

“The Mystery and Intensity of Artistic Creation” in the Poem The Thought Fox

Dr. Shashikumar B

Assistant Professor, Department of English
GFGC Yelburga, Koppala
shashivijai7@gmail.com

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Abstract

The Thought-Fox by Ted Hughes first appeared in The Hawk in the Rain and remains one of his most celebrated poems. The poem is a poem about writing a poem. The poem metaphorically represents the act of poetic inspiration through the imagery of a fox. Hughes masterfully crafts a parallel between the external world and the internal imagination. This poem is a powerful reflection on the mystery and intensity of artistic creation. In other words the poem discusses the elusive and mysterious nature of creativity. The way the fox moves through the poem mirrors the way thoughts form in the poet’s mind, reinforcing the connection between nature and intellect. Hughes suggests that the creative process is not purely rational but deeply instinctual, much like the movements of a wild animal. The Thought-Fox touches on the mystery of creation and brings to the reader the idea that the act of creating, in this case the writing of a poem, is sparked by something beyond time and space.

Keywords: Imagination, Poetic Thought, Creative Language, Mystery and Intensity, Artistic Creation

Introduction

The poem metaphorically represents the poet’s struggle to find inspiration, with the fox symbolizing the emergence of a poetic idea. At the beginning of the poem, the poet suggests a moment of deep contemplation where the mind is searching for an idea. The darkness and silence surrounding the poet emphasize the difficulty of capturing inspiration. As the fox moves cautiously through the poem, leaving its “*prints into the snow*,” the creative process is depicted as gradual and delicate. Through this extended metaphor, Hughes masterfully conveys the idea that creativity is an unpredictable and organic process, requiring patience and observation.

Main Discussion

This is a poem about writing a poem. Its external action takes place in a room late at night where the poet is sitting alone at his desk. Outside the night is starless, silent, and totally black. But the poet senses a presence which disturbs him:

Through the window I see no star:
Something more near
Though deeper within darkness
Is entering the loneliness

The disturbance is not in the external darkness of the night, for the night is itself a metaphor for the deeper and more intimate darkness of the poet's imagination in whose depths an idea is mysteriously stirring. At first the idea has no clear outlines; it is not seen but felt – frail and intensely vulnerable. The poet's task is to coax (get it out of formlessness and into fuller consciousness by the sensitivity of his language. The remote stirrings of the poem are compared to the stirrings of an animal – a fox, whose body is invisible, but which feels its way forward nervously through the dark undergrowth:

Cold, delicately as the dark snow,
A fox's nose touches twig, leaf;

The half-hidden image which is contained within these lines is of soft snow brushing against the trees as it falls in dark flakes to the ground. The idea of the delicate dark snow evokes the physical reality of the fox's nose which is itself cold, dark and damp, twitching moistly and gently against twig and leaf. In this way the first feature of the fox is mysteriously defined and its wet black nose is nervously alive in the darkness, feeling its way towards us. But by inverting the natural order of the simile, and withholding the subject of the sentence, the poet succeeds in blurring its distinctness so that the fox emerges only slowly out of the formlessness of the snow. Gradually the fox's eyes appear out of the same formlessness, leading the shadowy movement of its body as it comes closer:

Two eyes serve a movement, that now
And again now, and now, and now
Sets neat prints into the snow
Between trees, and warily a lame
Shadow lags by stump and in hollow. ..

In the first two lines of this passage the rhythm of the verse is broken by the punctuation and the line-endings, while at the same time what seemed the predictable course of the rhyme scheme is deliberately departed from. Both rhythmically and phonetically the verse thus mimes the nervous, unpredictable movement of the fox as it delicately steps forward, then stops suddenly to check the terrain before it runs on only to stop again. The tracks which the fox leaves in the snow are themselves duplicated by the sounds and rhythm of the line „Sets neat prints into the snow“. The first three short words of this line are internal half-rhymes, as neat, as identical and as sharply outlined as the fox's paw-marks, and these words press down gently but distinctly into the soft open vowel of snow. The fox's body remains indistinct, a silhouette against the snow. But the phrase lame shadow itself evokes a more precise image of the fox, as it freezes alertly in its tracks, holding one front-paw in mid-air, and then moves off again like a limping animal. At the end of the stanza the words „bold to come“ are left suspended – as though the fox is pausing at the outer edge of some trees. The gap between the stanzas is itself the clearing which the fox, after hesitating warily, suddenly shoots across: “Of a body that is bold to come / across clearings”.

Ted Hughes is popularly known for the use of animal imagery. The title of the poem itself is loaded with animal imagery where the fox is compared with the thought process of a writer before composing something great. Both for the fox to make a move and for the thought to be released, they need silence and solitude. The measured and quick steps of the fox is the process of contemplative writing, and the use of „now“ for the four times focuses on the careful steps a fox takes before entering into the head of the poet. This process beautifully connotes the forming of the thought more clear and concrete. The shadow of the fox is becoming more clear and clear and its advancement through the snowy woods, leaving the foot print beautifully and artistically states that the dim thought is now clear and it is being printed in white paper. The white snow with the foot print stand for the blank paper printed with the poetic creation of the poet.

Conclusion

The Thought Fox is a poem about writing a poem. The poem metaphorically represents the act of poetic inspiration through the imagery of a fox. The poet explores the connection between the natural world and human thought. The fox, as a creature of the wild, is symbolic of the untamed, instinctive aspects of the human mind, particularly the subconscious. The poet's sensory descriptions illustrate the fox's physical presence while also symbolizing the gradual development of an idea. The way the fox moves through the poem mirrors the way thoughts form in the poet's mind, reinforcing the connection between nature and intellect. Hughes suggests that the creative process is not purely rational but deeply instinctual, much like the movements of a wild animal.

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