

UNIVERZITA PALACKÉHO V OLMOUCI

FILOZOFICKÁ FAKULTA

Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky

Nicolle Knapová

Nature Imagery in the Poetry of Ted Hughes

Bakalářská práce

Vedoucí práce: Mgr. Pavlína Flajšarová, Ph.D.

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1. Introduction

In my thesis, I am going to explore the nature imagery in the poetry of one of the leading British poets of the 1960s, Edward (Ted) Hughes. For this purpose, I chose the *New Selected Poems* (1995), which covers over 40 years of his work. I also chose *The Hawk in the Rain* since the eponymous poem was not included in the *New Selected Poems*. The aim of my thesis is to examine individual nature and animal imagery and provide their interpretation. I also want to understand where the idea to write poems about animals came from.

In the first chapter, I will introduce the literary context, I will write about the poetry in the 1960s. Later I will make a quick introduction of the writer himself. In the second part of the thesis, I will introduce the poem collections which are relevant for this topic (*The Hawk in the Rain*, *Lupercal*, and *Wodwo*) as well as Hughes's major themes. I will also talk about the animal symbolism in Hughes's poetry. In the third part of the thesis, I will focus on the analysis of nine poems that I selected. The very last part of the thesis concludes the analysis from the previous chapters and summarizes the findings.

Ted Hughes was one of the greatest poets of the 20th century. He was also rather a bewildering one. His marriage to Sylvia Plath influenced him on many fronts and she was a significant role in his life. It might have also broken him. He was a very private person and he managed to survive all the pain through his work. He is something of an enigmatic force of British poetry. His influence on the British poetry is undeniable. It is actually often compared to the one of such major name like T.S. Eliot.

1.1. British poetry in the 1960s

In his book *The Twentieth Century in Poetry*, Peter Childs states, “The arts during the 1950s and early 1960s had been characterized by themes of class mobility, sexual adventure, and realist aesthetics. This was broadly true of drama, fiction, poetry and also film. Writers were less concerned with pushing at the boundaries of art and the medium of language than with exploring the material relations of contemporary social experience. Central preoccupations were the “promiscuous generation” and the “national malaise”. This, among other things has turned the poet away from politics.

This trend was to change in the next two decades, as the polarisation of the political field, more pronounced than at any time since the 1930s, was accompanied by more engaged poetry. Pop music became more political when Margaret Thatcher came to power in 1979. Across poetry, there has also been an increase in direct socio-political statements, from Blake Morrison’s attack on Thatcher, through the many poems on the Gulf War by writers as varied as Tony Harrison and Jo Shapcott.”¹

The 1960s poetry in Great Britain underwent an unexpected and rather interesting development, which changed its character. The main characteristics of this period are as Mánek states “a rapid increase in poetry production, increased popularity of poetry (mainly with young adults) and a change in quality in its character.”² The main sources of the poetry were avant-garde movements in the 1910s and 1920s, which deeply marked the development of the majority of modern European literature, however, in England, such movements were still rejected in British poetry and they remained aside.

It was in the 1960s when there finally was a delayed reception of stimuli from modern European literature. There was also an increase of value and number of poetry translations. New and untraditional poetics were in the making but there were also some traditional lines.

¹ Peter Childs, *The Twentieth Century in Poetry* (London: Routledge, 1999), 144.

² Bohuslav Mánek. “Britská poezie v 60. letech,” *Světová Poezie* 24, no. 5 (1971): 193.

The Movement

The Movement was considered according to Mánek “the most distinctive group of poets at the end of the 1940s and the beginnings of the 1950s.”³ The term “The Movement” was first used by a writer and critic Anthony Hartley in the article “Poets of the Fifties” in August of the year 1954, which was published in the British magazine *Spectator*. The poets usually included in this group are Kingsley Amis, Philip Larkin, John Wain, Thom Gunn, Elizabeth Jennings, Donald Davie, John Holloway and D.J. Enright. All of these poets deliberately did not create any kind of coherent group. Despite that, they did profess common principles. The Movement’s main platform was an anthology called “New Lines,” “Poets of the 1950s” as well as magazines *Listen* and already mentioned *Spectator*. According to Mánek, their poems are usually characterized by “civilized or even depersonalized lyric hero, authorial attitude, an emotional distance from the topic, emotional control and also use of irony.”⁴ Despite the fact that some of the later poetry schools did not accept them, “The Movement” played a crucial role in the development of post-war British poetry.

The Group

“The Group” was formed around the same time as “The Movement” – around the year 1952. The main initiator was a British teacher, critic, and poet Philip Hobsbaum. The poets included in “The Group” were George MacBeth, Edward Lucie-Smith, Philip Hobsbaum, Peter Redgrove, Alan Brownjohn, Peter Porter and Martin Bell. The content and style of poetry was much looser than the one of “The Movement”.

Martian poetry

Martian poetry was a delayed experimental stream which was developed in the 60s and 70s in the United Kingdom. The main characteristic feature of the poetry was the point of view of a Martian or an alien who finds the everyday objects and tries to understand them and thus using a completely new vocabulary. This results in a distance of the poet from the poem which is actually quite entertaining and the everyday objects are seen from a completely different perspective. The poets enjoyed using a variety of metaphors and similes. The first representative of the Martian poetry was Craig Raine. Martian poetry was definitely a blow of fresh air in the mainstream poetry.

³ Bohuslav Mánek. “Britská poezie v 60. letech,” *Světová Poezie* 24, no. 5 (1971): 198.

⁴ Bohuslav Mánek. “Britská poezie v 60. letech,” *Světová Poezie* 24, no. 5 (1971): 198.

Confessional poetry

One of the new tendencies during the 1960s was so-called “the confessional poetry.” The term was coined spontaneously in the United States in the year 1959. According to Mánek, this poetry was mainly focused on “familiar, personal and intimate topics but only from their negative perspective.” This poetry does not hold back anything from shocking, raw or the ugly truth of “the confession.”⁵

Review

A group around the magazine *Review* formed at the beginning of the 1960s. In the centre was a man named Ian Hamilton who was an editor of the magazine and also a very demanding critic of the magazine. The magazine worked consciously towards a unity of critical principles and poetry practice.

Underground poets

The Liverpool poets came into knowledge once the Beatles became famous in the 1960s. That is why the poetry reading was accompanied by music. The Liverpool poets were influenced by journalist Adrian Mitchell. The 1960s was the era of the Beatles, sex, drugs and true morality as well as destroying the conventions. It was also a period of dissatisfaction with the current social system. The people feared war and mass protests. The most important mediators for the Liverpool poets were small magazines like “New Departures”, “Night Scene” and “Eleventh Finger”.

Their poetry is associated with the cult of youth, innocence, and poverty. Many of the poems are parodies and they use the language and style of advertisement. The leading figure was Michael Horovitz. As far as the Liverpool scene is concerned, the anthology called “The Liverpool Scene” from the year 1967 as well as “The Mersey Sound” summed up the most successful work of the Liverpool poets.

Concrete Poetry

The term “Concrete poetry” involves a vast number of poetry manifestations which also have a connection to art. The concrete poetry can be labeled as “visual poetry” and sometimes it is

⁵ Bohuslav Mánek. “Britská poezie v 60. letech,” *Světová Poezie* 24, no. 5 (1971): 202.

said that visual poetry is considered a subcategory of concrete poetry. The most famous and also most prolific author in the concrete poetry was Ian H. Finlay from the Bahamas. It is true, that concrete poetry is sometimes considered a somewhat controversial genre that according to Pavlína Flajšarová in her book “is balancing in between literature and art, but there is no reason to abandon it or to belittle its significance.”⁶

1.2. Life of Ted Hughes

Edward (Ted) Hughes was born in Mytholmroyd, Yorkshire in 1930. Hughes started studying English at professor Leavis but he changed it to study archaeology and anthropology at the Cambridge University. Hughes’s literary career started exemplarily: he published his first poems when he was still in high school. He served as a radio operator in Royal Air Force. He was a pioneer in the post-war confessional poetry. He was interested in myths and legends. The rural landscape of Yorkshire had a major impact on his work. Reading Hughes’s poetry means entering a world where animals and nature are the dominating figures.

It was the love of animals that made Hughes decide to become a poet. According to *London Times* contributor Thomas Nye, Hughes wanted to capture not just live animals, but the aliveness of animals in their natural state: their wildness, their quiddity, the fox-ness of the fox and the crow-ness of the crow. The problem with Hughes was that his interest in animals was generally less naturalistic than symbolic. Hughes sent his manuscript of *The Hawk in the Rain* to a competition in the United States because of Sylvia Plath’s initiative. He won the first prize which was being published by a highly regarded publishing house Harper in 1957.

Peter Davison in his article for *The New York Times* writes, “While inhabiting the bodies of creatures, mostly male, Hughes clambers back down the evolutionary chain. He searches deep into the riddles of language, too, those that precede any given tongue, language that reeks of the forest or even the jungle. Such poems often contain a touch—or more than a touch—of melodrama, of the brutal tragedies of Seneca that Hughes adapted for the modern stage.”⁷

Hughes continued writing and publishing poems until his death. He died from cancer, on October 28, 1998.

⁶ Pavlína Flajšarová, *Poezie ve Velké Británii a Severním Irsku po roce 1945* (Rychnov n. Kněžnou: Uniprint, 2007), 96.

⁷ Peter Davison, “Predators and Prey,” *The New York Times*, December 1, 2002, accessed February 12, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2002/12/01/books/predators-and-prey.html>.

1.3. Themes in Hughes's poetry

Terry Gifford talks about Hughes's themes in the first chapter of the *Routledge Guides to Literature*, "The two themes dominated Ted Hughes's youth: his fascination with wildlife and his early sense of himself as a future poet and a writer. All of his resources as a writer of poetry, fiction, literary studies, book reviews, translations and others are aimed at exploring the tension and connections between our inner nature and the external nature, in both of which Hughes believed that we must find a way to be at home." ⁸

In his essay "The Debates about Hughes" Paul Bentley talks about Hughes's interest in violence. He quotes the *Reappraisal* from the year 1965, "Everybody knows that Ted Hughes's subject is violence." Bentley also states that "the early debates about Hughes's poetry register something of the shock of Hughes's first two books (*The Hawk in the Rain* and *Lupercal*)." According to Bentley, "The vitalism of Hughes's poetry is really a kind of naive admiration for animal life – a kind of raw nature cult, which assumes that human consciousness brings only limitation."

Bentley also talks about Alfred Alvarez and his anthology *New Poetry*. He says that "Alfred Alvarez places Hughes at the vanguard of a "new depth poetry" – a poetry that challenges what Alvarez calls "the Gentility Principle" of The Movement writers such as Philip Larkin and Kingsley Amis. Alvarez places Hughes in the context of an age of psychoanalysis, an age coming to terms with new revelations about Holocaust. Alvarez's is the most important attempt at this time to place Hughes's poetry in a cultural context and to detect in it a social or cultural relevance." ⁹

When asked about the critical controversy over his "poetry violence" in an interview in 1970, Hughes replied that "the question was not a simple one: The poem of mine usually cited for violence is the one about Hawk Roosting, this drowsy hawk sitting in a wood and talking to itself. That bird is accused of being fascist." ¹⁰ Bentley asks himself in the earlier mentioned essay as to "why nature is no longer simple". He answers that "it might do something with mediated status." According to him "the violent effect of a poem like "Hawk Rooting" is not explicable with reference to how hawks behave but is an effect of the way the poem breaks up

⁸ Terry Gifford, *Ted Hughes: Routledge Guide to Literature* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), 7.

⁹ Terry Gifford, *The Cambridge Companion to Ted Hughes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2011), 29.

¹⁰ Gifford, *The Cambridge Companion to Ted Hughes*, 29-30.

what is “self-evident” by intimating and exploring the religious, mythical and historical meanings already invested in nature.”¹¹

1.4. Animal poetry collections

1.4.1. The Hawk in the Rain

The Hawk in the Rain is still Hughes’s most important poetry collection. This is where the majority of his best-known poems appeared for the first time in 1957. These poems helped Hughes gain reputation. It was in this volume that Hughes was able to announce his major themes. It is now much easier to understand that Hughes was actually consciously writing “anti-pastoral poetry that attacked emotional and intellectual complacency about inner and outer nature in order to be able to seek more positive explorations of the inner life that humans might have among the creative and destructive forces of their home environment.”¹²

In his book *Ted Hughes*, Gifford states, “In one of Hughes’s most enduring poems “The Thought-Fox”, the text that is apparently conjured up before the reader’s eyes seems to suggest that poetry itself can draw its life from the kind of sensory alertness of a fox, if only it can allow such quality of attention to enter the dark hole of the head”.¹³

1.4.2. Lupercal

Hughes’s second poetry collection named *Lupercal* was published in 1960. The reader can notice some changes in both style and also development of his themes. One of the changes since *The Hawk in the Rain* has a simpler key as far as rhythms and sound patterns are concerned. The name *Lupercal* comes from a word *Lupercalia*, which was a festival of the Roman wolf-god which took place in February. It was believed that women who were running naked in the streets had their fertility restored by the whips of the priests called *Luperci*. It is possible that Hughes chose his theme in its opening line of a poem called “Things Present”: “All things being done and undone.”¹⁴ It is safe to say that the best poems in *Lupercal* are basically a mask of “Hawk Roosting”, “Pike”, “View of a Pig” and other poems.

1.4.3. Wodwo

It took Hughes seven long years to publish his third poetry collection, *Wodwo*. The readers can easily notice the significant contrast with his previous collections. This collection consists of three parts: the poems in the first and the third part and five stories and a play in the second

¹¹ Gifford, *The Cambridge Companion to Ted Hughes*, 30.

¹² Gifford, *Ted Hughes: Routledge Guides to Literature*, 33.

¹³ Gifford, *Ted Hughes: Routledge Guides to Literature*, 34.

¹⁴ Ted Hughes, *Lupercal* (London: Faber&Faber, 2010), 1.

part. As Gifford mentions, “All (parts) are intended to be read together as part of a single work.”¹⁵ For Hughes, narrative, drama, and poetry were not just becoming complementary modes, but possibly all present in any one mode.”¹⁶ Gifford also states that “the first part of the collection contains poems that might be seen as having grown out of the earlier collections and that they are the most accessible descriptive poems in the volume.” According to Gifford, “*Wodwo* is considered to be the volume in which Hughes found his mythic voice and began developing a sense of structure that could explore mythic drama within the scope of a volume of poetry.”¹⁷

Wodwo belongs to the highlights of Hughes’s poetic career. According to Terry Gifford, “The first part of *Wodwo* contains poems that can be seen by some readers as having grown out of the earlier collections. The language is both more anecdotal and more enigmatic. The volume does not end with revelation, but with more questions, more observations and the need for new poetic modes.” Gifford continues in his book to explain the story behind the volume, “Closing the final section, ‘Wodwo’, the title poem of the collection, is unique in Hughes’s poetry because it misses the punctuation and lower-case first letters opening each line. This ‘Wodwo’ is related to the Wodwo of the book’s epigraph, and explores his own consciousness and environment with curiousness and naivety.”¹⁸

1.5. Ted Hughes and animal symbolism

Ted Hughes talks about his interest in shamanism and its role of animals in it in a letter he wrote to Moelwyn Merchant. In that letter Hughes explained how shamanism helped him see a connection between things such as his preoccupation with animal life, mythologies and dreams he had. In his essay “Hughes and animals,” Chen Hong talks about Hughes’s connection between animals and the divine world, “Underneath them all, what he found was a deeper connection between animal life and the divine world, a world that animal have always been living in and that humans are separated from.”¹⁹ Hughes was heavily influenced by Jung when it came to the separation of two psychic halves and Jung regarded it as a basic human condition in which every human being, including himself, was implicated.

¹⁵ Gifford, *Ted Hughes: Routledge Guides to Literature*, 37.

¹⁶ Gifford, *Ted Hughes: Routledge Guides to Literature*, 37.

¹⁷ Gifford, *Ted Hughes: Routledge Guides to Literature*, 37.

¹⁸ Gifford, *Ted Hughes: Routledge Guides to Literature*, 39.

¹⁹ Gifford, *The Cambridge Companion to Ted Hughes*, 40.

Alan Bleakly claimed in his book *The Animalizing Imagination* that Hughes has been practicing animal-centred shamanism. According to Hong, “The reason that shamanism, through the mode of totemism, has been widely practiced in ancient and diverse cultures is that there seems to be as people of those cultures believe, a kind of natural continuity between energy possessed by different beings in their lived experience, including human beings. Hughes was fascinated by this view, and the first two poems in *The Hawk in the Rain* could be seen as his evocation of the mysterious workings of life-sustaining energy stored in the bodies of powerful animals.”²⁰

As far as animals in his poems are concerned, it is probable that his mimetic act is a result of his own consciousness attempting to return to matter. Hughes’s interest is a so-called primitivism and it had a major impact on his life and also his work. Yet, there might exist another reason for the reader’s much-justified impression of a forced and deliberate style in Hughes’s first book. According to Chen Hong, “It lies in the gap between Hughes’s intellectual conviction in the crucial importance of the raw energies of the material world to the healthy development of the human psyche and his actual failure to reconcile the two.”²¹

The poetry collection *Wodwo* comprises three parts with poems and stories. To me it feels like the animals in the first part are considered some kind of symbols – if not Gods – but in the second part of the collection, it seems to me like the animals are more likely to receive pity. The animals in the first part appear to be much more symbolic in function than those in the first two collections. For example in the first half of “Second Glance at a Jaguar,” – a poem which I am going to analyze later in my thesis – recalls the earlier jaguar, but this one seems much sadder, and pitiful than the first one in the poem “Jaguar.” Lastly, Hong says that, “The animal poems in the third part of *Wodwo* are various in style, tone and animal imagery, showing perhaps, the poet’s uncertain view of nature.”²² Many critics have commented on Hughes’s overly careful use of language in his first collection and its somewhat too tight style.

²⁰ Gifford, *The Cambridge Companion to Ted Hughes*, 42.

²¹ Gifford, *The Cambridge Companion to Ted Hughes*, 44.

²² Gifford, *The Cambridge Companion to Ted Hughes*, 47.

1.6. The poetic device of imagery and symbol

In his book *A Dictionary of Literary Terms*, Cuddon introduces the meaning of imagery, “The word imagery comes from Latin and it means making of likenesses. This term is one of the most common in criticism, and one of the most variable in meaning. The terms image and imagery have many connotations and meanings. Imagery as a general term covers the use of language to represent objects, actions, feelings, thoughts, ideas, states of mind and any sensory or extra-sensory experience. An “image” does not necessarily mean a mental picture.”²³

According to Cuddon, “Many images are conveyed by figurative language, as in metaphor, simile, synecdoche, onomatopoeia and metonymy. An image can be visual, olfactory, tactile, auditory, gustatory, abstract and kinaesthetic. It is often the case that an image is not exclusively one thing or another. They overlap and intermingle and thus combine.”²⁴

As far as the device of symbolism is concerned Cuddon says, “The word symbol derives from the Greek verb *symbollein* which means “to throw together” and its noun *symbolon* means “sign” or “token.”²⁵ In the broadest sense a symbol is anything which signifies something; in this sense all words are symbols. In discussing literature, however, the term “symbol” is applied only to a word or phrase that signifies an object or event which in its turn signifies something, or has a range of reference, beyond itself. Some symbols are “conventional” or “public”.²⁶

²³ J.A. Cuddon, *A Dictionary of Literary terms* (London: Penguin Books, 1977), 322.

²⁴ Cuddon, *A Dictionary of Literary terms*, 323.

²⁵ Cuddon, *A Dictionary of Literary terms*, 671.

²⁶ M. H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (Boston: Heinle and Heinle, 1999), 311.

2. Nature Imagery

2.1. The Hawk in the Rain

The Hawk in the Rain is the first poem in the poetry collection of the same title. This collection was Hughes's first book of poetry. Hughes dedicated this collection to his wife Sylvia Plath. The poem is formed in free verse, it is an unrhymed poem and it is divided into five quatrains. The poem contains graphic imagery: a vivid picture of a struggling man and of the hawk sitting effortlessly at a height is given to the reader. The most vivid picture is in the last stanza:

“Coming from the wrong way suffers the air, hurled upside down,

Fall from his eye, the ponderous shires crash on him,

The horizon traps him; the round angelic eye,

Smashed, mix his heart's blood with the mire of the land.”²⁷

There are themes such as the contrast between the unsteadiness of the human and the stability and strength of the hawk, animals superiority over a man in their natural environment to which they are adapted, mortality of all beings no matter their strength and animals are part of their natural element even after their death. There is a frequent use of Alliteration such as the line “I drown in the drumming ploughland, I drag up”²⁸, “From clay that clutches my each step to the ankle”²⁹, “And rain hacks my head to the bone, the hawk hangs”³⁰ and also simile – “Steady as a hallucination in the streaming air.”³¹

As far as poetic devices are concerned, there are metaphors in the following line: “Morsel in the earth's mouth”³², where it describes the feelings of the author in relation to the earth, in the line “Strain towards the master”, “Fulcrum of violence where the hawk hangs still”³³,

²⁷ Ted Hughes, *The Hawk in the Rain* (London: Faber&Faber, 2003), 1.

²⁸ Hughes, *The Hawk in the Rain*, 1.

²⁹ Hughes, *The Hawk in the Rain*, 1.

³⁰ Hughes, *The Hawk in the Rain*, 1.

³¹ Hughes, *The Hawk in the Rain*, 1.

³² Hughes, *The Hawk in the Rain*, 1.

³³ Hughes, *The Hawk in the Rain*, 1.

which describes the sky and then there is personification in the lines “The horizon traps him”³⁴ and “Swallowing of the earth’s mouth.”³⁵

2.2.Hawk Roosting

“Hawk Roosting” comes from an early poetry collection called *Lupercal*. It was published in 1960. There is either a literal interpretation in which case the narrator is celebrating the hawk itself or there is a metaphorical interpretation and in that case, the narrator is exploring the association with the bird. As far as form is concerned, the poem has a strong and regular form. It is written in six four-lined stanzas. When the structure is concerned the first two stanzas are about hawk’s superiority. The third and fourth stanzas reveal his power of nature. He holds everything in his claws. The last two stanzas form some kind of justification for the hawk’s actions. Concerning sound, there is one main key sound that echoes through all six stanzas. That sound is the long “ee”, which can be found four times just in the first stanza. The other sound effect is repetition of words referring to the hawk’s reference to itself appears in every stanza. Imagery-wise, the language is rather simple. The words in stanza two are words the reader might find in an office:

“The convenience of the high trees! / The air’s buoyancy and the sun’s ray
Are of advantage of me; and the earth’s face upward for my inspection.”³⁶

This kind of language contrasts with the threatening language of violence as in line sixteen: “My manners are tearing off heads.”³⁷ The use of negative words such as “no” in lines two, fifteen, twenty and twenty-three makes the phrases sound like political slogans.

These words suggest the hawk is rejecting the political process and is relying instead on brute force, which can be seen in already mentioned line sixteen. When the poem came out in 1960, it was quite controversial because the hawk who was sitting on the top and who controlled everything reminded people of fascist leaders.

³⁴ Hughes, *The Hawk in the Rain*, 1.

³⁵ Hughes, *The Hawk in the Rain*, 1.

³⁶ Ted Hughes, *New Selected Poems* (London: Faber&Faber, 1995), 29.

³⁷ Hughes, *New Selected Poems*, 29.

However, Hughes himself said, that he wanted to show “nature thinking”. I believe that the hawk here might actually be the symbol of human evil in this world, arrogance, destructiveness and its egoistical behaviour. That is, it is a symbol of inhumanity.

2.3. View of a Pig

View of a Pig is an uncomfortable and unsettling poem, where Hughes explores the brutality of nature; the cruelty of human attitudes to nature; his own inability to empathise (and to imagine a dead pig as a living thing); and perhaps his own failure as a poet. The poem consists of six four-lined stanzas. There is no clear use of consistent rhyme or rhythm. The poem has rather frustrating tone. There is an encounter with a large lifeless pig lying on top of a barrow. First contact with the pig causes the person to “Thump it without feeling remorse.”³⁸ After some physical abuse, the pig felt too dead to be mad at as it was like “A poundage of lard and pork”.³⁹

Through all the frustrating events, and attempts to accuse the pig, sympathy for the pig starts to appear. Instead of the anger, the poem changes to being more sympathetic towards the pig.

“Too dead now to pity.”⁴⁰

In the first line of the 5th stanza showcases that all the anger and sympathy for the pig is gone with the realization that the pig is no longer alive. Acting out of frustration may have caused the person to thump the pig and later on feel bad about it. This poem was written to show human’s cruelty to animals. During the postmodern time period, writers were starting to embrace the changing of reality. Ted Hughes writes about the reality of animal cruelty. Sound-wise, there is one sound device and that is consonance.

This phenomenon can be found in the following line: “Such weight and thick pink bulk.”⁴¹

The harsh consonance of the “k” consonant sound seems to reflect the disgust of the poet towards the dead pig. Imagery-wise there are many different poetic devices such as simile – “It was like a sack of wheat”, “Pigs must have hot blood, they feel like ovens”⁴², paradox –

³⁸ Hughes, *New Selected Poems*, 34.

³⁹ Hughes, *New Selected Poems*, 34.

⁴⁰ Hughes, *New Selected Poems*, 34.

⁴¹ Hughes, *New Selected Poems*, 34.

⁴² Hughes, *New Selected Poems*, 34.

“It was less than lifeless, further off”⁴³ and repetition of the phrase “too dead”, which can be seen several times (three to be exact) throughout the poem.

2.4. The Jaguar

The poem “The Jaguar” is a part of Ted Hughes’s first poetry collection *The Hawk in the Rain* from 1957. It is a tribute to the animal. All the other animals have to find ways to attract attention while the jaguar does not need to. The narrator, who is, in this case, Hughes himself, is trying to make a statement about the mechanized human condition.

Like the hawk, the jaguar is a creature full of energy powerful enough to mesmerize the watching crowd at a zoo. Facing the jaguar as if it were “a dream”, the crowd seems to be penetrated by “the drills of his eyes,” just as the “prison darkness” is drilled through. The dreamy moment thus becomes the moment when the closed door to the inner world of the crowd, which we may understand as the collective unconsciousness of human beings, opens temporarily up to forces of the outer world. But the jaguar does not need any impetus from the outside to break out of the bondage. The cage no longer exists for him as he strides in “wilderness of freedom”.⁴⁴

Concerning the form of the poem, “The Jaguar” consists of five four-lined stanzas. There is no clear use of consistent rhyme or rhythm. As far as tone or attitude is concerned, the tone suggests that the animals are not valuable and regards them as frivolous beings. The line “It might be painted on a nursery wall”⁴⁵ shows that the animals are as stagnant and not eye-catching. However, the poet’s tone became proud and illusory about the jaguar. He described the jaguar as the only animal that stands out from the rest and is more valuable.

Mysterious and alluring, vibrant and vivid which can be seen in the following line: “Where the crowd stands, stares, mesmerized.”⁴⁶ Such tone describes how the jaguar is able to mesmerize and hypnotize the crowd. The poet describes that “The world rolls under the long thrust of his heel”⁴⁷ – emphasizes on the confidence and status of the jaguar in its majestic glory. The poet describes the jaguar in a dignified and praising manner. Concerning sound, there are two elements and those are onomatopoeia and alliteration. In this poem, the sentence

⁴³ Hughes, *New Selected Poems*, 34.

⁴⁴ Gifford, *The Cambridge Companion to Ted Hughes*, 42.

⁴⁵ Hughes, *New Selected Poems*, 4.

⁴⁶ Hughes, *New Selected Poems*, 4.

⁴⁷ Hughes, *New Selected Poems*, 4.

“The apes yawn and adore their fleas in the sun”⁴⁸, “yawn” is onomatopoeia. In this case, the narrator used onomatopoeia to help the reader to imagine more clearly how the apes yawn sleepily and boringly. As far as alliteration is concerned, one of the alliterations in “The Jaguar” is the following line: “Stinks of sleepers from the breathing straw.”⁴⁹ As regards imagery, there are following poetic devices – simile, personification, metaphor and repetition. An example of a simile is: “At a cage where the crowd stand, stare, mesmerized, as a child at a dream.”⁵⁰ When it comes to personification, Hughes used personification in the sentence “The parrots shriek as if they were on fire.”⁵¹

The narrator wanted to show that the parrots’ sound sounded like a shriek, so he used personification to help him express it better. The line “The boa constrictor’s coil is a fossil” in the second stanza is a metaphor. Ted Hughes used a metaphor in this sentence because he wanted to give us a better picture of the boa constrictor lied still so its coil look like a fossil. The last but not least poetic device Hughes used is repetition. That is visible in the line “Cage after cage seems empty...”⁵² He used repetition to make the concept that the whole zoo is rather boring as if there were no animals at all. To me, the jaguar is a symbol of a free spirit – someone who does not stick to the boundaries or limitations of life.

2.5. Second Glance at a Jaguar

“Second Glance at A Jaguar” was the poem published in Hughes’s third poetry collection called *Wodwo* in 1967 – ten years after the first poem “The Jaguar”. This poem is an associated poem to the poem I analysed earlier – “The Jaguar”. This poem seems to me as a poem of some kind of transformation. The lonely and bored jaguar changes into a courageous and vicious Aztec warrior right in front of the reader’s eye thanks to the use of perfect imagery. The title of this poem can mean many things. The word “glance” might suggest the jaguar is often ignored by the zoo visitors and that is maybe because the jaguar is not entertaining enough for them to be fun. Nevertheless, “second” suggests that there is so much more meaning to the jaguar that you have to look in more detail to actually see the real jaguar.

⁴⁸ Hughes, *New Selected Poems*, 4.

⁴⁹ Hughes, *New Selected Poems*, 4.

⁵⁰ Hughes, *New Selected Poems*, 4.

⁵¹ Hughes, *New Selected Poems*, 4.

⁵² Hughes, *New Selected Poems*, 4.

This poem really well captures the raw animal rhythms of Hughes's poetry. The poem is structured in one rather long stanza. This could easily mean that the jaguar is consistent and keeps on going. It could also mean that in captivity, his life is long and dull due to the lack of "breaks." Although the poem has no rhyme scheme the reader must figure out how the sentences are organized. Considering that the entire piece is one stanza, it is fast paced and the main purpose of the poem is already uniform throughout – so the juxtaposition of splitting it into stanzas is in this case unnecessary. The lack of rhyme scheme could mean that the jaguar has nothing happening in his future life. It could also suggest that the jaguar is planning his freedom. The theme of the poem is an attempt to explore the physical aspects of the jaguar's nature. As far as the tone of the poem is concerned it is hasty and also energetic. This jaguar is the embodiment of savagery through the similes and allusions Hughes used.

The text is trying to depict a setting of the jaguar being restrained and it is concluded through lines like: "At every stride, he has to turn a corner..." or "A gorged look..."⁵³

The purpose of the poem is that the reason this is the "Second glance at the Jaguar" is because this jaguar is a nothing but a pathetic remain of what used to be a respectable creature. The syntax of this poem is very Hughesian considering the structure usually follows the subject being analyzed. There is a lack of stops and sometimes there are no stops at all.

2.6. The Thought Fox

Terry Gifford describes in his book *Ted Hughes* that this poem is "the most typical example of Hughes's animalizing imagination."⁵⁴ This poem is one of Hughes's earliest ones.

According to Gifford it is also often regarded as "one of his best animal poems since it seems to be magically holding three animals in one: the biological, the symbolic and the textual. When the imaginative eyes of the working poet look through the window into the midnight forest, when a sense of movement outside in the darkness penetrates the lonely heart, and when the actual fox merges with the one in the poet's memory at the point where the eye appears as "A widening deepening greenness", and when these fuse to jump onto the pages by the way of "the dark hole of the head", the usual boundaries between different worlds collapse, and the triple transformation is made."⁵⁵

⁵³ Hughes, *New Selected Poems*, 60.

⁵⁴ Gifford, *The Cambridge Companion to Ted Hughes*, 41.

⁵⁵ Gifford, *The Cambridge Companion to Ted Hughes*, 41.

Richard Webster detected a “conflict of sensibility” in the poem, a tension between “the extraordinary sensual delicacy” of the fox image and the “predatory impulse.”⁵⁶

“The Thought Fox” was published in a poetry collection *The Hawk in the Rain*. It is considered a metaphor poem about the creative process involved when writing a poem and about suffering from a creative block. There are certain parts revealed about the fox such as its nose, eyes, its shadow and body. But in reality, there is no fox. The wood is still there but there is a change in poet’s creative capacity. In the poem, Hughes credits the natural world as a source of humankind’s capacity for creativity and intellectual development.

In his book *Poetry in the Making*, Hughes also talks about this poem: “This poem does not have anything you could easily call a meaning. It is about a fox, obviously enough, but a fox that is both fox and not a fox. What sort of a fox is it that can step right into my head where presumably still sits... smiling to itself when the dogs bark. It is both a fox and a spirit. It is a real fox; as I read the poem I see it move, I see it setting its prints, I see its shadow going over the irregular surface of the snow. The words show me all this, bringing it nearer and nearer. It is very real to me.

The words have made a body for it and given it somewhere to walk. If, at the time of writing this poem, I had found livelier words, words that could give me much more vividly its movements, the twitch and craning of its ears, the slight tremor of its hanging tongue and its breath making little clouds, its teeth bared in the cold, the snow-crumbs from its pads as it lifts each one, in turn, if I could have got the words for all this, the fox would probably be even more real and alive to me now, than it is as I read the poem. So you seem in some ways my fox is better than any ordinary fox. It will live forever, it will never suffer from hunger or hounds. I have it with me wherever I go.”⁵⁷

As far as structure is concerned, the poem consists of six four-lined stanzas. It has one or two full end rhymes with hints of slant rhymes. There is no set meter. There is a careful use of punctuations and enjambment. The poem is set in the present. I believe that the narrator, in this case, is the poet himself. The tone of the poem is mysterious and melancholic and dream-like with some kind of suspension feeling. Hughes employs a number of different literary devices. There is repetition, anaphora and epistrophe in the line “And again now, and now, and now.” It evokes the physical action and sound of typing.

⁵⁶ Richard Webster, “The Thought Fox and the Poetry of Ted Hughes,” *RichardWebster.net*, accessed March 10, 2018, <http://www.richardwebster.net>.

⁵⁷ Hughes, *Poetry in the Making* (London: Faber&Faber, 2008), 20-21.

There is also alliteration of the “d” sound in the line “deeper within darkness” and “m” sound in the line “midnight moment’s.” Hughes employs sensory imagery to suggest the tangible reality of the fox. The fox is gradually realised from a set of “neat prints” into a living, breathing animal. There is also a simile in line “Cold, delicately as the dark snow; A fox’s nose touches twig, leaf.”⁵⁸ Hughes employs this reversed simile and disjointed syntax to represent how the fox is slow to come into form. This is parallel to the writing and printing process. There is also a metaphor in the line “Sets neat prints into the snow.”⁵⁹ This metaphor could easily mean the representation of writing on a blank page. Snow is white just like the blank pages on a paper. Like the snow, an empty page is also white. Another literary device presented in the poem is personification which is in the line “The clock’s loneliness.”⁶⁰ The fox is a symbol of imagination. Eventually, Hughes is able to find the words which for him are like the fox’s footsteps in the snow.

2.7. Pike

“Pike” was included in Hughes’s second collection *Lupercal* published in 1960. The poem is about life of carnivorous freshwater fish. It is based on Hughes’s childhood memories when he recalls going fishing with his father to the lake. It has physical as well as allegorical meaning. In this poem, Hughes reveals the dark nature of the animal kingdom. In “Pike”, the speaker at the end of the poem is obviously experiencing a dilemma as he “silently cast and fished/ with the hair frozen on head” in that pond full of Pike too immense to stir. That fishing is both physical sport and a psychological activity. In a letter to Terry Gifford, Hughes defined fishing as a means of “putting the individual back in contact with the primitive being”.

The poem consists of eleven stanzas comprising of quatrains. It is a free verse. Visually the poem structure seems rather regular. The poem is divided into three sections and each of them focuses on a different event. The first section includes first four stanzas pike’s movement in its natural habitat. The next section – stanzas five to seven – are flashbacks to events of cannibalism. The last section includes stanzas eight to eleven when the narrator returns back to the present where he is fishing again. His word choice is associated with words of violence. Those words are for example “hooked”, “clamped” or “fangs.” The writing has a

⁵⁸ Hughes, *New Selected Poems*, 3.

⁵⁹ Hughes, *New Selected Poems*, 3.

⁶⁰ Hughes, *New Selected Poems*, 3.

conversational tone and Hughes uses simple language. There are a number of literary devices in the poem.

Alliteration and repetition of the “p” sound can be seen in the first stanza. Ted Hughes also uses a metaphor here which can be seen in the line “Stunned by their own grandeur.”⁶¹ A pike is a majestic fish and Hughes emphasises it here. Another metaphor can be seen in the line “The same iron in his eyes” which shows that the pike has a fixed intent. Hughes also uses hyperbole to emphasize the pike’s position. He also uses oxymoron in the line “Still splashes on the dark pond.” He ends the poem with more suspense as the outcome of the narrative section is uncertain.

2.8. Wind

“Wind” is a centrepiece of Ted Hughes’s first poetry collection *The Hawk in the Rain*, which was published in 1957. Hughes showed a completely different aspect to this element of nature. He is not concerned with describing the beauty of the wind, but to communicate the strength and power of it. In *Poetry in the Making* Hughes explains, “In writing that poem I was mainly concerned with the strength of the blast, the way it seems to shake the world up like a box of toys.”⁶² The poem explores the effect it has on the narrator of the poem as he hides inside of the house.

“Wind” consists of six four-line stanzas, also called quatrains. There is no clear use of consistent rhyme or rhythm. The fact that the poem is written in quatrains makes it seem like the poem is organized and tidy, yet the frequent use of enjambment corrupts this assumption. The poem is written in chronological order. The first three stanzas show time indications such as “all night” and “at noon.” In the first line of the second stanza, there is a caesura, which is break in a verse at which the reader pauses. That can be seen in the following stanza:

“Till day rose; then under an orange sky
The hills had new places, and wind wielded
Blade-light, luminous black and emerald,
Flexing like the lens of a mad eye.”⁶³

⁶¹ Hughes, *New Selected Poems*, 41.

⁶² Hughes, *Poetry in the Making*, 34.

⁶³ Hughes, *New Selected Poems*, 14.

At this point, Hughes describes a change. The night is over and colours are introduced to represent the special type of light that happens in the morning, during or after a storm. There is vivid colour imagery (orange, black, and emerald) and a lexical field of words related to light and seeing.

There are words such as “luminous”, “blade-light”, “lens” and “eye”. Hughes uses a combination of different sounds. The most noticeable, however, is onomatopoeia, which can be clearly seen in the first stanza:

“The woods crashing through darkness, the booming hills,
Winds stampeding the fields under the window
Floundering black astride and blinding wet.”⁶⁴

He also uses alliteration such as “wind wielded”, which is used to speed up the pace of the poem. Two most important images in the poem are personification and metaphor. The use of a metaphor can be seen in the very first line: “This house has been far out at sea all night.”⁶⁵

Hughes uses this particular metaphor to create a sense of isolation and instability. I believe that the “house” in the first line might represent a ship at sea, suggesting that it is unstable. It might also be a metaphor for his unstable marriage with Sylvia Plath’s. There is another metaphor in the same line: “At noon I scaled along the house-side as far as the coal-house door.”⁶⁶ Hughes compares moving alongside of the house to climbing a mountain because the wind is so strong. As far as personification is concerned, Hughes brings the woods and winds to life so that their presence in the poem is even more powerful.

This can be seen in the following lines in the first stanza:

“The woods crashing through darkness, the booming hills,
Winds stampeding the field”⁶⁷

Hughes personifies the landscape in the following line: “Here the fields are “quivering” as if in fear, and the skyline is a “grimace.”⁶⁸ Against the wind, the world is insignificant, and can “bang” and “vanish” with a “flap.” The world seems trivial and can be destroyed by being

⁶⁴ Hughes, *New Selected Poems*, 14.

⁶⁵ Hughes, *New Selected Poems*, 14.

⁶⁶ Hughes, *New Selected Poems*, 14.

⁶⁷ Hughes, *New Selected Poems*, 14.

⁶⁸ Hughes, *New Selected Poems*, 14.

simply flapped away. In the next line, the wind has “flung” away from the magpie, as if it is a meaningless piece of rubbish rather than a sentient creature. The simile of the gull being bent “like an iron bar” indicates the force involved in the wind capable of bending a hard metal. The bird has no chance.

Hughes continues to personify inanimate objects in the last stanza:

“Or each other. We watch the fire blazing,
And feel the roots of the house move, but sit on,
Seeing the window tremble to come in,
Hearing the stones cry out under the horizon”⁶⁹

Here the “window” is seen to “tremble to come in,” as if it also needs some shelter. The “stones cry out under the horizons”⁷⁰ is a primitive and desperate response that goes back to the origin of human existence. “The roots of the house” is connected with this subconscious and primitive fear. The power of the storm and its ability to create some kind of fear is reflected through personification in the very last line in the sixth stanza: “Hearing the stones cry out under the horizons.”⁷¹

I believe that the first important theme of the poem is isolation. The speaker himself is defined by isolation. Even though he probably lives in the house with other people, the narrator is confronted by powers much bigger than himself. The wind has such isolating effects that it drowns any possible focus on the narrator’s possible relationships.

Violence is the poem’s second crucial theme. Neither the reader nor the narrator knows what the wind is capable of. It wreaks destruction and leaves chaos as it moves on. The last theme to focus on is power. The wind has its own kind of power that is rather hard to explain and comprehend. That is what makes the wind so unpredictable and dangerous, wild and untamed.

2.9. Thistles

The poem “Thistles” is included in the poetry collection *Wodwo*. In this poem Ted Hughes talks about the life cycle of the flower called a thistle. Hughes claims that it is very difficult to get rid of them. He compares them to wars and their memories that we will never get rid of either. As far as the structure is concerned, there are four stanzas which are regular. It is a free

⁶⁹ Hughes, *New Selected Poems*, 14.

⁷⁰ Hughes, *New Selected Poems*, 14.

⁷¹ Hughes, *New Selected Poems*, 14.

verse. Two important things in the poem connected with structure are enjambment and caesura. In this case caesura means the chopping of the thistles and their replacement that is similar to an army man. The first line comes back to the title of the poem and can come out as harsh. It can also mean a contradiction in the sense that a cow's tongue is soft but not smooth. The word thistle is used again in the line two. Hughes gives the reader an ill-favoured image to undergo by showing how the strength of the war destroys the beauty of nature. It resembles how the mankind destroys the natural world. The title easily introduces the element of nature giving the reader an essence of the poem.

Even though the title of the poem is short, it is effective because it encourages the readers to use their imagination more. Throughout the poem, Hughes compares the thistles to Vikings. The thistles pollinate and reproduce as can be seen in the line "Every one a revengeful burst."⁷² That means there is a reason behind the reproduction and it is not just to maintain the status. The motive is to fight a battle or a long war. The word "burst" sounds violent and destructive and "revengeful" is an adjective referring to a punishment of someone. The word "every one" makes it sound like there is some kind of compromise. They are all prepared to fight in the war. As far as poetic devices are concerned there is a metaphor in the line "From the underground stain of a decayed Viking."⁷³ There is also a simile in the line "They are like pale hair and the gutturals of dialects." Thistles come back as is described in the line "Stiff with weapons, fighting back over the same ground".⁷⁴ The poem associates this cycle of violence with the human cycle of war territory.

2.10. To Paint a Water Lily

Ted Hughes published this poem in 1960. There are two possible titles – "To Paint a Water Lily" and "How to Paint a Water Lily". That means that the poem has an overt addressee. Hughes is advising someone how to paint the lily. It is a perspective of an artist. Although the poem is titled "To Paint a Water Lily," the water lily is not always the main focus of the poem; by describing the water lily only in the beginning and ending stanzas and focusing on the surrounding environment throughout the rest of the poem, Hughes illustrates that painting a water lily does not merely mean to paint the object itself, but to capture the way it fits in with nature. As far as tone is concerned, it is mostly observant and descriptive. The imagery

⁷² Hughes, *New Selected Poems*, 55.

⁷³ Hughes, *New Selected Poems*, 55.

⁷⁴ Hughes, *New Selected Poems*, 55.

which is depicted in the poem shows the war-like action that a water lily is surrounded by. It reflects the complicated interactions a water lily has between its surrounding environment. It also reflects the internal conflict occurring within the author himself as he attempts to capture the beauty of a water lily without compromising its nature.

The poem consists of thirteen two lined stanzas. There are short independent clauses. Each stanza is merely an idea in the speaker's mind. Each break is time spent observing. It showcases difficulty capturing nature. The structure Hughes uses is reflective of his thoughts as he observes the pond.

He repeatedly uses commas, semicolons, and dashes in the poem to emphasize the time it takes for the reader to appreciate the poem and the activity occurring. As the poem starts, the narrator shows appeal to a water lily – he calls it a lady in the fourth line. There is alliteration of the “l” sound in the first line: “A green level of lily leaves.”⁷⁵ There is a personification of the dragonfly in line six: “That eats meat, that bullets by.”⁷⁶ A device of paradox appears in line fourteen where strong metal becomes a fluid “Beads of molten metal”⁷⁷ and also in line twenty four where the narrator showcases difficulty in capturing nature: “As a painting, trembling hardly at all.”⁷⁸ We can also see a change in language register from line thirteen to line fifteen.

Rainbow sounds childlike however spectrum is much more scientific. This suggests that there is a need for both aspects of painting. Hughes's poem illustrates the complexity of nature: in order to paint a water lily, he must immerse himself “deep in both worlds.”⁷⁹ This compliments the paradox stating that the worlds “can be still as a painting, trembling hardly at all.”⁸⁰

⁷⁵ Hughes, *New Selected Poems*, 31.

⁷⁶ Hughes, *New Selected Poems*, 31.

⁷⁷ Hughes, *New Selected Poems*, 31.

⁷⁸ Hughes, *New Selected Poems*, 31.

⁷⁹ Hughes, *New Selected Poems*, 31.

⁸⁰ Hughes, *New Selected Poems*, 31.

3. Conclusion

This thesis is concerned about the nature imagery in the poetry of Ted Hughes. My main interest was to explore and understand where Ted Hughes found his inspiration to write animal poems and nature poems in general. The first part of my thesis is focused on the situation in British poetry after the year 1945. I describe the various streams and movements that were born after the World War Two. The following chapters reflect upon the themes in Hughes's poetry. The practical part of my thesis consists of analysis of the animal poems and my attempt to understand them and to point out the nature imagery in them. Ted Hughes was one of the greatest English poets of the twentieth century, yet his life was dogged by tragedy and controversy. He was marked by his relationship with Sylvia Plath and he never entirely recovered from her suicide that happened in 1963.

Ted Hughes's poetry is widely known for its animal imagery. By juxtaposing the image of different types of animals such as the hawk, the fox or the jaguar to ambiguous vocabulary, he manages to describe the process of writing a poem. In "Hawk Roosting," the poem is told by a personified hawk. At the beginning of the poem he is very static. The arrogance of the animal is accomplished by using the first person point of view. Ted Hughes wrote twenty eight poems about animals. In those poems, Hughes celebrates the spontaneous and instinctive nature of animals. In his book *Poetry in the Making*, Hughes confessed that "he thought of his poems as animals, meaning that he wanted them to have a vivid life of their own."

The crucial and thus central theme in poetry of Hughes is a reflection of the nature as well as a scope of the role of an artist. In his poetry, animals appear not only as poetic subjects but they also appear in almost every poem as metaphors and symbols. These animal images present a symbolic bestiary and in some way they are revealing Ted Hughes's attitudes to important themes in his work. Imagery and symbolism are poetic devices drawn from many different sources and Hughes's self-analysis and self-exploration through suffering which unite them all together. According to Hughes's exploration of a poetic persona, he discovered a variety of different poetic roles. He made it clear that a poet sees things clearly and also can be alienated from the humanity. I think in a way, Hughes just like any other poet, feeds on emotions and suffering of the people around and he uses it as a fuel for his poems.

I was quite taken aback by the fact that I could not find any thesis written on Ted Hughes. It was definitely one of the main reasons why I chose to explore his work. I really hope that this will not be the first and last thesis about this incredible poet. It was rather a challenging topic since there are not that many sources about him. On the other hand it was truly rewarding to somehow get under Hughes's skin and try to understand his way of thinking when writing poetry. Another reason why I chose to write this thesis is because I myself write poetry. It was interesting and highly enriching to learn about this great poet so much and try to understand his ways and how he perceived the world. Ted Hughes has definitely become one of my new favourite poets. I will continue learning more about him by reading his poetry and perhaps I will learn even something new from his beautiful poetry as I go on in life.

4. Resumé

Tématem bakalářské práce s názvem “Obraz přírody v poezii Teda Hughese” bylo analyzovat Hughesovy básně s přírodní a zvířecí tematikou a vysvětlit, jakou roli v ní hrají přírodní symboly. Hlavním cílem této práce bylo zjistit, kde bral Hughes inspiraci k psaní svých básní o přírodě a zvířatech a také, kde tato fascinace zvířaty začala. Práce se skládá ze tří částí.

Úvod poskytuje přehled o situaci v britské poezii po roce 1945. Zaměřila jsem se na hlavní proudy v poezii v šedesátých letech. Další část práce přináší biografické údaje Teda Hughese a také jeho hlavní témata, která jsou nezbytná pro pochopení jeho tvorby. Dále jsem zmínila básnické sbírky, ve kterých jsou obsažené básně, které jsem analyzovala. Stěžejní část práce tvoří rozbor deseti vybraných básní a možná interpretace přírodních symbolů. Vybrala jsem básně z jeho prvních tří básnických sbírek. K tomu jsem použila jeho antologii *New Selected Poems*.

Ted Hughes je jedním z největších britských básníků dvacátého století. Jeho život byl zasažen obrovskou tragédií, když jeho první manželka a básnířka Sylvia Plath v roce 1963 spáchala sebevraždu. Myslím, že jeho tvorba byla touto smrtí značně poznamenána a sám Hughes se z této události nikdy nevzpamatoval. Poezie Teda Hughese je známá pro svoji zvířecí tematiku. S touto tematikou Hughes napsal dvacet osm básní. Ve velké většině těchto básní Hughes oslavuje instinktivní a divokou povahu zvířat. Ve své knize *Poetry in the Making* Hughes napsal, že své básně považoval za zvířata a chtěl, aby měly svůj vlastní barvitý život.

Obraz zvířat a obecně přírody je stěžejní tematikou v poezii Teda Hughese. Zvířata se v jeho poezii neobjevují pouze jako předmět básně, ale většinu času také jako metafory a symboly. Díky těmto symbolům dokázal Hughes prezentovat nejdůležitější témata jeho tvorby.

Obrazotvornost zvířat je také hlavním středem důležitého mytického představení: proměna jako obraz nezničitelnosti života a zvířecí bohové jako symbol kreativity a ničivých sil v přírodě. Hughes použil širokou škálu obrazů zvířat, aby tím nejenom ukázal aspekty své básnické osobnosti, ale aby objevil stránky života umělce jako lovce, tak i kořisti. Zobrazení zvířat ukazuje básníka v různých rolích, jako například prorok, kritik, podvodník či blázen.

Například jestřáb v básni „The Hawk in The Rain“ je obrazem básnickovy představivosti, která touží po svobodě a lehkosti. V básni „Second Glance at Jaguar“, je představa zvířete mnohem cyničtější a zjednodušenější. Už čtenáře neohromuje jako v básni „Jaguar“. Obraznost a symbolismus Ted Hughes přirozeně čerpá z velkého množství zdrojů a jeho sebeanalýzy.

Objevení sama sebe skrze utrpení je všechny spojuje. Hughesův průzkum básnické osobnosti ukázal mnohostrannou roli umělce jako vizionáře a kritika. Ted Hughes jako básník může jakýmsi způsobem vidět lidstvo jako predátor, který využívá emoce a dokonce i utrpení lidí kolem jako potravu pro svoje básně.

Docela mě překvapilo, když jsem zjistila, že v České republice nikdo o Tedovi Hughesovi bakalářskou práci nenapsal, a tudíž to byla obrovská výzva být první, která se do takové práce pustí. Doufám, že nebudu tou jedinou a že tato práce inspiruje další studenty k psaní o tomto fascinujícím básníkovi. To byl určitě jeden z důvodů, proč jsem si toto téma vybrala. Druhým důvodem byl fakt, že já sama píši básně. Bylo opravdu velice zajímavé pohlédnout do světa Teda Hughese a vlastně i do jeho hlavy. Díky analýzám básní mi byla poskytnuta jakási lekce v poezii od samotného autora. Ted Hughes se rozhodně stal mým novým oblíbeným autorem a budu i nadále číst jeho tvorbu. Pevně totiž věřím, že si z jeho nádherné poezie přenesu do svého života spoustu nových a užitečných rad.

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Anotace

Jméno autora: Knapová Nicolle

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Tématem bakalářské práce s názvem “Obraz přírody v poezii Teda Hughese” je analyzovat autorovi básně s přírodní a zvířecí tematikou a vysvětlit, jakou roli v ní hrají přírodní symboly. Práce se skládá ze tří částí. Úvod poskytuje přehled o situaci v britské poezii po roce 1945. Další část práce přináší biografické údaje Teda Hughese a také jeho hlavní témata, která jsou nezbytná pro pochopení jeho tvorby. Stěžejní část práce tvoří rozbor vybraných básní a možná interpretace přírodních symbolů.

Abstract

Author: Knapová Nicolle

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The aim of this bachelor thesis „Nature Imagery in the Poetry of Ted Hughes” is to analyze poet’s nature poems and explain what role the nature imagery plays in them. The thesis consists of three parts. The first part includes the situation in British poetry scene after 1945. The second part consists of a brief biography as well as Hughes’s major themes and his poetry collections which include the poems I selected for analysis. The third part is the analysis of the nature poems and a possible interpretation of the nature imagery and symbols.