

Article

## **Representation of Human Violence Against Nature in Ted Hughes' Selected Poems**

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#### Article Information

#### Abstract

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The existence of nature-themed literary work is not only used as a setting, but also as a critique of how humans treat and behave to nature. The River, The River in March, The Jaguar, Hawk Roosting, To Paint A Water Lily, and Pike are Ted Hughes' nature-themed poems. This article analyzes human behavior against nature using eco-criticism proposed by Cheryll Glotfelty and applies the concepts of animals and pollution by Greg Garrard as the principle in analyzing these poems. The researchers also reveal messages from the poems about the importance of human consciousness to preserve nature. The result of this study explains that it shows human violence against nature without thinking about its impact on life of people. The human treatment depicted in these poems that reflect human life and natural conditions in England in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, where many natural disasters and natural damages occurred as the result of human bad behavior against nature. Nature is part of the life of living things and humans are dependent on nature. Therefore, the condition of nature depends on how humans treat nature.

# **INTRODUCTION**

Poetry is one of the literary works, which is valuable to be analyzed because it has complex elements such as themes, figurative language, rhyme, and messages. People have to read poetry more than one time to get a deep understanding. It is different when someone is reading a book. In addition to express feelings, a poet also can deliver some messages through a poem, one of them present about relationship between humans and nature. Nature is the Art of God that used to be the object of a poem. Alvi et al, mentioned that poetry one of the sources of inspiration for poets. They have been making use of various inspiring, curative, and confronting dimensions of nature to echo their inside (Alvi et al., <u>2019</u>).

In literature, nature is an essential part of the emergence of a literary work. Many poets use nature as an idea for writing their works. For example, Ted Hughes, an English poet, successfully described the relationship between humans and nature in his collected poems. The use of nature in poetry shows that the emergence of a poem is inspired by the poet's awareness and admiration towards natural conditions. Nature gives ideas and creativity to the poets. Furthermore, nature belongs to the binary opposition of man/nature. It is employed by many artists as a subject of artistic creation (Fomeshi & Khojastehpour, 2013). Then, they identify and write it into a poem with the theme of nature. As a poet who is aware of the importance of nature in life, Ted Hughes conveys his ideas, experiences, and concerns about nature that are not in harmony with human life. The poet's relationship and concern with nature have positioned nature as an unlimited source of inspiration.

Humans and nature are two inseparable things, both of them have their roles in life and they have a mutual relationship. As social beings, humans need nature to survive their life because nature provides things that humans need. Meanwhile, nature needs human help to conserve it, not to destroy or exploit it. In this cultural practice, it has meant the adoption of an ethical position toward the environment and the relationship between humans beings and nature (Morales-Ladrón, 2019). The most important thing about the relationship between humans and nature is how humans utilize nature without damaging it. If nature is damaged, it will make a huge impact on human life. This cultural practice, it has meant the adoption of an ethical position toward the environment and the relationship between humans beings and nature.

Literary works are a reflection of human life. One example of literary works that describe the relationship between humans and nature is Hughes poems. They are *The River*, *The River in March, The Jaguar, Hawk Roosting, To Paint A Water Lily,* and *Pike.* Ted Hughes' nature poems depict the relationship between humans and nature, especially about how humans do not show their concern toward nature. It can be seen from the meaning of each line in the poems. This research focuses on describing the relationship between humans and nature. This research explains the human violence against nature, especially on human arrogance and superiority in England society in the 20th century as captured in *The River, The River in March, The Jaguar, Hawk Roosting, To Paint A Water Lily,* and *Pike.* Then, the researchers analyze the messages contained in the poems that the readers need to know. The messages can be applied by the readers to conserve nature and it continues to give harmony for humans. This research also attempts to reflect representation of human life in the 20th century in England, which become the setting of these poems.

Ted Hughes' nature poems are the object used by literary critics and they apply some theories in analyzing nature poems. Inan and Boldan discusses that human cruelty against nature by using ecocriticism as demonstrated in *Hawk Roosting* (İnan & Boldan, 2018). They state that the eagle is a metaphor to convey the meanings and messages in the poem. Moreover, they also mention that the eagle as a symbol of human nature. This writing also contains the meaning of *Hawk Roosting* and its elements. This article provides a clear explanation of ecocriticism and how this theory can be applied in the poem. In addition, it also contains a short biography of Ted Hughes and the writers show the evidence in each line of the poem when describing the relationship between humans and the eagle. This study is related to war and politics at the end of the analysis. However, they do not go into detail. It is connected to Bandyopadhyay that she discusses several nature poems by Ted Hughes, including *The Hawk Roosting, Thrushes, The Hawk in the Rain, An Otter, The Howling of Wolves, The Horse, The Bull Moses, The Jaguars, and Wind*. She says that Hughes used animals as objects in conveying messages to readers and every animal that appears in his poem also has a symbol of itself because animals have an important role in preserving nature (Bandyopadhyay, 2013).

The writer discusses some of Ted Hughes' poems in her research, although she only shows lines in *The Hawk in The Rain* to support the analysis, not in detail. Her explanations throughout the article do not refer to other's opinions for the supporting idea. Then, Istiak analyses *Pike, The Jaguar, The Thought Fox, Hawk Roosting, and Crow*. He finds that animals are more than just cruel and vicious. He applies deconstruction and psychoanalysis theories. He states that *Pike, Hawk Roosting, and The Jaguar Roosting,* and *The Jaguar* depict human cruelty (Istiak, 2016). Meanwhile, *Crow and The Thought Fox* reflect the human spirit. Meanwhile, Chowdhury states that Hughes shows the reader about the bad side of nature and it can be seen more prominently in some of his literary works (Chowdhury, 2019). For example, in *Wind* where the situation in this poem is horrible, it is described through auditory, visual, and tactile. Also in *The Jaguar*, which explains that ferocity is an attraction. This article

mentions that Hughes did not just look at nature from its first 'layer', but he points out the terrible facts and tries to present them in positive things by combining the beauty and violence.

After all, she does not explain The Thought Fox in detail and how this poem relates to nature. Related to the theory used an article written by Pushpalatha explains that Ted Hughes uses animal imagery in some of his poems to show human cruelty. Humans lose their humanity, meanwhile the animals have to survive for their lives (Pushpalatha, 2019). This study uses ecocriticism by Glotfelty & Fromm. Ecocritcism is divided into three kinds; theyare "nature writing", ecology (such as animals and plants), and eco - practices (such as ice melting and global warming). Umapathy, focuses on the second type and relates it to Hughes' animal poem, Hawk Roosting. She explains the meaning of this poem by describing stanza by stanza. Then, she concludes that this poem describes the human characters who are arrogant, selfish, and cruel (Glotfelty & Fromm, 1996). By focusing on a single poem, she is able to explain the analysis clearly. Supremely, in an article written by Agustin and Najma they analyse the role of the author in presenting a new perspective on how to treat nature through the character of Ike McCaslin (Agustin & Najma, 2021). The analysis shows Ike's environmental which is found in three forms: Understanding the equality of human and nature; Loving and respecting nature, and Being aware of nature protection and preservation. It is expected that to raise readers' awareness of environmental problems by showing a better way to treat nature as what William Faulkner exemplifies in the story.

This research will contribute knowledge to people. Since humans do not utilize nature wisely and they keep to harm nature whereas nature is something beneficial and essential to human. We analyze how the relationship happens between humans and nature as depicted in Ted Hughes' selected poems through the beauty of languages. The relationship depends on human attitude toward nature. Thus, this research focuses on describing the relationship between humans and nature, while humans live in nature but they do not show their good behavior toward nature.

Therefore, this research is aimed to analyze the relationship between humans and nature by seeing human behavior against nature in the selected poems by Ted Hughes. As social beings, humans cannot do all the activities by themselves, but they also need other things, such as society and nature. This research explains the human violence against nature, especially on human arrogance and superiority in England society in the 20<sup>th</sup> century as captured in *The River, The River in March, The Jaguar, Hawk Roosting, To Paint A Water Lily,* and *Pike.* Then, we analyze the messages contained in the poems that the readers need to know. The messages can be applied by the readers to conserve nature and it continues to give harmony for humans.

Glotfelty and Fromm say that "ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (Glotfelty & Fromm, 1996). They argue that humans and the earth are interconnected and try to explore the ways in which literature describes these bonds and supports activists to help protect nature. Therefore, humans need to examine themselves and the world around them. They also have to interact and construct the man made environment. Then, Greg Garrard explores the development of ecocriticism and divides the concepts related to ecocriticism, as follows: *pollution, wilderness, apocalypse, dwelling, animals,* and *the earth* (Garrard, 2004). Ecocriticism and literature are related to human life. Therefore, ecocriticism provides an understanding and awareness in literary works and chooses nature as the theme to make it more interesting to read and analyze. People can also use ecocriticism to analyze other literary works, such as novels, short stories, dramas, and films.

This research discusses the selected poems of Ted Hughes with the theme of nature. Since Moral criticism deals with the messages or moral values in selected poems Shang argues, "Moral criticism examines and evaluates literature from the vantage-point of today's moral principles or the moral principles held by philosophers . . .". People know that literature is identical to its aesthetic values, but it also talks about the moral values that someone gets after reading a literary work (Shang, 2013). As Stange defines that poetry is a critique of life in the conditions established for such criticism by the laws of poetic truth and beauty of poetry (Stange, 2016). Through literary works, poets persuade people to do good things, as Najma mentions in her article that the principal purpose of literary work is to deliver morals to people and it becomes the responsibility to a critic to convey it (Najma, 2019). A good literary work is when it contains two values; they are aesthetic and moral (ethical) values. In this study, the moral values can be seen from the poet's description about the poems' meaning through the choice of words, figurative languages, and themes. By understanding moral values, people are expected to have a prosperous and happy life. We use moral criticism to evaluate the ethical content of the poems by relating human behavior against nature in poems and the impacts that can affect human life. Therefore, We judge the value of the poems by delivering morality to the readers and they should become a better person to treat nature.

The researchers use library research to collect the data. It is important to read and understand the poems by Ted Hughes from a book collection. Then, the researchers refer to some books and articles for supporting data and ideas. To analyze human violence against nature in Ted Hughes' selected poems, this research uses ecocriticism proposed by Cheryll Glotfelty and apply the concept of pollution and animals by Greg Garrard. To study the life of English society in England in 20<sup>th</sup> century and compare it to the situation in the poems, the researchers use mimetic approach by M.H Abrams.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

In *The River, The River in March, The Jaguar, Hawk Roosting, To Paint A Water Lily*, and *Pike*, the selected poems written by Ted Hughes, human cannot create a harmonious relationship with nature and only show their violent attitude towards nature, which has a negative impact on human life. Salcedo defines violence, which implies the conscious intent of the perpetrator to harm its victim, is not part of nature, humans notwithstanding. Violence in nature is in the eye of the beholder, the human observer. Doing violent action againat nature, means that humans create a bad relationship to nature (Salcedo, <u>2015</u>).

Hughes' way of representing nature in his work is quite unique. Most poets describe nature as beauty, romance, and peace, on the other hand, Hughes realistically underlines nature based on the facts and shows the dark side of nature. Therefore, he argues that violence can be seen in all aspects of life, including in nature. Violence occurs in his poems through the human attitude, natural condition, and the destruction of nature depicted in the poems. This opinion is well discussed by Mandal, he states that Hughes views violence in all spheres of life, nature and God. Hughes's view of Nature and God is dark, sinister, destructive and devilish (Mandal, 2014). He journeys from micro to macro and tries to explore the dark and deeper recesses of human psyche. Nature to Hughes is not only fierce and violent but dark, desolate, obscure and terrifying. Therefore, most of Hughes' poems describe the violence that exists in nature.

### Pollution in Human Life in the River and the River in March

Garrard says that pollution has become a culture for all people in the world and cannot be stopped. It also has become a threat to human (Garrard, <u>2004</u>). The occurrence of pollution can cause disasters and environmental damages, which relate to Garrard's concept, apocalypse. Disasters occur when nature and environmental conditions have changed as well as the destruction of ecosystems caused by human. This is because what humans have done in the past and at this time will impact the future. These two poems describe how human show their violent actions toward rivers. In *The River*, it says that river has been damaged by the world, "*The lap of his mother, broken by world*" (line 2). The meaning of the 'world' here is humans who take advantage of the river but cannot preserve it. Humans are creatures who are selfish and do not give thanks for what they have used in nature. As seen in *The River in March*, Ted Hughes describes human violence action toward rivers, depicted in some lines, which use the word "low" and "poor" as a description of the bad condition of the river, even the river shows its anger towards human behavior (*now the river is poor*). This condition occurs due to human activities that damage the beauty of the river, such as throwing rubbish into the river, so that when winter floods occur, the river will be full of rubbish and some get stuck on the riverbank (*she squats between draggled banks, fingering her rags and rubbish*). Then, humans also over-exploit the fish population in the river. It will also disrupt the river ecosystem. The extinction of the fish population in the river. It will also disrupt the river ecosystem.

Ted Hughes writes these two poems based on the actual river conditions in England in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially in Mytholmryod, Yorkshire. This location is where Ted Hughes was born and grew up. Yorkshire is an area in England irrigated by several rivers, including The River Ure, The River Nid, The River Calder, and The River Aire. The River Calder is a river located in West Yorkshire and empties into The River Aire. The River Calder has a long history of the environmental conditions around it. This river valley is called the Calder Valley. the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the textile industry in Yorkshire began to develop rapidly. River Calder was a supporting facility for the industry because by utilizing the water in this river, the labourer could wash the wool, cloth, and cotton used as raw materials. This river was also necessary transportation for carrying raw materials and to distribute products. Until now, the condition of River Calder is still quite bad because of the textile industry's activities. It was also caused by mining and turned the river into a garbage dump. Ted Hughes describes that the river becomes a crucial part of humans because rivers provide the water needed by humans. However, humans utilize water excessively and called over exploitation. This situation represents the real situation that happened in England and Wales. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there was a threefold increase in the human population. Therefore, water demand also increased, resulting in water scarcity. Climate change also affected it because of temperature changes in summer. As Kummu et.al says that in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, 14% of the world's population faced water scarcity and in the early 21st century rises to 58% (Kummu et al., 2016).

### Humans' Bad Treatment Against Animal in The Jaguar

Garrard says that the animal concept explains that confining animals in zoos is an act of violence and this opinion is also based on liberalist criticism. Through his animal poem, *The Jaguar*, Ted Hughes reveals the violent attitude of humans to animals. *The Jaguar* tells the condition of some animals in the zoo, but one animal becomes the center of attention. It is not because of its bad condition, but how this animal shows its passion as one of the strongest animals, although this animal is in a cage (Garrard, 2004).

The first stanza depicts several animals, such as apes, parrots, lion, and tiger, who live in the same environment, despite these animals come from different environments and origins. They do not seem to be enjoying their life. It can be seen from their activities, which are tired and motionless. The next animal is the parrots that look hungry. They scream loudly as if asking for help because their bodies are on fire. They do this to attract the attention of the visitors and hope to get some nuts from them. Then, in line 5 - line 6:

## Lie still as the sun. The boa-constrictor's coil

Is a fossil. Cage after cage seems empty, or

The boa constrictor can be an attraction for visitors, but its presence is not felt by visitors because the coil is stiff. This snake does not move too much like the sun, which only moves twice a day, at sunrise and sunset. Hughes compares this animal to a fossil, an old object from the remains of living things that have died in ancient times.

Ted Hughes tells the readers that animal life in zoos is not as comfortable and pleasant as visitors see. Several news has reported many violent acts that occurred at the zoo because the employees or visitors can do this action. Some animals get sick because they cannot adapt to the zoo's environment and some even die because they have been mistreated by the employees at the zoo, such as being beaten and whipped for certain purposes and reasons. The cleanliness of each animal's cage must also be considered because humans who visit the zoo cannot maintain cleanliness and hygiene. They throw garbage into the animals' cage and it will affect the health of the animals.

As Wit says *The Jaguar* was motivated by Ted Hughes' work at the Reger Zoo in the fall of 1954, during this time he observed the behavior of one of the jaguars kept at there (Wit, 2015). Therefore, Hughes often witnessed the behaviour and activities of animals around him. Hughes emphasizes human pride because humans think that they can control nature, even show their violent actions. Ted Hughes sees the way of humans treat animals caged in zoos and he also wants to tell humans that animals have the right to live freely in nature. As a public place, a zoo must have a good environment and facilities for animals and visitors.

Brimblecombe & Bowler say that the existence of laws and regulations are the best solutions to prevent violent acts in zoos (Brimblecombe & Bowler, <u>1992</u>). In 1984, the zoo licensing act 1981 was inaugurated. It contains requirements for all zoos in British which aim to ensure the animals are treated well. In addition, animals must be provided with a suitable environment, so that they can behave normally.

# Humans' Attitude Causes Pollution in Hawk Roosting, to Paint A Water Lily, and Pike

As Garrard notes, "humans can both be, and be compared to, animals" (Garrard, 2004). In *Hawk Roosting, To Paint a Water Lily,* and *Pike,* there is a comparison between animals and human characters because animal characters can represent human thought. The arrogance and selfishness of humans that appear in these poems cause an imbalance in nature, as happened in England in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Humans cannot be separated from their arrogant attitude. This may be influenced by their fact as the perfect creature from God compared to other creatures such as animals and plants. The higher power humans have, they can do whatever humans want.

*Hawk Roosting* is a nature poem that tells about the character of a cruel and superiority eagle, he does not afraid of anything and anyone, even this eagle thinks of himself as a God. An eagle is personified to describe the cruelty of humans who have freedom and power over everything in nature. He can kill anyone he wants because he considers himself as the master of this world and its contents, but he does not regret his actions at all, he even enjoys all his brutal actions because it is his natural thing as a predator and the way to survive. This poem describes the kind of cruelty of humans like this eagle possesses. The eagle who can speak like a human in this poem is believed to show the human attitude towards nature and compare it to an eagle. Although the eagle is depicted as a cruel predatory bird, he does it to get food and survive. Whereas human act violence without moral just to get appreciation from others, get the highest power, and harm other creatures. In "And the earth's face upward for my inspection" (line 8), it criticizes the way of humans think about nature. The changing times will

continue to progress from time to time and cause humans to have an obsession to master everything. In this case, humanity and moral values have been forgotten and even lost. In "*Are of advantage to me*" (line 7), Hughes tries to offend humans who take advantage of nature. They take advantages of trees, sun, and air in their daily activities, but the worst thing is they cannot conserve it, resulting in damage and natural imbalance.

To Paint a Water Lily discusses everything in nature, but not everything can be seen and felt by humans, because they only see the beauty in nature. Therefore, it can be said that nature also has a dark side. Almost the entire stanza in this poem describes nature is beautiful, but at the same time, nature is a bad and chaotic thing. Human violence toward nature is described on several lines, "*There are battle - shouts*" (line 9), ".... *death cries everywhere*.... (line 10) ". These lines explain that humans give wrong ideas about nature. Nature can be a battle arena for humans and shows human violent action against nature to get their desire. Humans do not hear the screams and cries that exist in this world. Furthermore, in "Rainbow their arcs, spark, or settle" (line 13) which explains that the beauty of nature like a rainbow must exist, but the damaged and destroyed nature cannot be ignored. Therefore, humans should care about nature where they live and as the source of life for them.

*Pike* reflects human violence compared to the behaviour of predatory fish, pike. Like *Hawk Roosting*, in *Pike*, Hughes states that animals have an instinct to kill, one of them is pike. As written in "*Killers from the egg: the malevolent aged grin*" (line 3), this explains that pikes become a killer from birth because this is their way of survival. This is different from the 'kill' instinct that human have which only to achieve their obsession. It has been investigated by Hayan and Khan which mention that humans want the changes in their life. Therefore, they will always look for opportunities to get a better life and this is a natural human instinct. Humans can damage or commit violent actions against animals, plants, or anything in nature, even kill other humans to get what they want (Hayan & Khan, <u>2018</u>). In *Pike*, this fish thinks of itself as a great creature. This is a natural law which states itself to be greater and more powerful than anyone. It is influenced by pikes' and humans' selfishness. Ted Hughes tries to describe nature as a cruel place, but it depends on how humans behave nature.

Nature is very important in maintaining the balance of life. The environment will be destroyed and damaged when humans are only concerned with their own interests. Humans forget their true and higher concern, which is the concern of the environment. As the result, natural disasters that are not expected by humans will happen. Human actions as mentioned before are depicted in Hawk Roosting, To Paint A Water Lily, and Pike. Humans think that nature is created to fulfill their needs without paying attention to the balance of nature and the bad things they have done to nature, so that people become selfish, anarchist, and cruel to nature. In these poems, Hughes wants to describe human character was in western countries at that time, especially in England. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the industrial sector developed very rapidly. Vacant land that should have been used for farming or gardening was converted into factories and buildings. In developing the industry, humans used raw materials that came from nature, as example human was using coals as fuel. Humans continued to exploit it and people became greedy for a long time. Agustin & Najma also state that the pollution that occurred in England in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century did not only have effects on nature preservation, but also on human health, animals, and plants were threatened by air pollution from the smoke of the coal industry (Agustin & Najma, 2021). Smoke caused new problems for humans, such as coughing, shortness of breath, and even death. The environment did not be able to provide proper oxygen for humans because trees were also affected by air pollution.

### The Messages Portrayed in Ted Hughes' Poems

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The selected poems by Ted Hughes have an important message that he wants to convey to the readers. Then, the poems show human immoral attitude and by learning the value of the poems, humans are expected to become a better person. In *The River* and *The River in March*, Ted Hughes invites people to preserve rivers. He wants to remind people of the dangers that can be obtained if the sustainability of rivers cannot be maintained. As illustrated in *The River* in March which shows human behavior; humans throw garbage into the river (line 6), exploit river water (line 15), exploit fish in the river (line 18). In The Jaguar, Hughes wants to tell readers to treat animals properly and kindly because animals are an essential part of nature and it means that if the animal population is threatened, it will lead to the destruction of nature. Therefore, Hughes wants to make readers aware to preserve the existence of animals, including wild animals, endangered animals, and domestic animals, which aims to maintain the balance of nature. Then, in his poems entitled Hawk Roosting, To Paint A Water Lily, and Pike, Ted Hughes wants to warn people, especially rulers and tyrants are also weak creatures and surrounded by the dangers that exist in nature. As noted by Inan and Boldan, human anarchism, tyranny, do not want changes, and do not accept other opinions are human characters personified by the eagle in Hawk Roosting. Ted Hughes reminds people that strength is not the main thing that is needed in this world (İnan & Boldan, 2018).

### CONCLUSION

Like other living things, humans have a connection and dependence on nature. The meaning in *The River, The River in March, The Jaguar, Hawk Roosting, To Paint A Water Lily,* and *Pike* by Ted Hughes show a description of the bad relationship between humans and nature. In these poems, humans show their violence against nature. Nature, which is a source of the necessity for all creatures on earth, is getting damaged because of humans action. Preserving and utilizing nature wisely are the right attitudes for humans towards nature, but in these poems, humans treat nature without humanity. The selected poems that we analyzed reflect the history of the environment in England throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century and provide evidence of the society at that time treated nature. Human attitudes toward nature in these poems cause river pollution, floods, drought, and threats to animals. Nature can be a friend or enemy to humans depending on the way they treat it. Through the poems and this research, we hope that humans have a sense of responsibility and care of nature. Therefore, a literary work does not only provide entertainment but also conveys messages for its readers.

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