

## 摘 要

英国桂冠诗人泰德·休斯身为诗人的第一冲动即是赞颂自然。休斯对自然和谐的直觉感悟深深植根于凯尔特文化传统中，随着对道家思想认识的深入，这种直觉逐渐成长为对自然与人之间和谐关系的不懈求索，并最终演变成对宇宙恒一信念忠贞不渝的坚守。

自柏拉图以来，西方文明对理性的过度崇尚导致人类控制自然欲望的极度膨胀，神圣的大自然逐渐沦为人类谋求利益的工具。与此同时，人类因自我异化不仅被外界大自然惩罚，而且被自我内心放逐。然而人类不仅是自然的一部分，也为自然而生。休斯以其对自然和谐的直觉感悟和诗人的高度责任感，在早期诗集《雨中鹰》和《牧神》中，对理性至上的思维方式提出了质疑，并借此呼吁自然本性的回归，这与道家中重直观感悟、轻理性分析的观点颇为契合。此外，休斯对自然中蕴含的巨大生机与能量给予了由衷的赞美。休斯对生命本体的独特关注体现了庄子“天地与我并生，万物与我为一”的天地胸怀。

在道家思想中，水与山谷因泽被万物、居下不争的品质成为最接近“道”的象征物。“上善若水”的水之道与“谷神不死”的谷神精神在休斯中期诗歌创作中生根发芽。在谷神惠及万物，细水润物无声的无为之道中，休斯创作出诗集《河流》与《爱默特废墟》。历经生命沧桑的休斯在道家思想中逐渐洞悉了生之有、死之无，以及有无相生、无为而无不为的玄妙。因循自然生命的律动，休斯在《河流》与

《爱默特废墟》中展现了自然与人之间的和谐交流。通过“无为而无不为”之道，休斯重获与外在自然的和谐统一，逐步趋近“天人合一”的境界。

休斯认为，诗歌是通往内在心灵的神奇旅程。老子曰：其出弥远，其知弥少，是以圣人不行而知，不见而名，不为而行。在最后一部诗集《生日信札》中，休斯法道家自然之道踏上了一条内省之路，实现了内在心灵的重生。休斯诗歌中流露出的道家思想是毋庸置疑的。本文立足于主题研究，应用比较研究手法，通过追寻休斯自然诗中的道家思想内涵，揭示了休斯实现外在自然世界与内在心灵世界和谐统一的完善之路，从而印证了道家的真谛所在。休斯在生活以及诗歌创作中践行道家思想成就了自我，同时也赢得了世人的尊重。

**关键词：** 泰德·休斯，自然诗，道家，道家思想

## Abstract

The English Poet Laureate Ted Hughes is a poet whose first impulse is to give ode to nature. His instinct for natural harmony which is rooted in Celtic cultural tradition gradually develops into a persistent pursuit for harmony between man and nature with his increasing knowledge of Taoist thought, and finally evolves into a consistent belief in the unity of the universe.

Since Plato, the increased emphasis on rational objectivity in western civilization causes human's swamping desire over nature. The divine nature gradually becomes a heap of raw materials for human profit. Meanwhile, Human beings' self-alienation from nature has resulted in the exile of man from both the outer natural world and the inner spiritual world. However, human beings are not only made up of elements of nature, but also made for nature. Hughes, with his instinct for natural harmony and his sense of responsibility as a poet, raises doubt about rational analysis in his early poem collections *Hawk in the Rain* (1957) and *Lupercal* (1960), and appeals for a return to nature based on instinct and intuition which account for the basis of Taoism. Moreover, Hughes shows great reverence for energies of nature and vitality of creatures in it. Hughes' focus on Being Itself embodies the wisdom that "Heaven and earth were born at the same time I was, and the ten thousand things are

one with me” shared by Chuang Tzu.

Water and Valley are considered as the symbols that are closest to Tao in Taoism, for they benefit thousands of creatures, yet they do not scramble and are content with the places that all men disdain. Tao of Water and forever-living spirit of valley are revealed in the middle period of Hughes’ poem writing. *River* (1981) and *Remains of Elmet* (1979) display profound wisdom of Taoist thought, such as “Tao of Water,” “Valley Spirit,” “Being and Nothingness,” and “achieving effectiveness through inaction (wu wei).” Drawing on his life experience, Hughes gradually gains insight into the interaction between Being and Nothingness, and the paradox in the “effectiveness achieved through inaction (wu wei)” in Taoism. Therefore, Hughes presents in the poems of *River* and *Remains of Elmet* a harmonious communication between man and nature following the law of nature. With his practice of the Taoist “achieving effectiveness through inaction (wu wei),” Hughes regains harmony with the outer natural world, moving towards a final “unity of man and nature.”

It is believed by Hughes that poetry is a miraculous journey into the inner world. Lao Tzu maintains that the further one travels, the less one knows. Therefore the sage arrives without going, sees all without looking, and does nothing, yet achieves everything. Hughes initiates in his last poem collection *Birthday Letter* (1998) a journey into heart following the

way of Nature, by which Hughes achieves rebirth of his inner spirit. In conclusion of this research, Taoist thought displayed in Hughes' poetry is uncovered. The thesis employs comparative theories oriented in thematic studies. Based on a comprehensive analysis of Taoist thought in his nature poems, a consummation of Hughes is revealed with his unity of the outer natural world and inner spirit, which thereby proves the greatest wisdom in Taoism. Hughes' belief in and practice of Taoist thought brings him reverence and makes a whole of his life as well.

**Key words:** Ted Hughes, nature poems, Taoism, Taoist thought

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作者签名：李艳

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## Introduction

The English Poet Laureate Ted Hughes (1984-98) is one of the most influential poets in England. As Nobel Prize winner for Literature Seamus Heaney has said, Ted Hughes is “a great man, a great poet.”<sup>1</sup> Hughes is worthy of such a credit not only for his brilliant poems, but also for his consistent belief in the unity of the universe and his deep concern over the nature-human relationship manifested in both his poems and his life practice.

Hughes arises in the 1950s as a poet and distinguishes himself from his contemporaries for his verbal exhibition of vitality of animals and energy of nature. Therefore, he is generally placed in literary history in opposition to the Movement Poets and in relation to the Romantics in struggling for liberation from excesses of Enlightenment rationalism.

Strongly located in the tradition of Shakespeare, Blake, Yeats, and Lawrence, et al., Hughes is well aware of the distortion in individuals and the trepidation in western society caused by man’s unbalanced reliance on scientific, rational and objective perceptions. He sees clearly the reality that the exclusiveness of our subjective eye, the very strength and brilliance of our imaginative power in nature has turned into stupidity—of the most suicidal kind. He maintains in the review of *The*

*Environmental Revolution* in 1970 that “The story of the mind exiled from nature is the story of western man” (378-79). Human’s rejection and self-alienation from nature has resulted in the exile of man from ‘Mother Nature,’ from both outer nature—the environment, and the inner spirit.

As Ann Skea has suggested, Hughes’ desire to change this situation is apparent in his early poems and it gradually becomes an integral part of his poetic spans. (2) In his first two poem collections *Hawk in the Rain* (1957) and *Lupercal* (1960), Hughes has questioned the limitation of rational analysis in metaphor of animals and quested for a world of equality based on his belief in intuitive thinking. To Hughes, a regain of balance and communicative power with nature can be achieved through imaginative perception based on intuition, which happens to be the way to obtain Tao in Taoism.<sup>2</sup>

Hughes’ passion for nature can be traced back to his early childhood. Born on August 17, 1930 in Mythmrold, a small village in the valley of Yorkshire Pennines, Hughes lives a peaceful and tranquil country life in his first six years. Yorkshire culture is a culture with strong Celtic ties whose main deity is Brigid, the goddess of poetry and nature as well. All of these help Hughes bridge an intimate relationship with nature since early, and exert influence upon his life and writing. Besides, growing up during the Second World War, Hughes suffers a lot and forms a profound



understanding of the destructiveness of wars. He comes to realize the importance of being harmonious with nature and values the communication with nature all the more.

Plus his natural bound with nature and his penetrating perception in literary history, Hughes' personal tragedy in Mid-age further confirms and strengthens his early belief, and thus paves way for his receptivity of Taoism. The loss of four intimate relatives in 1960s, three of which committed suicide, has brought Hughes unbearable pain. Moreover, he has to suffer furious criticism from the public as well, especially the feminists. It is believed that his ex-wife, the brilliant American poet Sylvia Plath's suicide in 1963 is partly due to his affair with Assia Gutman Wevill. With his sense of violence in the animal world, Hughes begins to know that human beings as all the other creatures are part of the same fabric, woven into and out of the mysterious universe. Drawing on his own life experiences, Hughes further explores in a manner and within a context which extends their relevance from the personal to the universal, and finds in the works of Taoism similar concerns.

For Hughes, the condition of creativity is a prepared receptivity. Hughes is a writer open to various influences including myth, religion, and folklores in both western and eastern literature. He claims that his knowledge of Indian and Chinese philosophical and religious writings is tied up with that of mythology and folklores. (Dyson 105) The American

specialist Leonard M. Scigaj argues in *Ted Hughes* (1991) that it is especially true of Hughes' interest in Taoism since mid-seventies. (21) Conceptions of "becoming of Being and Nothingness" and "achieving effectiveness through inaction (wu wei)"<sup>3</sup> can be found in his life and writing. Hughes chooses to keep silence on the matter of Sylvia Plath following "Tao of Water"<sup>4</sup> preached in Taoism, "Let's what happens to him simply happen" (*CP* 467).<sup>5</sup> Besides, ideas like "Valley Spirit" and "unity of man and nature" are highly acknowledged in his poem collections *River* and *Remains of Elmet*. Scigaj in *The Poetry of Ted Hughes: Form and Imagination* (1986) holds that "the strongest influence in the landscape poetry of *River* and *Remains of Elmet* is from Taoism" (23). This thesis aims therefore to make a thorough analysis of Taoist thought in Hughes' nature poems.

Ted Hughes and his poetry have been familiar to western readers and thoroughly studied since 1960s. A great number of books, book reviews, journals and newspaper articles have come into being through years. Hughes studies cover a wide range focusing on the themes of violence, ecology, myth, religion, etc. Representative scholars on Ted Hughes are Ann Skea, Craig Robinson, Elaine Feinstein, Janet Malcolm, Keith Sagar, Leonard M. Scigaj, Neil Roberts, Nicholas Bishop, Terry Gifford, et al.

Keith Sagar began to study Hughes professionally as early as 1960s. *The Art of Ted Hughes* (1978) is the first book length treatment of Ted

Hughes as a poet, in which Sagar discusses Hughes' poems in detail and traces pathways of goddess through his poetic work. In the past thirty years, Keith Sagar's intimate correspondence and communication with Hughes have gone on providing informative and provoking materials for us in *The Achievement of Ted Hughes* (1983), *The Challenge of Ted Hughes* (1994), and *The Laughter of Foxes: A Study of Ted Hughes* (2000). Neil Roberts together with Terry Gifford makes an exploration of Hughes' imaginative language and analyzes his poems from the dimension of anthropology and religion in *Ted Hughes: a Critical Study* (1981). Ann Skea is a foremost Australian scholar who examines Ted Hughes from various aspects especially that of mythology such as Shaman, Trickster figures, etc. Her *Ted Hughes: The Poetic Quest* (1994) reveals Hughes' belief in the healing power of poetry and his intention to achieve rebirth through poetry. Biographers Elaine Feinstein and Janet Malcolm work enthusiastically in *Ted Hughes: The Life of a Poet* (2001) and *The Silent Woman: Sylvia Plath & Ted Hughes* (1995) for a diversion of public attention from his affairs back to his poems and his remarkable accomplishments as a writer. Craig Robinson, student of Keith Sagar, is another expert on Hughes' poetry. In *Ted Hughes as Shepherd of Being* (1989), he examines Hughes' pursuit of a redefinition of human maturity in calling upon Heidegger's knowledge of Being. The American specialist Leonard M. Scigaj probes influence upon Hughes' writing in *The Poetry*

of *Ted Hughes: Form and Imagination* (1986), categorizing his development into three stages with influence from critical formalism, surrealism, and influence from Blake and Taoism, among which the exploration of Hughes' affinity with Taoism is particularly provoking.

The ProQuest Digital Dissertations shows six dissertations dealing respectively with inhuman imagination in Hughes' writing, the unique rhythm of Hughes' poetry in the alliterative tradition, Hughes' confession and persona in *Birthday Letter*, bestiality, animality and humanity in Hughes' poetry, and questioning Hughes' edition of *Ariel*.

Considering the substantial and painstaking endeavor given by western scholars for decades, Hughes studies in China started since 1990s is still at the preliminary stage. There has been no monograph on Ted Hughes, and only one book of Hughes' poem collection *Birthday Letter* has been translated into Chinese by Zhang Ziqing. By searching China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) digital library, 26 articles are found concerning Ted Hughes during the years 1992-2008. Most of these articles follow the lead of western studies and deal with Hughes' early poem collections with focus on themes of war, image treatment, nature complex, Celtic tradition, etc. Only one article by Professor Ou Hong and Li Zidan is on the Taoist tendency in Hughes' poetry.

Based on the above studies, especially those of Leonard M. Scigaj, Ou Hong and Li Zidan, the author is inspired about Ted Hughes' relation

to Taoism which exerts influence upon his life and his poetry. As a controversial figure who never conforms to traditional public conventions and who has been the target to the feminists, Hughes has however won numerous prizes for his poems and great reverence from people, for which it is believed that Taoism serves as an indispensable influential source.

Leonard M. Scigaj examines Taoist thought in Ted Hughes' poetry from the perspective of western scholars. Besides, Ou Hong, Li Zidan and Scigaj fail to probe Taoist thought in the full length of Hughes' poetry despite they have studied the influence of Taoism upon his later poems in limitation. However, the author finds similar expression of Taoist thought in both his early and later poems, especially the ones with nature concern. Therefore, this thesis, oriented in thematic studies, attempts to analyze Taoist thought in Hughes' nature poems in a sequential way so as to reveal Hughes' questing journey for unity with his increasing knowledge of Taoism.

Hughes is a diligent and productive poet with dozens of poem collections published in his life. His poetic development can be divided into three main stages, hence representative poem collections in each period are chosen with poems that best serve the study of this thesis. Altogether twenty-five poems from five poem collections are discussed. As to the versions of *Lao Tzu (Tao Te Ching)* and *Chuang Tzu* familiar to

Hughes, relatively authoritative versions of translation by Arthur Waley and Burton Watson are referred to in this thesis.

The thesis is divided into four chapters. Chapter 1 probes Hughes' intimate relationship with Taoism and makes a brief introduction to Taoist thought and that in the view of Hughes. The following three chapters are corresponding to different stages in Hughes' poetic development. Chapter 2 reveals emergence of Taoist thought in Hughes' early nature poems by reading *Hawk in the Rain* and *Lupercal* from aspects of Intuition and Being Itself. Chapter 3 studies *River* and *Remains of Elmet*, unveiling the flourishing of Taoist wisdom with Hughes' acknowledgement of "Tao of Water," "Valley Spirit," "being and nothingness," and "achieving effectiveness through inaction (wu wei)." For Hughes, a true unity of man and nature is thus indicated by practicing Taoist inaction (wu wei). Chapter 4 discusses Hughes' last poem collection *Birthday Letter* and concludes that it is a journey into the heart following the way of nature, by which Hughes achieves rebirth of his inner spirit.

Hughes, with profound understanding of Taoism, shows great concerns over humans' condition in nature. Facing the ecological crisis and spiritual trepidation caused by fast expansion of science and reverence for ultimate rationalism, a reexamination of Taoist views such as "naturalization of human beings" and "unity of man and nature" is highly necessary. In this sense, the thesis is an effort to echo the

significance of Taoism for the present society.

Moreover, Chinese culture enjoys a long history and embodies profound philosophies in its unique mode of thinking. Taking Hughes for instance, the thesis aims to draw people's attention to a revaluation of the Chinese classic culture represented by Taoism, and at the same time generate a sense of the basic sameness in the context of increasing emphasis on cultural differences.

## Chapter 1

### Ted Hughes and Taoist Thought

Taoism has formed an indispensable part in the 20<sup>th</sup> century American poetry. Poets like Ezra Pound, Gary Snyder, Allen Ginsberg, et al. all benefit from it, while there seems to be little influence from Taoism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century British poetry, though different versions of *Lao Tzu* (*Tao Te Ching*) have been widely spread in Europe since the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>6</sup> Ted Hughes is one of those minorities who breaks the boundary in England. The basis for Hughes' receptivity of Taoism as a poet can be traced back to his early childhood, to his deep Yorkshire origin and the influence of Celtic culture.

#### 1.1 Hughes' Affinity with Taoism

Ted Hughes, Christened Edward James Hughes, was born on August 17, 1930 in Mytholmroyd, a little village surrounded by sensuous hills in the west riding of Yorkshire, England. The climate here is quite similar to the nearby Brontë Country<sup>7</sup> famous for its wilderness and bleakness. Yorkshire men are descended from the Brigantes who are one of the earliest Celtic tribes of Britain. For centuries, they have forged certain



characteristics which set them apart from other English people, such as toughness, quick perception, sense of humor, etc. This may be attributed partly to the freedom of mountain air and isolated hill-side life.

In the first six years of his life, Hughes enjoyed a happy and tranquil life in Mytholmroyd where he could get easy access to farmland, rivers, mountains, insects, animals, etc. Hughes' brother Gerald is a particular important figure in his childhood as leading him into the exploration of mystery of great nature. As early as he was three or four years old, Hughes was occasionally taken out by Gerald for hunting or fishing. What Hughes enjoyed was obviously not the activities, but the way it made him alert to the whole landscape, so that he was aware of the magic power of each creature alive in it.

Hughes' passion for nature seems to be innately born, as he claims in *PIM*,<sup>8</sup> "My interest in animals began when I began" (15). Animals in the great nature are the first to arouse Hughes' extreme interest. His fascination with animals continues almost through his life, and it plays such an important role as to influence his choice of his major in college and his career later.<sup>9</sup> The first six years of his life is of tremendous importance to Hughes. He notes in an interview in 1998: "my first six years shaped everything" (Sagar *The Laughter of Foxes: A Study of Ted Hughes* 40). Nevertheless, his intimate contact with nature during childhood enables him to be innately related to nature.

The root of Hughes' Yorkshire origin is strong, and some of his childhood delight in nature lives on intact in Hughes' mind since ever and without transformation appears later in his poems. In his first two poem collections *Hawk in the Rain* (1957) and *Lupercal* (1960), Hughes explores extensively the world of nature with vivid presentation of a large number of animals such as hawk, horse, fox, etc., all of which originate in his memory. Hughes therefore earns the name of "Animal Poet." For Hughes, animal are like parents. He says in the 1995 *Paris Review* interview:

I spent my first sixteen or seventeen years constantly thinking about them (animals) more or less, they became a language—symbolic language which is also the language of my whole life. [. . .] so when I look for, or get hold of a feeling of that kind, it tends to bring up the image of an animal or animals simply because that's the deepest, earliest language that my imagination learned. ("The Art of Poetry" 23)

However, it will be misleading if we take for granted Hughes' understanding of animals and nature as simple fondness. Hughes' understanding of nature was so penetrating that Sylvia Plath wrote in her letters home that it was Hughes who first introduced her to nature. (Plath

234) Even as a boy Hughes could see that the wildlife of moors had a harsh struggle for survival through which he came to realize that profound connection to surrounding nature was central to all life.

In 1937, Hughes left with his family for Mexborough, an industrial town in South Yorkshire. Despite the sudden change of environment, Hughes never failed to explore his interest and live his own life in the country. Soon he discovered in nearby country a private estate with wood and lakes which satisfied all his need and fantasy. On the other hand, the moving was particularly crucial for Hughes' development as a poet, for it enabled him to approach for the first time the comics and children's encyclopedia which offered him another world to experience nature. Born into the Celtic culture whose chief local deity happens to be Brigid, the Goddess of Poetry and a nature goddess as well, Hughes perceived more in the link between the world of knowledge and the world of nature as his reading increased into *Bible*, Greek mythologies, folklores, works of Shakespeare and Shelly, etc. Gradually he began his exploration into the world of nature in poetry. It was then Hughes' passion for animals began to complicate. Hughes said: at about fifteen, "my attitude to animals changed. I accused myself of disturbing their lives. I began to look at them, you see, from their own point of view" (*PIM* 16).

In the view of Hughes, poetry is a vehicle of universal energy which embodies both inner life and outer life. He believes that "It is

occasionally possible, just for brief moments, to find the words that will unlock the doors of all those many mansions in the head" (*PIM* 124). Therefore Hughes began to break the barrage lying between nature and human world, casting away the previous view of nature as an alien world. In spite of the general acknowledged fact that western civilization is based on the assumption that the earth is a heap of raw materials given to man by God for his exclusive profit and use, Hughes condemned a disproportioned use of rational objectivity and took interest in the intuitive perception which accounts for the basis of Taoism. Hughes' intuitive insight was obvious to almost every one of his friends such as David Ross, Lucas Myers, et al. (Feinstein 40-42)

Besides, Hughes consolidates his understanding of himself as a man and the way of nature through his life experience. Though Hughes didn't join in the Second World War, he suffered a lot from economic depression and war experiences of his father and his uncle. As far as Hughes could remember, his father was always wordless and was so shattered by his war experiences that he would remain silence even when other soldiers were exchanging stories. The destructiveness of war is disastrous for loss of human nature and alienation of human spirit, which derives from man's blind belief in scientific method and fast expansion of human's controlling desire over nature. As Lao Tzu says, "No lure is greater than to possess others want. No disaster is greater than not to be content with

what one has. No presage of evil is greater than that men should be wanting to get more” (*TTC* ch46).<sup>10</sup> Human’s fortune is intimately related to nature. Coming to realize the importance of being harmonious with nature, Hughes appreciates communication with nature all the more.

Hughes’ mid-life is shadowed by his personal tragedies. Loss of four intimate family members in 1960s caused him unbearable pain. Hughes married Sylvia Plath, an American girl and Fulbright student in Newham College, Cambridge, in four months since they met in 1956. After marriage they enjoyed six years of creative and flourishing life. However, Sylvia Plath committed suicide in 1963, which affected Hughes profoundly since Plath’s death was regarded as owing partly to his affair with Assia Gutman Wevill. Moreover, Wevill killed herself and her daughter by Hughes—Shura in a similar way as Plath had done six years later. Hughes on the one hand suffered a lot from the loss of intimate relatives including the death of his mother in 1969; on the other hand he had to stand furious criticism from feminists for decades. Apparently Hughes had tried to make a struggle but only to find it useless.<sup>11</sup> Later on, Hughes chose to be silent and let what happened to him simply happen. This choice can be partly attributed to his reading and understanding of Taoism.

Leonard M. Scigaj holds that Hughes is one of the most widely and deeply read poets. (*Ted Hughes* 16) As a voracious reader and borrower,

Hughes absorbs from the works of his contemporaries and ancestors in both western and eastern world. His knowledge of folklores and mythology leads him into the exploration of the law of nature. It is especially worth of mentioning that *The White Goddess* awarded as a poem prize in his teenagers is claimed by Hughes as an influence along his life and poetic career. Nature is sincerely worshiped by ancient Celts and is regarded as holy as the “White Goddess” in Celtic culture. As to awe for nature, this traditional belief in a way parallels with Taoism.

Hughes’ enthusiastic passion for Oriental culture and philosophy is apparent. Dating back to 1959, the Chinese composer Chou Wen-chung had invited Hughes to write a libretto for a musical presentation of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. (Feinstein 93) Though this never came into being for fund problem, it paved way for Hughes’ receptivity of Taoism in his later years.

During the sixties, Hughes read Zen and Sufi literature, and Hindu Upanshad. His review of *The Selected Letters of Dylan Thomas* in 1969 revealed a marked Oriental influence. In the seventies, Hughes developed passion for Indian Tamil poetry and Taoist writers.<sup>12</sup> He admits his knowledge of Chinese philosophy and religious writings by himself. (Dyson 105) Scigaj proves “that is especially true of Hughes’ interest in Taoism since the mid-seventies” (*Ted Hughes* 21).

In Taoism, Hughes finds expressions similar to his understanding of

life and nature and the healing power for sufferings. For Hughes, the White Goddess described as “Muse, the Mother of All Livings, the ancient power of fright and lust” (Graves 24) is replaced by new goddess in Taoism—“Tao of Water” and “Valley Spirit.” On the matter of Sylvia Plath, Hughes chooses a journey into heart by following “Tao of Water,” and thus survives the misfortune of life and bitter criticism from the public. Meanwhile, Taoist thought permeates through his poem writing. Scigaj holds that the strongest influence in the landscape poetry of *Remains of Elmet* and *River* is from Taoism. (*Form and Imagination* 25) Taoist consciousness deeply rooted in his Yorkshire blood and Celtic literary tradition, comes to flourish when Hughes gets access to the works of Taoism, and remains whole through his life and thus permeates through his poem writing.

## 1.2 Taoist Thought in the View of Hughes

Taoism represented by Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu is an exploration into the way of nature and the universe and cultivation of man’s mind, covering subjects comprehensively ranging from philosophy, aesthetics, and politics with human concern, etc.

Lao Tzu is generally considered to be the founder of Taoism. *Tao Te Ching* (Lao Tzu), the only monograph by Lao Tzu, has made great

contribution to the development of Chinese culture. Oriented in Tao, the nameless eternal order from which all natural phenomena emanates, Lao Tzu shows great reverence for equality and freedom of each creature in nature. Based on “being and nothingness” and “achieving effectiveness through inaction (wu wei),” Lao Tzu exemplifies extensively dialectical thinking in the “unity of destiny and freedom” and “unity of aim and principle” for a balance between the need of self and the limit of nature.

Owing to the effort of another representative Chuang Tzu, Taoism is further explored and developed into maturity. Chuang Tzu shares similar understanding with Lao Tzu and further explores the extension of Tao and dialectical thinking with artistry in humorous language, preaching “keeping to stillness” and “inaction (wu-wei)” for an ultimate “unity of man and nature” and true freedom.

Tao, the way the universe works, is the ultimate reality in which all attributes unite. Both materialistic and spiritual, it can not be expressed in words nor obtained by rational and systematic analysis. Only when refraining from acting out of motives that lead ordinary men to strive for wealth, fame, success, or safety, can people come to a state of “inaction (wu wei)” in which one acts instinctively and simultaneously and, without knowing why, achieves success. Arthur Waley believes that the meaning extensions of Tao also exist in the European languages. (30) It is something similar to western God in the more abstract and philosophical



sense. Similarly, Zhang Longxi concludes in *The Tao and the Logos: Literary Hermeneutics, East and West* (2006) that the term “Tao” has in many aspects resemblance with the word “Logos,” so the western scholars would have few difficulties in understanding it.

Hughes conceives similar Taoist concerns in his nature while his understanding of life and nature deepens with his personal experience, both of which pave ways for his final acceptance of Taoism. Carl Jung observes that “Western man is in danger of losing his shadow altogether, of identifying himself with his fricative personality and of identifying the world with the abstract picture painted by scientific rationalism” (82). Like Jung, Hughes is well aware of the trepidation of western civilization, especially that in the last three hundred years since the emergence of industrialization. Industrialization oriented in rational analysis has greatly promoted the well being of human condition and the development of society; however, it has thrown us into the vast emptiness and meaninglessness simultaneously. In his poetry, Hughes’ interest is not narrowly in presenting the scenic qualities of landscape, destructiveness of wars, or brutality of animal world, but in the laws of the universe. His concept of universal energies and their presence in nature is related to his poetic purpose. He believes poetry about nature can produce practical, psychological, social and spiritual benefits. Therefore he attacks in his poems a disproportionate use of scientific approach to life and teaching

and puts an emphasis on intuitive thinking valued by Lao Tzu. He insists that intuition should be the method adopted in poem writing and creatures should be presented in the way they are.

That “Heaven and earth were born at the same time I was, and the ten thousand things are one with me” conveys Hughes’ understanding of the universe. (CT 43)<sup>13</sup> Hughes as a boy had been fascinated by animals, and his attitude to animals is a direct and self-conscious one. He does not see them as strange and alien creatures, but as representatives of another world which is “the true world”—the world of great nature. In Hughes’ eyes, animals live out a struggle for survival of the fittest in the same way that human beings strive for success. Each creature including human enjoys a life that is equal to each other and is subjected equally to laws of nature. The power of animals represents the power of humans. In this sense, Hughes’ passion for animals in nature shows his concern for Being Itself, and he finds in animals a metaphor for his view on life. Just as Hughes says in a 1960 BBC radio talk, “usually[sic], in a poem that seems to be about a bird, animal or fish, it is evident that the poet is in fact writing about some element of human nature in the disguise of creature” (Scigaj *Ted Hughes* 29).

Conceptions of “Intuition” and “Being itself” can be found in Hughes’ early poems while Hughes’ knowledge of Taoism becomes mature in his later poem collections *River* (1983) and *Remains of Elmet*

(1979) with his acknowledgement of Taoist thought of “becoming of being and nothingness” and “achieving effectiveness through inaction (wu wei).” Being and Nothingness is the fundamental conception in Taoism. “The world Nothingness may be used to designate the beginning of Heaven and Earth; The word Existence (Being) may be used to designate the mother of all things. [. . .] all things of the world are born from Existence (Being), And Being from Nothingness” (*TTC* ch1, 40). Hughes’ emphasis on this dialectical thinking is totally revealed in his poems. For instance, birth-death pattern which reflects the frequency of Being and Nothingness is a recurring theme in these two collections.

Actually, Tao attends in our everyday life. Hughes exemplifies his understanding of Taoism through “Tao of Water” and “Valley Spirit.” Lao Tzu speaks highly of water and believes it near to Tao, because “it benefits the ten thousands creatures; yet it does not scramble, but is content with the places that all men disdain” (*TTC* ch8). Hughes’ obsession with water causes the being of *River* in which he shows reverence for virtues of water. Besides, the “Valley Spirit” in Taoism brings the desperate Hughes confidence in the fertility of his hometown valley which is almost ruined by industrialization and wars. In Taoism, “Valley Spirit,” named the Mysterious Female, never dies, for “the doorway of the Mysterious Female is the base from which Heaven and Earth Sprang. It is there within us all the while; Drawn upon it as you will,

it never runs dry" (*TTC* ch6).

However, the way that Tao works is almost a mystery that is hard to gain insight into. In his effort to regain conversation with nature, Hughes suggests following the law of nature: achieving effectiveness through inaction (*wu wei*). Inaction (*wu wei*) is magically utilized in fishing and his fishing poems as well. Besides, His practice of Inaction (*wu wei*) can be found in his life experience. In dealing with the matter of Sylvia Plath, Hughes remains silence by adopting inaction (*wu wei*) in the guidance of Tao of Water, for "Nothing under heaven is softer or more yielding than water; but when it attacks thing hard and resistant there is not one of them that can prevail" (*TTC* ch78). Hughes' belief in the unity of the universe is confirmed by "the One," unity of man and nature. As human beings retreat from the position of the dominator, nature regains its equal identity. A true "unity of man and nature" is therefore achieved.

Lao Tzu holds that "the further one travels, the less one knows. Therefore the sage arrives without going, See all without looking, Does nothing, yet achieves everything" (*TTC* ch47). *Birthday Letter* (1998) is Hughes' last poem collection in which he returns to his inner world and explores his relationship with his wife Sylvia Plath following the way of Tao. "All things however they flourish return to the root from which they grew" (*TTC* ch16). Approaching the end of his life, Hughes gives a clearance for his life with Plath in view of both history and themselves.

Worldly things are washed away so that spirit may begin. As Hughes reaches the inner temple, he achieves unity of both outer natural world and inner spirit. Therefore, a consummation of his life and poetic work is revealed.

## Chapter 2

### ***Hawk in the Rain and Lupercal: Revelation of Taoist Consciousness***

In his review of Max Nicholson's *The Environmental Revolution* (1970), Hughes declared "the time for Conversation (between man and nature) has certainly come" (378-79). Moreover, he was surprised to find "the re-emergence of Nature as the Great Goddess of mankind, and the Mother of all life" which was "unthinkable ten years ago, except as a poetic dream." This offers implication to prove that Hughes as a poet had conceived such thought—"Nature as the Great Goddess of mankind and the Mother of all life" around 1960s. It was the time when he began writing poems professionally.

Even at the beginning of his career as a poet, Hughes was seen as defying the conventions of previous generations and his contemporaries—the Movement Poets who stress the exemplification of reality. He believes English culture in general since Shakespeare has been largely directed towards suppressing the instinctual life from which poetry springs. Therefore, in his early poems, Hughes goes back to his native Yorkshire landscape to seek the origin of spiritual energy and to subvert the crucial fact—an irreconcilable contradiction between man as the

possessor and nature as the possessed.

Hughes' early representative poem collections *Hawk in the Rain* and *Lupercal* are examined from two aspects of Intuition and Being Itself in this chapter. *Hawk in the Rain* (1957) is Hughes' first poem collection which, at the suggestion of his wife Sylvia Plath, was sent to enter poetry competition sponsored by Poetry Centre of the Young Men's and Young Women's Hebrew Association of New York, and it finally won the 1<sup>st</sup> Prize. In *Hawk in the Rain*, Hughes raises doubt about the limitation of scientific approaches to life and teaching and appeals for a return to true nature based on intuitive thinking shared by Lao Tzu. Meanwhile, Hughes shows reverence for the masculine power of nature by presenting a world of animals, plants, and natural phenomenon, for he believes that the first step to remind people of their position in nature is to convince them of the energy of their equal in nature. *Lupercal* published three years later continues the theme and concerns of the first collection.

## **2.1 Attack on Rationalism and Acceptance of Intuition**

Speaking of the decisive influence Plato has had upon our perception and beliefs, Hughes in "Myth and Education" (1970) argued pervasively that three hundred years of rational enlightenment based on the analytical, destructive methods of Plato had taught us to divide all human

experiences into two categories: the objective, verifiable facts and the subjective, unverifiable data. For centuries we have been taught that emotions are not reliable and can distort our judgment, therefore the objective analysis should be trusted and relied upon when decisions are made. Such a division, as Hughes believes, is artificial and damaging. It will lead to inflexibility and dead-end. In a world that rationality and objectivity have become the only criteria for knowledge, Hughes believes, as Taoists do, that the promoting of our inner world of instinct as the only solution should be paid particular attention to.

Taoism values intuition more than rationalism which is revered in western philosophy. In Taoism scientific knowledge brought by rational thinking is despised, as Lao Tzu says, “It was when intelligence and knowledge appeared, that the great artifice began” (*TTC* ch18). “Intelligence” and “knowledge” mentioned here refer to rational analysis which will lead to our loss of true nature. Therefore, Lao Tzu recommends “banishing wisdom” and “discarding knowledge,” by which people can benefit a lot. (*TTC* ch19)

Industrialization and mechanism have strengthened the method of analytical thinking while it seriously suppresses intuition and instinct of human beings. Facing the crucial reality that the technological barricades developed to manipulate natural source has insulated us from the environment and led us to a world of absence, loneliness and meaningless,



Hughes raises in his poems doubt about the trepidation caused by scientific thinking in the western world, and appeals for a return to intuition and true nature.

In “Jaguar,” Hughes expresses his concern for human beings trapped in rationalism in metaphor of “animals in cages”:

[. . .] a jaguar hurrying enraged

[.....]

The eye satisfied to be blind in fire,

By the bang of blood in the brain deaf the ear—

He spins from the bars, but there’s no cage to him

More than to the visionary his cell:

His stride is wildernesses of freedom:

The world rolls under the long thrust of his heel.

Over the cage floor the horizons come. (*CP* 19-20)

An “enraged Jaguar,” trapped in cages, is fully aware of his situation and strives furiously for his freedom and at the same time forms a sharp and vivid contrast with those “yawning apes,” “shrieking parrots,” and “fatigued and indolent tigers and lions” which are similarly caged but are totally unconscious of their situation in danger. In the interpretation of

“Jaguar,” Hughes admits in an interview with Egbert Fass in 1970 that the jaguar can be received in several different aspects, the first of which maybe “a beautiful, powerful nature spirit” (“Ted Hughes and Crow” 8). For Hughes, the jaguar symbolizes freedom and vitality of great nature. His description is so precise and vivid that readers can feel the powerful energies and the barely suppressed vitality the jaguar embodies.

The cages are especially noteworthy as the symbol for rational imprisonment. Therefore the “enraged Jaguar” in the cage becomes an emblem of a hero struggling for a way out of this situation. Moreover, this image is further strengthened by those dumb people who crowd outside of the cage of the enraged Jaguar to mesmerize. It is indicated that those dumb spectators rather than the enraged Jaguar in cages are those who are imprisoned in the realm of rationalism, for they lack the vitality and inner freedom of the Jaguar. In this sense, they are even more miserable than those trapped apes, parrots, tigers and lions. In metaphor of animals, the poet’s determination to liberate human from the tyranny of rationalism with the vitality of nature is suggested.

In another poem “Macau and Little Girl,” Hughes again attacks the excess of rational thinking in the image of “Macau in the cage.” Macau, locked in the cage, “stares at his furnace / with eyes red-raw” for a whole day. (CP 19) The fire in the furnace on the one hand represents the anger of the Macau, on the other hand, it symbolizes the world of intuition that

Macau is eager for. Despite the temptation of the little girl with food—symbol of materials brought by advanced technology, Macau chose to die for a final freedom as “she strikes the cage in a tantrum and swirls out: / Instantly beak, wings talons crash” (*CP* 19). To the poet, Macau is objectively caged but subjectively free. The power of this subjective freedom is terrifying: “The bars in conflagration and frenzy, / And his [Macau’s] shriek shakes the house” (*CP* 20). The poet challenges anthropocentrism based on rational thinking and expresses his resolution to subvert such a belief which has given us a false sense of our own abilities to control ourselves and the world around us.

Most poems in these two collections deal with great nature, even those few war poems reveal the confrontation between nature and man, and throw light on humans’ swamping desire over nature caused by excessive use of rational thinking.

The war in general is so destructive that it will lead to death, famine, plague, etc. Hughes, as Taoism preaches, condemns offensive war while admitting the right of community to defend itself against enemies. In “The Ancient Heroes and the Bomber Pilot,” it is suggested by a series of comparisons that the pilot’s destruction of the whole city is something evil, the root of which lies in the corruption of human’s spirit and uncontrolled increasing desires. Human’s pride and confidence in the new science based on rational thinking finally results in the being of wars

which is a crime not only against nature, but also against humanity. Human therefore become victims of their own belief where the disaster for violating laws of nature is indicated.

Egotism in our own rational abilities has distorted our perceptions, immobilized our imagination, and cut us off from our inner world that is nearest to the natural energies which we share with all living things. For Hughes, the only way to the world closed to direct, rational thinking is through imaginative perception based on intuition, and poetry which mimics rhythm of nature could help bridge man with its surrounding environment with “the words that will unlock the doors of all those many mansions in the head” (*PIM* 124). Therefore a connection between our inner world and outer world can be reestablished.

As a shaman-poet<sup>14</sup> with strong sense of responsibility, Hughes expresses his endeavor to break the bars of reason into the vast intuitive world in “The Man Seeking Experience Enquires His Way of a Drop of Water.” The poem is opened with “this water droplet, charity of the air” (*CP* 34). Immediately, readers are invited into a world of serenity and holiness, and naturally begin a journey with the droplet.

Readers follow the water droplet through the sky, from the cloud down to the earth, from the face of the sweating victor to the body of the decaying dead bird, etc. They seem to get the real feel, weight, and sound of the water: a droplet of “clear simple water.” Lao Tzu says, “The

goodness of water is that it benefits the ten thousands creatures; yet it does not scramble, but is content with the places that all men disdain. It is this that makes water so near to the Way” (*TTC* ch8). With his comprehension of virtues of water, Hughes expresses in this poem his desire to achieve Tao through a droplet of water. In the last stanza, contemplation for the ceaseless binary opposition is presented with “After the first alone-in-creation cry / When into the mesh of sense, out of the dark, / Blundered the world-shouldering monstrous ‘I’” (*CP* 35). The beauty of birth can not deny the bleakness of being alone; the surprise to get out of darkness is immediately immersed into the world of rational analysis; the confidence in shouldering one’s responsibility is stripped by the monstrous self. How to solve those contradictions? A reunion with instinctual life long suppressed by English culture is indicated. In the view of Hughes, a return to true nature based on intuition is the best solution to re-communication between men and the universe.

Hughes’ emphasis on intuition is mingled into his poem writing. In *PIM*, a referential book for children in writing poems, Hughes suggests that one of the most important things is not to “think it up laboriously, as if you are working out mental arithmetic,” but to “imagine what you are writing about. [. . .] Just look at it, touch it, smell it, listen to it, turn yourself into it.” When you are able to see it and live it, “the words will look after themselves, like magic” (18).

“The Thought Fox” is a poem that brings the reality of outer nature into the inner world, and proves that poem writing is a process of intuition that inspiration naturally intrudes into one’s mind. On a snowy evening, the poet is sitting in meditation, staring into darkness. Everything seems to fall into a suspended stillness except the “ticking clock” and the “moving finger” which are always ready to invite something alive. Suddenly, inspiration comes upon him: “Something more near / Though deeper within darkness / Is entering the loneliness” (CP 21). It is something alive, cold and delicate as the snow. After a careful and tentative observation of the surrounding environment, it finally is bold enough to step out its feet. That is a fox with a sharp nose and a pair of alerting eyes. Inspiration occurs in the form of a fox, and then is changed into a poem:

Till, with a sudden sharp hot stink of fox

It enters the dark hole of the head.

The window is starless still, the clock ticks,

The page is printed. (CP 21)

As the page is printed, a poem comes into being. The separation of white snow and blank page, of neat footprint and tidy page print, of the ticking clock and moving fingers, and of fox’s lair and man’s head are united into

oneness. Everything ends in a moment of visionary silence in comprehension of Tao—the nameless from which all things evolve. This process of intuition is exactly that of Taoist enlightenment of “keeping to stillness.”

The poem originates in a real experience with a fox.<sup>15</sup> On one occasion, as Hughes climbed up one side of a hill, a fox, unknown to him, was creeping even more stealthily up the other. They reached the top almost at the same moment, and from a distance of about nine inches, they gazed into each other’s eyes. A split second seemed an eternity, and instantly inner communication between the two was achieved by instinct.

Hughes believes that poetic imagination releases through intuition. Hughes tried to explain this kind of thinking to his wife Sylvia Plath in the year after the writing of “The Thought Fox”:

The thing to do in thinking about anything is not to try and get a clear mental picture of it, or a distinct mental concept, [. . .] but to try to look at the actual thing happening in front of you. [. . .] In the second way, [. . .] I think straight to the thing and am not conscious of any mental intervention. [. . .] I get the feel, weight, sound, every nuance of atmosphere about a concrete thing.

*(Letters 52)*

The first poem Hughes wrote is not “The Thought Fox”; however, it is selected as the opening poem of his subsequent collections such as *Selected Poems 1957-1981* (1982) and *New Selected Poems 1957-1994* (1995). “The Thought Fox” shows how Hughes combines his craftsmanship, his imagination, with a realistic knowledge of animals, and the intuitive perception practiced by “The Thought Fox” is further developed into his main poetic theory.

## 2.2 Emphasis on Being Itself and Exhibition of Nature

In Taoism, Ye Welian holds that “a natural presentation of each creature without intervention embodies another meaning extension which is to admit the free existence of each creature and show equal reverence for Being itself” (叶维廉 65). Everything is born into the world equally, and it is this equality that really counts and proves the value of all creatures. As Chuang Tzu says, “Heaven and earth were born at the same time I was, and the ten thousand things are one with me” (CT 25). Human beings are not superior to other creatures in the world. In this sense, “Being itself” shows full respect for each creature in nature on the one hand; on the other hand it is intended in poems to present things as what they are.

Hughes is well aware of the position of human beings due to his



intimate contact with nature in childhood and his understanding of life in the universe. Besides, it is believed by Hughes that presentation of imaginative energies in nature is an effective way to bring people back into a fruitful contact with intuitive perception long buried in their sub-consciousness. Therefore in his poems Hughes shows great reverence for each creature in nature. Hughes expresses his admiration to the vitality of animals in “Thrushes”:

Terrifying are the attent sleek thrushes on the lawn,  
More coiled steel than living - a poised  
Dark deadly eye, those delicate legs  
Triggered to stirrings beyond sense—with a start, a bounce, a  
stab  
Overtake the instant and drag out some writhing thing.  
No indolent procrastinations and no yawning stares,  
No sighs or head-scratchings. Nothing but bounce and stab  
And a ravening second. (*CP* 82)

The thrushes' swiftness, accuracy and efficiency in catching food suggest their unique and incomparable ability in nature. The power of animals is vividly displayed through thrushes. Each creature possesses its unique capability on the earth. Guo Xiang in his interpretation of Chuang Tzu maintains: “In spite of difference in size, nothing could be better nor more

powerful than the one who specializes in its own field” (郭象 18). Further on, thrusts are compared to Mozart’s brain and shark’s mouth, “Mozart’s brain had it, and the shark’s mouth / [. . .] efficiency which strikes too streamlined for any doubt to pluck at it / Or obstruction deflect” (CP 82). In Hughes’ mind, power of animals is also the source of human beings, by which human cultivate and develop naturally. In this sense, they deserve equal status as human beings and full respect from human beings.

In “Hawk in the Rain,” the poet calls off the superiority of human beings upon other creatures and gives his ode to the hawk for its strength, courage and persistence, by which it holds all creatures in a weightless silence. At the beginning of the poem, a series of comparison and contrasts between the hawk and “I” are made on the stormy stage, such as “my habit of dogged grave” and the hawk’s “diamond point of will,” my “hardness” on the earth and the hawk’s “effortless” in air, etc. They share strong will of persistence while the hawk seems to prevail in tackling such a hash situation. It is indicated in this poem that animals are no less courageous or powerful than human beings in face of difficulties. In this way, an equal conversation is conducted between the hawk and “I.” In fact, it is a conversation between human beings and other creatures. Beyond the poet’s interest in the barriers between man and nature, there lies a deeper meaning—the one as the excluder and the other as the excluded. Living in a sick society caused by hegemony of human beings,

Hughes tries to break the division between “the one” and “the other” to create a new system in which all living things are able to maintain an equal and harmonious existence. He is pretty certain that the first step is to evoke human’s sense of their position in the universe by presenting unique capability and vitality of their equal—animals in nature.

“Hawk Roosting” goes on displaying the amoral power of nature and undercutting confidence of human beings with untarnished frankness. The poem is written in the first person that a drowsy hawk opens his mouth. It is conducted through a monologue:

I sit in the top of the wood, my eyes closed.

Inaction, no falsifying dream

Between my hooked head and hooked feet:

Or in sleep rehearse perfect kills and eat.

The convenience of the high trees!

The air’s buoyancy and the sun’s ray

Are of advantage to me;

And the earth’s face upward for my inspection. (*CP* 68-69)

In his own words, the hawk expresses his confidence in his ability: everything including trees, air, sun and earth are for his convenience and

are available to him as they are to human beings. Therefore it is indicated that animals represented by hawk shares equally with human beings source of nature. In his interview with Egbert Faas, Hughes explains: "Actually what I had in mind was that in this Hawk Nature is thinking" (Dyson 102). Nature as human beings is endowed with the ability to think and reason. Again, the long established presence of human beings as the dominator and nature as the dominated is thrown up in Hughes' poem.

However, as the monologue goes on, the hawk's egotism gradually appears: "I kill where I please because it is all mine. / [ . . . ] My eye has permitted no change. / I am going to keep things like this" (*CP* 69). According to the hawk, no arguments assert his right and everything is subjected to his control. Hughes was accused by some critics of writing a paean to fascist power as he depicted an animal in anthropomorphic terms. Actually what Hughes is trying to suggest is his anxiety of anthropocentrism in modern society in disguise of a hawk. As Hughes says, "in a poem that seems to be about a bird, animal or fish, it is evident that the poet is in fact writing about some element of human nature in the disguise of creature" (Scigaj *Ted Hughes* 29). Hughes, in metaphor of the hawk, reminds people of the danger caused by their own egotism.

In "Egg Head," Hughes suggests the disaster of a man who sees the world purely in his own terms and shuts the beauty and the wonders of nature with "wide eyed deafness of prudence" and "Braggart-browed

complacency” (*CP* 34). Human beings are part of the natural world and subjected to the same forces of nature as all the other living creatures. Therefore, when the man, ignorant of such natural laws, tries to set him apart from nature and resists “the flash of the sun, the bolt of the earth,” there is no way out but a dead end. The man’s egotism—“staturing ‘I am’” collides with his own “dewdrop frailty” in face of natural power.

The cosmic energy of nature is both creative and destructive. It can revolve into destruction when “the one” becomes “the other” and the vice versa. Similarly, in “Hawk in the Rain,” as the hawk falls into its own subjectivity and establishes as the centre of the universe in which men become a “dazed last-moment-countering” alien—the other, the hawk:

That maybe in his own time meets the weather  
Coming the wrong way, suffers the air, hurled upside down,  
Fall from his eye, the ponderous shires crash on him,  
The horizon trap him; the round angelic eye  
Smashed, mix his heart's blood with the mire of the land.

(*CP* 19)

No amount of self-deception can overcome the reality of death. In the view of the poet, the hawk as human beings has to be subjected to its aggression—“the habit of dogged grave” when it sees itself as the center of creation and is blind to its vulnerability.

Lao Tzu holds that “Everything however flourish they are, will finally return to the root” (*TTC* ch16). The one who enjoys the meaning of life is not afraid of death, for death in Taoism is a return to the root by following the law of nature. Therefore, birth-death-rebirth forms the great cycling in the universe. Hughes displays his profound understanding of the cycling of life. In “Hawk in the Rain,” the hawk, with eyes smashed, finally dies in the storm; however, its heart’s blood is mixed with the mire of land. The hawk comes into nothingness while it obtains another form of life—being in the soil as fertilizer to cultivate plants. “All creatures under Heaven are the products of being. Being itself is the product of Not-being” (*TTC* ch40). With its realization of being and nothingness, the hawk accepts death peacefully.

According to Being itself, Hughes views animals “from their own point of view” (*PIM* 26) and in his early poems exhibits creatures as what they are. In “Horse,” what strikes us straightaway is the real, breathing presence of those horses. They are not described. They are not defined, analyzed or in any way poeticized, but summoned up alive and brought back into being in the medium of language, still “steaming and glistening” (*CP* 22). As Hughes notes, “see it and live it. [. . .] Turn yourself into it” (*PIM* 18), we gradually move towards unity of man and nature. Moreover, in “Wind,” the length of the lines seems to feel the brunt of wind as much as the man attempting to walk into it. Land and sea

are mingled into one's imagination. The wilderness of the moorland and its stone remain present even when the family is sitting by the blazing fire in the last verse. It is Hughes' intimate contact with nature, careful observation and penetrating perception that make these possible.

However, Hughes' exposure of brutal scenes in nature arouses such negative emotions in some readers that they reject the poems altogether. Hughes was even misunderstood as a "poet of violence" by certain critics. However, rather than violence, what Hughes presents is the power of nature which embodies both creativity and destructiveness. Ann Stevenson observes: "there was no violence in his (Hughes) poetry—it expressed the violence of the universe" (77). That violence of the universe is an indispensable part of the power of nature. Therefore, to deny the violence in nature is as foolish and hypocritical as a denial and suppression of the natural energies. Hughes asserts that "If you refuse the energy, you are living a kind of death" (Dyson 104).

Tennyson's "nature, red in tooth and claw" conveys Hughes' view of part of nature. Hughes has been acutely aware that both beauty and violence are indispensable parts in the natural world since early childhood. He does not hide crucial facts of nature in his poems; instead, he presents them in exact and vivid description with fascination, fear and awe. In this sense, Hughes' view of nature in his early poems is not at all like the traditional romantic view of nature for which English poets are famous.

However, it is just his overwhelming awareness of the violence in nature, his presentation of constancy of birth and death, and his graphic depiction of struggle and conflict in nature that endow his poems unique characteristics which indicate a resurgence of English poetic innovation and establish his pre-eminence in English poetry at an early stage. The American scholar Scigaj speaks highly of Hughes: “Hughes has been a mainstay of the British literary scenes since the early sixties” (*Ted Hughes* 25). He is worthy of such an appreciation not only for his ability to identify this great power of nature, but also for his success in describing it not in human terms, but in its own—in nature’s own terms, as Hughes says about the animals, to view them “from their own point of view” (*PIM* 16).

Hughes in his early poems introduces a nature that possesses a genuine power outside man’s control and brings us back into a fruitful contact with intuitive perception in the background of suffocating rational analysis. However, we must acknowledge that Hughes’ exploration of universal themes in his early poems is still at the preliminary stage owing to its narrow comprehension of masculine power of nature and ignorance of its feminine side. Hughes leads us away from the assumption of human dominance but towards a new dominance based on nature as the indefeasible source of reality.

Nevertheless, Hughes’ early poems offer a blueprint for integration



between man and nature. Hughes' intention to create a sense of awe for masculine power of nature is further developed into an appreciation of the feminine part of nature and thus a gentle cooperation between man and nature in his later poems.

## Chapter 3

### *River and Remains of Elmet:*

#### **Regaining Harmony with the Outer Natural World**

Janet Malcolm holds that “Hughes had ten years of absolute hell after Plath’ death” (103). That’s true in the dark side and blue note of his poems as reflected in the crow series of that period. Even so, a consistent theme rooted in Hughes’ poems—Hughes’ continuing condemnation of the excess of rational analysis—has never changed and remains there. In *Wodow* (1967), *Crow* (1970), and *Gaudate* (1976), Hughes further demonstrates systematically accusation of rational thinking and expresses his genuine belief in the constructive power of intuition.

However, as we believe Hughes has to search a way to make sense of damage that Human beings inflict on one another in this increasingly indifferent world, he retreated from the big city to countryside and began a life of farmland in 1970s when he began to read Taoist works. Leonard M. Scigaj proves that it is especially true of Hughes’ increasing interest in Taoism since mid-seventies. (*Ted Hughes* 21) In Taoism, Hughes finds expressions similar to his understanding of life in nature and the healing power for sufferings. Therefore, Hughes confirms his earlier belief in the imaginative power of nature, and, by following “Tao of Water,” survives

the misfortune of life and continues his marvelous achievements in poetry as well. *River* (1983) and *Remains of Elmet* (1979) defines clearly the poet's return to the outer world of the physical landscape and human history in celebration of "woman in her own divine power."

Though Hughes retreated into countryside himself, his poems in this period are of anything but a simple return to nature. Nature has been his major concern as always so, in the meantime great wisdom of Taoist thought is reflected in his poems. Scigaj holds in *The Poetry of Ted Hughes: Form and Imagination* that "the strongest influence in the landscape poetry of *Remains of Elmet* and *River* is from Taoism" (25). Taoist thought revealed in *Remains of Elmet* (1979) and *River* (1983) will be analyzed from aspects of "Tao of Water," "Valley Spirit," "Being and Nothingness," "Inaction (wu wei): Effective Action," and "Unity of Man and Nature" in this chapter.

### **3.1 Images of Tao: Water and Valley**

Masculinity of nature indicated in Hughes' early poems is by no means apparent; however it does not mean that the feminine side is totally missed. In fact, Hughes is more interested than any one of his contemporaries in the exploration of that part. His reverence for the Nature Goddess had begun the time he began writing poems.

Hughes was born into a culture with strong Celtic ties whose chief local deity is Brigid, a goddess of Poetry and a nature goddess as well. Nature Goddess is worshiped in the tradition of Celtic culture, from which he obtains inspiration and absorbs nutrition for his poetry. He speaks repeatedly of the influence of *The White Goddess* by Robert Graves awarded to him as a poem prize, in which the white goddess plays a central role in the forms of ever-present natural forces. However, educated in a “masculine culture,” it takes time and life experience for Hughes to realize the source of his real inspiration. Taoist thought comes into his vision and brings him back to the point where he started, but a new, higher point.

Hughes’ poetry in the 1970s displays a style a little bit different from that of the earlier two decades though his concern over nature remains. The poems in *River and Remains of Elmet* reflect a reminiscence of the good old days. Tranquility, softness and purity form key notes of these two collections instead of violence and vitality in his earlier poems.

Weakness and softness in general embodied in infant, Water and Valley are representative characteristics of Tao. “Tao of Water” and “Valley Spirit” are highly spoken of in Hughes’ poetry. “The goodness of water is that it benefits the ten thousands creatures; yet itself does not scramble, but is content with the places that all men disdain. It is this that makes water so near to the Way (Tao)” (*TTC* ch8). Hughes’ obsession

with water causes the being of *River* in which he shows reverence for water for its softness, purity, tranquility, non-action, etc.

Actually *River* has roots in Hughes' early works. His fascination with water has been apparent since his childhood. Even after moving to Mexborough, he often got up early on purpose before school and walked far away to explore the mystery of nearby hills and moors. He once discovered two rivers by himself, rivers of Don and Dearne. Speaking of his childhood influence, Hughes frequently refers to the gloominess of rocks and the freshness of moors. For Hughes, the gentle female watery line opens into illimitable space and brings a sense of immensity, endurance and vitality. Therefore, Hughes began his exploration of water the moment he started to write poems.

In his first poem collection *Hawk in the Rain*, the poet expresses his vague comprehension of the divinity of water in "The Man Seeking Experience Enquires His Way of a Drop of Water." In this poem, the water is found everywhere: in the cloud, the cup of tea, the sweating victor, and even the decaying bird. There is nowhere that it does not attend. Tao is to the world what the river and the sea are to the countless streamlets. For its softness, water conquers the world. Having studied from high to low, including the cathedrallied brain, the mole's ear, and the dog's bowel, there is no place the water has not bettered, and none problem has it brought to solution. That "Tao never does, yet through it,

all things are done” is indicated. (*TTC* ch37) However, when the water is asked to lecture his experience, she says, yet she says nothing. Tao can not be smelled, seen, or articulated. Lao Tzu maintains that “The Tao that can be expressed is not ultimate and eternal Tao” (*TTC* ch1), so is the Tao of Water. The droplets’ silence indicates its realization of Taoist wisdom despite of vacancy of language.

Hughes continues his ode to water in various forms in his subsequent poetic creation, such as “Snowdrop” in *Lupercal*, “Water” from *Recklings*, “Snow Song” in *Crow Wakes*, “Rain” in *Moortown Diary*, etc. *River* is a full record of his growing awareness of ineluctable force, animating all living creatures in the universe. It provides a world of calmness and light with which Hughes seems to be able to leave behind whatever furies are pursuing him. In the meantime, readers are brought into the Goddess world to participate in birth and death, and finally obtain a glimpse of the Nameless (Nothingness) which unites all.

Poems in *River* are imbued with softness of water and light. Water is “the generator,” “the power line,” “a chrism of birth,” “a medicinal mercury creature,” etc. Hughes exhibits subtle and sensuous beauty of water in “Low Water”:

This evening

The river is a beautiful idle woman.

The day's august burn-out has distilled

A heady sundowner.

She lies back, bored and tipsy. (CP 670)

The poem is carried out in a slow rhythm, and the softness and purity of river in an image of young lady is presented in an atmosphere of tranquility. Hughes confesses in *PIM* his difficulty in writing female figures.<sup>16</sup> Obviously, his trouble has vanished till the being of *River*. In this poem, Hughes does not only present the river in metaphor of a female beauty, but also depicts it vividly and perfectly. Dynamic beauty of the river is revealed as she (the river) “lows on her deep couch,” “lifts from the flash of her silks,” “Comb out her spread hair,” and “massage her fingers.” In the last line that “she eyes you steadily from the beginning of the world,” it is indicated that temptation has existed with feminine beauty since the being of life itself. Water seems to be soft and weak, but the range and scope of its power when it is utilized are incredibly enormous. Nothing under heaven including human beings can maintain a life without the presence of water. As Lao Tzu says, “Nothing under heaven is softer or more yielding than water; but when it attacks things hard and resistant there is not one of them that can prevail” (*TTC* ch78). Hughes tries to remind us of the potential and power of nature in disguise

of water.

Further on, the river becomes a symbol of god for its ability to rear thousands of creatures in the title poem of *The River*. The divinity of water is introduced as it “issues from heaven” (CP 664). That “In dumbness uttering spirit brightness” goes on revealing basic Taoist characteristics of water: The Tao that can be expressed is not ultimate and eternal Tao. Water is nearest to Tao for it is not only content with the places that all men disdain, but also able to return stainless “after swallowing death and the pit.” The presentation of water as the source of life not only reflects mankind’s most primitive cosmic belief, but also suggests the commonly accepted scientific fact. Finally, for the delivery of this world, the river’s capability in nurturing thousands of creatures is displayed. That the water fertilizes ten thousands creatures in silence is a result of inaction (wu wei) which accords with laws of nature. As Chuang Tzu says, “The murmuring of the water is its natural talent, not something that it does deliberately” (CT 226). In spite of its good deeds, the river does not claim its credit or impose itself; instead, it retreats and waits. Therefore, it is a “god,” inviolable and immortal.

The West Yorkshire landscape aroused in Hughes’ childhood a darkening sense of being trapped under the evil eye of the rocks hemmed in his valley. Speaking of the death image of the rocks, Hughes once noted: “I must have returned less and less of myself to the Valley. This



was where the division of body and soul, for me, began” (Uroff 21). For Hughes, Valley is the place where his body and soul separate and it should be the point where his body and soul reunite as his belief in the cause and effect relationship. “The valley spirit (Tao) never dies. It is named the Mysterious Female. And the doorway of the Mysterious Female is the base from which Heaven and Earth Sprang. It is there within us all the while; Drawn upon it as you will, it never runs dry” (*TTC* ch6). Valley is another symbol of Tao in Taoism. With the aid of “Valley Spirit” in Taoism, Hughes achieves reunion in *Remains of Elmet* with the creative power of nature. His former feeling to find it impossible to write about the mother in poems has vanished. *Remains of Elmet* is dedicated to his mother Edith Farrar in which a prevalence of energies of great Mother Nature is indicated.

“Hardcastle Crag” is opened by “think often of the silent valley, for the God lives there,” which is claimed by Hughes as a Taoist proverb (Scigaj *Ted Hughes* 113). In Taoism, valley like water is content with the places that all men disdain and ready to serve without any intention to claim its credit. “Valley Spirit” reminds Hughes of the valley in old days, beautiful and tranquil, a flourishing one that fertilizes trees, rivers, animals, insects, etc. However, in Hughes’ memory, being of industrialization and two world wars brings all of these to an end:

But here the leaf-loam silence  
Is old sifting of sewing machines and shuttles,  
And the silence of ant-warfare on pine-needles  
Is like the silence of clogs over cobbles,  
And the beech-tree solomnities  
Muffle much cordite. (CP 456)

Peace and tranquility is replaced by the sifting of machines and vitality of the region is robbed by wars, as it is complained in the poem: “happiness is now broken water at the bottom of a precipice” (CP 456). Faced with such dilapidation, Hughes is surprised to find a maternal feeling embodied in the spirit of valley in Taoism. Valley in Taoism brings Hughes full contact with the fertile ability of his hometown. The bleak, rugged and haunting beauty of Calder valley<sup>17</sup> is evoked and presented. Therefore valley for Hughes as in Taoism is a symbol of Tao.

Death of chapels, mills, and individuals might create a sense of complaint and resentment, but it does not bring ultimate pessimism with it. Since Hughes knows well that it is the primitive and creative energies embodied in the valley of Calder that rears Yorkshire men and its civilization, and he is certain that people and nature can retain harmonious existence with the prosperity of “Valley Spirit.” The temporary chaos is just a periodical phase that, as Craig Robinson

believes, “an unity of man and nature is followed by a separation and falls into the phase of the Industrial Revolution; the Heideggerian Turn<sup>18</sup>, back towards nature, is now beginning” (208).

Being of *River* and *Remains of Elmet* suggests survival of Hughes through the reunion of his spirit’s double aspects: masculine and feminine, restrictive and liberty, earth-bound and sky-born, death-dealing and life-giving.

### **3.2 Tao in the One**

The movement of Tao is fully displayed in the dialectical thinking of Being and Nothingness which is the most fundamental conception in Taoism. “The word Nothingness may be used to designate the beginning of Heaven and Earth; The word Existence (Being) may be used to designate the mother of all things. [ . . . ] All things of the world are born from Existence (Being), and Being from Nothingness” (*TTC* ch1, 40). Hughes with his knowledge of Taoism expresses extensively the interplay of Being and Nothingness in his poems.

#### **3.2.1 Becoming of Being and Nothingness**

According to Lao Tzu, Nothingness (Not-being) is the basis of being and origin of all creatures in the world. The conception of Being and

Nothingness is revealed in Hughes' "Widdop" in *Remains of Elmet*:

Where there was nothing  
Somebody put a frightened lake  
[ . . . . . ]  
Nothing else  
Except when a gull blows through  
  
A rip in the fabric

Out of nothingness into nothingness. (CP 488)

"Out of nothingness and into nothingness" exemplifies Hughes' Taoist ontology. Nothingness is the origin of being, therefore comes the being of all creatures including the gull. Since "All things however they flourish return to the root from which they grew" (*TTC* ch16). Finally, the gull disappears into nothingness. This process fully displays the Taoist wisdom that being and Not-being (nothingness) grow out of one another. For Hughes, Human beings are like gulls. This view is shared by Chuang Tzu: "Man's life between heaven and earth is like the passing of a white colt glimpsed through a crack in the wall—whoosh!—and that's the end" (*CT* 240).

The constant and indispensable presence of life and death in the universe perfectly exemplifies interaction of Being and Nothingness. Hughes' awareness of the inevitability and necessity of death beneath the wonder of natural life suggests his insight into the nature of life in the universe. Living-death pattern is a recurring theme in Hughes' poetry which informs his perception of our mutual world. The death of Hughes' mother, wife and uncle are referred to in several poems. Hughes' sense of loss of Plath among these relatives is of particularly significance. Through the suicide of Plath, Hughes experienced for the first time the intensive feeling to be left alone with the "original emptiness" when Plath had been in his life and then abruptly was not. There is always something that men can do nothing about. Chuang Tzu says, "Life and death are fated—constant as the succession of dark and dawn, a matter of heaven" (*CT* 80). Those who understands Heavenly joy knows that life is working of Heaven, and death is the transformation of things. As we are born, we evolve from formless mass—nothingness into regular life—being. So is natural that life in its turn evolves into death—formless mass.

In "Heptonstall Cemetery," though Hughes' families are dead, disappearing into nothingness from being, they obtain another form of existence: in the form of "living feathers," moving towards "where all the horizons lift wings" (*CP* 492). In traditional Chinese culture, "horizon" refers to the place where a river and sky meet, namely the very place

where material world and spiritual world encounter. The word “horizon” plays an important role in Hughes’ life, as he claims, “if any words could be engraved in my skull, [. . .] it would probably be the word ‘horizon’” (Scigaj *Form and Imagination* 240). With his profound understanding of Taoism, Hughes in this poem implies the mysterious interaction between the invisible spiritual presence and the visible but impalpable death. Life is the companion of death, and death signifies the beginning of a new life. Life and death is the natural cycling of the universe “where sun roles bear; and earth rolls bear” (*CP* 681).

Similarly, the flourishing and fall of the Calder Valley echoes the theme of Being and Nothingness. With the imminence of industrialization, the tranquility of the valley is broken and the natural vitality gradually dies down. And finally, there is only “remains of Elmet” left in fragments. The story of Calder valley suggests the cruelty of the universe and offers clues for man’s hegemony over nature, while it supplies people with hope of blessing and spiritual rebirth through “Valley Spirit” embodied in Taoism. It is believed by Hughes that the spirit of valley can resurrect and help people regain communicative power with nature.

### 3.2.2 Inaction (wu wei): Effective Action

Being and Nothingness is a recurring theme in Taoism. Hence are

yielded ideas such as that to grasp is to lose, to yield is to conquer, to be perfect is to invite diminution, to climb is to invite fall, and to obtain is to be inactive.

Where Tao exists and how the power of Tao works is a question upon which Taoists throw much light, however it is still the most ambiguous point to understand. In the story that Dong Guozi asks Chuang Tzu for Tao, Chuang Tzu simplifies by “everywhere.” When he is asked to explain further, Chuang Tzu continuously offers his answer: “in the ants,” “in the panic grass,” “in the tiles and shards,” and “in piss and shit.” As a result, Dong Guozi, as most people possibly do, is puzzled why Tao exists in such a bad place and why the place it attends gradually becomes worse. (CT 241) It is indicated by Chuang Tzu through this story that Tao is a universal truth that is able to exist anywhere despite of being rich or poor, superior or inferior. There is nowhere it does not attend and nothing could escape its presence. Therefore, the power of Tao is utilized without identification in many arts and crafts, such as fishing, wheelwright making, carpentry, butchery, etc.

Lao Tzu maintains: “it is the way of Heaven not to strive, but none the less to conquer” (TTC ch73). The movement of Tao is a continuous interplay between the opposite. Things will develop in the opposite direction when they become extreme. “To remain whole, be twisted. To become straight, let yourself be bent. To become full, be hollow. Be

tattered, that you may be renewed. Those that have much, are but perplexed” (*TTC* ch22). Therefore, Taoism holds the idea of “keeping to stillness” and “inaction (wu wei)” which actually embodies great wisdom of Tao and thus offers an effective way to achieve one’s goal by following the law of nature.

Confronted with ecological crisis caused by new science and industrialization, Hughes gives his suggestion in poems. Mankind is not only made of elements of nature, but also made for nature which embodies both constructive and destructive energies. In reality, there has been evidence that we are revenged by nature for our malicious invasion. Therefore, it is suggested by Hughes that we should learn our lesson and retreat from nature.

In “Tree,” Hughes compares himself to the tree that finally achieves rebirth by keeping inaction (wu wei). The opening line “a priest from different land” indicates that Taoism came into his vision the moment Hughes was going to desperation after a furious struggle against criticism from the public. After suicide of his first wife Plath, Hughes suffered a lot from the public, especially the feminists, as it is described in the poem: “under unending interrogation by wind / Tortured by scaldings of light / Tried to confess all but could not blood a word” (*CP* 467). Hughes’ life was exposed in the light of media, and various versions of his story with Plath were thrown here and there mercilessly. Hughes was eager to



expose the truth and tried to confess all himself but finally found it impossible for the sake of everyone concerned. Trapped in such a tangle, Taoism came into his vision at the right moment. Heaven is like one who says little, yet none the less he lays his plans. Therefore, Hughes chose to keep silence: “lets what happens to him simply happen” (*CP* 467). Finally Hughes achieved greatness by following “inaction (wu wei)” preached in Taoism. That “He does not contend, and for that very reason no one under heaven can contend with him” is thus proved. (*TTC* ch22)

For Hughes, the way to achieve effectiveness through inaction (wu wei) is practiced in fishing. When you are fishing, your whole being rests lightly on the float—but with a kind of alertness for any twitch of the float. This is called by Hughes “concentrated excitement,” through which it is possible to “bring up some lovely solid thing like living metal from a world where nothing exists but those inevitable facts which raise life out of nothing and return it to nothing” (*PIM* 61).

As the fisherman is full aware of the fishes below in the dark and strives to catch one, the world of beauties down there is suspended in total ignorance of him. However, fishes come for the bait by themselves when the fisherman retreats to “concentrated excitement”—inaction (wu wei). “After Moonless Midnight” describes such an interaction between the two kinds of creatures: fishes and men:

I waded, deepening, and the fish

Listened for me.

[.....]

They waited for me. The whole river

Listened to me, and, blind,

Invisibly watched me. And held me deeper

With its blind, invisible hands.

“We’ve got him,” it whispered, “We’ve got him.” (*CP* 659-60)

As the fisherman retreated, fishes came for the bait themselves. When the fisherman forgot his aim and was invited into a “concentrated excitement,” the identity of fishes and men exchanged: in the stillness, fishes’ eyes instead of the fishermen’s waited; fishes’ gills moved while the fisherman’s hands held; fishes’ mouth aimed intent at bait instead of the vice versa by the fisherman. In the world of water, fishes rather than men are those who are specialized. With his realization of this natural law, the fisherman retreated as fishes became invaders. Therefore, such a scene is presented in the last verse of the poem: “‘We’ve got him,’ it whispered, ‘We’ve got him.’” It is the way of Heaven and Earth to lose everything to get possess everything. Chuang Tzu maintains: “limpidity, silence, emptiness, inaction (*wu wei*)—these are the level of Heaven and Earth, the substance of the way and its virtue” (*CT* 142). Following the

law of nature, the fisherman achieves his goal through inaction (wu wei), which proves the unity of aim and principle in Taoism.

### **3.2.3 The One: Unity of Man and Nature**

Tao is something that is at the same time both within and without. In the Tao, all opposites are blended and all contrasts harmonize. One can achieve effectiveness through inaction (wu wei) by following the law of nature, which is included in the expression of the “One”: “unity of man and nature.” Lao Tzu says, “Heaven that holds the One becomes clear and bright; Earth that holds the One becomes steady; God that holds the One become efficacious; Valleys that hold the One become full; All creatures that hold the One become alive” (*TTC* ch39). Unity of man and nature is the ultimate beauty in Taoist thought.

Hughes’ poetry, as he has claimed, records “how the forces of the universe try to redress some balance disturbed by human error” (Dyson 101). “After Moonless Midnight” displays the idea of unity of man and nature. When the fisherman gradually immersed himself in nature, “waded, deepening” (*CP* 659), the fish, in their magical skins, suddenly stalked the fisherman. The river and its fish “held me (the fisherman) deeper / with its blind, invisible hands” (*CP* 660). The subject and the object are opposite as well as complementary to each other. As human

beings retreat from the position of the subject, never are fishes the object. Fishes and man mingle with each other and melt into nature. Unity of man and nature is thus achieved.

The poet further reveals the beauty of a true unity between men and nature in “Go Fishing” (CP 652). At the beginning of the poem, a harmonious picture is presented: “Join water, wade in underbeing / Let brain mist into moist earth.” The task of fishing becomes a joyous play with the water. In his integration with the natural world, human beings “lose words / Cease / Be assumed into glistening of lymph.” Gradually, the fishermen realize the fact that human beings are one part of nature and are “supplanted by mud and leaves and pebbles.” Therefore, it is possible for men to dissolve in “earth-wave and the soft sun-shock,” dissemble in “sun-melt,” and “become translucent” in the drifting of water and light. Getting rid of the supposed superiority upon other creatures, human beings finally rejoin nature and regain their identity as one part of the palpable, mysterious universe. And a final glimpse of Tao is achieved in the unity of man and nature: “Try to speak and nearly succeed / Heal into time and other people,” for the Tao that can be expressed is not ultimate and eternal Tao.

In “Salmon Eggs,” the last poem in *River*, the fisherman loosens his spiritual self into the river’s elemental mesh of water and light:

## January haze

With a veined yolk of sun. In bone-damp cold

I lean and watch the water, listening to water

Till my eyes forget me

[. . . . .]

Something else is going on in the river

More vital than death—death here seems a superficiality

Of small scaly limbs, parasitical. More grave than life

Whose reflex jaws and famished crystals

Seem incidental. (CP 680)

Till eyes forget him, the fisherman is no longer examining the world with eyes, but is feeling nature with heart. It is not simply the presence of elements, but the encounter and interaction between the elemental things and the presence of human beings. Chuang Tzu says: “Heaven and earth have their great beauties but do not speak of them” (CT 236), it is felt through inner communication. It is a sign that the poet’s instinctual being repressed in civilized life rises up as it senses a return to its proper field of action.

“Forgetting” is a concept of particular importance in Taoism. Chuang Tzu explores extensively “forgetting benefits,” “forgetting others,” “forgetting death,” and “forgetting oneself,” etc., by which one is

able to live a natural life. In the poem above, Hughes not only exhibits, but also practices Chuang Tzu's concept of "forgetting." In the view of Hughes, death is incidental and superficial and there is something "more vital than death" and "more grave than life" which can not be expressed in words, for "To this telling—these tidings of plasm— / The melting of mouthing silence, the charge of light / Dumb with immensity" (*CP* 680). As we try to show, the mouthing melts into silence and immensity of dumbness. A glimpse of Tao is indicated. With this final glimpse of the Tao, man and nature forget each other, moving towards "unity of man and nature."

Hughes mentions the need to refresh ourselves occasionally by escaping the cities and returning to the wilderness, for he believes that "it is only there that the ancient instincts and feelings in which most of our body lives on can feel at home and on their own ground" (*PIM* 76). Hughes retreated into countryside in his practice of Taoism in 1970s. However it is not suggested that Hughes has to return to the real nature to find his inspiration for his poems in *River and Remains of Elmet*. On the contrary, Hughes never needs to return to nature to achieve wholeness for it lives in his heart.

However, we must admit that "escape and return" itself reveals the reality that we once left or are distancing from nature, which is the greatest tragedy both inescapable and indispensable in the development of

history. It has been generally acknowledged as a universal law that we need to move forward for development and improvement in promise that we will come back to the point where we started with a better comprehension of the universe and our place in the universe, yet it is at the cost of loss of nature. This is a crucial reality that everyone in modern society is forced to confront. Hughes is no exception. With his knowledge of Taoism, he tries to retain contact with natural energies through poetry which he believes can open our sense to the natural world, and help us attend to the lessons of our misdeed. As natural energies are channeled into the sterility of the modern world, we rejoin nature for a harmonious existence in practice of Taoism.

According to Hughes, the real problem of our sick society comes from “the fact that [our] outer world and inner world are independent at any moment,” so what we need to do is to pay equal attention to both sides, embrace both worlds simultaneously, and keep faith, “as Goethe says, with the world of things and the world of spirit equally” (“Myth and Education” 1976: 91).

In *River and Remains of Elmet*, Hughes immerses himself in the Mother Nature and achieves communication with the outer natural world while he goes on his quest for wholeness of inner spirit in his last poem collection *Birthday Letter*.

## Chapter 4

### ***Birthday Letters: Achieving Rebirth of Inner Spirit***

Referring to the greatness of Yeats' poetry, Hughes observes that "the ideal aspect of Yeats' development was that he managed to develop his poetry both outwardly into history and the common imagery of everyday life at the same time as he developed it inwardly in a sort of close parallel" ("Ted Hughes and Crow" 14-15). Actually, such a developmental pattern of poem writing—to seek wholeness both outwardly and inwardly—is perfectly fulfilled by Hughes himself in his own poetry, so that he could speak of both simultaneously.

Taoists recommend refraining from the lure of fame and strangling of success by retreating into the great nature, and many ancient Chinese scholars seem to prove the effectiveness of such a way in their practices. However, what is really alluded in Taoism is inner cultivation. It is well known that irony and paradox are enormously utilized in Taoist languages. Both Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu employ extensively what is the opposite or something that seems to be absurd to mean what is originally intended to be true. Therefore, what Taoist suggests by retreating into the outer natural world means exactly what is intended to explore one's inner spiritual nature. As his knowledge of Taoism increased, Hughes came to



realize that a final unity could not be obtained through outward struggling; instead, it could be achieved through ceaseless inner spiritual cultivation. For Hughes, poetry is a way to gain entry into one's innermost being. In this sense, his last poem collection *Birthday Letter* (1998) in which Hughes explores his inner spiritual nature not only accords with, but also further extends the theme of the thesis though it is not a collection depicting the real nature world any more.

*Birthday Letter*, as Hughes confesses, is a way of making a "direct, private inner contact" with his first wife. (Feinstein 232) It is a journey of self searching and discovery for wholeness of inner spirit. *Birthday Letter* will be analyzed as a whole in this chapter so as to reveal the significance of Taoist thought for Hughes and his poetry as well.

#### **4.1 Way into the Heart**

Lao Tzu believes that "the further one travels, the less one knows. Therefore the sage arrives without going, see all without looking, and does nothing, yet achieves everything" (*TTC* ch47). Poetry with its poetic imagination, as Hughes believes, can provide a magical and powerful way of reaching our feelings and emotions—our subconscious natural energies. Therefore, Hughes explores his inner spirit for a genuine self in *Birthday Letter*.

The whole collection of *Birthday Letter* resonates with love and loss.

Hughes altogether presents 88 poems depicting both his life with Sylvia Plath and life after her death, with his passionate feeling for her overflowing the whole collection. Hughes confesses that *Birthday Letter* is a direct, private inner contact with his first wife to give a clearance for the things he should have solved thirty years ago. Since Hughes is well acquainted with the truth that one's life is intimately related to the others, this poem collection is published for the sake of both Sylvia Plath and himself.

Hughes' love for Plath exemplified in *Birthday Letter* is so bare that nobody would doubt its truth. "Fulbright Scholars" presents a picture of the American girl—Sylvia Plath with vivid and graphic description. It was the image of Plath that intruded into Hughes' mind for the first time. The language seems plain, the atmosphere, boring, however, the passionate feeling, like stuffed fishes under the water eager for fresh air, is so intense and shocking. In the eyes of Hughes, the beloved Plath is completely a new world, as it is stated in "18 Rugby Street": "So this is America, I marveled. / Beautiful, beautiful America!" (CP 1058)

However, Plath's suicide in 1963 causes Hughes unbearable pain on the one hand; on the other hand, the miserable story results in a continuous debate over thirty years. Hughes has been severely attacked by certain critics, especially the feminists who believe that Hughes should be responsible for the death of Plath due to his betrayal and unfaithfulness

in their marriage. In this sense, it seems unbelievable for anybody to keep a peaceful mood in those years when watching his young self picked over by biographers, scholars, critics, article writers, and newspaper journalists. Hughes should not be an exception either. There is no doubt why Stephen Spenser, in a letter to Hughes in 1988 with sympathy for his being continually dragged through the most painful events, marveled at Hughes' courage in continuing to live such a rich and creative life. The reason for this is probably that his passion for Plath through years of pushing and dragging remains to be love rather than hatred. It sees evidence in Emma Tennant who believes Hughes' being is still obsessed with Sylvia Plath.

Tennant reports that Hughes once said in staring up a flock of geese, "they are faithful to their first mate. [. . .] I may be" (Feinstein 202). Though it is a casual saying, it can best serve as a reflection of his real feeling for Plath because the reality of our inner world is often revealed in casual behaviors driven by the subconscious from the perspective of psychology. Hughes is still spiritually loyal to his first wife Plath.

As to those poems with melody for fate and for each other, it can be understood in the following way. As people grow older, they forgive themselves and each other and may even come to realize that what they are forgiving for is youth. Hughes grows to this age and is able to look back the tumults of young adulthood with sympathy and without anger. His genuine grief and sincere self accusation can be sensed from his

poems.

The poem “Red” exemplifies Hughes’ understanding of Plath’s choice of death. Red, the color of Plath, alludes to her death and seems to suggest haunting dreams subsequently aroused. However, in the comparison of red and blue, Hughes thinks that blue rather than red is better for her. In Hughes’ heart, the life with Plath and that after her death are not nightmares indicated by red, but tender dreams represented by blue, for he believes that the spirit of Plath is kind and thoughtful. However, death is a crucial reality that no one can do anything to change or subvert. Hughes’ deepest sorrow and sympathy for Plath is revealed: “but the jewel you lost is blue” (*CP* 1170).

Hughes sincere self-accusation and reflection gradually refrains him from this pathetic story. Hughes once confessed to Plath’s best friend Elizabeth Sigmund: “it doesn’t fall to many men to murder a genius. [. . .] I hear the wolves howling in the park and it’s very apt” (Feinstein 149). As it is displayed in “Life after Death,” the wolves which have been threats to Hughes shift to be his companion that offers him consolation: “Wolves consoled us. Two or three times a night / For minutes on end / They sang. They had found where we lay” (*CP* 1161).

The power of poetry is unimaginable since “poetry is a natural flow of powerful feelings.” Even Sylvia Plath’s friend Al Alvarez who might have expected to look for signs of Hughes’ attempting to whitewash his

own guilt senses the note of genuine grief in the poetry and shows his understanding: “Hughes takes the bare bones on which biographies have been hung.” He “does what no biographer, however diligent and impartial, could ever do: say what it felt like to be there with her” (Feinstein 234). Nevertheless, for Hughes, *Birthday Letter* is a journey into the heart to confront his inner spirit bravely and frankly.

#### **4.2 Cycling: Movement of Tao**

Shelly says in “To a Sky-Lark” that “our sweetest songs are those that tell of the saddest thought.” Remembering is what Hughes has tried to make us enjoy throughout *Birthday letter*. However, for Hughes, to remember is not a sweet journey all the way and sometimes it is so torturing that it makes him sweat, burn and even bleed. Regardless of its genuine tone revealed in the poems, the publication of *Birthday letter* is considered by some critics as Hughes’ self-defense on the matter of Sylvia Plath after keeping silence for decades. However it is not an argumentation in the view of the author.

As we all know, Hughes has been extremely reticent about his life with Sylvia Plath despite his selflessly endeavor for promoting her poetry. He has written no memoir and gives no interviews relevant to her. Even his writings about her work touch nothing else but the work itself.

Therefore *Birthday Letter* (1998), the last poem collection in his life, is Hughes' first and the only piece of work to deal with Plath. As a poet, Hughes knows no less than the others that poetry is the last way for people to seek truth. Therefore it could not be intended by the poet for a defense. Hughes chose to remain silence on the matter with Plath in almost thirty years for his belief in the healing power of "Forgetfulness." In the foreword to *The Journal of Sylvia Plath* (1983), Hughes explains his burning of Plath's diary written in several months before her suicide: "The last of these contained entries for several months, and I destroyed it because I did not want her children to read it. (In those days I regarded forgetfulness as an essential part of survival)" (Plath xi). The words in the brackets are particularly noteworthy.

For years, "forgetfulness" has been regarded by Hughes as an essential part of survival. He chooses to remain silent in the matter of Sylvia Plath in consideration of his children whose impression about their mother would be through nothing else but distorted words. He knows that the alternative would make him a projection post for every worse suspicion, and his silence seems to confirm every accusation and fantasy. However, confronted with question for the truth of his proof, Hughes has no other choice: "I have never given any account of Sylvia, because I saw quite clearly from the first day that I'm the only person in this business who can not be believed by all who need to find me guilty" (Malcolm

141). Left in such an irreconcilable entanglement, he is aware of the importance and necessity in following the law of the universe and holds that being silence over weighted at that time. As Lao Tzu believes: “He who is wise will not speak; He who speaks is not wise” (*TTC* ch56). In his practice of Taoist inaction (*wu wei*), Hughes, together with his families, survives those miserable sufferings and gains temporary peace.

On the other hand, Hughes’ adoption of inaction (*wu wei*) is in view that it was not the right moment. The more furiously he struggles, the more severely will he be misjudged, since he understands well that “To remain whole, be twisted. To become straight, let yourself be bent. [. . .] be tattered, that you may be renewed. Those that have much, are but perplexed” (*TTC* ch22). Therefore, Hughes is aware from the beginning that keeping silence is a strategy adopted temporarily. “Forgetfulness” is a temporary solution to stop pains, but not the medicine to end bitterness.

It is true, as Malcolm believes, that “whatever Hughes might have done or redone in his relationship to Sylvia Plath, the opportunity was taken away from him when she committed suicide” (7). Hughes has lost his chance to defend or deny anything with the death of Plath on her part, however, Hughes still bears his part of obligation to confess, which as he finds later is necessary in view of both himself and Plath.

In a reading given at Simon Armitage and the Smith Bank Sep, 1994, Hughes read aloud a piece of his life with Plath, which aroused violent

applause from audience. It is conceivable that this positive response confirms what he has already discovered—it is in poetry that he must confront everything.

In 1995 *Paris Review* with Drue Heinz, Hughes observes: “Why do human beings need to confess? Maybe if you don’t have that secret confession, you don’t have a poem, —don’t even have a story. Don’t have a writer” (Feinstein 229). It seems clear that the only way possible for Hughes to go on living with Plath is in words. Therefore, Hughes began a new way out in his poems, and initiated searching for his own self-portrait approaching the end of his life.

The starting point of that “The good man does not prove by argument. And he who proves by argument is not good” (*TTC* ch81) is following the law of nature. Therefore it becomes necessary for Hughes to give a clearance for the things he should have solved thirty years ago as approaching the end of his life since “all things however they flourish return to the root from which they grew” (*TTC* ch16). Though he is aware that telling out his passion with Plath would not be easy, Hughes is clearer that if one intends to seek for wholeness, he must know and accept everything.

“This return to root is called Quietness; Quietness is called submission for fate; what has submitted to fate has become part of the always-so. To know the always-so is to be illuminated” (*TTC* ch16). The



effectiveness is thus achieved through this “Quiteness.” Thom Gun, a notable friend who shares Hughes’ sense of power of poetry, thinks it is essential for Hughes to publish what he has written. He believes that such a book would be good for the record; in the meantime, it could promote Hughes’ own well-being. In the letter read on the Awarding ceremony of TS Eliot Prize for *Birthday Letter* by his daughter, Hughes explains the strong release that telling about his life with Sylvia has brought him. Taoist thought of unity of aim and principle and unity of destiny and freedom is fully reflected on Ted Hughes.

Tao can not be obtained in outer struggles. It can only be achieved in our ceaseless pursuit for inner spirit cultivation. *Birthday Letter* is not a work intended by Hughes to subvert or defend his image, but a genuine exploration of his inner temple for spiritual wholeness. “Cycling is the movement of Tao” (*ITC* ch40). Through the imaginative power of poetry and service of Taoist wisdom, Hughes accomplishes his questing journey towards self knowledge and achieves rebirth of his inner spirit.

What Hughes has done is adding his view of life with Plath, without which it would be incomplete for both history and Hughes and Plath themselves. Readers are left in a tangle of different viewpoints. If one tries to make sense of it as one tries to do with Tao, it would go wrong one way or another. For truth is, as Anne Stevenson wrote in her letter to Malcolm, “in its nature, multiple and contradictory, part of the flux

history, untrappable in language” (80). Therefore, what one needs to do is to live with the anxiety that such uncertainty generates as one has to live with the anxiety of absence and inadequacy of language, to read and reread his poetry until one ceases to think of what he is saying, and instead develops an intuitive sense of the mind moving beyond words and of the world in which it moves. Chuang Tzu points out that “The fish trap exists because of the fish; once you’ve gotten the fish, you can forget the trap. [ . . . ] Words exist because of meaning; once you’ve gotten the meaning, you can forget the words” (CT 302).

Cycling is the movement of Tao. From *Hawk in the Rain* to *Birthday Letter*, Hughes experiences a poetic and spiritual journey in more than forty years with many setbacks and cul-de-sacs, and finally arrives at full circle from a world made of blood back to the same world now seen, a world made of light. H. V. Hofmannstahl maintains in his summary of Romanticism: “Each development evolves in a spiral form, and will return to the point where you started, yet at a higher level” (张隆溪《道与逻各斯》 93). Hughes has quested far away and finally returned to the world seen when he was born, yet with his life fulfilled and spirit glorified and purified.

## Conclusion

Hughes says in terms of influence: “This whole business of influence is mysterious. Sometimes it’s just a few words that open up a whole prospect. They may occur anywhere” (“Ted Hughes and Crow” 14-15). Hughes does not admit to the public the influence of Taoism as he has done earlier with influences from Ransom, Grave, Yeats, et al. However, it does not necessarily deny the influence from Taoism as a whole. On the contrary, it can be interpreted as Hughes’ practice of Tao in Taoism, since Lao Tzu concludes in the last chapter of *Tao Te Ching*: “True words are not fine sounding. Fine sounding words are not true. The good man does not prove by argument; and he who proves by argument is not good. A man of true learning does not show off his learning. He who shows off his learning does not have true learning” (*TTC* ch81). Taoism, for Hughes, is “a truth under all the truths. Far beyond human words” (Faas 190). In this sense, Hughes’ silence on the influence of Taoism is a reflection of his true learning in practice of great Taoist wisdom.

Hughes’ reading of Taoism is for sure. Leonard M. Scigaj proves in his studies that Hughes’ interest in Taoism has started since mid-seventies. (*Ted Hughes* 21) Besides, the Australian scholar Ann Skea agrees with Scigaj on the analysis of Hughes’ *River* and *Remains of Elmet*. She

believes that “Hughes’ vision of the world, and the way in which he presents it, is holistic. In this respect, as Scigaj has ably demonstrated, it closely resembles the world view of many Oriental philosophies, and of Taoism in particular” (209). Moreover, Hughes, after reading of Scigaj’s draft on his Taoist thought, admits that the whole main part of the essay finds the kind of sense in the poems he tries to put there. (Scigaj *Form and Imagination* 335)

The thesis explores in detail the main paths that Hughes has traversed in his poems, and shows how certain of Hughes’ early beliefs concerning the power of nature and healing power of poetic imagination have been reinforced and developed with his receptivity of Taoist thought. Hughes’ childhood environment, life experience and his openness to various forms of literature from worldwide contribute to his receptivity of Taoism. There is potential Taoist thought in Hughes’ nature, and it grows as his understanding of life and nature deepens with his sufferings until it comes to a maturity when he finally approaches Taoist works. So is the way of Taoist thought in his poetry. Conceptions of Intuition and Being itself stressed in Taoist thought are suggested in his early poems in which Hughes shows his reverence for nature, while ideas of Taoist thought such as “Tao of Water,” “Valley Spirit,” “Being and Nothingness,” “Inaction (wu wei): Effective Action,” and “Unity of Man and Nature” come to flourish in *River* and *Remains of Elmet*. Hughes regains harmony with the

outer natural world in his practice of Taoist inaction (wu wei). Moreover, his last collection *Birthday letter* is Hughes' exploration of his inner spirit and stands for a consummation of his belief in Taoism as both a poet and a living creature.

Some poets have to struggle for a whole life to find a voice that is truly their own. Hughes, as Feinstein believes, discovers his own early. (244) Taoism is an influential source of the voice. Undoubtedly, Hughes' poems are imbued with Taoist thought which brings aesthetic enjoyment as well as spiritual cultivation to us. Hughes chooses a journey into heart by following "Tao of Water" in both life and writing, and thus survives the misfortune of life and achieves marvelous results in poetry. Hughes' belief in and practice of Taoism in both life and poems earns him reverence and makes a whole of his life as well. Therefore he is a great man and a great poet.

The brilliance of Hughes' poetry owes to his inclusiveness of various cultures, among which Taoism is by no means an indispensable element. However, it is not suggested in this thesis that Hughes attempts to formulate one philosophy as his own practice or any fixed attitudes towards life. As Hughes remarks, "I can't say I ever quested deliberately for a philosophy" (Dyson 105), the scope of Hughes' poetry, and of the belief from which it stems, is broad. Great scholars will not be trapped in one culture but must be open to a variety of traditions. In the process of

integration into his life experience, one starts his own conversation with the universe.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> On Hughes' Memorial service held at Westminster Abbey May13, 1999, the Irish poet and Nobel Prize winner for Literature Seamus Heaney addressed in the title of "A Great Man, A Great Poet." The article was translated into Chinese by Zhang Ziqing in 2000. (希默斯·希尼 108-109)

<sup>2</sup> There is debate over how, and whether, Taoism should be subdivided. Livia Kohn divides it into three categories: Philosophical Taoism, Religious Taoism, and Folk Taoism. (Kohn xi-xxix) The thesis focuses on "Philosophical Taoism" (Daojia 道家), and discusses philosophical Taoist thought based on the texts *Tao Te Ching* (《道德经》) and *Chuang Tzu* (《庄子》).

<sup>3</sup> Inaction (Wu wei 无为) is a central and fundamental concept in Taoism. The literal meaning of wu wei is "without action." It is often expressed by the paradoxes "wei wu wei" (为无为) and "wu wei er wu bu wei" (无为而无不为), meaning "action without action" or "achieving effectiveness through inaction."

<sup>4</sup> In Taoist texts, inaction (Wu wei) is associated with water for its yielding nature. Water is soft and weak, but it can move earth and carve stones. Taoists believes that the universe works harmoniously in its own

way as water flows naturally according to its own nature. Therefore men should place their will in harmony with the natural law of the universe following “Tao of Water.”

<sup>5</sup> All quotations of Hughes’ poems in this thesis are from *Ted Hughes: Collected Poems* (refer to bibliography). For convenience, it is shown in initial letters *CP*, followed by the relevant page number.

<sup>6</sup> Referring to *Tao Te Ching in English World—A Textual Journey and World Imagination* by Xin Hongjuan, the Latin edition of *Tao Te Ching* was introduced into Europe as early as the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century. The first French version of *Tao Te Ching* was completed by Julian Pas in 1817. The first English version *The Speculations on Metaphysics, Polity and Morality of “The Old Philosopher,” Lau-tsze* by John Chalmers appeared in 1868.

<sup>7</sup> Brontë Country is the home of famous Brontë sisters and setting for Emily Brontë’s Novel *Wuthering Height*. It is a rugged county of bear moors and mountains, often rainy and windy in summer, and bleak and snowy in winter. Hughes was once called by critics a “Heathcliff” figure.

<sup>8</sup> *PIM* refers to *Poetry in the Making*, a work of suggestions by Ted Hughes for young people in poem writing. For convenience, it is shown in initial letters *PIM*.

<sup>9</sup> Hughes majored in English in Cambridge in 1952 and shifted to



Anthropology and Archeology two years later. Hughes told a particularly influential dream of a fox which caused him to abandon the study of English Literature. After graduation he took jobs such as zoo keeper, garden man, et al.

<sup>10</sup> All quotations of *Tao Te Ching* refer to translations by Arthur Waley and Gu Zhengkun (refer to bibliography). For convenience, it is abbreviated as *TTC*, followed by the relevant chapter.

<sup>11</sup> Hughes' poetry in 1960s after Plath's suicide reveals sense of darkness. According to the study of Ou Hong and Li Zidan, the poem "Rat" fully exemplifies his painful struggle against death-mare of Plath and the mercilessness of public criticism.

<sup>12</sup> The American scholar Leonard M. Scigaj in *The Poetry of Ted Hughes: Form and Imagination* studies influence upon Hughes' poetry. He proves that Hughes read Zen and Sufi literature in 1960s and developed passion for Indian Tamil poetry and Taoist writers in 1970s. Besides, he holds that Hughes' review of *The Selected Letters of Dylan Thomas* in 1969 revealed a marked Oriental influence.

<sup>13</sup> All quotations of *Chuang Tzu* refers to translation by Burton Watson (refer to bibliography). For convenience, it is shown in initial letters *CT*, followed by the relevant page number.

<sup>14</sup> Shaman is one who is dissembled by a demon, undergoes a magical death, and then is resurrected with a new body and a new spirit.

She (He) displays healing powers and provides clairvoyant information in guiding soul to the underworld, and bringing back the sick man's lost soul. A shaman poet, like a shaman, undergoes with phenomenal intensity that will produce the practical results of a regeneration of spirit by bringing up our ordinary mind the revelations of our deepest instincts and spiritual insight.

<sup>15</sup> It refers to the article "The Thought Fox" by Keith Sagar. <<http://www.keithsagar.co.uk/Downloads/Thought-Fox.doc>> Mar 15<sup>th</sup>, 2008.

<sup>16</sup> In *PIM*, Hughes has a chapter discussing relatives, in which he expresses his confidence in writing male figures and confesses his inability to explore female figures such as the mother.

<sup>17</sup> Hughes spent his first six years in Calder Valley which contributed greatly to the formation of his character and influenced his metaphors and turns of language in his writing. The landscape of Hughes' hometown Calder Valley is vividly presented in *Remains of Elmet*.

<sup>18</sup> Referring to *Taoist Aesthetics and Western Culture* by Ye Welian (叶维廉 38), Heidegger shares a lot with Taoism on the relationship between man and nature. Heidegger once admitted that his previous books should not have been written if he had read Taoism and Buddhism earlier.

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## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the following people referred to, without whom this thesis would not have been possible or at least would not have been conducted so smoothly.

My greatest thanks will go to my supervisor professor Zhang Yuejun for his constructive advice and great patience on the thesis. In more than two years' post-graduate study, he gives me enormous encouragement to move forward and leads me gradually towards a poetic world of wisdom. Besides, I am grateful to Prof. J. H. Prynne from Cambridge University and associate Prof. Li Zidan for their valuable suggestions on the thesis.

Moreover, I would like to show my sincere sensation to Prof. Liu Mingjing, Prof. Zhang Xu, Prof. He Yunbo, Prof. Huang Jianren, Prof. Li Lansheng, Prof. Wu Lingying, Prof. Li Yanbo, associate Prof. Li Ling, and associate Prof. Zeng Zhuqing, et al., in School of Foreign Languages, CSU. I have benefited profoundly from their classes which broaden my horizon and penetrate my insight into the canon of literature.

Special thanks go to my friends, especially Zou Wenhong, Zhou Dan, Liang Zhuofei for assisting me in proofreading the thesis.

Finally, I am indebted to my parents and my dear brother and sister who have been and will forever be the strongest support in my life.

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