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# The Healing Poetics of Ted Hughes: From a Jungian Perspective

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**Abstract**

This paper explores Ted Hughes's oeuvre through the lens of C. G. Jung's analytical psychology, arguing that his poetry enacts a lifelong process of psychic and ecological healing. By tracing Hughes's career from his early confrontation with shadow energies in *The Hawk in the Rain* (1957) and *Lupercal* (1960), through the descent into chaos in *Crow* (1970) and *Cave Birds* (1978), to the landscapes of renewal in *Remains of Elmet* (1979) and *River* (1983), the study demonstrates how his work mirrors the Jungian stages of individuation. His epilogues, *Birthday Letters* (1998) and *Howls & Whispers* (1998), are read as culminating attempts of reconciliation, where personal grief is transformed into archetypal experience. The core argument is the therapeutic role of myth, archetypes, and natural imagery in Hughes's works, which mediate between the conscious ego and unconscious forces, facilitating a psychic balance. Ultimately, the paper concludes that Hughes's poetics suggests a healing practice of transformation, offering not final resolution but an ongoing dialogue with shadow, nature, and memory. His work thus affirms the role of poetry as a medium of psychological renewal and ecological consciousness in the modern age.
*Keywords:* Ted Hughes, Jungian psychology, individuation, healing poetics

## Introduction

Ted Hughes was living in England in the 20th century, like T.S. Eliot, had an intense feeling of "wasteland" towards the Western world around in that era. He was

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dissatisfied with the damage industrial civilisation had done to nature, and along with it, the destruction of imagination by positivism and the alienation of modern men from ancient civilisation and mythology. Therefore, he called on poets to fulfil their "therapeutic" mission like shamans. Hughes was also influenced by C.G. Jung as he once said that he had read all the translated works of Jung. Through Jung, Hughes managed to put together a network of his own "intellectual systems, psychological and some philosophical systems" (Hughes, 2008, p. 625). From as early as his first published collection *The Hawk in the Rain* (1957), Hughes's reputation as a poet has been bound with brutal disclosure of the force of nature. Hughes's fascination with violent animal energies, elemental forces and mythical figures has long been noted and studied by critics. One of the prominent Hughes scholars Skea (1994) says that, Hughes is well known as a poet of "blood and violence". Since the expressions and imagery in Hughes's poetry often appears brutally honest in its visceral intensity, such remarks from the critics, while not inaccurate, are partial. Across different stages in his life and career, Hughes pursued not merely the depictions of violence in nature, but the transformation and insight derived from it. His major collections can be read as successive and progressive attempts to engage energies of the unconscious, to face their potentially destructive force, and ultimately discover a path toward psychic renewal. Jung's analytical psychology provides a system to understand Hughes's recurrent preoccupations: archetypes, myths, dreams, violence and renewal. The process of individuation is most emphasised in Jung's theories, with this process the conscious self integrates with aspects of the unconscious, especially shadow and anima/animus, so to

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realise a fuller psychological wholeness (Jung, 1977, p. 164). This process always comes with numerous struggles, involving confrontation with the shadow (the repressed and instinctual side of the psyche), disintegration into chaos (the alchemical *nigredo*, meaning "blackness"), and eventually achieving reintegration into a more balanced relation to the Self. Jung also advocates the healing function of symbols, myths, and images in art: they mediate between the conscious and the unconscious, allowing destructive energies to be transformed into creative ones (Jung, 2013).

Hughes's poetry enacts exactly this type of psychic process. His recurring animal archetypes, mythological figures, and elemental landscapes are often symbolic connections between consciousness and unconscious instinct. By staging encounters with predatory birds, mythic tricksters or ruined landscapes, Hughes magnifies the psychic ordeal of shadow confrontation, possession, disintegration and eventual renewal. Hence the therapeutic dimension of his work is at core. He has written in his essay repeatedly identifying poetry as a discipline that helps one confront and work with forces and powerful impulses that the conscious ego cannot easily handle. As he reflected in his later prose, he described the ritual of poetry as "the record of just how the forces of the Universe try to redress some balance disturbed by human error" (Hughes, 1994, p.206). Such comments echoes Jung's opinion of art as a symbolic dialogue with the unconscious, assisting one to restore psychic equilibrium (Jung, 1972, p. 128). Both Hughes and Jung believed in the therapeutic function of art. For Jung, symbols are not ornamental, they mediate between conscious and unconscious systems and help restore psychological balance when the ego becomes rigid or collapses from

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being too one-sided. According to Jung's theories, individuation is the life-long task of pursuing a more "complete" version of oneself, which requires constant confrontations with the shadow, encounters with the anima/animus, and a long and winding road toward the Self**,** the psyche's regulating centre (Jung, 1977). This study therefore suggests reading through Hughes's career with the understanding of the individuation process, analysing the poetic healing derived from his work with the lens of Jungian depth psychology. Tracing the poet's development in his writing, the discussion will divide some of his major works into four stages that mirror the phases of individuation:

Firstly, the focus is on Hughes's early collections such as *The Hawk in the Rain* (1957) and *Lupercal* (1960). There are poems in these collections such as "The Jaguar" "Pike" and "Hawk Roosting" wherein instinctual and predatory energies as shadow powers are acknowledged and channelled through those animal figures. At the second stage, with *Crow* (1970) and *Cave Birds* (1978), Hughes enters a darker mythopoetic mode. Here he lays down a path of descent into chaos, accompanied with the collapse of religious and rational structures, and particularly the ordeal of the Trickster archetype. Jungian alchemy interprets this stage as *nigredo*, the necessary downfall that would later progress onto renewal (Jung, 2015, p. 143). Then next in *Remains of Elmet* (1979) and *River* (1983), Hughes turns to landscapes and natural cycle of life. The poems in those collections attempt to zoom in on the ruins of cultural terrain, the toil and moil in the farmland and also on the symbolic flow and dynamites of rivers. Among them the archetypes of anima and water act as mediator of healing, by connecting the human psyche to ancestral and ecological system and rhythms. Lastly, in later works such as

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*Birthday Letters* (1998), and *Howls & Whisper* (1998), Hughes confronts his memory and grief over past tragic loss of his loved ones. In these poems, we can see how he processes his trauma, with his language his personal wounds are transformed into universal archetypal experience. Readers can experience the healing and catharsis from the psychic integration process through Hughes's articulation of grief and love. That is reaching the final stage of individuation striving towards acceptance and reconciliation with the Self.

Hence each stage of Hughes's career can be understood as a psychic phase in a long struggling individuation process. His oeuvre itself is a record of an imaginative adventure of the unconscious, charting not only personal trauma but also collective wounds in culture and ecology. Hughes's healing poetics thus go beyond the personal level and enlighten his readers to find ways of their own psychological transformation and renewal.

## 1. *The Hawk in the Rain* and *Lupercal*: Confronting the Shadow

The first collections in Ted Hughes's career—*The Hawk in the Rain* (1957) and *Lupercal* (1960)—start off with encounters with raw instinct, weakness, desires, predatory power and suchlike, or in short, the shadow energies. Those dark energies of aggression from the unconscious forces are that modern consciousness prefers to supress. Together, these volumes showcase the symbolic imageries and language via which Hughes start to lay out a healing system advocate symbolic recognition rather than moral condemnation—a controlled, ritualised attention to instinct, violence and predatory desires as ontological facts. In Jungian terms, such recognition is the first step

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of individuation—the confrontation with the shadow—the repressed, instinctual and destructive dimension of the psyche. The shadow archetype represents the dark side of ourselves, an invisible yet integral component of our mental whole. This archetype often manifests as darker figures, such as monsters or demons, representing the chaotic and wild elements of the unconscious. Hughes skilfully embodies this archetype in his poetry, exploring themes of wildness and primal instincts that challenge societal norms. By bringing these shadow figures to light, Hughes encourages readers to confront their own repressed elements, echoing Jung's assertion that acknowledging the shadow is vital for personal growth and individuation.

### 1.1 "The Jaguar" and "Hawk Roosting": The Shadow in and out of the "Cage"

"The Jaguar" in *The Hawk in the Rain* (1957) being one of Hughes's most anthologised early poems, opens with the depiction of a very sombre zoo—the apes yawning, the boa coiled like "a fossil". This is a glimpse of nature being reduced to display for the pleasure of human. Then the poem progresses to a cage "where the crowd stands, stares, mesmerized,/As a child at a dream, at a jaguar hurrying enraged", introducing the jaguar that refuses prison: His stride is wildernesses of freedom: / The world rolls under the long thrust of his heel. (Hughes, 2012, p. 25) Here, the jaguar acts as a projection of the psyche's shadow—a force that reveals the unrecognised dark aspects of the personality (Jung, 1951/2015, p. 22). This force is usually "caged" and repressed by the conscious self, but once being observed by the human active gaze ("stares" "mesmerized"), it is unleashed with no denial. The jaguar's "fuse" "fire" "bang of blood" seems dangerous but Hughes places the world "under" the heel of the

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jaguar, painting the whole image with touch of divinity. From the Jungian perspective, this is the first task of individuation: to bring the shadow energy into the light, acknowledging its role in psychic life.

"Hawk Roosting" from *Lupercal* takes a step further to make absolutely sure that the voice of the shadow is heard. The hawk speaks like a tyrant: "I kill where I please because it is all mine" (Hughes, 2012, p. 68). The hawk's monologue is one that allows no questioning. Critics have often read this poem as fascistic, an amplification of authoritarian will (Kendall, 2009). The language of the poem is firm, declarative and dominant— "Now I hold Creation in my foot", "No arguments assert my right", "My eye has permitted no change" —the voice of the hawk sounds echoed alone forth and back between heaven and earth. Yet within a Jungian frame, the voice of the hawk is that of the shadow's autonomy, direct and firm, where no feedback is necessary. The poem is loud and ear-splitting, forcing readers to hear what the psyche has repressed— its affiliation with violence, control and egocentricity. Hughes's genius shines in letting archetypes speak with their own authority. The theatrical effect of the hawk speaking out and declaring its authority lifts up the monologue into an archetypal speech. Therefore, a distance is created for the readers to hear and recognise the will's predatory desire without being invited to endorse it. Jung cautiously points out that the shadow must be granted reality but not righteousness: denial makes it come out of the surface unconsciously while recognition brings containment. Healing really begins when the reality of such forces is accepted and integrated.

### 1.2 "Pike" and "Thrushes": Archetypes of Instinct

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While the hawk's voice is firm and decisive, "Pike" speaks in ambivalence. The poem starts with uplifting expression— "perfect" "Pike in all parts, green tigering the gold" yet followed by an immediate shift to "Killers from the egg: the malevolent aged grin" (Hughes, 2012, p. 91). The fish is a paradox. It is evident that from early stage of Hughes's life, there had been fear as well as excitement accompanying his fishing experience. The episode he describes in his poem "Pike", whether while the narrator was pondering over life or fishing a deep pond late into the night, he was meditating in awe and fighting his demons:

A pond I fished, fifty yards across,
Whose lilies and muscular tench
Had outlasted every visible stone
Of the monastery that planted them

Stilled legendary depth:
It was as deep as England. It held
Pike too immense to stir, so immense and old
That past nightfall I dared not cast (Hughes, 2012, p. 91)

The pond's ecosystem with "lilies" and "tench" outlives the decayed monastery, showcasing nature's overpowering human history. The "England-deep" pond had the poet hesitate on his rod, evoking ancestral dread tied to the land. The pond transcends physical reality, becoming a reservoir of national memory, or by extension the collective unconscious of the people. He is respecting the vast waters

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and the old pike, and fearing the unseen and the unknown in the dark depth of the pond: “Frail on my ear against the dream/Darkness beneath night’s darkness had freed”. Hughes describes pike as “killers from the egg”, plus them being “immense and old” immediately exudes primordial terror. At this point, he is not just fishing for pike, but also for his own vision of what’s down in the legendary depth of the ancient pond, the “darkness beneath night’s darkness had freed” and his dream and his own unconscious. The layered darkness essentially implies a subconscious abyss. Around the time he was composing “Pike”, he wrote to his sister Olwyn and shared his view of life as “the notion of God as the devourer—as the mouth & gut, which is brainless & the whole of evil” (Hughes, *Letters*, 148). Literary critic Sagar comes to the conclusion that fishing a deep ancient pond at midnight is the invitation from God “the devourer” to the hellish creatures of the deep to enter his world (Sagar, 2010, p. 249).

Overall, at a psychological level, the poem is a reflection on the complexity of shadow. The poem is switching between admiration for the fish’s primordial survival and horror at its predation. This ambivalence corresponds to Jung’s belief that the content of shadow is morally neutral, containing both destructive energy and source of life. A murderous appetite is not evil but the engine of life. The pike embodies what Jung calls the instinctual layer of the psyche (Jung, 1951/2015, p. 55), whose energy can either destroy or sustain, or both. Hughes’s symbolic language reveals that there is no definite resolution as how to deal with the complicated psyche, but it requires constant attention and negotiation with instinct.

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While there are more poems that present some of Hughes's most intense explorations of predatory instinct in *Lupercal,* none is more striking than "Thrushes". The little birds famous for their bright and delightful singing, have their feral sides out in the open in Hughes's beginning depiction: Terrifying are the attent sleek thrushes on the lawn, / More coiled steel than living – a poised / Dark deadly eye, those delicate legs. (Hughes, 2012, p. 82) The thrushes are described as predatory mechanisms, as they are like "coiled steel", with an "eye" honed into a "dark deadly" gaze. In this poem, thrushes are perfect embodiments of the repressed instinctual energies of violence and vitality. As if any sentimentality would be stripped away, pure instinct is revealed in its raw form. This is also a projection of the Shadow, the dimension of psyche that contains primitive drives like aggression, lust and hunger that consciousness represses (Jung, 1951/2015, p. 22). With the repetitive stresses of "no", Hughes writes: No indolent procrastinations and no yawning stares. / No sighs or head-scratchings. Nothing but bounce and stab. (Hughes, 2012, p. 82) It is evident that Hughes is in awe of the birds' "bullet" efficiency in their work of killing. What is shocking about these animals is not just violence but competence. Hughes does not condemn thrushes' predation, instead, he contrasts the birds' unwavering aim with the human tendency to hesitate, to be "distracted from distraction by distraction" (T.S. Eliot, "Burnt Norton"). The line "his act worships itself" skewers the way human projects can become egotistic rituals. A man does yearn for genuine devotion— "he bends to be blent in the prayer" —but can't quite merge with it. Because the "distracting devils" bring profane to the scared worship ("orgy and hosannah"). Human consciousness is a parliament of warring drives, even

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piety is noisy and compromised. The ending lines stack vertical layers—the “fire” of agitation is above, with “weeping” black silent waters below. The psyche is not just busy. it’s abyssal. The “weep” of the black silent waters suggests a sorrow the man can’t hear over the blaze. The man is split between ego aims, “heroisms” or other types of achievement, and the unconscious, which erupts as “distracting devils” and broods as “black silent waters”. His effort to “be blent in the prayer” is the wish for wholeness, but inflation (“his act worships itself”) and distraction may hinder individuation. Hughes contrasts the thrushes’ seamless, instinctive efficiency with human’s divided spirit, with our work tilts toward self-worshiping activity, and beneath our blazing ambitions lies a silent, sorrowing depth we scarcely face. Rather than lamenting, Hughes lets this contrast instruct, that the precision of instinct is a measure by which our divided attention is exposed.

Across these early poems, Hughes uses his striking language to summon the psyche’s darkest energies as well as containing them. His diction is that of force, with verbs that grip and gouge, nouns of warm blood and gore intertwined with that of cold tool and steel. Hughes’s language is full of loud images and layered texture, free of euphemism. His animals are written as archetypal embodiments of forces that the conscious mind hesitates to accept. From a Jungian perspective, individuation cannot begin without acknowledging the shadow. Hughes’s early works open the door to the unconscious, allowing its shadow energies to speak in the jaguar’s ferocity, the hawk’s tyranny, the pike’s ambivalence and the thrush’s cold-blooded precision. If Hughes’s early books encourage looking into instinct without flinching, that would prepare one

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for the *nigredo* in his mythopoetic works of the 1970s to come. *Crow* (1970) will explode theological language while *Cave Birds* (1978) will ritualize trial and rebirth. Without the early discipline of attention and containment, these descents would be annihilating. They become the next necessary stage in a healing process.

## 2. *Crow* and *Cave Birds*: Alchemical Descent into Chaos

The publication of *Crow* (1970) marked a radical turning point in Hughes's oeuvre. While his earlier works often dramatized encounters with the shadow through animal imagery, *Crow* turns away from familiar landscapes and creatures, driving towards a mythopoetic descent into chaos. It is an experiment in dismantling and rewriting biblical creation myths through the Trickster figure. Within Jungian framework, *Crow* moves to the stage of *nigredo*, the psychic disintegration necessary for transformation (Jung, 2015, p. 230). The *Crow* poems enact what Jung would describe as "the dark night of the soul", a confrontation with archetypal disorder that strips the ego of false certainties. This psychological downfall is extended in the following *Cave Birds*, an alchemical drama of trial, death and rebirth. Together, these works present Hughes's most radical engagement with psychic disintegration, in which healing is achieved through painful ordeal.

### 2.1 *Crow*: The Archetype of Trickster

Jung believed that the healer is marked by wounds of his own. He often invoked the image of the wounded healer, rooted in the figure of Chiron in Greek mythology, to suggest that the analyst's own encounter with psychic suffering enables him to guide others toward wholeness (1972, p. 135). Healing in Jung's psychology begins with a

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descent into the unconscious, where the ego is broken open by encounters with shadow, chaos, and death. Out of this ordeal arises the possibility of individuation—the reconfiguration of the personality around the archetype of the Self rather than the limitations of the ego. Hughes's poetry dramatizes precisely such initiatory descents. Ewa Panecka develops this point by proposing that Hughes's poetics operate like a Shamanic ritual: they draw upon energy and ecstasy, enact themselves in the form of myth or ritual, and culminate in a cathartic result that is healing for both the poet and his readers. (2018, p. 2) Hughes was specially inspired by the shamanistic *Tibetan Book of the Dead* (*Bardo Thodol*). Crow's capacity to survive the ordeals and mutilations he comes across also resembles the shaman's rebirth after his magical death and dismemberment. And the basic shamanistic quest pattern of death and rebirth in *Tibetan Book of the Dead* provides a general analogue to the "Life and Songs of the Crow" of surviving despite the ordeals and mutilations he is exposed to. That is also resembles the shaman's rebirth after his "magical death and dismemberment ... with all possible variants of boiling, devouring, burning, stripping to the bones", as Hughes summaries in his essay in *Winter Pollen* (p. 57). In Jungian terms, Hughes's shamanic poetics can be read as enactments of the *nigredo* stage of alchemy.

In the meantime, Sagar observes that the story line in *Crow* follows the typical incidents in a cycle of Trickster-narratives that involves "the wild escapades in series, causes leading to improbable effects that snowball in magnitude, maniacal pursuits, villainous transformations …. That utterly destroys the protagonist, who then appears in the next scene intact" (Sagar, 1983, p. 176). With regard to the figure of Crow, there

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is much in Crow that fits in the profile of the mythological archetype of the Trickster in Jung's theories: "[The Trickster] is a forerunner of the savior … He is both subhuman and superhuman, a bestial and divine being, whose chief and most alarming characteristic is his unconsciousness" (Jung, 1977, p. 263). In short, the Trickster is an unconscious shadow tendency of an ambivalent, mercurial nature in a man.

The voice of the wounded healer is perhaps most loud in *Crow*. This collection invents a trickster-shaman crow figure who suffers ordeals, mocks gods, and undergoes repeated symbolic deaths. In "Crow's First Lesson", God taught the bird to say "Love", but what comes out of his beak is a horrifying cry that brings destructive consequences to the world:

> Crow convulsed, gaped, retched and
>
> Man's bodiless prodigious head
>
> Bulbed out onto the earth, with swivelling eyes,
>
> …
>
> And Crow retched again, before God could stop him.
>
> And woman's vulva dropped over man's neck and tightened
>
> (Hughes, 2012, p. 211)

This moment is archetypal: love is revealed not as sentimental feeling but as a force inseparable from pain, sacrifice, and death. Jungian psychology insists that individuation requires the ego to be wounded, even shattered, in order for the deeper archetypes to manifest. Crow's cry is a wound that also marks the beginning of learning.

In "Examination at the Womb-Door," Hughes spills all the ink on casting Crow

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in a trial where existence itself is interrogated by a litany of questions—from "Who owns these scrawny little feet?" "Who owns this bristly scorched-looking face?" "Who owns these still-working lungs?" to "Who is stronger than hope?" "Who is stronger than the will?" (Hughes, 2012, p. 218). Each and every answer to those questions resounds with "Death" —until the speaker admits that all possessions, even the body and mind, belong to powers beyond the ego. However, when the final question arrives— "But who is stronger than death?"—the response is shockingly different: "Me, evidently." Semantically, it is deadpan, even absurd. Yet this absurdity signals a psychological threshold. If all belongs to "Death", then the only way to "pass" is to paradoxically claim identity with the force that seemed invincible. If one steps into the logic of this paradox, then survival here is not denial of death but the recognition that one carries death within. By claiming "Me, evidently," the speaker collapses the dualism of "I" versus "Death." Death is not an external tyrant; it is part of the Self. To pass is to integrate this recognition. On another level, this line is pure trickster wit. Panecka calls such moments "pragmatic myth" (2018, p. 73), which are solutions that work not because they are sticking to doctrines but because they produce a shift in psychic state. The absurdity itself is the medicine: it turns numb acceptance of fate before Death into mockery, cheeky response, and renewed vitality. Through Crow's final response, the poem concludes that the only way to survive is to become death, to carry it consciously. This is echoing Jung's notion of *nigredo*: one must face symbolic death in order to be reborn into a wider consciousness.

In Hughes's *Crow*, the Trickster figure enacts the Jungian archetype as a

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therapeutic destabilizer. By transgressing moral, linguistic, and theological boundaries, Crow mirrors Jung's claim that Trickster differentiates by transgression (Jung, 1977, p. 265). The grotesque parodies of creation reveal where human consciousness is secretly attached to consoling myths of divine order or idealized notions of love. In exposing these attachments, Hughes's Trickster performs a paradoxical healing function—he forces the psyche to confront its shadow, thereby making space for a deeper integration of suffering and vitality into consciousness.

### 2.2 *Cave Birds:* Alchemical Trial and Rebirth

Since the full title of Hughes's *Cave Birds* (1978) is *Cave Birds: An Alchemical Drama*, it only makes sense to start with the alchemical interpretation. *Cave Birds* transforms the *nigredo* of *Crow* into a visionary ritual passage toward renewal**.** In collaboration with Leonard Baskin's striking illustrations, the poems follow the protagonist through accusation, trial, execution and symbolic rebirth. The most significant alchemical component in *Cave Birds* is the magical metamorphosis or rebirth that takes place inside the alchemist during an external operation. The metaphorical union of the body and the soul is another aspect of alchemy. Hughes's early interest in the works of W.B. Yeats and C. G. Jung (both of whom made a close study of the Upanishads) would have made him aware of the Upanishads and of the emphasis on the Atman, the Self-Soul (Skea, 1994), as the generator of all that is perceived, and on the interconnectedness of all things. Alchemy is a spiritual art through which the "gross matter" of man may be refined to reveal the spiritual gold of the pure Self-Soul. The precepts of alchemy were the basis for some other oriental philosophies

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explored by Hughes, including Sufism. Hughes's writing of *Cave Birds* poems was also influenced by Persian Sufi poet Farid ud-Din Attar, the writer of *The Conference of the Birds* (an allegorical fable of the search for wisdom and understanding, which ends with the revelation of Self-Soul) (Skea, 1994). A perfect example of an alchemist scene can be found in the poem "The Accused" in this collection: His mudded body, lord of middens, like an ore, / To Rainbowed clinker and a beatitude. (Hughes, 2012, p. 425) The progression of call, refusal, abduction, collapse/dismemberment, and restoration to wholeness is essentially the template for shamanic initiation, which Hughes was familiar with from his anthropology reading and is evident in many of his books, particularly collections like *Cave Birds*.

The protagonists created by Hughes and Baskin in *Cave Birds* appear to be part human and part bird, and Eliade, regarding "the 'magical flight'" encountered in "archaic anthropology", speaks of a "group of myths and legends about the aerial adventures of the mythic Ancestors", the "bird-men (or feathered men)" (Eliade, 2020, p. 101). Eliade further observes that the bird is traditionally associated with the soul or spirit, one notable example is Yeats's "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen": Some moralist or mythological poet / Compares the solitary soul to a swan... (Yeats, 2014, p. 234). Hence Eliade's research regarding these motifs points to the archetypal nature of the bird. One's attention may be drawn to the trial of "The Accused" Cock, which is an important plot in this collection.

As the drawing of Socratic Cock came before Hughes's tenth poem "The Accused", Baskin was the one who initiates the reference to Socrates and his last words

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with which he jokingly asked his friend Crito to sacrifice Socrates's cock to Aesculepius, the god of healing, to thank god for the gift of death (Plato, 2009, p. 157). The subtitle of *Cave Birds* was at one time "The Death of Socrates and his Resurrection in Egypt" (Robinson, 1989, p. 100). The "cave" of the title plausibly refers to Plato's cave while the poem "The Accused" is accompanied by Baskin's drawing titled "A Tumbled Socratic Cock" (Rees, 2009, p. 131). Together with the hemlock allusion in "The Executioner": Fills up / Sun, moon, stars, he fills them up / With his hemlock – / They darken. (Hughes, 2012, p. 424) Hughes is satirising the evolution of Western civilisation since Socrates's time for the utility, dialectical reasoning, and passion for learning have led people to believe that the advancement of consciousness alone can unveil the mysteries of existence. Here the repetitive "fill up" builds up the tension as the Cock witness Crow the Executioner devouring everything with darkness, and gradually, the Socratic Cock would be soaked in the dark, leading to the demise of his own self. Transformation does contain the stage of facing death of one's former self before one can thrive and be reborn with new life, hence at the end of "The Executioner", after experiencing all the darkness, the future for the Cock is not at all bleak: It feels like the world / Before your eyes ever opened. (Hughes, 2012, p. 425) Other Bird characters represent different unconscious forces within the inner psyche of "The Accused" Socratic Cock.

There is an interesting point made by Robert Haven Schauffler in his *The Poetry Cure: A Pocket Medicine Chest of Verse* (1925) that "any poem that has genuine healing in its wings usually commences its medical career the moment it is conceived by

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promptly curing its creator" (xviii). The illustrated *Cave Birds* accompanied by Baskin's artwork was composed over a few years in the 1970s, while Hughes was going through a string of tragic events in his life—Sylvia Plath committed suicide in 1963, followed by the passing of his lover Assia Wevill and their daughter Shura in 1967 (Feinstein, 2012). At the controversial stage of his life, the keen observation of nature and animals in his early creative endeavours was replaced by the abundance in narratives of guilt and mythical adventures of seeking redemption, wherein animals and other human protagonists were mostly serving as archetypal figures. As a modern Shaman that Hughes regarded himself to be, he endured and turned his own pain in life into poetry, bearing fruits of new insights for readers.

Despite Hughes's tragedy in his own love life, there is one fully integrated narrative sequence in *Cave Birds*. In "Bride and Groom Lie Hidden for Three days" in *Cave Birds*, Hughes describes an ideal marriage of a woman and a man, that they find the missing pieces for the body of one another, namely their limbs, skin and teeth, etc. In doing so, they physically "complete" each other. The poem ends with "They bring each other to perfection", and the "vast astonishment" points to a renewed and enthusiastic human perception of the world. Looking at it through the lens of Jung's theories, this poem also presents the symbolic marriage of the conscious and the unconscious. Thus, *Cave Birds* stages a psychic death and foreshadows the possibility of rebirth through archetypal integration.

At the stage of Hughes's mid-career, the healing process in his poems is making progress in breakdown. *Crow* and *Cave Birds* immerse both poet and reader in psychic

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chaos, where language falters, death dominates and archetypes destroy. Yet this ordeal is not nihilistic. By giving form to disintegration, Hughes transforms trauma into symbolic narrative. His Trickster-Crow, and cave-bound protagonist serve as mediators, allowing destructive energies to be symbolically endured. The therapeutic effect lies not in resolution but in recognition: the psyche endures chaos by giving it a voice. Hughes's mid-career works function as mythic containers for psychic violence, vessels strong enough to hold energies that would otherwise overwhelm. This aligns with Jung's conviction that art can provide a healing container for archetypal energies (Jung, 1972, p. 108). Hughes's mythopoetic sequences thus enact a psychic alchemy—they destroy in order to prepare for renewal. The ordeal in *Crow* and *Cave Birds* is necessary for the later integration found in *Remains of Elmet* (1979) and *River* (1983).

## 3. *Remains of Elmet* and *River*: Landscapes of Renewal

While Hughes's mythopoetic explorations in *Crow* and *Cave Birds* showcased the disintegration of the ego through alchemical descent into archetypal chaos, his subsequent collections turn to the landscapes out in the nature for remedies of psychic renewal. *Remains of Elmet* (1979) and *River* (1983) turn away from the mythic ordeal to elemental environment. Though this shift longs for firmer ground in the natural world, it is not a retreat from the unconscious; this is its integration found in ruined landscapes, farm labour and formless waters. At this point, the poems in these collections are more subtle, slow-paced and open. Consequently, by reconnection with place and anima, the pure presence of natural elements may offer healing and guide one from *nigredo* to integration.

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### 3.1 *Remains of Elmet:* The Ancestral Ruined

Ted Hughes's *Remains of Elmet* (1979) has a pivotal place in his oeuvre, presenting both a return to the landscapes of his Yorkshire childhood and a poetic reckoning with cultural, spiritual, and ecological history. In collaboration with Fay Godwin's stark photographs, Hughes renders the Calder Valley as a terrain of ruins with collapsed mills, sagging walls, war memorials, yet also as a site of elemental vitality in its moors, rivers, and skies. The collection has frequently been read as an elegy for a lost community, but its significance extends further. Viewed through the dual lenses of Jungian psychology and ecocriticism, *Remains of Elmet* reveals itself as a work of psychic healing and environmental reimagining. Jungian analytical psychology provides a vocabulary for understanding the psychological development depicted in these poems. The sequence dramatizes processes of individuation, shadow confrontation, and psychic renewal, using the imagery of decomposition and regeneration to symbolize inner transformation.

Memory is central to Hughes's vision of Elmet, and memory also functions as the psychic terrain where individuation occurs. The collapsing mills and chapels are not only cultural ruins but also emblems of the psyche's outdated structures, which must be refurbished to achieve balance. In *Remains of Elmet*, Hughes revisits shadowed memories of industrial labor, religious repression, and war, transforming them into sources of psychic growth. Several poems exemplify Hughes's engagement with his shadowy past. "Two" recounts the departure of the poet's elder brother after World War II, an event that Hughes links to a primal wound in the family psyche. The poem's

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imagery is apparently shamanic: from an idyllic moment of Edenic beauty at dawn, the brothers descend to find the violence of war, and Hughes writes that: The feather fell from his head. / The drum stopped in his hand. / The song died in his mouth. (Hughes, 2012, p. 480) This scene encapsulates psychic rupture, suggesting the loss of a guiding song—a metaphor for the psychic shock that fractured Hughes's youthful wholeness. Confronting this painful memory in verse is an act of integration: by giving shape to grief and acknowledging the war's aftershocks on his inner life, Hughes reclaims a part of his shadow rather than leaving it unacknowledged in the unconscious. By articulating the memory, Hughes transforms it into an act of mourning and integration. In the meantime, "Mount Zion" records Hughes's childhood experience with Methodism, describing the chapel as a prison of death and conformity. The grotesque imagery of the people's activities at the chapel is stifling:

> Women bleak as Sunday rose-gardens
>
> Or crumpling to puff-pastry, and cobwebbed with deaths.
>
> Men in their prison-yard, at attention,
>
> Exercising their cowed, shaven souls. (Hughes, 2012, p. 481)

To liberate himself from the rigid, joyless religiosity in his youth, Hughes borrows the "furious chisels and screwdrivers" from imaginary crickets to strike down the "religious stonework". According to Jung, this can be interpreted as confronting the collective shadow of institutional religion: the repressive father-archetype that stifles instinct and imagination. By rendering it in sardonic verse, Hughes distances himself from its bound, performing an individuation step by liberating the psyche from false authority.

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Even in poems less explicitly tied to memory, such as "Heptonstall Old Church," ruins embody shadow material. The church is figured as the remains of "a great bird", once uplifting but now perished (Hughes, 2012, p. 490). The symbolism suggests a cultural form whose energy has been exhausted. Jung argued that symbols die when they no longer mediate between consciousness and the unconscious; renewal requires new symbols rooted in living experience. By presenting the church as carrion rather than shrine, Hughes deems its declining prestige necessary for clearing space for new forms of spiritual redemption.

Throughout *Remains of Elmet*, memory is not nostalgic but transformational. It revives shadow material like trauma of war, industrialism, and religion, so that these can be consciously integrated into a more balanced self. Alongside memory, *Elmet* poems foreground nature's processes of decay and regeneration as models for psychic healing. Decomposition, in both ecological and psychological senses, is essential. Hughes writes in "Lumb Chimneys":

> Brave dreams and their mortgaged walls are let rot in the rain.
>
> The dear flesh is finally too much.
>
> Heirloom bones are dumped into wet holes.
>
> And spirit does what it can to save itself alone.
>
> …
>
> Before these chimneys can flower again
>
> They must fall into the only future, into earth. (Hughes, 2012, p. 457)

These lines encapsulate Hughes's belief that only by yielding to decay can renewal

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occur. Psychologically, it aligns with Jung's *nigredo*, the alchemical stage of dissolution where ego-attachments die so that transformation may follow (Jung, 2015, p. 37). Ecologically, it echoes the soil's fertility after organic matter breaks down, reminding readers that cultural structures—"chimneys" and "mortgaged walls"—must also return to earth. The poem "Tree" also embodies this renewal process. A figure of a priest, initially raging like against the storm, eventually resigns himself "to be dumb" and receptive. Scigaj interprets this as Hughes discovering his "ecological second skin," (1991, p. 109) accepting natural rhythms rather than imposing anthropocentric control.

*Remains of Elmet* positions Ted Hughes at a crossroads: moving beyond the mythic violence of *Crow* and *Cave Birds* toward a poetics of humility, memory, and ecological consciousness. Through Jungian psychology, the sequence can be read as a process of individuation, confronting shadowed memories of war, religion, and industrialism, and integrating them into a renewed self.

### 3.2 *River*: The Flow of Transformation

*River* (1983) leads one from the previous soil landscapes down into the waters. Hughes envisioned *River* as an epic spiritual quest in which the poetic persona seeks a "source of life" and ultimate truth in the river's depths (Skea, 1994). This journey parallels Jung's concept of individuation, the process of integrating unconscious and conscious facets of the self to achieve wholeness (Jung, 1977, p. 275). Ann Skea (1994) observes that the reappearing salmon in these poems act as "totem creatures" guiding the persona toward truth and knowledge, their upstream journey symbolizing the quest for the Self. In Jungian terms, the river's "primordial energies" represent the

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unconscious forces the ego must confront and integrate (Jung, 1964/2013, p. 67). In Scigaj's *The Poetry of Ted Hughes: Form and Imagination* (1986), he attempts to "synthesise major influences from depth psychology, myth, alchemy, Trickster folklore, Blake, and many Oriental disciplines" (p. 173). Scigaj considers that the scenery described in *River* is under the influence of Taoist philosophies. His thesis is of relevance to the study of Hughes's therapeutic endeavours. It also compiles compelling ecological readings of *River*, and the concepts of natural renewal that underpin a profound and enduring significance of alchemy in these poems.

Hughes's love for fishing had developed very early on since boyhood, stemming from his time in the Rochdale canal, just a few yards from his first home in Mytholmroyd. Later as he was maturing into his literary career, he shared his realization that writing poems is like fishing in a different manner:

> …it occurred to me that my writing poems might be partly a continuation of my earlier pursuit…The special kind of excitement, the slightly mesmerized and quite involuntary concentration with which you make out the stirring of a new poem in your mind…This is hunting and the poem is a new species of creature, a new specimen of the life outside your own. (Hughes, 1994, p. 11-12)

With this Hughes suggests that fishing and writing poems are the same at their core, they both allow one to escape from the toils and tanglements of the ego, and to be renovated while encountering with "a new specimen of the life outside your own", a new insight would be found and extracted from the "mysterious depths" in yourself. Then river to Hughes, the "formless" flow and live dynamics of this fluvial landscape

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symbolises the flow of poetic imagination with no shape nor form, only a fraction (or a fish) to be captured every now and then. Scigaj submits that "*River* celebrates nature's powers to refresh one's perceptions and promote psychological renewal" (p. 136). *River* is also often interpreted as a healing journey following the trauma and darkness of Hughes's earlier works. This is a work of redemption and restoration where water functions as a regenerative medium, depicted as both wound and cure in Hughes's *River* poem "Go Fishing": As if creation were a wound / As if this flow were all plasm healing. (Hughes, 2012, p. 653) By surrendering to water, the poetic voice undergoes psychic cleansing, aligning with Jung's view that individuation requires the integration of shadow elements.

The salmon is central to *River*, symbolizing life force, epic struggle, sacrifice, and the stark realities of nature. Hughes was deeply fascinated by their lifecycle, particularly their arduous migration to spawn and subsequent death. The healing vision of *River* is tempered by recognition of mortality. In "October Salmon," the battered, dying salmon embodies sacrifice and persistence: "death-patched" yet possessing:

> The epic poise
>
> That holds him so steady in his wounds, so loyal to his doom, 60
>
> so patient
>
> In the machinery of heaven (Hughes, 2012, p. 679)

Hadley read this as both elegy and ecological parable (Hadley, 2008). In Jungian terms, confronting the salmon's mortality mirrors the final stage of individuation: the acceptance of death and integration of the shadow. Hughes's tone here reflects

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reverence and empathy, affirming the salmon's struggle as part of a larger cosmic order ("In the machinery of heaven"). As Skea (1994) notes, this moment conveys both "wonder and love," initiating divine order in nature. Individuation thus entails not only illumination but also the acceptance of mortality as integral to the natural cycle of life. The celebrated poem "That Morning" dramatizes this healing epiphany. The protagonists encounter salmon in a golden dawn, experiencing themselves as "alive in the river of light/among the creatures of light" (Hughes, 2012, p. 664). Skea (1994) interprets this as a supreme religious moment in which selfhood and materialism are relinquished. The image resonates with Jung's concept of the Self, a unifying archetype beyond consciousness, attained through encounters with numinous experience.

*River* achieves a synthesis of Jungian inner exploration and ecological vision. Individuation unfolds through immersion in the river's rhythms; healing the psyche is inseparable from healing human–nature relations. Hughes balances close observation of wildlife with mythic archetypes, producing a holistic vision of renewal. As Troupes (2019) argues, the collection's moments of transcendence reinforce ecological commitment, not escapism. In *River*, transcendence is embodied in the mystical "river of light" in "That Morning" that occurs not beyond the world but in its waters, where salmon, human and cosmos are connected.

*Remains of Elmet* and *River* represent Hughes's turn from mythic disintegration to ecological re-rooting. By attending to ancestral ruins and the flowing river, Hughes locates healing in immersion: grief is acknowledged, death accepted, and the unconscious engaged through natural cycles. From a Jungian perspective, these works

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enact the anima's healing function, reconnecting the psyche to unconscious flow and archetypal renewal. They in a way also offer consolation to Hughes himself, preparing him for the final stage of the integration of grief and memory in *Birthday Letters* (1998) and *Howls & Whispers* (1998).

## 4. *Birthday Letters* and *Howls & Whispers*: Reconciliation

By the late 1990s, Ted Hughes's poetry undergoes a profound shift in tone. Whereas his early and mid-career works confront archetypal violence through animals, myths and landscape, his later poetry turns inward to memory, grief and personal history with care and acceptance. In *Birthday Letters* (1998) and *Howls & Whispers* (1998), Hughes does not abandon darkness; he embraces it patiently, attentively and often tenderly, until its energy becomes presentable as reflections. In Jungian terms, this phase marks the culmination of individuation—the integration of opposites.

### 4.1 *Birthday Letters*: Integrating Memory and Grief

*Birthday Letters* (1998) broke Hughes's public silence about his life with Sylvia Plath and it revisits his life with Sylvia Plath through a series of confessional lyrics, transforming trauma into symbolic narrative. This is a poignant collection of eighty-eight poems reflecting on his turbulent relationship with Plath and the psychological aftermath of her death. Published thirty years after Plath's 1963 suicide, *Birthday Letters* can be read as Hughes's late-life act of catharsis and integration. As Panecka observes, Hughes waited for decades until he had "enough distance and control over his pain and his sense of loss" before confronting Plath's ghost in poetry (2018, p. 10). By blending personal memory with archetypal imagery, *Birthday Letters* becomes a

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literary case study in Jungian self-realization—a poetic enactment of individuation through suffering and reconciliation.

The collection follows a roughly chronological arc, from his first encounter with Plath to the aftermath of her death, thus tracing psychic descent, confrontation, and tentative integration. Hughes himself admitted that the poems began as attempts "to evoke Plath's presence… and to feel her there listening" rather than as public works of art (Hadley, 2008, p. 138). Panecka emphasizes that for Hughes, myth supplied the necessary language to express psychic states that were otherwise "inexpressible" (2018, p. 11). *Birthday Letters* is composed of autobiographical episodes extracted through mythic imagery. This synthesis mirrors Jung's claim that individuation requires reconciling personal history with transpersonal archetypes. As Panecka puts it, Hughes's late poetry enacts a "transformation mystery" in which confrontation with psychic pain becomes a step toward integration (p. 11).

The *Birthday* collection dramatizes Hughes's encounter with both Plath's and his own shadow. In "The Minotaur," for instance, Hughes recalls Plath's furious smashing of furniture, casting her rage through the Labyrinth in the myth of Theseus and the Minotaur. In a famous Greek myth, the hero Theseus embarks on the journey to Crete to slay the monstrous, half-man, half-bull creature known as the Minotaur imprisoned in the complex Labyrinth. It is noted that how Hughes identifies Otto Plath (Sylvia's father) with King Minos and Sylvia with the Minotaur, a monster born of neglect and secrecy (Moulin, 2005, p. 2). This mythic reframing aligns with Jung's observation that shadow material often appears in dreams and myths as autonomous

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figures to be confronted (Jung, 1977, p. 284). Hughes describes Plath's tendencies of sullenness and eventual suicide as manifestations of an inherited "fate" linked to her father (Moulin, 2005, p. 2). From a Jungian perspective, Hughes's mythologizing of the scenario reflects his attempt to externalize and grapple with overwhelming psychic darkness. Sylvia's complicated relationship with her father is further illustrated in "The Shot," where Hughes portrays her as a bullet fired by her father's death, her real target always the paternal ghost. By finally naming and narrating these forces, Hughes moves toward integrating the shadow rather than remaining silently possessed by it.

Jung's theory of the anima and animus, the inner contrasexual archetypes, provides another frame for Hughes's portrayal of Plath. At their wedding, Plath appears in Hughes's poem "A Pink Wool Knitted Dress" as "ocean depth brimming with God," a line that reveals her role as an archetypal anima-figure: a muse, a goddess, and a spiritual mediator. Plath, conversely, was haunted by her animus, most powerfully represented by her father. Hughes suggests that Otto Plath's image dominated Sylvia's psyche, becoming a destructive internal presence that drives her both to poetic achievement and to despair (Moulin, 2005, p. 1). In Jungian terms, this represents animus possession, when the inner masculine overwhelms the ego of the woman. By voicing these patterns in *Birthday Letters*, Hughes performs the crucial Jungian step of seeing through the projection. In the final poem, "Red," Hughes corrects his earlier misperception of Plath's essence, acknowledging her vulnerable "blue" behind the fiery "red." This belated recognition signals a partial reconciliation of anima and animus images, a symbolic *coniunctio*—the integration of conscious and unconscious aspects

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of the psyche.

Hughes also emerges in this book as a wounded healer. Shattered by Plath's suicide, he spent decades in silence before transforming his wound into testimony. In the poem "Epiphany" is another example: Hughes recalls ignoring a wounded fox-cub offered for sale in London, later interpreting it as a missed omen for his tragic marriage. Panecka interprets the fox-cub as a symbolic messenger from the unconscious, which Hughes failed to recognize at the time but reclaims in retrospect (2018, p. 53). By illustrating the scene, Hughes integrates a once-isolated fragment of psychic experience into a healing journey of revisiting his mental wounds so to bear them consciously.

Through the lens of Jungian psychology, *Birthday Letters* itself can be seen as Hughes's ritual of individuation. The poems confront shadow projections, wrestle with anima and animus images, and ultimately enact the archetype of the wounded healer. While the collection does not erase tragedy, it transforms trauma into meaning, allowing Hughes to achieve a measure of psychic integration.

### 4.2 *Howls & Whispers:* A Private Finale

Hughes's final published collection during his lifetime, *Howls & Whispers* (1998), exists in the shadow of *Birthday Letters*. Published in only 110 copies in collaboration with the artist Leonard Baskin, which carries the air of secrecy and marginality (Gifford, 2011, p. 80). While *Birthday Letters* offered Hughes's most public account of his relationship with Sylvia Plath, *Howls & Whispers* represents its private counterpart, releasing poems that Hughes considered too intimate or raw for wider circulation. The collection thus takes its place more as a psychological document:

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a final confrontation with the shadow elements of a life-long struggle.

*Howls & Whispers* can be read as the poet's last attempt at individuation—an effort to achieve some measure of psychic wholeness through confronting grief, guilt, and the inexorable presence of Plath as both muse and haunting figure. Yet the poems also testify to the impossibility of full integration. Rather than redemption, this finale offers a form of tragic consciousness, an acknowledgment of limits that resonates with Jung's assertion that individuation often proceeds through suffering and confrontation rather than resolution (Jung, 2015, p. 36). The title itself dramatizes this polarity: "howls" evoke eruptions of unconscious pain and trauma, while "whispers" suggest the ego's quiet and tentative attempts to narrate or contain them. This wording corresponds to Jung's model of individuation, where integration requires the ego to acknowledge the disruptive energies of the unconscious without being overwhelmed by them.

In Jungian psychology, the anima represents the inner feminine in the male psyche, a mediating figure that often emerges in projections onto actual women (Jung, 1951/2015, p. 24). For Hughes, Plath consistently functioned as anima figure—both muse and destructive presence. In *Howls & Whispers*, however, the anima appears fractured and wounded. The title poem, "Howls & Whispers," refuses to lay blame directly at Plath's feet. Instead, it depicts her as a victim of external forces—that from mother, friends, doctors—who "poured" words into her ears while she "argued with death" (Hughes, 2012, p. 1179). The rhetorical questions dramatize Hughes's bafflement and helplessness, suggesting the anima as a silenced figure, cut off from authentic dialogue. This echoes Jung's warning that the anima, when wounded or

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distorted, becomes destructive, leading to psychic disorientation (Jung, 1951/2015, p. 34). Hughes's shifting portrayal of Plath here may be read as an attempt to reconfigure the anima image, to rescue it from earlier demonization and to acknowledge its vulnerability. Yet the unresolved tone also underlines the incompleteness of that integration.

The finale culminates in "The Offers," its longest poem and, which is described by Middlebrook as the "definitive poem" of Hughes's marriage (2003, p. 81). Of 118 lines, it is not only the longest poem in the sequence but also the most sustained attempt by Hughes to confront the psychic legacy of his life with Sylvia Plath, while engaging himself in an imaginary conversation with the "ghost" of his wife. Rather than closing the narrative arc of *Birthday Letters*, "The Offers" dramatizes what Jung would call the confrontation with the unconscious, an encounter that resists resolution but compels transformation. The expressions in this poem are hesitant and pondering in tone, notably via Hughes's repetitive use of "seemed" while facing what is left from his memory and current vision of Plath:

"You **seemed** older – death had aged you a little."

"But you **seemed** not to know the part you were playing"

"You **seemed** to have no idea you were yourself.

…Yet you were

So much yourself my brain's hemispheres

**Seemed** to have twisted slightly out of phase"

"It **seemed** you had finessed your return to the living"

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(Hughes, 2012, pp. 1181-1183)

This mentality embodies what Jung (1951/2015, p. 186) theorized as the collapse of the ego's certainties when faced with unconscious contents. From a Jungian perspective, such uncertainty is the hallmark of a psyche undergoing individuation, where the ego must open to accommodate shadow elements. In Hughes's case, these shadow elements include guilt, complicity and the haunting presence of Plath's death. Unlike the mythic analogies of *Birthday Letters*, which often frame Plath within archetypal narratives, *Howls & Whispers* strips away protective mediations. The raw exposure of "The Offers" itself is therapeutic, embodying the psychic descent necessary for individuation. Hughes does not press for a narrative closure, but enacts the paradoxical truth of healing: integration requires not finality but the ongoing acceptance of psychic complexity. Thus, "The Offers" can be read as Hughes's concluded recognition that the psyche's wounds can never be fully healed but remain as entrances to dialogues with the unconscious. This void of closure is not a failure but an affirmation to Jung's insight that individuation is a lifelong process. The poem's definitive quality lies precisely in its ambivalence: it is not the end of a story but the enactment of an ongoing confrontation with shadow, grief and memory.

**Conclusion**

This study has treated Ted Hughes's poetic career as a sustained enactment of psychic and ecological healing, illuminated through the lens of Jung's analytical psychology. The core argument of this paper is that Hughes's healing poetics cannot be reduced to a fascination with violence or myth, as some critics have suggested (Sagar,

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1978; Kendall, 2009). Rather, his imaginative engagement with archetypes, myths, and natural landscapes demonstrates what Jung described as individuation: the lifelong task of integrating shadow, anima/animus, and the Self. Hughes's poetry gives form to psychic ordeal—shadow recognition, descent into chaos, confrontation with trauma—and channels these destructive energies into creative and symbolic expression. Such transformation is the essence of what Jung regards as the therapeutic function of art: a symbolic dialogue between the conscious and the unconscious. Beginning with the confrontation of shadow energies in *The Hawk in the Rain* and *Lupercal*, moving through the alchemical disintegration of *Crow* and *Cave Birds*, and reaching toward spiritual renewal in *Remains of Elmet* and *River*, Hughes's oeuvre embodies a long and difficult individuation process. Finally, Hughes's late works reveal the paradox of healing. In *Birthday Letters*, he confronts the ghosts of Sylvia Plath with mythic and psychological honesty, while in *Howls & Whispers*, particularly "The Offers," he accepts the impossibility of a final resolution. As Brain (2001) and Middlebrook (2003) observe, this improbability of closure is itself therapeutic, aligning with Jung's insistence that individuation can never be completed and it is a lifelong dialogue with the unconscious. Hughes's poetics thus advocates not triumph over trauma but the ongoing courage to engage it meaningfully. To conclude, Hughes emerges as a poet-shaman whose works embody both psychic individuation and ecological renewal. His poetry stages archetypal encounters with shadow and death, yet transforms them into symbolic pathways toward wholeness. In the end, his oeuvre affirms the power of poetry to mediate between destruction and renewal, psyche and nature, memory and

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reconciliation, an enduring contribution to the human's pursuit of meaning and balance in modern times.

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