

# Use of Language in the Poetry of Ted Hughes

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Poems are new species of creature and a new specimen of life outside your own. ” This statement of Hughes is baffling. ’how can a poem be like an animal’? Well, “it is better to call it an assemblage of living parts moved by a single spirit. The living parts are the words, the language and the rhythm, the spirit is the life which inhibits them when they all work together of course, it is difficult to say which part comes first at the same time one has to make sure that each part is alive i. e., to whom we can hear, see, taste, touch and smell through senses. They seem to use their muscles like balance. ”

Ted Hughes was a great poet in whose hands language was a very powerful instrument of communication. it is both similar to and different from anything we have thought possible. He reminded that we really still speak the language of Shakespeare capable of registering the reality of things and of inner states of life it is only through attention to the language that a poet’s reputation established.

Hughes’ language demonstrates the fact that it is adequate enough to express variety of thoughts, about his poetic style Keith Douglas writes:

“The style is not a symptom either of  
Obsession of intellectual surrender.  
It combines to a remarkable degree.  
Receptiveness and control”?

A perusal of the opening lines of tips poem ‘the horses’ taken from the gawk in the rain sets forth the skilful use of the language:

“I climbed through woods in the hour before dawn-  
Dark,  
Even airman frost making stillness,  
Not a leaf, not a bird,  
A word cast in frost,  
I cane out above the wood,  
Where my breadth lift tortuous statues  
In the iron light.  
But the valleys were draining the darkness”.

In the above lines the rhythm, diction and sound effects used to evoke the freezing stillness are superb but not unusual, the perception is anchored by a bold conceit. It is well connected with the bleakness of the world before dawn. Apart from this, the poet was.

Not contented with the neatness of the conceit that he bring in potential details but through excessive and domestic concreteness he has exploded the conceit and thus established its triumph the clear perceptual idea pervades in the early part of the poem and beneath it there is a striking paradox which reflects the tension at the heart of the poet.

The familiar idea that good poetry makes a communication which precedes and outdistances conscious understanding is connected in Hughes case with the relation to the physical world. There are two aspects of roots in the physical nature of the speaker and the hearer this can be used to provide a synthesis of the two aspects of language’s relation to the physical world.

Hughes had spoken of capturing the reality of things in words and illustrated the idea in his poem ‘the thought fox’ the fox will get up somewhere in the darkness and come walking towards him.

Ted wrote,  
The deeper one goes into the language  
The less visual is its imagery and more  
Audile its system of tensions. ”  
These accords with the biological facts. Thus the idea that the communication of poetry and all effective language so physiological in nature. In the other words,  
“The deeper into language ones goes,  
The more dominated it becomes by  
Purely musical modes and more unified  
It becomes with the total state being  
With the expressiveness of physical Action. ”

Evidently, Hughes considered that language, particularly the spoken language has its roots in an inner life of which the speaker may not be conscious. This is consistent with the dialect.

“Whatever others speak your dialect  
Stays alive in a sort of inner  
Freedom, a separate little self. ”

In his first Volume Hughes mist obviously attempted to create poetry with a material body by employing language which consonants,

Alliteration and assonance. This can be discerned in the following lines:

‘I drowned in the drumming plough land, I drag up  
Heel after heel from the swallowing of the earth mouth  
From clay that clutches my each step to the ankle  
With the habit of dogged grave. ”

In the above passage the language is so physically dense that one is intensely conscious of words and activities of the poet in putting them together. But we find by contrast a real mastery and subtlety in the description of the hawk. Effortlessly at height hangs his still eye, the effect is affable. There is the assonance of height and eye there is rhythm springing worth its far at the centre, but the sense of hawk’s light and mastery presides an awareness of the mechanizes of the poetry, it has the communication and the charm.

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The use of overtly physical language is not usually as felicitous as it is in the opening of the poem. Latte, the poet describes himself as a:

“Bloodily grabbed dazed last moment counting  
Morsel in the earth’s, month.”

Thus the words chosen suffice to make the effect. By contrast, the piling up of words in the ‘Hawk in the Rain’ suggests an agitation in the poet as well as the protagonist.

‘Wind’ differs from most of Hawk in the Rain poem in the clarity of its language. The first line in the simplest of words gives us a metaphor that unifies the association of the ensuing violence principles and summarizes the continuing sensations of the night. This house has been far out at sea all night. The woods cursing through darkness the booming hill.

At a deeper level it starts off the series of suggestions that undermine the reader’s faith in the permanence and reliability of the landscape. The final line of the third stanza is an excellent visual metaphor reinforced by characteristically energetic verbs, yet it too derives its greatest power from this deeper lever.

In Ted’s poems the conceits are the result of concentrations on a small point while letting imagination work freely to collect every thing that might concern that still point, the stillness in concentration can perhaps most clearly be seen in- ‘A Black Back gull bent like an iron bar slowly’.

Here rhythm, syntax, imagery and repetition work together to create this effect. Repetition is the most stylistic feature of the passage and changing functions chart the movement of the poem towards its central vision. More generally, the repetition conveys antimpression of deliberate control of the poet holding firmly onto language in the face of his vision. This effect is also produced in the last three stanzas by the stress on mono-syllabic ending of every line, especially when the ensuing line opens with a stress.

The field quivering, the skyline a grimace,  
At any second to bang and vanish with flap,  
The wind flung a magpie away and a black –  
Back gull bent like an iron bar slowly. The House  
\* \* \* \* \*

Seeing the window tremble to come in,  
Hearing the stones cry out under the horizons.

No poet has observed animals more accurately never taking his eyes from the object-capturing every characteristic up to the

Limits of language. His renderings are vivid startling and true to his insights. But the description generates metaphors and the metaphors relate the creature to all other creatures and to human experiences and concepts.

In nearly all his poems Hughes strove to find metaphors for his own nature. And his own nature is of peculiar general interest not because it is unusual but because it embodies in a usually intense nature and nature itself.

In the early poems the metaphor he used are so often related to animals because animals live out in such naked extremity the

Primary struggle between vitality and death. The easy colloquial style flexible enough to heighten instantly to: ‘Disgorging your gouts of farness like a wounded God and unexpected, slightly comical metaphor and Exaggerations’.

We are challenged all the time to reverse these metaphors, to see this landscape as an image of the human conditions. If the tree is like a crazy old woman, is not any person hanging on to barren life as tenaciously as the tree, as crazy as the old woman:

‘Minute after minute, acorn after acorn,  
Nothing lets up or develops  
And neither there is a bad variant nor a try out  
This is where the staring angles go through  
This where all the stars bow down”.

‘Skylark’ is the most assured and accomplished larger poem

In ‘Widow’. It is one of the great poems of English language.

Quickly the poem is into its striking descriptive metaphors:

‘Barrel cheated for heights  
Like an Indian of high Andes,  
A whippet head barbed like a hunting arrow’.

Thus “metaphor, for the authentic poet, is not a figure of rhetoric but a representative image standing concretely fore him in lieu of a concept. All one needs in order to be a poet is the ability to have a lively action going on before one continually to live Surrounded by a host of spirits”.

Words though controlled up to a point, are allowed to retain a Life of their own and express more than the poet consciously knows.

His imagination which draws on his unconscious and on his sixth sense is perhaps innumerable things that speak through him. He is, in a word inspired. He performs a function essential to the race, a function analogous to the one performed in more primitive cultures

By the shaman, whose function is to make the dangerous journey, on?

Behalf of the society, into the spirit world into his own unconscious.

Hughes is a master of hyperbole. Hyperbole is deliberate exaggeration not intended to be taken literally to express strong feelings or make a strong impression. It is as essential to poetry as metaphors and is responsible for the power of the most admired passages of English poetry. Its rarity in the twentieth century is part of the failure of nerve. The metaphysical conceit is both metaphors and hyperbole. The first line of the first poem is Hughes’ first book  
Plunge into hyperbolic verse of a king:  
“I drown in the drumming plough land,  
With the habit of the dogged grave’ .....  
Here the exaggeration in the description of a man waling

Through mud seems to generate its own conceit. The earth is so habituated to its primary relationship with man-his grave that it

Knows no reason to wait for hate die but is from the start hungry for him pulling him down with a force stronger than gravity-morality. Yet so closely does the language describe the physical experience of dragging across a plough field in a rain storm that we are hardly aware of it becoming either hyperbole or metaphor until it is too late to resist.

What Hughes took from Thomas was a pulsating verbal energy, an emphasis in blood and bone and a hyperbolic imagery.

Hughes prefers monosyllabic stress to iambic accents and would have surely agreed with Hopkins that sprung rhythm is the rhythm of common speech and of written prose when rhythm is perceived in them. In his verbal recreation of 'Thought Fox'. Hughes disdains strict rhyme and iambic pentameter. Hughes rhythm is mimetic. The monosyllables in those memorable lines:

'Till with a sudden sharp hot stink of fox,  
It enters the dark that's of the head".

This really suggests the movement of the fox as it approaches

The metaphorical foxhole.

Thus, in brief, the language used by Hughes in his great works is varied in nature. The deployment varies from words,

Communication and simple language to spoken, Imaginative, rock-bottom, inherited, super-ugly and journalistic language. It has been intensified further by its physiological aspect, roots in inner life, overtly physical effort, use of energetic verbs, metaphors, hyperboles, rhetoric and monosyllabic stress. At its highest level, rhythm, syntax, imagery and repetitions work together to create magic effect.

Hughes's style has changed almost from volume to volume.

The reason is that his apprehension of the subject has altered also. His manner has bloated or grown lean, smoked up or illuminated entirely as this changing apprehension has prompted. It could not have been otherwise poetry is poignant understanding first, words second though the words seem always to race the understanding to the goal. The manner is a device for feeling the subject to fully so precisely that it can never be forgotten.