

## A Study of Ted Hughes' War Poetry

Yan Yunxia

School of Foreign Languages, East China Normal University, Shanghai 200241, China

**Keywords:** characteristics · Hughes; war; poetry

**Abstract:** Ted Hughes' poetry creation is generally divided into four stages: early, middle, middle and late, and late due to the change of subject matter. Early and mid-term poetry highlighted the opposition and isolation between nature and people, while mid-to-late poetry delved into the complex and profound relationship between nature and society. This article will study the war poetry of Ted Hughes, and discuss the specific impact of war on Hughes' poetry creation, and the close relationship with the history of British society at that time.

### 1. Animal paradise created by nature poets

Hughes published "Eagle in the Rain" in 1957. Not only did he achieve amazing poetry, but he also had a great influence on younger contemporary poets. His style of poetry was very different from the style popular at the time. "Explore some uncomfortable natural primitive themes with destructive language", showing his distinctive personality and perspective of observing the world. Hughes's poetry has gained worldwide reputation for its "combination of tradition and anti-tradition, regional and cosmopolitan harmony[1]," and has attracted widespread attention. The poem collection "Eagle in the Rain" breaks the poem style of "sporty", he depicts a wild world with predatory nature of animals as the main body and primitive violence as the means. It was refreshing. In *HawkRoosting*, Hughes used his boundless imagination and subtle literary language to show readers the wild power entrusted by this image of eagle.

In the first verse, the poet presents an eagle full of violence and distinctiveness to the reader. A series of short vowels and plosives [d], [t], [k] make readers faintly see its sharp beak and strong claws. Even though this eagle perched on the top of a big tree, its eyes are still closed, and it is proud and free. The hooked head and sharp claws are its predators, and its dreams are also rehearsed with a killing. Different from the lonely eagle (TheEagle) described by the famous British Victorian poet Alfred Tennyson, the eagle in Hughes' poetry is more "real" and restores its true colors eagle[2]. It does not hide the idea of killing in its head. Although it is too cruel, it goes straight, without all kinds of hypocrisy and pretense. Its brutality reflects the instinct and bloody side of modern people and modern society.

### 2. haze of war over paradise

Hughes's uncle and father had participated in World War I; Hughes himself served for two years during World War II. It can be said that the two world wars left a deep mark on the poet's heart. However, there are few remnants of the battlefield reflected in the poems. What makes readers think about the poet's deep perception of war: the haze of war entangled with ghosts, the impermanence of life and death, the struggle between rationality and animalism, the trap of freedom, the cage of liberation, Ideal disillusionment.

The two world wars brought a huge impact on Europe and world civilization. The First World War greatly weakened the British power and also shook the faith of the British. Although the shock of the Second World War to the British people was not as strong as that of the First World War, it was also devastating. After the war, there was a profound change in British social order, social anarchy, and the gradual decline of the British Empire. "And most British people gradually understood all this and accepted British The reality of the centre turning into a lonely bystander. All these socio-political, economic[3], and cultural changes have caused young English poets to have great doubts about order and tradition. In this context, the 1960s A new tendency has emerged in the British poetry world. Ted Hughes is a representative of this tendency. His attention to the problem of violence is deeply rooted in the poet's

personal living environment and experience, and his personal experience of war and Enlightenment has profoundly influenced the topic selection of his poems. Zhang Xian and the deepest fear of human beings reflected in his works are the poet's unique feeling and true expression of war. Such extreme manifestations of violence are often It is the wildness and violence that refracts human beings through animals, such as Jaguar.

The frequent occurrence of animal images in Hughes's poems is related to the potential violence in human society and animal world. Nature is like a raptor beast with its teeth and claws covered with blood, while the human world is like nature. The wild nature of animals reflects the heart and vent of human nature. Corresponding to these depictions of cruel natural forces is atrocities against human beings, and especially depictions of war. Hughes' father, as one of the seventeen soldiers who survived a battle, had a profound influence on Hughes. These experiences gave the poet a deeper understanding of the great destructive power of the war. In *Six Young Men* and *Bayonet Charge*, the poet reflects the cruelty of war and the sense of helplessness when people try to understand themselves.

*Six Young Men* shows readers a group photo of six young people, which truly reproduces the death process of six young people who have lost their lives on the battlefield in succession, using the most concise poetic language to transform the fragility of life and the Cruelly pictured. "Motorbike" more directly describes the connection between war and death and the state of British young people after the war; and "Ghost-Crabs" is another song that reveals the extreme inner heart brought by war to human beings Poetry of fear. The appearance of this ghost crab appeared to be a military offensive, and they poured into the inland and crossed the defense, unstoppable. Hughes used the strange image of the ghost crab to convey the fear and pain in the human heart. These chilling creatures symbolize the terrible shadow of war breaking into the human spiritual world, and only they have the power to rule the world (This crabs own this world). In front of them, human beings can only "wake up suddenly in this world of property, panting, sweating". War brutally trampled on the material civilization of the human world, and the traumatic wounds it caused to human beings were even harder to heal. This fear penetrated into our subconscious mind and shrouded the sky over the sea of human spirit for a long time[4].

It is not difficult to see from the poems that the remnants of war in Hughes's poems are not the obvious shell smoke, but the trauma that is deeply rooted in the human soul and cannot be easily erased. He used the power of language to make every reader feel the devastation of human spirit caused by the war, so that people fell into deep thinking.

### **3. Heal the war wounds and rebuild the natural paradise**

Critic Martin Dodsworth points out that Hughes is a writer who has "a deep appreciation for the fate of humankind" [B]. Hughes has experienced two world wars and has profound influence on the advanced science, technology, and industrial civilization of modern western society. Awareness. With the development of human society[5], people are becoming more and more aware that human wisdom does not necessarily bring about peace and happiness. The development of science, while creating a great material civilization, has also created a "better" Kill all kinds of advanced weapons of the same kind. The scientific double-edged sword helps mankind in the face of mysterious nature, but it also inevitably stabs the mother of mankind, and accelerates the alienation of mankind from nature. It also hurts humanity itself, Caused the alienation of human beings[6]. The idyllic living pattern chanted by post-war British traditional romantic poets has been destroyed by the industrialization of science and technology revitalization. Human beings live in a rational force represented by science and technology and In the vortex of the conflict of the capacity represented by nature, it has caused the dual division of human nature and the world.

In the collection of poems, Hughes doesn't just stop at rendering violence. He has to call against wild hypocrisy and call for a cure for sick humans. In the two poems of the later works "Swamp Town" and "The Ruins of Elme", Hughes still focused on expressing his view of nature. The development of human beings has continuously deteriorating the living environment of mankind. To improve the relationship between man and nature[6], To get rid of the spiritual dilemma of modern people, human beings must take every step to maintain the integrity and harmony of nature.

Ted Hughes reflected the gradual decline of British society after the Second World War, the ecological crisis and humanistic confusion brought about by industrialized urbanization with his refined poetic language and shocking images[7]. He warned the reader with an animal fable: mankind is not the ruler of nature. We are only a part of the organic whole of nature. Only by maintaining a harmonious relationship between man and man, and man and society, can man keep his spiritual home. Driven by a strong sense of historical mission, Hughes used the power of literature to find a way out for modern people. With the acumen of his poets, he cared about human development, and sought to resist the so-called rationality of mankind with primitive natural forces, and rebuild the relationship between man and nature. Balance, restore the vitality and vitality of nature, and rebuild the spiritual homeland of mankind.

Hughes first became famous for animal poems. The animals in his early and mid-term poems were powerful and powerful enough to compete with humans[8]; they were more a symbol of natural power or spirit and had less practical significance. Hughes began to record the life and death of farm animals in poems such as "Moore's Diary", and vaguely mentioned poaching in individual poems in "The River", but the brushwork involved in reality revealed only a sympathetic sympathy. . Different from the past, the animal poems in "Wolf Wolf" express a clear awareness of animal protection, which has strong practical significance. The poem "Manchester Sky Train" and the title poem "Wolf Watch" relate to the living conditions of captive animals. The poem "Black Rhino" is about the ecological crisis that might be caused by the extinction of wild animals by condemning the crime of indiscriminate killing of black rhinos. "Cultural intervention."

#### 4. Conclusion

In order to re-create the harmonious relationship between man and nature, Ted Hughes constantly explores new perspectives in his creation. In each poem, he deeply integrates his deep concern for war and nature. Strongly condemned humans who conquer nature Centralism calls for everyone to cherish nature and strive to create a harmonious relationship with nature.

#### References

- [1]Bergin, Tara. Ted Hughes and the literal : a study of the relationship between Ted Hughes's translations of János Pilinszky and his poetic intentions for Crow[J]. University of Newcastle Upon Tyne, 2013.
- [2]Gonel T , Dayton J . Animal Images as Metaphors in Ted Hughes' Poetry[J]. P Language and Literature > P Philology. Linguistics, 2012.
- [3]Koppenfels W V . A SAD AND ANGRY CONSOLATION: VIOLENCE, MOURNING AND MEMORY IN THE LATE POETRY OF TED HUGHES AND GEOFFREY HILL[J]. European Studies A Journal of European Culture, 2001:227-249.
- [4]Zidan L . Imaginary World, Sensory World, Animistic World-On the Three Dimensions of Ted Hughes' Poetry for Children[J]. Foreign Literature Studies, 2014, 36(1):113-119.
- [5]Thornton R K R , Kendall T . Modern English War Poetry[J]. The Modern Language Review, 2008, 103(4):1119.
- [6]Di W , Zhe L . Ted Hughes and the Shamanistic Qualities in His Poetry and Poetics[J]. Foreign Literature Studies, 2013, 35(3):50-57.
- [7]Jie-Wen H U , Ge-Fei W U . The Poetic Quest in Ecological Civilization——A Study of Ted Hughes' Poetry in the Perspective of Ecocriticism[J]. Journal of Southwest University of Science and Technology(Philosophy and Social Science Edition), 2011.
- [8]Rosslyn, F. Review: The Laughter of Foxes: A Study of Ted Hughes \* Keith Sagar: The Laughter of Foxes: A Study of Ted Hughes[J]. The Cambridge Quarterly, 2001, 30(1):91-96.