



Crow: the Critical Interpretation of Mythical Bird in Ted Hughes's Poetry

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Ted Hughes, himself, was just such a mythic poet as the mythical bird 'Crow' of his poetry. At Cambridge, Ted Hughes's poetic journey was fuelled by positive interest in myths, folk stories and other mediums of expression developed a standard culture in the existing realm. Myths are widespread elements in any piece of literature in all the religion-cultural traditions throughout the world. By using myth he had access to complete strength and drama of life and death; to globally familiar patterns of human actions; to the influential energies of gods and devils; and to custom & rituals backgrounds that have been used for years to comprise such influential vitalities and sentiments. For Hughes, myth was greater than any thesaurus, it was more or less a divining rod, a device for conducting and controlling the energies he worked with, whether they were subconscious or conscious energies, holy or wicked, moral or evil.

In *Crow's* (1970) poems, the representation of the crow as a chief base for symbolism is a great milestone in British poetry in the Post-Second World War era. The overall background of myths and folklore assists the formulation of emblems of obscurity and evil omen. Most crows are known as a symbol of darkness or maybe a bird of bad omen. Whether we take Western or Eastern cultures, the symbolic meanings of crow are broadly parallel. He presents a highly ambitious image by the appearance of Crow in his poetry, which at one level, relates to the complex function of animal imagery. Hughes was quite confident with his choice and says, "You see, I throw out the eagles and choose the crow. The idea was originally just to write his songs, the songs that a crow would sing". (Roberts 102) This line on the efficacy of the crow as a symbol or myth is quite noteworthy. Hughes predominantly took the crow to disconcert the positives of beauty or sensuous fruitfulness, especially the reputable aesthetic habituation of readers in the late twentieth century. By doing so, Hughes is also aiming for substitutes of golly or kindness. The Crow's image offers him an opportunity to exchange them all with the opposites of these categories. One cannot avoid the centrality of Crow in poems, as it is a key source of all churning together with poetic observations. But it's a crow, not a stagnant, reliable and straightforwardly comprehensible character. However, the poetic intensity of most of *Crow's* poems owes majorly to the mythical potential of the crow image. It springs from the poet's disposition of its infrequently varied and novel contexts – fluctuating from mythical, biblical to historical contexts of war, brutality and the mechanisms of mass media in the existing culture. We can settle that the image has got component of irony in it which is a kind of ill-behaved character. Furthermore, as a sole reason, it's extremely significant to the poet's style which as Stuart Hirschberg perceives, is "at once powerful, colloquial and direct, answers to his purpose of calling into question conventional ways of looking at birth and death, art and science, love and war." (Hirschberg 127)

Crow is observed as a bird of prophecy in the mythological world. The presentiment crowing of this bird in any village house is widespread in Indian tradition. Most of the time, we see it as an indication of the forecast of the actions, either auspicious or malicious. The ubiquitous, crow has been despised for its blackness by societies of all religious and cultural practices. Eskimos folklores say to us that in the very beginning ravens were the single creature and the entire world was dark as it. Though we've got many such folklores, the principal interpretation of *Crow* that Hughes makes use of can be defined thus:

God, having created the world, has a recurring nightmare. The nightmare appears to be independent of the creation, and God cannot

understand it. The nightmare is full of mockery of the creation, especially of man. God challenges the nightmare to do better. This is just what the nightmare has been waiting for. It plunges into the matter and creates Crow. God tests Crow by putting him through a series of trials and ordeals which sometimes result in Crow being dismembered, transformed or obliterated, but Crow survives them all little changed.(Keith 21)

If we consider the very opening of the *Crow- The life and songs of Crow*, Hughes portrays the murky depiction of the crow. He presages the surfacing of the crow with all its blackness in "Two legends" grand influential poem in the collection of *Crow* poems. It can be seen as putting this poem as well as "Lineage" at the very opening of the collection is greatly strategic. Except constructing "an environment, a realm of emptiness" (Hirschberg) at the creation of the sequence, the volume's elementary divergence of light and darkness is also contrasted. The poem is an inaccurate and functional account of the creation of Crow. He attempted it as satires of the Christian interpretations of Genesis, both of these poems, as Hugh Underhill detects, show that Hughes is "fundamentally at odds with valuing the social and the historical" and is rather seeking to "wrench its every frame."(Underhill 110)

Ted Hughes was certain that the de-humanization of manhood in the contemporary days of Western civilization is initiated by a suicidal over-dependence on rationalism and a continuous dodging of Nature, both internal as well as external to man. "Two Legends" and "Lineage" express that poet's disapproval of influential humanism and rationality is so immitigable and robust and in crow. It can be seen in a complete collection that it's a portion of Hughes's strategy not to keep the crow as a stagnant or consistent character, which is organized in extraordinarily distinct ways in diverse contexts. There're so many poems in which the crow apparently "caricatures certain human traits and is involved in periodic versions of familiar human situations."(Lodge 170)

Hughes's crow has been found as reversing the strategy of God. According to the poem, it's not the God who shaped the world but God comes later, in order after Mary and afterwards, the God's coming into being, nothing was shaped hence the lines are:

"who begat Mary
Who begat God
Who begat Nothing
Who begat Never
Never... Never... Never
Who begat Crow" (Hughes 2)

One can find that the myth of creation appears to have been delicately satirized by Ted Hughes in "Childish Prank". For instance, the poem is so short and it is imitated utterly for the sake of exploration. The mischievous bird Crow acts the part of a trickster. When Adam and Eve were created in the form of man and woman, God was some sort contemplating what to do with the corpses and pondering so God snoozed. Later, a crow came to the coliseum and resolved the issue faced by God and provided life to those bodies. However, the crow cut the worm of God into two equal parts and put one part in male and another in female. Here, we observe the symbolic significance of the worm is creative and artistic energy. Crow himself has portrayed the myth of the trickster very perfectly in this poem of *Crow*.

In the poem "A Kill", the paradox of the existence of Crow is revealed. It's the birth of the Crow. As crow embodies the lack of enthusiasm in life and birth is labelled ironically relevant to the death. The chaos and viciousness during Crow's birth and the resultant physical torment allied with it turns into a paradox. Crow hails to earth as dropping onto the trash. At the occurrence of life's utmost vivacious moment, Crow is seen as whipped, choked, clubbed, shot, nailed, and shattered.

“Flogged lame with legs
 Shot through the head with balled brains
 Shot blind with eyes
 Nailed down by his ribs
 Strangled just short of his last gasp
 By his windpipe
 Clubbed unconscious by his own heart
 Seeing his life stab through him, a dream flash
 As he drowned in his blood” (5)

All of the torture mentioned here at the time of birth of Crow has got very adjacent counterparts in Norse or Celtic mythology. Typically such kinds of physical injuries in psychosomatic positivity. Unfortunately, in the incident of Crow entirety goes black. Hence, during birth he experiences twinges of demise, rendering viciousness into a paradox of creation and demolition.

In the poem “Crow and Mamma” discovering himself alive, the very first thing Crow did, is get free from his mother which shows he wants to separate the bond with his mother. Paradoxically every attempt of Crow to get break free of his mother bizarrely wind up in very profound recognition of his dependency on his mother. Crow employs power-driven devices such as cars, aeroplanes and even rockets which can drill purely via the heart of mother earth in his bid to outflow the strength of gravity.

“And it was cosy in the rocket, he could not see much
 But he peered out through the portholes at Creation
 And saw the stars millions of miles away
 And saw the future and the universe
 Opening and opening
 And kept on and slept and at last
 Crashed on the moon awoke and crawled out
 Under his mother's buttocks” (5)

Crow has been used by Ted Hughes as an anion for every human who is keen to explore the sphere and start to make decisions on their own. For a moment, Crow finds the luxury of the rocket, but as soon as he peers out at the universe, he is found crashed on terrestrial of the moon and realises he’s still “under his mother's buttocks.” So according to Hughes, even technology cannot promise human liberty or freedom to his societies and environment. In their effort to escape, they may violate the earth or bring environmental disequilibrium which may be self-destructive. That’s why; they certainly cannot escape from the barricades enacted on them by Nature.

In *Paradise Lost*, John Milton is fixed to rationalize the paths which lead to man and on the other hand, Quran clerics are also fixed to rationalize the paths of God to man but Ted Hughes is fixed to satirize and criticize conventional sacred principles and tenets. Poet finds comfort in the crow an omnipresent and portentous blackbird. Although it’s not the reservoir of Hughes connoisseur from where the ideas of this blackbird ‘crow’ taken shape, it’s the corpus strata of numerous spiritual and biblical myths and legends from where the cascade of encouragement flowed into Ted Hughes’ thoughts and therefore he shaped the songs of crow.

The greatest pursuit of mankind to interpret the riddles of the universe is as ancient as the creation of this universe itself. For centuries human beings are trying to re-answer the questions of the enigmatic world using creating stories, myths and folklores. However, out of all these myths man has been giving their best shot to amuse and catechise man, as we discussed Milton’s words clarifying the ways of God to man. We see that artists, visual artists, sculptors, and litterateurs, particularly poets have strained to untangle the mysteries using myths in their workings. As per my

observation, Hughes comprehends myths rather implicitly and uses them in his poems, ripping them separately and producing fresh myths. The responses specified to all the mysteries or riddles of the universe are nothing but beliefs and philosophies. None of them can be inspected on the anvil of scientific and logical truth. So the question arises who created this universe? Who created human beings? Who created the flora and fauna world? For the moment we can say A created B, and B created C then the question arises who created the A? And it again leads us to an endless regress. To set an end to this endless regress, a great myth of almighty God has been developed, consequently, the supremacy of God is nothing but it's a myth. Hughes constructs a fresh myth in "Childish Prank" to counter this particular myth. While the Almighty God was contemplating what to do with the lax establishment of mankind the Crow aided the mighty Almighty. More or less this is the marvel constructed by Hughes to neutralize the myth of God's supremacy. Crow, however, is an appropriate fresh version of the Trickster Cycle fitting perfectly with the surrealist and strange sentiments of the contemporary era. And the bird 'Crow' in the world custom is found as the ideal of the creation as it is found in Hughes's work, as it is demonstrated in the work of Attar, Antarah, Abu Nuwas, and Geoffrey Chaucer.

Works Cited

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