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Dialogic Wilderness in Ted Hughes' Zoopoetics as a Conjugation between Humans and Animals

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ABSTRACT: *This paper contends that Ted Hughes' zoopoetics stages Bakhtinian dialogism, creating a polyphonic space through the interaction of human and animal worlds. The aim of the research is to explore the complex interplay of animal and human voices, challenging anthropocentrism and expressing the vitality of nature. The objective therein is to highlight the fluid boundaries between both the realms, establishing dynamism and dialogism in Hughes' zoo poetry. Addressing ecocentric viewpoints, Hughes' zoo poems establish poetry as a dialogic territory, questioning Bakhtinian logic that poetry canonizes language. The research employs a qualitative methodology, combining close reading and in-depth analysis of Hughes' animal poems based on Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogic paradigm. The study reveals that Hughes' zoo poetry affirms the interdependence of man and wildlife within a shared ecological consciousness. The insights into dialogic and ecocritical frameworks in Hughes' zoo poetry open future research avenues around reshaping human perceptions of the non-human world.*

Keywords: Wilderness, dialogism, polyphony, Anthropocene, ecology

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Ted Hughes, one of the most prominent twentieth century British poet, was known for writing poetry rooted in the natural and animal worlds. The resonances of the anthropocene in his poetry testify his pre-eminence as a poet sensitive to environmental concerns. Hughes' poetry is characterized by the amalgamation of beauty and violence in the natural world. Through the metaphorical display of animals, Hughes frequently portrays the relationship between the human and natural realms as interdependent. This dialectical relationship reflects on the necessity of striking a balance between civilization and wilderness. Thereby, his poetry thrives on the conjugation between man and nature.

This research aims to explore the dialogic interaction between the human and animal voices in Ted Hughes' zoo poetry, in the milieu of ecology. It connects literary analysis of Ted Hughes' animal poems – The Thought-Fox, The Jaguar, and Hawk Roosting - with the theoretical frameworks of Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin's dialogism and Craig DeLancey's ecological concept of wilderness. Even though Bakhtin's works are read as a commentary on language, humor, and social hierarchies, this research focuses on his connection with ecology. The objective in that context, is to expose an interconnectedness of the animal world and human consciousness by breaking the dichotomy that separates the two. This leads to engendering the realization that wilderness and its inherent forces operate outside the sphere of human control and challenges the anthropocentric approaches.

Much of the existing critical discourses on Ted Hughes' zoopoetics have investigated the prevalence of environmental ethics in his poetry, evading the deeper angle of dialogic wilderness integrating both the species as a unified whole in the scheme of nature. This study therefore, informs this gap by foregrounding dialogism in Hughes' animal poems as foundational to ecocritical discourses. In addition to highlighting this negotiation, it explores how this domain has thus far, remained estranged from critical attention. For the purpose of conducting research, this qualitative analysis relies on The Thought-Fox, The Jaguar, and Hawk Roosting as the primary texts for literary and critical analysis. Moreover, the secondary sources include M. M. Bakhtin's theoretical framework of dialogism, backed by Craig DeLancey's ecological theory of wilderness to support the analysis. In addition, studies conducted by Terry Gifford, David Abram, Andrew Robinson, and Michael J. McDowell integrate their rich, diverse, and mutually reinforcing views on dialogic wilderness, providing a fertile field for analysis.

To sum up, this research addresses the rejection of binaries between humans and animals in Ted Hughes' zoo poetry, and assimilate multiple voices at play in the

poems, to create a dialogic pattern that heightens ecological awareness. In doing so, this research contributes to ongoing debates about the acknowledgment of human and non-human forces as co-inhabitants within the same landscape, while also challenging the anthropocentric practices that have proved detrimental to the achievement of a greener planet.

Research Questions

1. How does animal imagery in Ted Hughes' zoo poetry construct a dialogic space where humans and animals coexist, interact, and transform each other towards a greener planet?

2. In what ways does Hughes construct wilderness as a dialogic force across his animal poems to critique the monologic role that humans play in the ecosystem?

3. How does Hughes engage with the anthropocene in his poetry, depicting loss of habitat and human interaction in the natural world?

Literature Review

Ted Hughes' environmental writings have received significant recognition from ecopoetic scholars, attesting his ascendancy as a green poet. Foundational voices on Hughes' poetry such as Keith Sagar, Terry Gifford, Jonathan Bate, and Leonard Scigaj analyze how Hughes' poetry resonates with environmental awareness and anthropocentric concerns, predominantly focusing on wilderness as a thematic framework or a storehouse of ecological archetypes. It was, in fact, Gifford's work that placed Hughes amongst the "green" poets (Reddick 7). This angle transformed the traditionally held view regarding his animal poetry as solely violent, offering further insights into Hughes' environmental repository. While these scholarships offered a fresh perspective on Hughes' animal poetry, they lacked a sustained attempt to theorize wilderness itself as a dialogic zone of overt negotiations between human and non-human voices. Addressing this lacuna, this paper develops the concept of dialogic wilderness through Bakhtinian dialogism, to validate the active and relational role of wilderness, reframing Hughes' zoopoetics as a polyphonic ecological discourse.

Hughes' childhood passions of hunting, fishing and farming fostered an understanding of environment at a very tender age (Reddick 47). This lived experience and his "love of 'wild' places, from Old Denaby and Crookhill to remote salmon-rivers in Alaska and Iceland, sprang as much from his rejection of popular cultural values and materialistic modernity as from his environmentalism" (Reddick18). Hence, his "acutely sensitive attunement to the environment" rendered a peculiar charm to his poetry; it is not merely an

admiration of the beauty of wilderness; it represented the inherent vitality in a more-than-human world (Robinson 258). In this context, Leonard Scigaj's article "Ted Hughes and Ecology: A Biocentric Vision", is also seminal in showcasing the shifting focus in Hughes' poetry from anthropomorphism to biocentrism (Reddick 8). Rather than subverting patriarchal roles, it stresses on the restoration of human-nature/animal bond.

Building on this perspective, David Abram's book The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World tackles with the idea of relationships. The book's preface begins with establishing human kinship with other species:

The eyes, the skin, the tongue, ears, and nostrils—all are gates where our body receives the nourishment of others. This landscape of shadowed voices, these feathered bodies and antlers and tumbling streams—these breathing shapes are our family, the beings with whom we are engaged, with whom we struggle and suffer and celebrate. (Abram ix)

There is a vast array of possibilities with regard to humans negotiating relationship with any or all aspects of their surroundings. This may also lead to questioning the need for humanity to participate with "that which is other than ourselves and our own creations" (Abram ix). David Abram postulates his debate on the premise that binaries exist, and it is this binary between humans and non-humans that becomes the touchstone for "collective sensibilities" (ix) defining humankind. Abram endeavors to make sense of "our current estrangement from the animate earth," while also provoking new thoughts on "the steady vanishing of other species, and the consequent flattening of our human relationships" (x). Jonathan Bate also underscores this idea in The Song of the Earth as he finds in Hughes' poetry, "the hot stink of animal flesh" (203).

Extending this discussion, the "earthly web of relations" (Abram 8) ensures a balanced flow of communication between the human and the non-human worlds. Accordingly, this discourse "with the animate powers that dwell beyond the human community" (Abram 7) is embedded in Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of dialogism. The principal idea of this theoretical framework resides in "the natural orientation of any living discourse" (Bakhtin DI 279) as being dialogic. According to Bakhtin, "[l]anguage – like the living concrete environment in which the consciousness of the verbal artist lives – is never unitary" (DI 288). It is in fact, characterized by "a multitude of concrete worlds," (Bakhtin DI 288) rupturing the notion that meaning contained within language is singular or definitive. With regard to Hughes, his interest in shamanism and the role of animals in it became the fountainhead of his ecological thought:

The deeply mysterious powers and entities with whom the shaman enters into a rapport are ultimately the same forces—the same plants, animals, forests, and winds—that to literate, "civilized" Europeans are just so much scenery, the pleasant backdrop of our more pressing human concerns. (Abram 9)

This trait of human oblivion manifests indifference towards the non-human world. It germinates a sense of disempowerment from a lack of consciousness that nature is "a living field, an open and dynamic landscape subject to its own moods and metamorphoses" (Abram 32). All the related constructs of nature, including animals are deeply intertwined with the human civilization. Abram gives a very poignant reminder about the mechanization of the human race that leads to such thinking:

The plants and animals we consume are neither gathered nor hunted—they are bred and harvested in huge, mechanized farms. "Nature," it would seem, has become simply a stock of "resources" for human civilization, and so we can hardly be surprised that our civilized eyes and ears are somewhat oblivious to the existence of perspectives that are not human at all, or that a person entering into or returning to the West from a nonindustrial culture would feel startled and confused by the felt absence of non-human powers. (28)

Hence, dialogism challenges the anthropocentric impression that the non-human forces are mute and in control of the human force. All these natural elements that Abram refers to, possess agency and power to resist against meaning imposed upon them by humans, designating the emergent relationship as dialogic and not monologic. Strikingly, this dialogic confluence is an echo of Hughes' own multidimensional personality as a poet – animal poet, nature poet, war poet, poet of ecology – all aspects are in dialogue with each other, and create and recreate a utopian wilderness.

In a related vein, Andrew Robinson amplifies Bakhtin's logic in the essay, In Theory Bakhtin: Dialogism, Polyphony and Heteroglossia, as he says, "We are always in dialogue, not only with other people, but also with everything in the world. Everything 'addresses' us in a certain sense. Each of us is uniquely addressed in our particular place in the world" (7). In view of this interpretation, a "dialogical work constantly engages with and is informed by other works and voices, and seeks to alter or inform it" (Robinson 7). The interaction of these heterogenous voices orchestrates multiple meanings that maps the compatibility between dialogism and ecology. So, when animals or natural landscapes are granted the agency of voice, they challenge human control and authority, giving birth to a dialogic edifice in the backdrop of ecological interdependence. In other words, both the human and the non-human worlds co-exist and depend on each other as binaries that define each other, rather than existing independently in a

hierarchical relationship. Hence, Bakhtinian concept complements ecocritical studies in validating the presence of non-human voices alongside the human voice.

In relation to language, a conspicuous mode of communication, it was considered "an exclusively human property that is most often used to demonstrate the excellence of humankind relative to all other species" (Abram 78). So, it was thought of as a tool that only human beings possessed, and rendered them superior to other species. According to Abram, even after the widespread recognition of Darwin's theory of evolution, most researchers "were reluctant to relinquish the assumption of human specialness" (78). Semiotics, the primary method of communication between animals, conveniently fell outside the bounds of language. Overlooking these layers of abstract meanings holds humans "apart from, and outside of, the rest of animate nature" (Abram 79).

This idea of human involvement leads the discussion to the idea of wilderness. Craig DeLancey critiques "the traditional concept of a wilderness" in the essay, "An Ecological Concept of Wilderness" as "an ecosystem little touched by human beings" (27). However, this notion encounters certain challenges. Firstly, it is an inapplicable concept because "every ecosystem has been significantly affected by humans" (DeLancey 26). Secondly, the "traditional concept tells us what wilderness lacks, but does nothing to tell us what positive features wildernesses share" (DeLancey 26). Thirdly, "the traditional concept gives no indication of why wilderness should matter" (DeLancey 26). In his discussion, DeLancey introduces "a new ecological concept of wilderness" (26). In contrast to the less complex traditional wilderness that has been "significantly altered by human beings," ecological wilderness "tends to be a complex and rich ecosystem" (DeLancey 27). Moreover, the "process of evolution creates ecosystems which, given the available genotypes, tends to maximize both the quantity of kinds of organisms (species or other relevant kinds of populations), and the quantity of individual organisms, in that environment" (DeLancey 27). So, DeLancey envisions an ecosystem as an interacting whole that renounces the human/nature divide.

The ecological angle in Bakhtin is "a facet that glitters particularly brilliantly in the pages of Rabelais and His World, among Bakhtin's many works" (Bell 66). It is this convergence of Bakhtinian dialogism with ecocriticism that adds a rich layer of meaning to the ecocritical praxis. Led forth by structuralism, it enables the amputation of hierarchical boundaries in literary texts (Buell 6). In this context, The Bakhtinian Road to Ecological Insight by Michael J. McDowell is a perceptive study proposing that dialogism intersects with ecocriticism since both foreground agency, interaction, and heterogeneity. McDowell further states, "Bakhtin's theories might be seen as the literary equivalent of ecology, the

science of relationships" (372). Lawrence Buell also argues that "an individual text must be thought of as environmentally embedded at every stage from its germination to its reception" (44). This sheds light on the engagement of human race with the rest of the world, in a way that the writer's external environment inevitably shapes the ideas projected in literary texts; likewise, even the readers' interpretation is nurtured by the material world and their relation to it. Moreover, it highlights Bakhtin's idea of carnivalesque, a rejection of authoritarianism, and suspension of rigid intra and interspecies hierarchies:

Bakhtin suggests that perhaps the most characteristic form of medieval folk humor was the marketplace carnival, the day when beggars would ride, turnips were watches, and effigies of the mighty appeared draped in rags. The festive, ever-laughing, group spirit found in all these forms Bakhtin labeled "carnival" and "carnivalesque."

(Bell 70)

When Bakhtin's marketplace carnival is viewed through the lens of ecology, it acts as an ecological subverter. So, there is an "inversion" of the "official world" followed by recreation of "a new one" (Bell 70). In his book, RHW, Bakhtin outlines carnivalesque as "an interplay or collision of voices from differing sociolinguistic points of view" (McDowell 380). Bakhtin's carnival is a sort of transition, debunking anthropocentrism, and bringing humankind closer to the non-human world (RHW 39). Thus, this marks the commencement of a dialogue that must never end, and recreation of a life that must never cease, showing an inevitable interdependency.

When Ted Hughes incorporates animal voices in his poetry, it indicates "the fundamental unity of people and nature" (Bell 70). The dualities from the human and animal domains converge to cast-off boundaries between the two. To reiterate this idea, Robinson states, "[d]ialogism is not simply different perspectives on the same world. It involves the distribution of utterly incompatible elements within different perspectives of equal value" (8). This "polyphony of interacting voices" corresponds to the realization of different viewpoints that restores the inherent unity betwixt man and nature (McDowell 375). Syrrina Ahsan Ali Haque, in her book, Dialogue on Partition, has also reiterated this idea that "the historical and ideological voices are not the only voices and that there are other voices present, broadcasted through narrators and characters, which compete in dialogic fashion stressing on the unheard, embedded, and subterranean layers of communal interaction" (xxvi). This means that a dialogic site is shaped by polyphonic voices which maybe entangled, but retain exclusivity. Exploring the dialogical and ecological aspects in Hughes' poetry is significant in recognizing that the "concept of dialogics is extremely

ecological" (Bell.68). Precisely, this research extends dialogism beyond merely human voices; it contributes to interspecies dialogue within the realm of wilderness, bringing forth unheard and hidden interactions. Hence, Bakhtinian dialogism does not draw borders around human beings and animals; he reinforces an interaction that is possible at all levels, however diverse they may be.

Methodology

This study is based on a qualitative model of research methodology, employing interpretation of literary analysis based on close textual analysis of selected poems by Ted Hughes. The aim is to identify and explore the dichotomies segregating humans and animals, resulting in anthropological control over environment through the zoopoetics of Ted Hughes, in the light of ecological dialogism. This approach grants agency to animals as equal counterparts of humans in the scheme of natural environment, providing a new perception of environment that regards all the contributors as integral to the completion of the puzzle of existence.

As a means of addressing this approach of ecological dialogism, the research makes use of both primary and secondary sources. The primary texts include The Thought-Fox, The Jaguar, and Hawk Roosting. With regard to secondary sources, scholarly essays and critical works of key theorists form an essential base of the literature review. M. M. Bakhtin, Craig DeLancey, Terry Gifford, David Abram, Andrew Robinson, and Michael J. McDowell, are some of the names that are indispensable when discussing dialogism in relation to ecology. Their works on ecology and dialogism, are the building blocks of the prime area of concern, that is to say, the existence of polyphonic discourses within the ecosystem. The research makes use of journal articles, essays, and book chapters, to enunciate previous research that has been conducted in and around this area, thereby highlighting the research gap.

The subjective nature of the qualitative method entails heavy reliance on textual analysis as the primary method of conducting research, yet being limited to only a few poems is a glaring limitation. In addition, the interpretive quality of dialogism runs the risk of subjectivity seeping into the analysis, making it a susceptible choice. Finally, the restricted scope of this research, with respect to the time and length parameters, constrains comparative study with other writings on nature and domination, for instance, Moby-Dick by Herman Melville, that might have proved more enriching.

Discussion and Analysis

Literary studies, in recent years, have opened a broad spectrum of new and valid approaches to pertinent concerns shaping the present world. One of these perspectives, ecocriticism, seamlessly woven with other approaches, has permeated deeply into the domain of literature. Terry Gifford's analysis of Ted Hughes' works as "green poetry," (Green Voices 8) currently known as ecopoetry, raises questions about the role of poetry in enhancing the understanding about human relationship with the natural world. It is interesting to observe that these texts hold immense validity in recent literary and critical developments, despite being composed decades ago. Fused with dialogism, it recreates a pattern like the one Hughes "prints" in The Thought-Fox, defined by elusive creativity (A Ted Hughes Bestiary 14). The conjugation between man and animals, accentuated through the intermingling of dialogism and ecology, is sensuously and vividly sketched in Hughes' animal poems such as The Jaguar and Hawk Roosting, alongside The Thought-Fox. Set against the backdrop of wilderness, these poems bring out the dynamism in nature, a prominent feature of his poetry that cannot be ignored.

Ted Hughes, (1930 – 1998), was writing from the mid till the end of the twentieth century. His preoccupation with nature, particularly animals, defines his poetic vision. According to Alice Oswald's introduction to ATHB, he thought of his poems as animals, having an intense life of their own (Hughes 5). The poems in this selection "embody animals, not just describe them," (Hughes ATHB 6) which is why these poems have a vivid life of their own. Oswald further states that "The purpose of a bestiary…was to find distinctions between Man and the animals; but Hughes always worked in the opposite direction, aiming to show us what they have in common" (Hughes 5). Oswald's idea then, is in harmony with DeLancey's perception of the ecological wilderness – rejecting binaries in favor of interrelatedness.

The Thought-Fox, published in 1957 as a part of the collection titled, The Hawk in the Rain, is an awe-inspiring work in which the natural world and the animal world blend with one another. The dialogue that ensues between the two, in Hughes' imaginary forest, grants wilderness a polyphonic quality where multiple voices interact. The poem is essentially a cartography of the internal and the external realms of the poet's mind "the dark hole of the head," (Hughes ATHB 14) which is sharp like the fox leaving imprints with each move. To support this idea, Keith Sagar in The Challenge of Ted Hughes quotes Hughes, "the poem can emerge of a sudden, complete and perfect, unalterable, taking the poet completely by surprise, as if he had no idea where it came from" (40). Sagar further states that "there is wide-spread belief, particularly among the young, that this is how all poems are written, or should be written" (40). The interaction must happen for creation to take place. Therefore, the dialogic interaction between the

two worlds is not just a passive description of nature; the external environment, in the shape of the fox, is carved out as a living entity, able to communicate both internally and externally. The polyphonic discourse is taking place between the literal fox and the symbolic fox, as well as, between the inner consciousness of the poet's mind and the outer presence of "[s]omething else [that] is alive" (Hughes ATHB 14). The paradox, interestingly, resides in the fact that the fox is alive and this state of being alive enables the creation of the poem, but as soon as "[t]he page is printed," at the end of the poem, the fox dies; so the fox is a contributor in the dialogic process. Bakhtin's perspective lends validity to this process as he says, "No matter what "agonies of the word" (DI 286) the poet endured in the process of creation, in the unfinished work language is an obedient organ fully adequate to the author's intention.

This journey is also evident in the hyphenated title of the poem. The hyphen between Thought-Fox indicates that the animal in the poem operates at both, literal and metaphorical levels. Moreover, it grants agency to the animal, bringing it at par with the human counterpart, the poet. The speaker awaits a response from the animal that is akin to a human faculty – inspiring creativity. The fox shoulders the responsibility of breathing creativity in the poem, an inspiration that the poet is dependent on the fox for. Keith Sagar describes this vision in The Laughter of Foxes: A Study of Ted Hughes as, "What he imagines first is not the fox, but 'this midnight moment's forest'. Midnight is the witching time of night, when human consciousness is most exposed to the non-human. Darkness is the subconscious world with all its primeval fears" (3). At an additional level, this process embraces the readers also as active participants of this dialogue. This echoes DeLancey's concept of wilderness as an integrated whole blurring distinction between humans and animals. According to DeLancey, "Ecosystems are likely a rather vague kind, with fuzzy edges (one cannot say precisely where one ecosystem ends and another one begins, nor where one ecosystem transforms over time into another kind of ecosystem" (29). Thus, these fluid boundaries make dialogism an ongoing eternal process of interaction.

The poem, The Jaguar, which appears in the same collection, The Hawk in the Rain, published in 1957, contrasts the jaguar's untamed freedom with the caged zoo animals. The zoo setting of the poem is an indirect reference to loss of freedom that the apes, parrots, tigers, and lions used to experience in the wilderness. These animals exhibit a lack of energy presenting a stark contrast with the vitality in The Thought-Fox. The first quatrain of the poem reveals a psychological conditioning that has transformed the core instincts of the animals:

The apes yawn and adore their fleas in the sun.

The parrots shriek as if they were on fire, or strut

Like cheap tarts to attract the stroller with the nut.

Fatigued with indolence, tiger and lion

Lie still as the sun. (Hughes ATHB 16)

Flung into the confined space of the zoo, the animals display lethargy in their demeanor. Moreover, they are at odds with this unnatural set-up, where their communion with the natural habitat is severed due to the anthropocentric interventions. Keith Sagar, in The Laughter of Foxes, speaks about "the story of Man's mutilation of Nature in his attempt to make it conform to the procrustean bed of his own patriarchal, anthropocentric and rectilinear thinking" (2). This thought-provoking insight of Sagar's marks the hostile and dominating human presence in the ecological sphere.

To elaborate further, the analogy between the "parrots" and the "cheap tarts" is anthropomorphic; however, unlike the human attribution to the thought-fox, it is derogatory, and unappealing. Even the "tiger and lion," despite being the ferocious and ruling breed of the jungle, are indolently lying in the sun. These creatures are associated with hunting, and not passive behavior; unlike the thought-fox who paces about the vast expanse of the wilderness, these cats do not inspire. Nicole Hassoun's essay, Wilderness, the Wild, and Aesthetic Appreciation, speaks about this loss of wildness as "[t]hose things that are created free from influence and especially intentional attempts to control are usually wild in this sense" (3). In this context, The Jaguar critiques the unjust violation of ethics that demand freedom to live in harmony with conflicting forces in the same environment.

Moving on to the second half of the poem, the mood changes as "…the crowd stands, stares, mesmerized, / As a child at a dream, at a jaguar hurrying enraged" (Hughes ATHB 16). This particular cat still retains its true essence, is able to mesmerize the onlookers, "…[n]ot in boredom— / He spins from the bars, but there's no cage to him" (Hughes ATHB 16). The "enraged" energy of the jaguar enters into a dialogic discourse with the jaded animals like the fossilized coil of the boa constrictor presenting a contrast between their different internal worlds. The jaguar defies the physical state of captivity and chooses to dwell in his wild and free world. On the other hand, the rest of the animals, fall a prey to anthropocentrism by giving up their raw and untamed nature. To sum up this poem, Hughes captures the jaguar's unleashed energy in this powerful verse that matches his true instinct, "His stride is wildernesses of freedom" (ATHB 16).

The next poem in this study, Hawk Roosting, belongs to the Lupercal collection, published in 1960. The ecological vision in conjunction with Bakhtinian

dialogism comes into full force in this poem. The hawk symbolizes the brute force of nature through its emphatic assertion of agency, "The sun is behind me. / Nothing has changed since I began. / My eye has permitted no change. / I am going to keep things like this" (Hughes ATHB 50). According to Terry Gifford, "The self-deception of that will in the last line of 'Hawk Roosting' is ironically balanced by the earlier evocation of evolution as the true reason why things are 'like this' so that the poem acts as an ironic reflection of human arrogance" ("Ted Hughes's 'Greening' and the Environmental Humanities" 9). In this sense, the hawk serves as a metaphor for the human race, forever spreading its wings to be all powerful and supreme.

Paradoxically, the poem is a monologue, yet it knits in dialogism between the reader and the speaker, and between the hawk's mind and the external world. The assertion of will that the hawk displays is an indication that it is justifying its superiority to the world. From the beginning of the poem, it positions itself on the top, "I sit in the top of the wood, my eyes closed," and wild nature aids its claim to power, "The convenience of the high trees! / The air's buoyancy and the sun's ray / Are of advantage to me; / And the earth's face upward for my inspection" (Hughes ATHB 50). It is evident in these lines that nature does not act as a silent backdrop, but as an active participant on the ecological stage, highlighting the hawk's sovereignty. In the essay, The Environmental Revolution, Hughes comments on the significance of nature in his poetry, "It is a story of decline. When something abandons Nature, or is abandoned by Nature, it has lost touch with its creator, and is called an evolutionary dead-end" (129). Hence, in this dialogic process with nature, the hawk emerges as a vigorous entity like the thought-fox.

Hughes fleshes out the hawk's character through its explicit dialogue with the natural world, as well as, with the human one. McDowell supports this stance as he asserts that "environment creates a character or characters, so that the study of the environment with which a character interacts will reveal much about the character" (386). The hawk finds this confidence in the surrounding environment to claim it as its own, "I kill where I please because it is all mine;" the ecosystem grants it the authority to ordain "The allotment of death" (Hughes ATHB 50). The hawk is indeed, a bird of prey, speaking from a vantage point to bring out the violence in nature, which is as much a defining facet of it as beauty. McDowell further elucidates, "An exploration of the dialogic voices in a landscape leads naturally to an analysis of the values a writer has recognized as inherent in a landscape, rather than imposed upon it" (386). The hawk's roosting aptly exemplifies Bakhtinian dialogism, "The word is born in a dialogue as a living rejoinder within it; the word is shaped in dialogic interaction with an alien word that is already in the object. A word forms a concept of its own object in a

dialogic way" (DI 279). Correspondingly, "the diversity of language and discourse may contribute to coexistence and cultural plurality, if there is a nexus for generating eclectic points of view" (Haque 120). Hence, rather than reliance on a singular voice, the conjugation of human and animal voices in Ted Hughes' zoopoetics, enriches the understanding of the dialogic wilderness.

Conclusion

Ted Hughes' preoccupation with animals helped him discover a connection, and an affinity with the world that he was a part of. This world had always been inhabited by animals; humans only sought to draw distinctions. Hughes, through his zoo poetry attempts to bridge this gap by granting the much-deserved agency to wildlife, in order to create an integrated whole thriving on the concept of dialogism. The result is a dismantling of the hierarchical order established by the anthropocentric tactics. Zoologist and nature writer, Rachel Carson emphasizes on shifting the focus from destruction to what the world has to offer, "In the ecological web of life, nothing exists alone" (51). Thus, the wilderness arises as the breeding ground of multiple voices pouring in from all kinds of species that constitute it.

Likewise, Bakhtin refers profusely to the importance of dialogic interaction in Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics, "Truth is not born nor is it to be found inside the head of an individual person, it is born between people collectively searching for truth, in the process of their dialogic interaction" (17). Hence this entire journey is in search for the ultimate truth of a unified existence. Whether it is the thought-fox, or the jaguar, or the hawk, Hughes' characters collapse the monologic idea of interaction between humans and animals. Finally, Timothy Morton, in his book, Ecology Without Nature, presents the quintessence of the entire debate, "Our journey to the middle, to the "in between" space, whatever we call it, would go on generating binary pairs, and we would always be coming down on one side or the other, missing the exact center" (30). Hence, the conjugation between the co-inhabitants of the natural world should aim for a balance that would prevent tipping over to any of the extremes.

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