less legitimacy because of what history shows about its social behaviors, of its primary feature of trouble, which would automatically violate such a perspective (Coupe in Gifford 16). This is why the ancient myths of Trickster will not be utilized in the upcoming studies, as what it is based on contradicts any clarity of description or purpose (Verdonk 12).

Crow, I believe, commences a collapse of truth by grasping at the mythical, logical, and philosophical tackles we use to explain genuineness and spinning them on their heads, by challenging contrasts and their ranked inclination. While observing Crow as he creates his, one's notions of reality become obvious. Yet, because Crow rejects hierarchy, it has the potential to reveal a fundamental unity. I assume one can see Hughes' legendary search for recovery in this underlying oneness, and it happens inside how Crow, as Gifford defines it, "may strive to mend dualities by keeping them in counteracting juxtapositions" (9).

For all the layers that make up the notion of Crow, maybe its most fundamental feature appears once one begins to notice the primary indicators that Crow is a metaphor. This is evident in the way he bears a changing connotation depending on connection; no version of Crow is the "pure" Crow. He appears as an animal, an animal poem, a character, a story, a style, and finally some "other," and by consuming each of these, he becomes the form of an

unfathomable notion. The cornerstone of Crow's metaphoric and chronological idea emerges in the first poem "Two Legends" from the Crow collection, and all sides of his existence are inaugurated.

A series of anaphora that runs throughout the two parts of the poem's first line creates something that might be described as a network of links or a definition of the term "black." The final four words, in particular, are crucial for this unraveling.

"To hatch a crow, a black rainbow
Bent in emptiness over emptiness
But flying"
(Hughes 1)

A crow's conception, a black rainbow. Recently, Crow has hatched, and is already associated with a contradictory notion: a rainbow includes all color gradients, while darkness contains nothing. The metaphoric meaning of a black rainbow, on the other hand, connotes a diversity of blackness, or darkness as diversity. As diversity, blackness is conveyed partially throughout the poem, too, and part by part all across the collection, in poems such as "Crowego," "Crowcolour," and "Crow Blacker Than Ever" (Hughes 54, 59, 62).

CONCLUSION

Hughes' poetry is dominated by the theme of violence, and he is often regarded as one of the best poets of violence. Hughes, on the other hand, cannot be defined solely as a "poet of violence". Readers of his poetry generally see violence as a major focus in his poetry as aberrant and unwanted. However, Hughes himself associated the term "violence" with "vehement activity," sometimes known as "energy." Ted Hughes is deeply concerned with the last century's cultural impoverishment, moral degradation, psychological dysfunction, and turmoil. To him, the exterior universe, the human world, and the world within are all battlegrounds, with more darkness, death, and devastation than light, peace, wealth, and life. He depicts the natural forest, not the manicured landscape, where terror, ferocity, danger, and death reign supreme.

Hughes has always attempted to probe man's deepest instincts and to reveal the inherent breakdown and disorder of the human psyche. The poems reveal the dread and despair that lie behind the human mind's undisturbed surface reality.

The Crow poems vary from Hughes' earlier Animal-poems in their adhesion to his folklore, to the wondering of what is fundamental to discover what is behind that reality, of crossing the limits between the human and natural worlds, of portraying something which appears to work outside the grounds of language and exchange about which modern society is built. However, these are merely representations and not simple definitions; no actual laws exist in the language of the Crow, but the sole law in the parlance of the Crow is the rhythm that governs the choice of words. Crow gets more than simply a style or an animal.; it evolves into a complicated concept that Hughes generated in his search for something distinctive. The Crow poems get to be an appropriate vehicle for conjuring something intangible, anything which provides the poems the feeling of getting a life of their own, actually like an animal. Concerning Hughes' myth, there is an additional path that goes beyond representation and words; the actual essence of experiencing a poem as an animal is like a concept that cannot be described, only experienced. It is an expertise that will be distilled into the features of the Crow idea.

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