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## Ted Hughes's Poetry: A 'Mantric' Chant

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### **Abstract:**

Ted Hughes is chiefly a poet. As a poet his traditional trait is mainly that of an inspired visionary. Hughes's major poetic preoccupations are nature and myth. This holds true for nearly all of his books, from *The Hawk in the Rain* (1957) to *Flowers and Insects* (1986) and *Wolfwatching* (1989) two of his late collections. In his earlier poetic work, *The Hawk in the Rain*, *Lupercal* (1960) and *Wodwo* (1967) his obsession with animals and the dark, mysterious forces latently embodied in the natural world is obvious. *Crow* (1970), *Gaudete* (1977), *Cave Birds: An Alchemical Cave* (1978) are not myths by themselves but treat mythic themes and material. In subsequent poetic volumes *Moortown* (1979) and *River*, the 'feminine' aspect of Hughes's vision may be understood as embodied in the continuing emphasis upon nature as creative, rather than destructive. Thus Ted Hughes's poetry from the publication of his first volume *The Hawk in the Rain* to his last poetic collections *Flowers and Insects*, *Wolf Watching* and *Moortown Diary* apparently indicate that his favourite obsession as well as his wonted treatment of them, continue to be the same. However, there has been a gradual change in Hughes's poetry between 1957 and 1989-the destructive aspect of nature is counter-balanced with a more positive nurturing aspect of nature to hint at regeneration and affirmation of life. We also find primitive rituals, folklore, haunting memories of war and his shamanistic fascination with the world of animals and primitive mythology throughout his poetry. There is violence, but there is also pity and consolation. Hughes shows his serious concern to save endangered species and attempts to address environmental issues also. *Birthday Letters* published in 1998 few months before his death reveals his complex relationship with his first wife Sylvia Plath.

**Keywords:** instinctual, glorification, shamanism, harrowing, unconscious realm.

## **A Brief Review Ted Hughes's Poetry:**

### **1. Nature Poems:**

Ted Hughes's nature poetry comprises mainly of his poems that explore man's relation with 'animal life' and 'landscapes', both constantly interacting with the elements of nature. They deal with the problem of modern man's alienation from nature and attempt to unite him with nature. It is impossible to imagine Hughes's poetry without animals. Many of his poems describe animals or have the names of animals for their titles. These animals stand for a particular human vision (R.P.King, p.115). This vision can be described in two fundamental and opposing qualities: a celebration of energy, spontaneity and instinctual drive on the one hand: and a fearful admission of the deadly, abiding predatoriness of life on the other. It is more like a war between vitality and death (Dennis Walder, p.3). Since Ted Hughes celebrates violence, destruction and terror throughout his work, he is often termed as 'voyeur of violence' or 'Terror's Ambassador'. Hughes himself says that any form of vehement activity invokes the bigger energy, the elemental power circuit of universe. (London Magazine X, March, 1971, pp5-20). Some of Hughes's best animal poems also record a doubleness only to point out human ambivalence. Here Hughes attempts to explore the unconscious realm of hidden, dark evil forces that inwardly trouble man.

### **The Jaguar: Contrast between rational and non-rational**

'The Jaguar' is a contrast between the enraged freedom of the caged jaguar at the zoo and the fear and admiration of the onlookers. In fact, it is an encounter-taking place between civilized man, the fallen natural creature, looking at his own superior self which continues to exist outside him in the jaguar. This jaguar is enraged because he is caged, because he is blinded by the fury of his eyes, deafened by the beating of his own heart. The crowd at the zoo stares at the jaguar 'as a child dream', just 'mesmerised by the 'wilderness of freedom' in the caged jaguar's stride. Though man is portrayed as a spectator, he is not passive. He admires and shares a feeling of the brute's wildness, ferocity and rage.

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 floor the horizons come. ('The Jaguar', *The Hawk in the Rain*, p.12)

### **Wolfwatching: A symbol of the unsuppressed energy**

'Wolfwatching', like the earlier 'The Jaguar' and 'Second Glance at a Jaguar', observes a caged animal. The poem exposes a hapless and aged wolf in captivity. His life is 'Like a sleepless half-sleep of growing agonism'. He is waiting for 'the anaesthetic to work'. However, the drug has already sapped his energies. His 'neurotic boredom' is that of the modern man. The aged wolf, confined in a London zoo is doomed to stare out of his confinement at the smells and sounds outside his cage. The unsuppressed energy of the primitive can be seen in his restless behaviour. Removed from his natural environment to become an ugly curiosity in the zoo, the old wolf reminds us of the last wolf killed in Scotland late in the eighteenth century. All that is left of his wildness are his "Asiatic eyes, the gun sights/ Aligned effortlessly in the beam of his power."

Comfort of woolly play-wolf. He's weary.

He curls on the cooling stone

That gets heavier. Then again the burden

Of a new curiosity, a new testing

Of new noises, new people with new colours

Are coming in at the gate. He lifts

The useless weight and lets it sink back,

Stirring and settling in a ball of unease.

All his power is a tangle of old ends,

A jumble of leftover scraps and bits of energy

And bitten-off impulses and dismantled intuitions.

He can't settle. ('wolfwatching', *Wolfwatching*, pp.12-15).

### **The Black Rhino: The Rhino Rescue**

'The Black Rhino' is a touching poem that registers the extinction of the last rhino. Hughes wrote this poem for the World Wildlife Fund, to raise funds as a contribution to the Rhino Rescue Appeal of 1987. The great animal becomes an attractive skeleton in the museum – a part of history; this reunites it with the fabulous unicorn whose birth stands condemned in reality and whose fabulousness makes it twin of the extinct rhino. The poet's eye defeats still photography in capturing the colour and mood of the animal, outdoes videography in catching its movements and outstrips the hieroglyph in mystifying it. The tailpiece, in staccato verse, states that the dead rhino is now beyond dualities, though its paradise of existence was lost owing to the attractions of its forbidden horn. Hughes attributes magical properties to the horn. This makes it a commodity of commercial value, 'at eight or nine/ thousand dollars a handful'. Hughes's later poetry is tinged with a melancholic sense: 'The black Rhino is vanishing into a soft human laugh'. The need to preserve the endangered species is suggested most piteously.

For this is the Black Rhino, who vanishes as he approaches  
Every second there is less and less of him  
By the time he reaches you nothing will remain,  
Maybe, but the horn--an ornament  
For a lady's lap. ('The Black Rhino', *Wolfwatching*, pp.26-32)

### **Hawk Roosting: Glorification of violence or hawk as poet's spokesman for nature?**

Hughes's most popular poem 'Hawk Roosting' shows his fundamental vision of violence. The poem is, in fact, a glorification of violence (P.R.King,p.115). This hawk is a monomaniac and a solipsist. He deals death to his victims. He can crush them effortlessly. There is no 'falsifying dream' between his hooked head and feet. Even in his sleep, he contemplates killing. The simultaneity of his dream and achievement denotes his unity with nature. Hughes develops hawk as a symbol of the malevolent predatory nature. He is, in fact, becomes Hughes's spokesman for nature itself. He is an embodiment of the evil otherness of nature. The hawk's poise and serenity, its contemplative ease reflects nature's predatory ferocity. While praising the ferocity of the primal forces of nature embodied in the hawk, he condemns man's rationale and puniness.

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.  
There is no sophistry in my body:  
My manners are tearing off heads-  
The allotment of death. ('Hawk Roosting', *Lupercal*, p.26)

### **February 17th : A Catastrophe**

'February 17 th' is the most harrowing poem Hughes has ever written. It is about what happens when a lamb is too large for the mother bearing it. He presents a catastrophe through the half- born stillborn lamb, which he decapitates with a razor. Hughes records : 'Of all the mistakes a lamb can make worse is, having got himself conceived inside a rather small mother, then to grow too big before being born. His mother can't help. If the good shepherd isn't nearby, it's the end. If he is nearby , he can help the lamb out....If the good shepherd's a little bit late, then the lamb has to be get out of its mother'. (The Critical Forum: Ted Hughes and R.S.Thomas , Norwich Tapes ltd. 1978)

In 'February 17 th' Hughes speaks of the last possibility when the rescue operation has failed. The facts are gruesome. Therefore, the speaker beheads the lamb in order to free it. Then he reaches in and pulls out the rest of the lamb. The lamb is born but stillborn. It is death at birth but the ewe will live. The point is that, with the human intervention, though the lamb dies, the ewe lives so that it gives birth to many lambs. Such a poem will have a shattering effect on readers. Hughes himself admits and makes a defence : "Once I read this poem in a hall full of university students and one member of the audience rebuked me for writing what he called 'a disgusting piece of horror writing'. We either have a will to examine what happens or we have a will to evade it."(The Critical Forum: Ted Hughes and R.S.Thomas, Norwich Tapes, 1978).

To get up and I saw it was useless. I went  
Two miles for the injection and a rajor  
Sliced the lamb's throat, strings, levered with a knife  
Between the vertebrae and the head off  
To stare at the mother, it pipes sitting in the mud.  
With all earth for a body. Then pushed

The neck-stump right back in, and as I pushed  
She pushed. She pushed crying and I pushed gasping,  
And the strength,  
Of the birth push and the push of my thumb  
Against that wobblyvertebra were deadlock,  
A to-fro futility. ('February 17 th', *Moortown*, pp.191-92)

### **To Paint a Water-Lilly: Exploring the unconscious realm**

Ted Hughes effectively manifests the dual quality of nature in one of his finest poems 'To Paint a Water lily' along with the parallels drawn between nature and life. The poet sympathises with the artist's difficult task to depict the water lily by highlighting the disparity between the lily's gentle, lady-like beauty and the menacing, war-like characteristics of its surroundings. The poet personifies the lily into a fine dainty woman. He describes the two worlds above and below the lily as 'two minds of the lady'. The phrase 'two minds' may also suggest the conscious and the unconscious, both cruel, instinctual and arbitrary. Though the lily represents beauty, the world surrounds it is violent. He describes the world above as the 'flies furious arena' as though the dragonflies are warriors fighting in barbaric Roman battles. He describes the pervading nature as 'battle shouts', and 'death cries'.

While the world above is chaotic and violent, even 'worse is the pond's bed matter'. The world beneath the lily contains so many terrifying creatures, which are primordial beings from prehistoric times. Having described the both halves of the nature, Hughes goes on to describe the solitary water lily. The top half symbolises the present and dynamic, while the bottom half represents history and inactivity. The lily is deep in both worlds, conscious equally of horrors above and below. She can understand and participate, without being involved or disturbed. The poet needs something like the water lily's paradoxical participation and detachment to see into the heart of the feelings- seeing conscious into subconscious, beneath appearance into primitive life and death forces and beyond time to the timeless.

Now paint the long-necked lily-flower:  
Which, deep in both worlds, can be still

As a painting, trembling hardly at all

Though the dragonfly alight

Whatever horror nudge her root. ('To Paint a Water-lily', *Lupercal*, pp.29-30)

### **Salmon Eggs: Sanctus Sanctus**

The poems of *River* have certainly a 'religious aura' (Dennis Walder, p.88) about them. Hughes counsels compassion, receptivity, and reverence for life, an appreciation of the feminine principle in nature. The poems seek reaffirmation of the power of natural forces in an age of technological marvels and believe in the optimism that nature promises for the future. The river is personified into a beautiful woman in all her feminine splendour who nurtures the creative life. For Hughes the salmon 'is a prototype of man, its life cycle a paradigm of nature's purposes and of the religious life (Keith Sagar, p. 304). The most popular and the concluding poem of the sequence *River* 'Salmon Eggs' illuminates Hughes's vision of nature. In this poem, natural description, sexuality and spirituality invoke a blessing upon the river and upon the salmon, 'Sanctus Sanctus/Swathes the blessed issue'. The poem begins with the description of salmon mating. The river enjoys itself in renewing and only birth matters.

Only birth matters

Say the river's whorls.

And the river

Silences everything in a leaf-mouldering hush

Where sun rolls bare, and earth rolls,

And mind condenses on old haws. ('Salmon Eggs', *River*, pp.120-24)

## **2. War and Death Poems:**

Ted Hughes is not primarily a war poet in the sense that he, like Wilfred Owen and Keith Douglas has not written his war poetry directly out of his own personal experiences in the war front. He has, in fact, written some poems on war out of his memory of war. His reflections on what his father has told him about the war as well as the collective experience of the British are brought out. Hughes is disenchanted with the western culture. With little or no spiritual values, a culture like the western culture can mean only emptiness, dismemberment, suffering and death.



So this disintegrated western culture and the emptiness, suffering and death it spells is Hughes's theme in many of his poems.

### **Out: Memory of war**

In 'Out' Hughes narrates his father's memories of World War I. These memories were imposed upon his childish consciousness, destroying his innocence. The poem says good-bye to the war. Hughes describes these war memories of his father in the first section of the poem, 'The Dream Time'. When he was four the war has already ended and his father was recovering from 'the four year mastication by gunfire and mud'. His outer perforations were valiantly healed but his inner horrific thoughts were still dragging him under the mortised four-year strata of the ideal English man with whom he belonged.

Hughes is his father's 'luckless double' because these memories that were imposed on his mind made him forever conscious of death like an 'immovable anchor'. In the second part of the poem Hughes imagines birth similar to the production of cannon-fodder. He likens the birth to a nightmare vision of 'reassembled' infantrymen tottering out of the womb. For Hughes, soldiers are born only to be blasted to bits in the battlefield. The third part 'Remembrance Day' is a philosophical acceptance of the inevitability of birth and death, under the shadow of the memory of war.

As after being blasted to bits  
The reassembled infantryman  
Tentatively totters out, gazing around with the eyes  
Of the exhausted clerk. ('Out', *Wodwo*, pp.155-57)

### **Bayonet Charge: Fear of death**

'Bayonet Charge' demonstrates the fact that man recovers his animal instinct only in war. The soldier who is seized with the fear of death never thinks about the man made abstract notions but will be single minded to stay alive. Thus the soldier in the poem who instinctually wakes up and runs for his dear life is totally ignorant of 'king, honour, dignity et cetera'.

King, honour, human dignity, etcetera  
Dropped like luxuries in a yelling alarm  
To get out of that blue crackling air

His terror's touchy dynamite ('Bayonet Charge', *The Hawk in the Rain*, p.51)

### **Eclipse : The Evil of Self Consciousness**

The poem 'Eclipse' is strangely pellucid: its sense is always outside Hughes's usual penumbra of surrealism. The poet, without being merely spectatorial, watches the mating of two spiders. His thoughts and feelings are suspended while the imagination spatialises the microscopic act. Amidst refuse and again human interference, the spiders mate and their mating is, as all consummate unions are, hundred percent unselfconsciousness. They are oblivious to voyeurs- poetic or impotent. Moreover, their ecstasy without ecstasising the voyeur makes him see it all as horribly happy. The 'horribleness' is in the awkward human self-consciousness of the poet who seems more jealous here than liable to be lost in the self-lost spiders. There is something sinister in the voyeur but the poet confesses to it and thereby redeems himself. His gain, throughout the voyeurship, is in the nonce-negation, of his self-consciousness. In the male spider's death, as the acme of life's orgasm, lies the poet's dissolution of self-existence and manifestation of pure consciousness. The language of the poem sounds like a running commentary. This shows what curious and detached watching can do to control imagination from soaring high into a surrealist sky. Intent objectification prompts obscurity.

So, I imagined, here is the famous murder

I got closer to watch, something

Difficult to understand, difficult

To properly observe was going on

Her two hands seemed swollen, like tiny crab claws

Those two nippers she folds up under her nose

To bring things to her pincers, they were moving

Glistening. He convulsed now and again

Her abdomen pod twitched, spasmed slightly

Little mean ecstasies. Was she pulling him to pieces? ('Eclipse', *Flowers and Insects*, pp.46-51)

### **Relic: Commemoration of soldiers**

In 'Relic' Hughes surveys the sea-side waste. He peers straight through the jaw-bone he finds to the natural cycle it represents. The poem seems primarily to be a celebration of the universal fact of death, but the poet's imagination at times lingers in the memories of war. For instance, one is confronted by the poem's opposing implications of the 'cold deeps, the 'darkness' in which 'camaraderie does not hold', where 'Nothing touches but, clutching devours'. The epithet 'camaraderie' implies wartime friendships. The poem concludes thus:

This curved jaw bone did not laugh  
But gripped, gripped and is now a cenotaph. ('Relic', *Lupercal*, p.44)

That so small and apparently insignificant an object can seem to take on such immense proportions is a tribute to the poet's imagination, an imagination fired by the memory of war. The war itself in Hughes is a reminder of the darker, hidden memory of the instinctual drives, which are so cruelly apparent in the midst of battle. Battle, especially the battle of bayonet charges and trench fighting established by the First World War, focuses upon what is immediately threatening, physical extinction, and brings into play the primary, instinctual responses. Hence the conjunction of war, the memory of war, and age old 'prehistoric' or pre-rational feelings in Hughes's poetry.

### **3. Shamanism:**

Ted Hughes regards myth and folklore as a healing force to the divided psyche. Myth, fantasy, ceremonies and primitive rituals help in healing a person's psychological as well as physical ills and they become a recurrent phenomenon in Hughes's work. One important technique Hughes often exploits is 'shamanism'. Hughes attempts to explore a world of primordial animal totems. The relationship between Hughes and the terrifying predators he describes is like that of the shaman to his totem animal. Hughes animals like the hawk, the fox, the jaguars, the bull, the pike, the otter, the bear, the rat, the wolf etc serve as animal totems for him. Through them he seeks, as did ancient shamans, an alignment with the unknown forces governing the universe. His work is a journey beyond the rational to the primitive depths of experience to liberate the self.

### **An Otter: Shaman's Alter Ego**

The otter is an important sacred animal for shamans. Mircea Elaide says that otters act both as healing shamans and serve to a certain extent even as priests. (Shamanism, p.316) As a tutelary animal, it not only enables the shaman to transform himself, but also, it is in a manner his 'double', his alter ego. Hughes explores the double existence of the otter. He stresses its solitary nature, its elusiveness that is at once pathetic and noble.

The state of otter projects exactly the shaman's habitual mental state of being, his ability to allow his soul and body to roam about in different realms. The shamans perform the function a psychic healer, announces the cure, goes in search of the patient's soul, captures it, and makes it return to rejuvenate the body that it has left. This act is nothing but the reintegration of the self-expressed in the context of the primitive religion. In this way, the otter forms an ideal totem image to dramatise the shaman's psychic life. The precarious existence of the otter described in Hughes's poem is also akin to the precarious life of the shaman whose functions also involve descension into underworld, ascension into the sky, and going into a trance, while retrieving the lost soul.

Of neither water nor land. Seeking  
 Some world lost when first he dived , that he cannot come at since,  
 Takes his changed body into the holes of lakes.  
 As if blind, cleaves the stream's push till he licks  
 The pebbles of the source, from sea. ('An Otter', Lupercal, pp.46-47)

### **The Bear: Perfect Shamanic Dream**

'The Bear' is a perfect shamanic dream. Eskimo shamans often dreamed of bears during their search for knowledge. The description of the bear evokes a contrast between the enormous inanimate bulk of the mountain and the tiny gleamy life in the 'eye' of the bear. The great hibernating bear is compared to a dormant mountain. The poem is a mythical evocation of the bear, its bulk and its omnivorous hunger. The encounter with the bear is a necessary shamanic element in the 'ecstatic rite of dismemberment of the candidate by demonic spirits' (Shamanism, p.44). The images of the mountain, cave and river hint at the shamanic descent to the under-world. Similarly, skeletons or bones have an enormous importance for

shamans. Bones, for shamans, have resurrecting potential, since they believe that bones can become clothed again with flesh. The poem is a celebration of the bear's timeless quality:

The bear sleeps  
In a kingdom of walls  
In a web of rivers.  
He is the ferry man  
To dead land  
His price is everything. ('The Bear', *Wodwo*, p.41)

Although we find numerous examples of shamanic technique in Hughes's earlier work, its boldest implication is to be found in *Crow*, *Gaudete*, and *Prometheus on His Crag*. Hughes himself said that *Crow* is the product of his automatic writings; 'they wrote themselves quite rapidly'. ('Interview with Faas, London Magazine, 1971, p.5-20). *Crow* includes some of the most profound shamanic initiatory experiences like the dismemberment of the body, cataleptic trances and the similar death rituals. It is full of songs, macabre dances and compressed rituals and great emphasis is put upon the search for initiatory experience.

#### **4. Mythology and Religion:**

Objectively or rationally, myth may be looked upon as archaic superstition. Every poet whether Romantic or Classical is a mythmaker. Both mythic naming and mythic narrative aim at integrating man and experience, or the reader and the poem and thus heal the division in man. Hence, myth is supposed to achieve an important function: the two divided selves of man are united through the telling of stories. From this follows a merger of world and self, superior and inferior.

*Crow* consists of fragments of surreal, epic, and folk fables with Crow as its main protagonist. The sequence, in truth, is a sort of mock epic, whose themes range from the inversions of the Biblical account of the creation, the Fall of man, the crucifixion of Christ, the Apocalypse and other classical myths related to Oedipal and White Goddess myth, to the themes of copulation, death, destruction, war and religion. Hughes's *Crow* tells us a story about the game in which God and Crow are engaged.

### **Examination at the Womb Door: Mocking Christian baptism**

This poem mocks Christian baptism. It includes a catechism used in the examination of baptismal applicants to Christianity. Here, Crow is interrogated by death. The interrogation reveals that death is stronger than the composite of life's attributes like feet, face, lungs, muscles, guts, brains. These questions emphasize the fragility of human life and magnify the vulnerability of life to destruction. Death owns all things and is stronger than earth, space, hope, will, love and life. Yet Crow is claimed to be stronger than death. Christianity is based on the hope of a Saviour who is stronger than death. Baptism is an affirmation of an eternal life through Christ. The irony of the poem is that death is portrayed as stronger than life. The poem may be read as a confrontation of existence and non-existence on the most elemental level.

Who is stronger than hope? Death

Who is stronger than the will? Death

Stronger than love? Death.

Stronger than life? Death.

But who is stronger than death?

Me, evidently

Pass, Crow.                    ('Examination at the Womb Door', *Crow*, p.15)

### **Crow's First Lesson: Adam's guilt**

In 'Crow's First Lesson', Hughes conveys that even the all pervasive, omnipotent God has failed to induce love into the self created world which is full of malice and viciousness. When God tries to teach Crow love, basic to all world, Crow produces a world of sharks, blue flies, tsetse, mosquitoes and lust which are the embodiments of hate. The implication of the poem is that God is not competent enough to induce love into the world. Crow's guilt is a reflection of Adam's guilt after the Fall where man hides himself from God.

Crow gaped, and the white shark crashed into the sea

And went rolling downwards, discovering its own depth

"No, No", said God, "Say Love, Now try it. Love "

Crow gaped, and bluefly, a tsetse, a mosquito

Zoomed out and down

To their sundry flesh-spots. ('Crow's First Lesson', *Crow*, p.20)

### **Song for a Phallus: Oedipal myth**

In many Crow poems Hughes intertwines the theme of alienation of modern man from nature with that of the Oedipus myth. Hughes's mother is essentially the earth Mother, Mother Nature. This poem is Crow's version of Oedipus. Here Crow pokes fun at the Oedipus myth. Crow deviates from the traditional Sophoclean Oedipal myth: his Oedipus attempts patricide as well as matricide.

Crow's song of Oedipus opens with the child Oedipus who is told by the oracle at Delphi that he is destined to slay his father and commit incest with his own mother. In the original myth when Laius, his father abandons the child to die on Mt. Etna the child Oedipus is rescued by the ordeal by a shepherd, who raises the child as the son of Polybus and Merope in Corinth. In Crow's account, his father takes that howling brat, ties his legs and throws him to the cat. But Crow's Oedipus escapes with luck. He does not answer the Sphinx's riddle, instead he kills her. In order to know the mysteries of after life, he commits matricide by splitting his mother's womb. But what he discovers is his own foetus in her womb.

He split his mammy like a melon

He was drenched with gore

He found himself curled up inside

As if he had never been born

Mamma Mamma ('Song for a Phallus', *Crow*, p.75-77)

### **Crow Tyrannosaurus: Crow's self-consciousness**

'Crow Tyrannosaurus' is one of Hughes's most powerful of Crow poems. The poem exposes the themes of guilt, suffering and pain. Tyrannosaurus Rex was the most destructive eater ever to live on the earth. In this poem, Crow realises that life is a cortege of mourning and lament. Swifts pulsate with the anguish of the insects they have eaten. A cat sorrows over its killings, though it is deaf to its victims' suffering. But with man it is quite different. He can neither feel nor hear his victims' sorrows. In fact, he is a walking Abattoir of innocents, whose

brain incinerates their outcry. Crow can rationalize away his killings, as man usually does. He cannot prevent himself preying on animals. But, he has to kill if he wants to survive. Although it is beyond Crow's power to stop eating, for a moment at least, he becomes fully conscious of the suffering of his victims. Crow truly discovers the laws by which he must live; his need to live by eating is stronger than his desire to avoid killing. Therefore, he kills and weeps until the agonies of his victims blind his eyes and deafen his ears.

Grubs grubs he stabbed

Weeping

Weeping

Weeping walked and stabbed

Thus came the eye's

Roundness

The ear's

Deafness ('Crow Tyrannosaurus', *Crow*, pp.24-25)

### **Conclusion:**

The rationalist might look down upon myth and shamanism because his ends are finite and palpable. However, to a poet who is riven by self-division and alienation from nature and whose end is to regain what civilization has cost him, the soulful oneness with nature and a unified personality, the means have to be what lexical words and logical reasoning cannot do. Ted Hughes like many other modern poets like Yeats and Eliot, who are opposed to blind belief or theology as poetic property, has recourse to primitive rites or exotic or out of the world spiritual practices whose rationality is proved in their efficacy to reach the end of self-integration though not in the apparently absurd means. Moreover, among arts, poetry can be as fiercely puissant as animals and express the inexpressible by making use of the myth and the occult. Ted Hughes's poetry is a 'mantric' chant where cadence of sound coherence not verbal works wonders.

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