

“MYTHIC SUBSTANCE” OF T. HUGHES’ DRAMA**Antonina A. Gurianova**

National Research University Higher School of Economics (Nizhny Novgorod, Russia)

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2477-9253>

Abstract. The article shows the essential role of drama in the work of the 20th century greatest English poet Ted Hughes. Being mainly a myth-maker and a language experimenter, Hughes throughout his life turned to drama as a genre capable of showing the work of a myth, which the poet found in almost any classical text and implicitly embedded in his own poetry collections. The article shows how, by translating and adapting the texts of ancient tragedies for the modern English stage, Hughes focused on the polyphony of myth, the multiplicity of its interpretation, pagan symbolism, and not on the classical conventions of form and language. The author also describes in detail the meaning and structure of Hughes’ literary essay “Shakespeare and the Goddess of Complete Being” (1992), in which Hughes’ Shakespeare appears as a poet-prophet who “solved” the ancient mythical code. As for Hughes’ own works related to theatrical activities and drama, the author of the article analyzes the experimental play “Orghast”, written and directed by Hughes together with the English director Peter Brook. The author describes how the plots of various world myths intertwine and function in the play “Orghast”. The last part of the article examines how Hughes implements the dramatic principle in his own poetry collections, thereby giving them polyphony and new semantics. The article also touches on the specifics of dramatic monologues, a special poetic form, where the Hughes myth comes to life, acquires a special sound and expression in the voice of the mythical characters.

Keywords: drama; dramatism; theatre experiments; drama adaptation; mythic narrative; monomyth; persona poetry; dramatic monologue; poetry of masks

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«МИФИЧЕСКАЯ СУБСТАНЦИЯ» ДРАМЫ Т. ХЬЮЗА**Гурьянова А. А.**

Национальный исследовательский университет «Высшая школа экономики»

(Нижний Новгород, Россия)

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2477-9253>

Аннотация. В статье показана роль драмы в творчестве величайшего английского поэта XX века Теда Хьюза. Будучи главным образом мифотворцем и поэтом-экспериментатором, Хьюз на протяжении всей жизни обращался к драме как жанру, способному показать действие мифа, обнаруживаемого практически в любом классическом тексте и имплицитно присутствующего в его собственных поэтических сборниках. Переводя и адаптируя тексты древних трагедий для современной английской сцены, Хьюз уделял особенное внимание не классическим условностям формы и языка, а полифонии мифа, многообразию его интерпретаций, языковой символической. Анализируя понимание Хьюзом мифа, автор статьи упоминает литературное эссе «Шекспир и Богиня Полноты Бытия» (1992), в котором великий английский драматург представлен как поэт-пророк, «разгадавший» древний мифический код, называемый Хьюзом «трагическим уравнением», структурно и семантически во многом совпадающим с авторским мифом самого поэта. В статье также анализируется созданная Хьюзом совместно с английским режиссером П. Бруком экспериментальная пьеса «Оргаст», в которой переплетаются и функционируют сюжеты различных мировых мифов. В последней части исследования рассматривается, как Хьюз реализует драматургические принципы в своих собственных поэтических сборниках, придавая им тем самым полифоничность и усложняя их семантику. Затрагивается автором статьи и специфика драматических монологов, где аспекты авторского мифа приобретают особую экспрессию через голоса персонажей-масок.

Ключевые слова: драма; драматизм; театральные эксперименты; драматическая адаптация; мифический нарратив; мономиф; поэзия персонажа; драматический монолог; поэзия масок

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Introduction

Ted Hughes (1930–1998) was a poet with a very special perception and understanding of “myth”, whose worldview was formed under the influence of the English mythological school, ethnography, psychoanalysis, folklore, oriental and occult practices [Sagar 2000]. Hughes’ mythological theory, based on the ideas of R. Graves, C. G. Jung, T. S. Eliot assumes the perception of “mythical imagination” as a prerequisite for poetry, and myth as a “mental map” that organizes reali-

ty. According to Hughes, modern Western civilization is dominated by “false myths”: Christian and industrial, similar in their fanatical denial of Nature [Sagar 2005]. The only place where the voice of antiquity breaks through, albeit veiled and barely recognizable, is poetry. The poet’s most important role is to restore the broken connection between man and nature on the basis of a new mythology about inner travel and the acquisition of knowledge about oneself. The closest myths for Hughes turned out to be the myth of the journey of the hero created by Joseph Campbell and

the myth of the White Goddess by James George Frazer [Sagar 2005]. It is these mythical structures that he considered to be among the most important in the world literature and puts at the basis of his own author's mythical narrative. Hughes emphasized that on a symbolic level, the main character of his poetry is a man of Western civilization (Everyman), who grew up on the basis of Socratic thought and humanism of the Enlightenment [Sagar 2000]. The plot function inherent in the mythopoeic character is a crime against a female being, whose spiritual powers are inaccessible to the anthropocentric worldview. As punishment, the character goes through a series of trials, getting out of the dark zone of his crimes and guilt into the world of wisdom, heals from internal contradictions and discovers deep humanity in himself [Sagar 2000].

Hughes saw this structure most clearly in dramatic works, which he, like many poets and writers of the twentieth century, turned to throughout his life. Being a myth-making poet and a linguistic experimenter the poet specifically perceived drama as a space in which one can see the functioning of myth in a new way. Hughes interacted with the works of world drama in various ways. Firstly, he collaborated with directors (Peter Brooke, Tim Supple, Jonathan Kent), acting as a translator of classical works and a screenwriter. T. Hughes' most striking screenplays were the translations and adaptations of Seneca's "Oedipus" for Peter Brook (1968), "Spring Awakening" (1995), "Blood Wedding" by G. G. Lorca (1996), "Phèdre" (1998), "Alcestis" (1999) and "The Oresteia" (1999). The vast majority of original works are associated with ancient myths. As for "Blood Wedding," the connection to mythology in Hughes' adaptation will be felt on a more subtle level. Secondly, the poet outlined his reflections on the deep functioning of myth in classical drama in a five-hundred-page critical essay "Shakespeare and the Goddess of Complete being" (1992). Also, experimenting with ancient mythological plots, combining them, T. Hughes created completely new stage masterpieces. The author's myth itself, implicitly present in most of the poet's collections and widely discussed by researchers, since the 1960s, has almost always been based on a dramatic confrontation between the hero and the goddess. Hughes describes the same ancient mythological structure in the already mentioned essay on Shakespeare. Finally, many of Hughes's individual poems are written in the form of a dramatic monologue, further distancing the character from the author and placing him in the space of theatricality.

The objectives of this article include describing as fully as possible all aspects of Hughes' work related to drama and theater, analyzing how Hughes' perception of myth functioned through theatrical experiments, and also understanding what tasks Ted Hughes solved through drama in his own poetic discourse.

Shakespeare's Mythical Equation

According to Hughes, Shakespeare was a poet-prophet whose work has always been an interpretation of ancient myths. Leveraging his Cambridge education, extensive studies of world mythologies, and expertise in psychoanalysis, the poet authored a com-

prehensive 500-page volume titled "Shakespeare and the Goddess of Complete Being" (1992). In this work, he posited that Shakespeare's entire corpus of plays was grounded in ancient myths centered around the Mother Goddess archetype. Generally the main plot of the plays was inevitably reduced to replacing the main female deity by the male god (which historically marks the transition from matriarchal to patriarchal power, as well as the separation of man from nature) [Hughes 1992]. This structure resembled the myth of eternal revenge, where the Mother Goddess appears in her dark form. However, both revenge and the subsequent death of the offender had a healing value, and the reborn God again would become beloved of the Goddess. So, the central concept of Hughes' Shakespearean studies was this idea of a cross-cutting plot, in his terminology, a "tragic equation". The usurpation of power by the Goddess is equated with the death of the God and his subsequent rebirth. Originally embodied in the early poems "Venus and Adonis" and "Lucretia", the equation transforms all of Shakespeare's tragic heroes into Adonis rejecting the Goddess. The poem "Venus and Adonis" sets the main tone for the tragic metamorphoses of the heroes of Shakespeare's plays, because the images of Adonis, Venus, Boar, Flower somehow appear in different of his plays. The Hughes-Shakespeare's "tragic equation" is complicated by the fact that each member of the equation has a multipart structure. So, in myths, the Goddess usually has three alternating faces: the Mother, the Sacred Bride and the Dark Goddess, and in Hughes' Shakespearean studies Venus, in love with Adonis, is the Sacred Bride, Lady Macbeth is the embodiment of the Dark Goddess. The problem of "double vision", or the problem of Shakespeare's hero discovering the reverse side of reality, is also connected with the multifaceted, tragic duality of the Goddess. For example, the plays of Shakespeare, where the madness of the characters is due to their inability to perceive the true essence of the beloved Goddess, are filled with tragic duality: thus, Hamlet, looking at Ophelia, sees his mother in bed with his uncle; Lear, looking at Cordelia, sees Regan and Goneril; Othello, looking at Desdemona, sees Cassio's mistress.

This fantasy of Hughes about Shakespeare, which was initially presented as scholarly, but now does not stand up to criticism, is very important for the research of Hughes's work, in which the idea of a cross-cutting plot filled with mythologems and polysemantic symbols became dominant. And the drama inherited from Shakespeare and individually comprehended through the prism of myth also accompanies the poet's creative activity in various fields.

The "mythical substance" of ancient Latin tragedies

Collaboration with Peter Brooke, an English theater director, made a particularly powerful influence on Hughes as a playwright. Brooke believed that drama could exist beyond culture and language. The beginning of their collaboration began in 1967, when Brooke conceived the idea of staging a Seneca's version of "Oedipus" and turned to Hughes for screenwriting help.

The story of Oedipus is not only an ancient play but also a fundamental myth of the 20th century with its catastrophes and war. It occupies an important place in educational ideas about humanism, self-knowledge and rationality [Fleming 2013]. So, it was quite natural to return to the work of Seneca and his “radically evil” world (B. Arkins). The hero of this modern myth is frightened, irrational and tragically tormented by a fate that he simultaneously recognizes and is unable to avoid, which exactly corresponded to the Hughes’ description of a modern man.

While working on the translation, the poet deliberately tried to avoid those aspects of the play that were inherent in the Seneca’s rhetorical style. Hughes knew a little Latin and worked with the play through intermediary translation of D. Turner [Scigaj 1992: 14], noting that he was “perfecting his Latin with the help of a Victorian cheat sheet” [Hughes 2007]. So, he brought the Latin sound closer to English, using the means of his language and tradition and created an experimental text consisting of words and nonverbal vocalization, plot-nonlinear and filled with episodes about the suffering of the main characters and their insights. This way, as Hughes said, he tried to dramatize the “crude and barbaric” [Hughes 1998] center of the tragedy. Changes of the original text are especially noticeable in the radical reduction of choral odes which were turned into “tribal shouts”. Hughes also saw a radical difference between the majestic heroes of Sophocles’ drama and the characters of Seneca, who “are Greeks only conditionally: by their nature they are more primitive than the aborigines. These are spider-men crawling on hot rocks.” [Hughes 1998: 7–8].

The main thing that attracted Hughes in Seneca was the “mythical substance” [Fleming 2013], consisting in the relationships between psychologically detailed characters of the drama, as well as in the description of ancient rituals (just they were used “only as a frame to depict the details of life in the imperial palace with its darkness, dangers and intrigues” [Scott-Kilvert 1968: 502]).

For Hughes, the myth-maker, it was important, as in the case of Shakespeare’s plays, to show the eternal confrontation between male and female, human and divine, nature and civilization. To this end, Hughes expands the role of Jocasta, who in Hughes’ version appears as a more determined and thoughtful character, in stark contrast to the frightened, almost cowering Oedipus. In one of the dialogues with Oedipus, she, unlike her short speech in the original, utters an excerpt of 70 lines full of determination and resignation to fate:

When I was carrying my sons
I carried them for death, I carried them for the throne
I carried them for the sake of the last catastrophe,
when I carried my first son, did I know what was waiting for me,
did I know what bloody threads were woven together, what bloody traces
They stay on my body.
[Hughes 1998: 330]

In this passage, special emphasis is placed on the mother’s body with its “blood ties” and “roots”, as well as on its creative power:

blood from the roots of my hair,
blood that was before the beginning of time,
it flowed into the knot of his insides,
into the knot of his muscles,
into the knot of his brain
[Hughes 1998: 331]

Researchers note that “Jocasta is Mother Nature, love; Oedipus is intelligence, reason, a rigid moral law.” [Fleming 2013]. It is significant that Jocasta’s description of herself is very similar to Oedipus’ speech when he describes his encounter with the Sphinx. The fact may also speak to the painful separation of the rational and sensual in the world of the Seneca’s play.

Hughes’ Oedipus initially feels guilty, as if in front of the whole universe. At the end of the play, he is harshly tormented by fate but, according to Hirschberg, “resigns himself to the role of a scapegoat” [Hirschberg 1981: 148]. The purifying function of tragedy in Hughes’ version is not in the traditional catharsis and affirmation of the tragic order in the universe, not in a decisive challenge to the fate of the protagonist, but in stoic acceptance of his guilt and humility, rejection of ego.

It is worth noting that Hughes’ interest in the figure of Oedipus resulted not only in an arrangement of the Seneca’s play but also in individual poems from “The Crow” poetry collection, which was written around the same time when Hughes was reworking the play. In a sense, these poems enter into a direct dialogue with Seneca’s Oedipus.

When National conducted a poll on the most significant play of the century, Young Vic director Tim Supple chose an adaptation of Hughes’ Oedipus. Supple said that “Hughes could write about the myth without embarrassment. He believed in the sacred. He found the primitive and archetypal in the modern sense” [Supple].

It was only in the 1990-s that Hughes returned to the theater with new versions of ancient and classical plays “Spring Awakening” by Wedekind, “The Bloody Wedding” by Lorca, “Phaedra” by Racine, “Alcestis”, “Oresteia” trilogy by Aeschylus. And again, the dramatic core of the classic plays consists of binary oppositions of male and female, duty and feeling, which fits into Hughes’ large-scale mythopoetic project. For example, in the center of Hughes’ “Phaedra”¹, as in the original, is the incestuous lust of an obsessed queen and step-mother, whose unrequited passion leads to the unjust accusation and bloody death of Hippolytus, her husband’s son. In Hughes’s reworked play, Phaedra appears even more ferocious and exhausted, Hippolytus even more stubborn and rebellious. Hughes also introduces motifs and symbols close to his own poetics into the play – hunting, hunger, eating food, poisons,

¹ Hughes’ “Phaedra” is an adaptation of Jean Racine’s masterpiece (1677), which itself is a version of Euripides’ Hippolytus (428 BC), written under the strong influence of Seneca’s Phaedra.

obsessions, animals, labyrinths and monsters. If in Phaedra Hughes recognized a certain destructive aspect of the Goddess, then the heroine of the drama “Alcestis” resembles the characters of Shakespeare’s later plays, sacrificing themselves and helping the inexperienced hero to understand life and himself more deeply. Hughes’ version is again full of innovations and additions. He attaches great importance to satirical rituals, which are always associated with the idea of resurrection, which is so important in this play. As in Oedipus, Hughes highlights the concepts of Necessity (or fate) and the gross sensual world of mythical space. Interestingly, the same confrontation underlies the poems from “Birthday Letters” (1998), which have a similar tone and similar themes. The fact that this play was not written by order of a theater company, but rather as an expression of the author’s own artistic needs, may explain the great freedom with which he handled the original Greek, including colloquial and anachronistic language, and an intriguing level of intertextuality linking it not only with ancient myths, but also with other languages. First of all, to Hughes’ own poetry.

Myth and linguistic experiments in drama

The most striking product of Hughes and Brooke’s collaboration was the experimental play “Orgast”, first staged at the Shiraz-Persepolis Festival on the ruins of the Palace of the Gods (Iran) in 1970. The plot of the play included not only the story set out in “Prometheus Chained”, but also elements from Seneca’s “The Madness of Hercules”, “Life is a Dream” by Calderon, the Armenian drama “In Chains”, Manichaean myths and Zoroastrian parables. In addition, Hughes brought elements of his author’s mythology to the plot, the closest embodiment of which was “The Crow”, published two years earlier¹. Before working with Brooke, Hughes translated many classic European plays, and deeply studied the mechanisms of Shakespearean drama, which the poet also practiced with theater actors in improvisations on various topics.

The play was performed by actors from different countries and theatrical traditions (French, British, Americans, actors of the Japanese Noh theater, Africans, Persians). For this international acting troupe, Hughes developed a special language made up of invented words, glossolalia and the ancient Zoroastrian language of “the Avesta”, which corresponded to P. Brooke’s idea of a primitive dramatic language inseparable from gesture. The playwrights did not have the task of providing the public with a ready-made system of signs that the audience could decipher using their intellectual abilities. The sounds of this language themselves were supposed to become intuitively correlated with certain physical or emotional states of the characters. Hughes called this language Orgast: Orga meant “existence”, ghastr – “spirit of life” and “flame”, Orghast – “sun”. Strangely enough, the sound of the invented words and their forms strongly resembled what Hughes himself called the “northern Anglo-

Saxon dialect”, which the author often used in his own poems. Here is an example of phrases from this language translated into English:

BULLORGA OMBOLOM FROR / SHARSAYA
NULBULDA BRARG

(Darkness opens its womb / I hear chaos roar)

IN OMBOLOM BULLORGA

(In the womb of darkness)

FREEASTAV OMBOLOM / NILD US GLITTA-
LUGH

(freeze her womb / rivets like stars)

ASTA BEORBITTA / CLID OSTA BULLORGA

(icy chains / lock up the mouth of darkness)

IN OMBOLOM KHERN FIGYA GRUORD

(In her womb I make words iron) [Smith 1973].

The plot scheme of “Orgast” echoes the “dramatic equation” that Hughes found in Shakespeare’s plays. This is a story about a crime committed by a strong but suffering individual whose guilt and splitting consciousness make his life a torture. It is also a story of punishment and redemption. The subject of the crime is Prometheus, the punishment, as in the classic plot, comes from a vulture. The image of the vulture is subsequently transformed into a female image.

“Orgast” was supposed to be the most labyrinthine work since “Ulysses”, all the episodes had to be non-linearly correlated with each other. According to the authors, the action of the play was supposed to take place in the body and consciousness of Prometheus, chained to a rock. That’s why various plot elements and characters have layered semantics. For example, “Orgast” is a natural light that is obscured from the hero by birds, but it is also the inner light of the main character’s soul. Moa is an invariant of the White Goddess. The vulture for Prometheus “is the jailer, the earth, his own body, his connection with animal life on the one hand, and with the life of the spirit on the other, a fundamental crime that he refuses to admit and which is slowly driving him crazy. For other characters, vulture can mean mystical conflict, suffering, bodily addictions, split ego, hope for healing” [Smith 1973].

This play has never been published as a text. In order to transfer the plot from the “Persian stage to the English page” [Hughes 2007], Hughes created a poetry collection, which in the sequence of poems was supposed to convey the idea of the play. The collection was called “Prometheus on his Crag” (1973).

The quintessence of drama in poetry

All the poems in “Prometheus on his Crag” are quite short, they consist of 11, 14 or 17 lines. The first line is always repeated, and the last three add up to a tercina. Many of them are inner monologues or visions and dreams in which the main character tries to make sense of his situation, actions, doubts and guesses that cannot be expressed in words. K. Sagar assures that this collection is the culmination of a creative attempt that Hughes has been pursuing for a long time: the image of liberation, overcoming stagnation through the search and acquisition of truth expressed through the Logos [Sagar 2000]. In fact, Hughes’ character is constantly reflecting on this very inability to express an image in words. Prometheus

¹ Speaking about “Orgast” Hughes once said “my Prometheus has a black brother.”

observes a vulture whose feathers are compared to capital letters, these letters speak of a new beginning of the painful struggle for understanding. Only in one of the last poems one can see a kind of verbalization, a result of the obstetric effort that Prometheus works on himself incessantly asking himself, almost socratically, questions about his own essence. And again the main character understands that the power of man lies in the awareness of his difference from nature, as well as his divine essence.

“Alchemical cave drama”

“Cave Birds” is another poetry collection by Hughes, which is important for this study because of its unusual subgenre / subtitle (“alchemical cave drama”) and the resulting relationships between the poems in the collection.

This book was the result of a collaboration between T. Hughes and the American graphic artist L. Baskin (1922–2000), who illustrated some of Hughes’ previous poetry (“The Crow”, “Wolf watching”, “Remains of Elmet”, etc.).

In 1974, Baskin created twelve drawings depicting bizarre birds, then Hughes arranged the images in a certain sequence and wrote poems connected to the plot, where a bird-like character is accused of a crime against a certain female being.

Hughes’s fantastic birds became characters in a “court drama”: the accused, the judge, the prosecutor, the jury, the lawyer, and so on. The original sequence of poems looked like this: “The Summoner”, “The Advocate”, “The Interrogator”, “The Judge”, “The Plaintiff”, “The Executioner”, “The Accused”, “The Risen” and “Finale”. Baskin later created several more images, in poems to which Hughes described the character’s reflection on the experience of being at various stages of the trial. Hughes himself noted that, when creating poems for the second batch of drawings, he transferred the action of the “drama” to “the underworld, where, as in the Bardo of Todol, the soul is judged, deciding its fate, but then it (the soul) is finally reborn” [Hughes 2007: 633].

The title of the collection has a story of changes. In a letter to T. Gifford and N. Roberts, he says: “At first I titled the collection ‘The Death Of Socrates and his Resurrection in Egypt’, thereby expressing criticism of Socratic abstractions and their influence on humanity through Christianity. From this point of view, the rebirth of Socrates in Egypt would mean his ‘correction’ through immersion in the religious and magical element of the Eastern Mediterranean, accompanied by his appearance in the image of Horus, the beloved son and spouse of the Goddess. I have abandoned this subtitle. It is better not to limit poetry to historical limits, scholastic baggage and petty formal guidelines” [Hughes 2007: 395].

The original title indicates that the semantic canvas of the collection includes for the author such semantic elements as “socratism”, “Egypt”, “resurrection”, which with the change of title have gone into the subtext. The final title complex highlights other concepts: “cave”, “birds”, “alchemy”, “drama”. All of them (both accentuated by the final version of the title and

stated in the working version) carry a high semantic concentration and narrative potential.

The author’s genre definition of the poetry collection (“alchemical cave drama”) requires not only analysis from a formal and substantive point of view, but also an appeal to Hughes’ theatrical activities. Despite the fact that there are characters in the book, each of which has its own role, as well as elements of the plot development (the beginning (the death of the hero), the development of the action (the passage of a series of posthumous ordeals), the culmination (reconciliation of all contradictions, crystallization of the spirit and its release), the denouement (new materialization), nevertheless, the concept of the book is far from the traditional idea of drama as a literary genre. The drama that the reader encounters in “Cave Birds” is rather of an internal, ideological nature: here, as in previous collections, Hughes describes the tragedy of a modern man whose intuitive, sensual and creative beginnings are suppressed by the power of reason and pride. The inner discord of a person is depicted through personifications and metaphors, often having a paradoxical or emphatically physiological brutal character. The position of the hero himself, undergoing trials and transformation after death, is also dramatic. The mental anguish, which becomes an individual manifestation of this common tragedy, is depicted already in the first poem: the arrogant speech of the main character breaks off in mid-sentence, and instead of rational words he is able to emit only a primitive scream, which begins the “inner” judgment on a person by his own mental nature.

T. Gifford notes that “Cave Birds” is “a drama of inner voices, not of action but of reaction, taking place as much between individual poems as within them” [Gifford 1981: 200]. Unlike the almost impersonal author of the early collections (“Hawk in the Rain”, “Lupercalia”), “Cave Birds”, after “Crow” include several modes of author’s presence: in addition to the main lyrical character and the author’s voice, the reader is faced with a wide polyphony of voices interpreting the event of the drama from different points of view. The dynamics of the plot are practically absent, according to Hughes himself, in the collection “each poem had to contain various elements of the whole scene – and instead of striving for a ‘dramatic’ manner,” he “aspired to a static, hieroglyphic manner: as if each poem could be a cartouche of hieroglyphic signs, each of which would include some aspect of the drama of this scene.”

This desire to grasp a certain deep structure in dramatic action, a key effective element, is due to the author’s search in the field of theatrical activity, which I mentioned earlier. The collection “Cave Birds” is also built according to the structure of the Hughes author’s myth, combining the myth of crime, punishment, the overthrow of the Goddess and the myth of the hero’s journey.

The analyzed “drama” is called “alchemical” by the author, and therefore contains not only an external event plan, but also a deep, allegorical one. Like the texts of the alchemists, the collection is deeply hermetic, allegorical, full of vivid metaphors and vague symbols

and suggests ambiguity of interpretation.

The same image can mean several completely different things in his poems at the same time. Just like in alchemical texts, they always talk about both the material and the spiritual process at the same time. The circular movement of the hero (repeatedly returning to the beginning of the process and passing it over again – the famous snake biting its tail – Uroborus, symbolizing the ability of matter to devour itself, thus releasing the spirit, which revives matter, returning to the body again), only one cycle of which is represented in “Cave Birds” – also borrowed from the alchemy scheme. Paradoxical from the point of view of Socratic logic, the idea that in order to gain enlightenment and rebirth, the Self must die, which Hughes sets out on the example of the path of the hero of the collection, is also characteristic of alchemy, as well as for other spiritual teachings consonant with it. He depicts the reunion of man with the true forces of nature in the culminating poem of the cycle as the realization of an alchemical marriage.

Dramatic monologues

Quite a few of Ted Hughes’s poems are labeled by critics as dramatic monologues¹ the genre of which is directly related to the research topic. The peculiarity of Hughes’s dramatic monologues is that they all belong to the role-playing lyrics or poetry of “masks”. The character of the monologue is a “mask” behind which a certain mental state of a person is hidden. Most often, this is one of the states characteristic of the typical hero of Hughes’ mythical narrative – the whole range of emotions from arrogant self-admiration to doubts, self-abasement, rejection of one’s ego and humility.

For example, in “Hawk Roosting,” Hughes, portraying a wild bird, talks about the psychology and cruel nature of a man reveling in power.

From the point of view of morality, the character’s condition should seem painful and difficult, however, in the hawk’s monologue there is no sense of guilt and regret about his killer instinct, instead there is endless pride.

This dramatic monologue really corresponds to the category of theatricality and meets the criteria of a stage monologue, which should be informative, coherent, integral, compositionally ordered, the constitutive components of the monologue should be subordinated to the thematic and semantic center, the monologue should be completed in a semantic sense and unfold in a certain time and space.

The movement of the monologue in the poem is directed from a neutral narrative to a climax. At the beginning of the poem, the hawk calmly reports about his absolute control over the world of birds and animals, because his body and instincts are initially an

accurate killing mechanism.

In the second stanza, the hawk talks about his power over the earth; his advantages are the height of the trees, the “power of the air” and the “sunbeam”. Thus, the hawk symbolizes nature itself in all its nakedness and desire to kill.

The pride of the hawk reaches its apotheosis in the third stanza, when he feels godlike, the goal of creation, having control over the whole world. The character’s action scene is the whole world, all objects around it are just secondary characters and listeners.

Conclusion

Hughes was well aware that poetry that translates myth can change reality. In 1978, the poet said: “Poetry is traditionally considered magical. This use of the word ‘magical’ is technical. Magic is a system of practical techniques spontaneously invented by mankind since ancient times <...>, it is one of the ways to make things happen the way you want them to happen...” [Hughes 1978]. Undoubtedly, Hughes knew that poetry and drama have been closely linked throughout history. Poetry itself was perceived by him as an instrument of dramatic dialogue between God and people. Hughes’ magical work included the transformation of dramatic language. Interacting with classical drama in his translations and in his own texts, Hughes entered into a dialogue with the myth itself, and not the author of the play. Moreover, the characters of the myth were depicted by Hughes psychologically, not historically. Numerous allusions, parallels and references to other myths and works helped the poet to point out the universal character of mental conflict in different plays and to deduce the so-called “tragic equation”, relevant not only for classical and ancient plays, but also for the perception of being by Hughes himself. Archetypes and mythologems were an aid to such universalization, which Hughes, following the ideas of the mythological schools in Cambridge, Graves, Jung and Campbell, considered to be the basis of classical works of world literature. By conducting linguistic experiments, the poet tried to make the language of plays more effective, taking it to extremes and following experimental directors like P. Brooke (according to Brooke, the language in the theater should be reduced to the simplest but most powerful forms – vocalization, screams, moans, intonation melody). In addition, the means of drama influenced the specifics of poetry collections and individual poems, allowed the poet to solve new problems of poetic discourse. For example, in “Cave Birds”, the inclusion of the dramatic genre allowed Hughes to abandon a single theme and create a more complex structure reflecting the multiplicity and cleavage of the plot, dialogicity and different points of view.

Thus, Hughes’ active work and experiments with drama have never been an end in itself and just an art for the poet. Like poetry, drama for Hughes was a by-product of his deep reflections on life and the world, on the healing power of imagination and poetry, as well as a tool for influencing the surrounding reality. For Hughes, the Goddess of Complete Being or the triple goddess was not just a poetic image, but a living

¹ A dramatic monologue is a poem written in the form of a character’s direct speech. Usually, a dramatic monologue reveals the history of the speaker and the peculiarities of his psychological state and character. This poetic form is mainly associated with R. Browning, who added to it the complexity of dramatic situations collected by the reader in detail. However, many Old English poems are dramatic monologues. In the 20th century, the dramatic monologue was used by Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, Robert Frost and others.

nature, which he cared about in all ways – including participating in socio-political projects, drawing the attention of the authorities to environmental problems and calling for a change in negative policies towards them. One of his most famous projects is “Dramas of the Sacred Earth”, which is associated with both artistic and environmental activities of T. Hughes. In his essay published in the “Observer” magazine, poet laureate Hughes cites the remark of Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, that art can become one of the ways to solve environmental problems, that “a new language is needed that penetrates right into the heart and soul” [Hughes 1992]. In response to Prince Philip’s idea, the

Art for Nature Foundation was created. And in 1990, as part of the same project, Hughes became a co-founder of the international drama foundation “Sacred Earth”, which goal was to collect a body of dramatic works on environmental topics written by both amateurs and professionals. In 1993, “Faber & Faber” has released the first drama collection “Sacred Earth”, which included plays from England, Switzerland, Vanuatu, Thailand and New Zealand. Thus, working with drama in the life of T. Hughes was purely practical in nature, and the “mythological substance” brought to the fore by the author was intended to demonstrate the deep work of the human psyche.

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Данные об авторе

Гурьянова Антонина Александровна – аспирант кафедры литературы и межкультурной коммуникации, Национальный исследовательский университет «Высшая школа экономики» (Нижний Новгород, Россия).
Адрес: 603155, Россия, г. Нижний Новгород, ул. Большая Печерская, 25/12.
E-mail: amyasnikova1@hse.ru.

Author's information

Gurianova Antonina Alexandrovna – Postgraduate Student of Department of Literature and Intercultural Communication, National Research University "Higher School of Economics" (Nizhny Novgorod, Russia).

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