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In-between the Uncertainties: Ted Hughes and the Art of Negative Capability

Belirsizlikler Arasinda: Ted Hughes ve Negatif Yetenek Sanatı

Emre Çakar 0000-0003-2288-9261
Celal Bayar University

ABSTRACT
This paper deals with the analysis of the poems of Ted Hughes (1930-1998) from John Keats' term, Negative Capability. In one of his letters to his brother, Keats writes that Negative Capability is such a state in which a poet is "capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries and doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason" (1817/2005, p. 60). Moreover, poets, according to Keats, have no steady character, they must have a metamorphic identity like a chameleon to adapt themselves to troublesome situations. Keatsian Negative Capability allows the reader to interpret Hughes' poems from two distinct perspectives, one is about Hughes' personal life with his wife, Sylvia Plath, and the other one is his public persona in England. This paper aims to reveal Hughes' struggle with the difficulties both in his personal and public life and interpret his poems to display how he was negatively capable of surviving amid the tragedy of human existence and how he turned his suffering into a work of art in his poems such as "The Hawk in the Rain," "Wodwo" and "Thought Fox."

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Introduction

In one of his letters, Gustave Flaubert (1857/1965) writes, "[i]n order to survive, one must give up having clear-cut opinions about anything at all" (p. 71-2). His argument originates from the idea that human beings with "limited senses" cannot obtain absolute knowledge. In some sense, Flaubert's claim about the link between art and absoluteness is closely related to John Keats's term, "Negative Capability." Keats didn't publish a formal book of literary criticism but mentioned one of his texts of criticism in a letter to his brothers George and Tom. In December 1817, Keats wrote,

> I had not a dispute but a disquisition with Dilke on various subjects; several things dovetailed in my mind, and at once it struck me, what quality went to form a Man of Achievement, especially in Literature and which Shakespeare possessed so enormously—I mean *Negative Capability*, that is when man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason. Coleridge, for instance, would let go by a fine isolated verisimilitude caught from the Penetralium of mystery, from being incapable of remaining content with half knowledge. This pursued through Volumes would perhaps take us no further than this, that with a great poet the sense of Beauty overcomes

CONTACT Emre Çakar, Asst. Prof. Dr., Dept. of English Language and Literature, Celal Bayar University, Turkiye | emre.cakar@gmail.com; ORCID# 0000-0003-2288-9261; https://doi.org/10.47777/cankujhss.1483594

> every other consideration, or rather obliterates all consideration. (italics original) (2005, pp. 60-61)

In the passage above, Keats refers to several points at the same time; first, he considers Shakespeare a man of achievement in literature. What makes Shakespeare so great is that he possesses negative capability. According to Keats, a writer with negative capability can occupy a certain position in uncertainties, mysteries and doubts. This is the second significant point in his argument; a writer can survive in the middle of mysteries and doubts.

Those "men of achievement" represent their miseries in art by fighting against the troubles. Keats's argument covers that the negatively-capable writers can turn agonies into a work of art. The ideal poet, however, does not stick to any idea firmly while expressing his/her despair. While standing by the troubles, the ideal poet stays out of the atmosphere as an outsider to keep him/herself away from any influences. In 1817, Keats writes in a letter that "Men of Genius … have not any individuality, any determined Character" (2005, p. 52). Having no self, the poet, a man of genius, Keats designates, is a "camelion Poet" (p. 195). This ability to adapt oneself to any circumstances appears in the term chameleon poet which is uttered only once in his letters. Keats argues,

> As to the poetical Character itself … it is not itself—it has no self—it is everything and nothing—It has no character—it enjoys light and shade; it lives in gusto, be it foul or fair, high or low, rich or poor, mean or elevated. It has as much delight in conceiving an Iago as an Imogen. What shocks the virtuous philosopher, delights the camelion Poet. It does no harm from its relish of the dark side of things any more than from its taste for the bright one; because they both end in speculation. A Poet is the most unpoetical of anything in existence because he has no Identity; he is continually in for and filling some other Body. (2005, pp. 194-5)

In the above quotation, Keats sets the framework of his theory of the ideal poet as a person who likes light and shade and lives in gusto and agony at the same time. A poet with no identity is symbolised by the image of the chameleon so that the writer can easily make him/herself suitable for a troublesome situation in order to survive and reproduce him/herself again. This is about the nature of the chameleon that can easily change its colour according to the situation of its environment. Keats turns the changing character of the chameleon into a metaphor to signify the psychological ability of the poet which allows him to adapt to social life. Therefore, Keats notes, "[t]he poet has none; no identity" (1817/2005, p. 195). The opaque identity of the ideal poet enables him/her to reproduce different personalities to survive during hard times.

Keats furthers his argument by connecting negative capability to social life. The world is a place in which people suffer from troubles, and the ideal poet knows how to get away from those pains. For Keats (1817/2005), it is indispensable for the poet to build his/her soul; he notes, "how necessary a World of Pains and troubles is to school an Intelligence and make it a soul" (p. 291). By means of the troubles, the poet shapes his/her intelligence and produces a unique work of art. Through an analysis of poems like "An Otter," "The Jaguar," "Song of a Rat," "Famous Poet" and "The Thought-Fox" this paper will argue that Hughes displays a form of negative capability and deals with the complexity of human suffering to write poetry that embodies the troubles of existence. In this way, Hughes embraces a Keatsian ideal and shows how poets can confront and transform pain into art that reflects the tragedies and truths of human experience.

Social Negativity

Towards the latter half of the 1950s, Ted Hughes introduced a distinctive poetic style with his first collection, *The Hawk in the Rain* (1957), which innovatively united rural and natural imagery as its thematic centrepiece, and thereby established a notable departure in poetic sensibility. Hughes

(2003) regards himself as a survivor and he writes, "You could not fail to realise that cataclysms had happened to the population (in the first world war, where a single bad 10 minutes in no man's land would wipe out a street or even a village), to the industry (the shift to the East in textile manufacture), and to the Methodism (the new age). Gradually it dawned on you that you were living among the survivors, in the remains" (Hughes 2003, p. 1202). Hughes considers himself a "survivor" within the milieu of his hometown, Hughes witnesses a series of catastrophes wrought by the First World War and the deleterious aftermath of industrialization. Sagar (1981) claims that Hughes "suffered in childhood the crisis of our civilization in a very pure form" (p. 8). Furthermore, Sagar underlines an important observation regarding the significance of Hughes's motherland in his poetic works, he notes, "[t]he experience forced him into a fiercely dualistic attitude to life" (p. 8). This dualistic nature inherent in Hughes's perspective is apparent throughout his first three books, *The Hawk in the Rain*, *Lupercal* and *Wodwo* (p. 8). When he was seven, Hughes's family moved to Mexborough, South Yorkshire, and there he inevitably experienced a "double life" too, the first one with "the town boys, sons of miners and railwaymen" and the other one in "his bolt holes – a nearby farm or a private estate with woods and lakes" (p. 9). The binary nature reveals itself in the opening poem of his second book, *Lupercal* (1960).

The title of the book, *Lupercal*, derives from the ancient Roman pastoral festival known as Lupercalia, traditionally organised on February 15th to invoke fertility and well-being. During this festival, Roman priests would employ thongs from sacrificed animals to strike or whip barren women, supposedly to restore their fertility. A parallel depiction of this ritual occurs at the beginning of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, wherein Marc Antony is directed to touch Calpurnia in a similar manner to ensure her fertility. However, the symbolic gesture of fertility captures an inherent contradiction. As Terry Gifford (2009) posits, the title of the book represents the themes of both "violence and creativity" (p. 35). Therefore, Hughes displays a state of ambivalence beginning from the title of the book and goes on with the poems in the collection.

Published in 1960, *Lupercal* contains poems written at the end of the 50s. The tone Hughes employs in the poems of *Lupercal*, which mainly originates from a certain untamed force of humankind, is associated with the chaotic atmosphere of the 1950s, and it allows him to reveal the primitive aspects of human nature that intermingle with violence. In terms of the social milieu, Stan Smith (1975) claims that the poetry of the 1950s "returned to the central theme of violence" (p. 414). The return to the theme of violence in 1950s poetry can be understood as a response to the cultural, social and political consequences of World War II. The decade was marked by a sense of disillusionment and questioning of human nature after the brutalities of the war such as the Holocaust and the nuclear bombings in Japan. These events shook the foundations of Western ideals about progress, civilization, and rationality. Then, poets like Hughes employed violence as a motif to examine the chaotic and darker aspects of humanity. "Things Present" begins with a certain condition of uncertainty. The speaker states, "All things being done and undone" (Hughes 2003, p. 59). And the poem goes on, "As my hands adore or abandon" revealing that the poet-speaker is self-consciously aware of his/her uncertainty. Besides, the theme of violence appears in "A Woman Unconscious." In the opening line of the poem, the speaker says, "Russia and America circle each other" and alludes to the cold-war years after the second world war (p. 62). In the following lines, a woman is depicted lying on a hospital bed unconsciously and suffering from the social situation because of the atomic bombs.

War is another major subject in the poetry of Hughes. In "A Woman Unconscious," Hughes juxtaposes the representations of public and personal life. In such a senseless world that is traumatised by nuclear bombs, people become alienated terribly. However, the speaker believes that "the future's no calamitous change / But a malingering of now" (Hughes 2003, p. 62). The future is not a catastrophic change but a fake illness of having a painful ailment of the present time.

The speaker further claims that the future will be the same with the "histories, towns, [and] faces that no / Malice or accident much derange" (p. 63). At the end of the poem, Hughes deliberately keeps himself away from interfering on either side; he compares the significance of the death of a woman to the collective death of thousands. The poem reads as follows:

> Did a lesser death come
> Onto the white hospital bed
> Where one, numb beyond her last of sense,
> Closed her eyes on the world's evidence
> And into pillows sunk her head. (Hughes 2003, p. 63)

Hughes wants the reader to juxtapose the importance of the death of an unconscious woman lying on "the white hospital bed" with both the political and social disastrous climate of the world. Politically, it's shaped by the terror of mass destruction, while socially, it refers to alienation and helplessness in daily life. This duality enriches the theme of private versus public suffering and makes "A Woman Unconscious" revolve around several topics concurrently.

Remains of Elmet (1979) exemplifies many places, scenes and images from his hometown Elmet, Yorkshire, and the traces of the First World War repeat in his poems. "Long Screams" evidently carries the evil images of war, the speaker says, "Dark voices. / Swift weapons" (Hughes 1979, p. 26). Then, the speaker refers to the perpetual battle between people through the imagery of "unending bleeding" and "Deaths left over" (p. 26). The speaker reinforces the representation of war in which "The dead piled in cairns / Over the dead" (p. 26). Coming from Gaelic origin, the word cairn "resembles a larger version of the conical pile of stones that marks most summits" (Drummond 1991, p. 26). However, man-made cairns represent a death erected for remembrance (p. 27). In "Long Screams" the speaker underlines the ugly side of war in which dead people were piled up and turned into a cairn. And the speaker finishes painting the wartime picture, "Everywhere dead things for monuments / Of the dead" (Hughes 1979, p. 26). Accordingly, the dead people turn into a natural monument which signifies the dreadful side of war. At the end of the poem, the speaker says, "And now this whole scene, like a mother, / Lifts a cry … A solitary cry" (p. 26). Now, Hughes completes the imagery of the poem by uniting the title of the poem "Long Screams" with the "solitary cry" which is left after the war finishes.

While telling the story of his homeland, Hughes also gives an account of difficulties he faced in his childhood years especially referring to the memories of war in society in *Remains of Elmet*. Once again, Hughes refers to war survivors in "Hill Walls" and the speaker says, "No survivors. Here is the hulk, every rib shattered" (Hughes 1979, p. 30). Hughes claims that "The great adventure began" but this time no one survived. In this scene, however, only the wreck of a ship with its frame remained on the ground and every element of its body was smashed and broken into pieces. So, the skeleton of the ship lays on the ground in all its state of wrecks and havoc. The reason why this ship with its body lays on the ground is not revealed, but war is signified in the poem with its elements of destruction. Despite the lament references to war, Hughes highlights the only survivor of war is the body of the ship.

In "First, Mills," the thematic structure deals with the remains of war. The poem opens with a portrayal of mills, followed by descriptions of "steep wet cobbles" and "cenotaphs" (Hughes 1979, p. 34). In this picture, the mention of cenotaphs holds the attention of the reader since it means a monument built in honour of a dead person or people whose remains are somewhere else. Accordingly, in "First, Mills" the reference to war is obvious through the image of cenotaph as they are often erected after the war for those who are killed. Then, the speaker changes the scene:

> First, football pitches, crown greens,
> Then the bottomless wound of the railway station

That bled this valley to death. (Hughes 1979, p. 34)

In this stanza, the speaker begins with the imagery of football pitches and crown greens that evoke a lively social atmosphere. However, this scene suddenly changes as the railway station appears, which is portrayed as a deep, unhealing wound. Through this imagery, Hughes suggests a society traumatized by the hidden damage of past wars. Once the railway station used to be a place where people gathered, it is now a symbol of trauma and loss. The stanza closes with the representation of a valley that "bled to death" due to this wound, summarizing the themes of war and trauma that are embodied in Elmet. In the following line in "First, Mills" Hughes goes on, "A single, fatal wound. And the faces at windows / Whitened. Even the hair whitened" (1979, p. 34). Once again, the speaker refers to the wound that belongs to the railway station, but this time the wound is single and fatal, which is the cause of the trauma of Elmet. The imagery of people at windows implies a collective sense of horror and shock. The emotional consequence of the wound is emphasised by the white faces of people who are afraid of death. Then, Hughes leaves a blank and composes another single line: "Everything became very quiet" (p. 34). This line symbolises not only the people but also all nature went into silence due to the serious damage of the wound. Therefore, "The towns and the villages were sacked" and "Everything fell wetly to bits / In the memory" (p. 34). So, both "Long Screams" and "Hill Walls" in *Remains of Elmet* illustrate Hughes's vision of war and survival. In "Long Screams," Hughes embodies the brutality and pain of battle, while "Hill Walls" captures the severe state. Hughes's childhood memories turn into a nightmare and trauma due to the pains of war. Hughes adeptly shifts the reader's perspective from the universal to the personal and emphasises the notion that the tragedy of individual death evokes a far more profound sense of terror than the anticipation of possible future calamities.

Personal Negativity

The state of being in between the possible calamitous future and painful present transforms itself into the theme of belonging to nowhere in "An Otter." That Hughes (2003) chooses an animal that is "neither fish nor beast" (p. 79) represents his commitment to the state of duality, which shows itself in two different aspects. Firstly, it is the dualistic nature of the otter that is both aquatic and terrestrial; it can dwell both under water and on land. Also, it has "an eel's / Oil of water body" and "webbed feet and long ruddering tail" which enable it to move under the water like a fish (p. 79). Secondly, the otter "Gallops along land he no longer belongs to" indeed it belongs to "neither water nor land" (p. 79). This duality is emphasized with Smith's (1975) idea that the dualistic nature of otter symbolises "a deep ambivalence in the self" (p. 424), which suggests an existential conflict at the heart of the individual. Hughes's depiction of the otter, an animal that can adapt to different environments yet finds itself at home in neither, reveals the human experience of struggling with identity and the search for meaning in an indifferent world. In other words, the otter's dual nature enables it to thrive in water, yet it also moves across land, which illustrates a tension between worlds that neither fully accepts nor excludes it. Hughes extends this otter metaphor to reflect that individuals face an existential "in-betweenness," bearing various roles and identities without a fixed sense of belonging.

Hughes and Plath met at a party in Cambridge where they befriended and then later married. Their relationship contributed much to the development of Hughes's poetry, he said, when he came across Plath, he "met her library," but the suicides of Plath and Assia Wevill caused the "periods of artistic shutdown and the premature closure of poetic projects" (Webb 2013, p. 36). Especially, "Song of a Rat" which was written immediately after Plath's death signifies the precise negative and depressive atmosphere in Hughes's life. "Song of a Rat" published in the collection, *Wodwo* in 1967 announces the representation of a depressing animal in a trap. In the first part, "The Rat's Dance," the speaker says, "The rat is in the trap, it is in the trap" (Hughes 2003, p. 167). The reader can empathise with the psychology of the rat in the trap, however, Hughes does not reveal its

suffering directly, instead, he only depicts the personal distress the rat feels. In the second part, "The Rat's Vision," the poem begins,

> The rat hears the wind saying something in the straw
> And the night-fields that have come up to the fence, leaning their silence,
> The widowed land
> With its trees that know how to cry. (Hughes 2003, p. 169)

In the excerpt above, the rat is seen on a farm, not in a trap, but in the middle of the silence of the night fields. Even the land cries as it is abandoned and desolate. Yet, the dandelions beg the rat, "Do not go," the yard cinders beg, "Do not go" and the cracked trough cries as well (Hughes 2003, p. 170). And in the last part, "The Rat's Flight" the rat passes away.

In terms of his personal traumas, autobiographical elements usually repeat themselves in his poetry of Hughes. He does not directly tell his childhood events in his poems, instead, Hughes combines some autobiographical events with objective facts, yet he does not thoroughly reveal his personal feelings in the way some poets confess in their lines. When he was young, Hughes went to see one of the famous cliffs in the Calder Valley which he narrated both literally and figuratively, he writes,

> I have heard that valley is notable for its suicides, which I can believe, and I could also believe that rock is partly to blame for them … A slightly disastrous, crumbly, grey light, sunless and yet too clear, like a still from the documentary film of an accident … All because of that rock and its evil eye.
> It had an evil eye, I have no doubt. For one thing you cannot look at a precipice without thinking instantly what it would be like to fall down it, or jump down it. Mountaineers are simply men who need to counter-attack on that thought (qtd. in West 1985, p. 16)

The above excerpt manifests the conflict between the idea of suicide and the counter-attack on that thought and the conflict the young Hughes feels and later narrates in his poetry. West also establishes that "[a]t some stage in life the young Hughes felt vividly the conflicting roles of this mental drama" (1985, p. 16). However, instead of committing suicide in the valley, Hughes, like a mountaineer, challenges the idea of ending his own life. In some sense, he turns the turmoil of the conflict into a progressive activity through writing his poems.

In *The Remains of Elmet*, Hughes, in such an autobiographical manner, uses certain locations from his childhood years in his poems with specific positions. In "The Ancient Briton Lay under his Rock" Hughes refers to the Redacre Wood where the cenotaph of the ancient Briton lays. That Hughes employs the valley in his poetry is no surprise; the valley symbolises life and fertility, at the same time, peace and security (Olderr 2012, p. 212). However, Hughes does not employ the initial symbolic meaning of the valley, instead, he composes his poems by employing the landscape itself. In this sense, Hughes the poet turns into the representation of life and fertility as a poet himself.

Hughes witnessed the ravages of war firsthand, as his father, William Hughes, was a veteran of the First World War. Neil Roberts (2006) suggests that his father's traumatizing torment left an enduring mark on Hughes's childhood recollections, characterized by a pervasive sense of bitterness. Although William Hughes rarely discussed his wartime experiences, occasional nighttime outcries in his sleep indicated remaining psychological wounds (p. 13). According to some critics, not only his father's trauma but also the ordeal of war left a perpetual trace on him. His father's vivid recounting of his wartime experiences, which were coupled with the obvious psychological scars he bore, were so impactful that Hughes felt as though he personally had witnessed the apocalyptic carnage (Meyers 2013, p. 30).

In his poem "Out," included in *Wodwo*, Hughes engages in an emotional reflection on his childhood

particularly with an emphasis on recollections associated with his father. The first part of the poem, titled "The Dream Time" opens with the lines, "My father sat in his chair recovering / From the four-year mastication by gunfire and mud, / Body buffeted wordless, estranged by long soaking / In the colours of mutilation" (Hughes 1967, p. 155). The first line sets the scene establishing the focus of the poem; Hughes's father symbolises the theme of the consequences of war and its remaining effects. The use of "recovering" means a process of healing or returning to normal health. Also, it suggests his father's period of convalescence and attempts to heal himself after the trauma of war. In the second line of the poem, Hughes employs vivid language to depict the violence and brutality of his father's experiences of war. During the four-year period of the First World War, soldiers came across the frenzy of gunfire and mud, and in this line, "mastication" refers to the relentless and consuming force. In the following line, the mention of "colours of mutilation" indicates not only the physical wounds but also the psychological torments that remain long after the physical wounds. However, after the four-year hardships and restlessness of the Great War, William Hughes found himself in the house unproductive and in some sense useless, which is underscored by the "clock's tiny cog" (Hughes 1967, p. 155). According to Pearsall (2007), the passage of time in the poem "renders the father's actions passive, ineffectual," in other words, he is "literally demobilized" which is used "for discharged soldiers after the First World War" (p. 528).

In this scene, Hughes (1967), the poet places himself as a small, four-year-old child "laying on the carpet as his luckless double," which reflects his traumatised childhood memories (p. 155). Hughes vividly describes himself as a small child who is innocent and luckless. And considering himself his father's "luckless double" Hughes indicates a connection between his father and himself leaving the impression on the reader that he himself had witnessed the apocalyptic carnage. In the third part, titled "Remembrance Day," the poet-speaker says, "The shrapnel that shattered my father's paybook / Gripped me, and all his dead" (p. 156). Thus, on his personal level, Hughes writes his poem like a veteran coming back home after the war, and although he was gripped by the recollections of war as if he had gone to the battlefield. In the last part of the poem, Hughes (1967) delivers a poignant and evocative reflection on themes of loss and trauma. The poet-speaker says, "Let England close. Let the green sea-anemone close" (p. 157). Hughes concludes the poem with a powerful invocation for closure bidding farewell not only to significant elements of their personal history but also to extensive national or cultural symbols. The imagery of England along with the closing sea-anemone suggests a sense of sealing off, as Hughes prepares the reader to embrace the traumatic memories.

In an interview at a radio programme, Hughes stated that the First World War held a more significant presence within his imagination compared to the Second World War because "It was right there from the beginning so it was going on in us for eight years before the second world war came along" (qtd. in Sagar 1983, p. 10). After all those traumatic events, Hughes was not content in this terrific atmosphere and he noted, "Everything in West Yorkshire is slightly unpleasant. Nothing ever quite escapes into happiness … A disaster seems to hang around in the air there for a long time. I can never escape the impression that the whole region is in mourning for the First world war" (p. 10). In conclusion, Hughes's emotional recollection of the lasting impact of the First World War on his psyche is coupled with his observation of a pervasive sense of mourning remaining over West Yorkshire. And his memories emphasise the enduring significance of wartime trauma and its profound influence on both individual and collective consciousness.

The lingering impact of his tumultuous childhood experiences is evident in Ted Hughes's "Dust As We Are," a poem recounting the survival narrative of his father. The poem appeared in the poetry collection, *Wolfwatching*, published in 1989. The poem opens with the poet-speaker's reflection on his father: "My post-war father was so silent / He seemed to be listening" (Hughes 1989, p. 13).

This initial depiction underscores his father's passive and withdrawn demeanour, characterized by a conspicuous lack of verbal expression. Only his father's laugh had survived "nearly intact" (p. 13). Again, in the middle of the First World War, the poet-speaker vividly portrays the harrowing experiences of war: "bones and bits of equipment / Showered from every shell-burst" (p. 13). Despite the traumas of war, Hughes's father surprisingly survived, however, deeply changed; his father "had been salvaged and washed" and "He had been heavily killed. But [Hughes family] had revived him" (p. 14). Nevertheless, the poem suggests that in spite of the physical survival, William Hughes struggled to adapt to civilian life by dealing with the pains of the war.

Hughes's evocation of an animal comes up in various poems, the representation of personal suffering unfolds itself in "The Jaguar" through the image of a jaguar. The speaker opens the poem with a depiction of a zoo where apes yawn with fleas on them. The idleness of apes is reproduced in the image of a tiger and lion that "Lie still as the sun" in their cage "with indolence" (Hughes 2003, p. 19). In the next cage, it is observed that "the boa-constrictor's coil / Is a fossil" signifying its fossil-like long-time dead body, which is a reference to vastness and time is stopped there. The position of those animals in their cages arouses the feeling of confinement that is equal to one's personal suffering. Instead, those animals are posited in an unnatural place where they look like replicas of their originals. Here Hughes also portrays a zoo with cages, but it seems empty, "Cage after cage seems empty," says the speaker (p. 19). By means of the word, "empty," Hughes refers to those wild animals as dead for they do not live according to their own nature.

In the middle of the poem, the reader, figuratively, arrives at a cage different from the previous ones. Hughes changes the course of the poem by beginning the line with a "but," and it reads, "But who runs like the rest past these arrives" (Hughes 2003, p. 19). Immediately after "but," Hughes perplexes the reader with "who." Instead of revealing the animal at once, he does not utter the name of the animal to create a feeling of curiosity. At this cage, "where the crowd stands, stares, mesmerized, / As a child at a dream, at a jaguar hurrying enraged / Through prison darkness" (p. 19). The jaguar is portrayed as a living animal with its emotions and movements, in other words, it shows its natural anger which proves that it is alive, not dead like the other animals. Within such imprisonment, Hughes underlines, the jaguar does not accept the limitation of its wild nature.

In some culture, the jaguar is referred to as "the master of animals" (Olderr 2012, p. 118). Here in this barren zoo, the jaguar is represented as the master of the unnatural animalistic garden. The untamed nature with powerful emotions of the jaguar is emphasised through its "short fierce fuse" but it is "not in boredom" (Hughes 2003, p. 20). Here, Hughes deepens the juxtaposition of the image of the jaguar and that of the other animals in the zoo. It is different from the other animals in the way that it never surrenders and never accepts its imprisonment. Accordingly, Hughes invites the reader to spend some time in a zoo where animals give the impression of accepting their confinement in such a conformist manner.

In "The Jaguar," Hughes turns the image of the otter upside down by representing an animal in a place where it cannot dwell. On the other hand, the otter, both aquatic and terrestrial, can live wherever it wants. The jaguar is forced to dwell behind the bar of the cage, which signifies "the tension between boundless inner potency and an external limitation" (Smith 1975, p. 421). Through the jaguar imagery, Hughes represents the struggle for survival and the personal suffering originating from the confinement of external forces. "The Jaguar" announces "an existentially precarious humanity groping for meaning, identity and survival in a world of powerful, primaeval and barely understood natural and preternatural forces" (Ely 2015, p. 149). Accordingly, Hughes transforms the jaguar imagery into a metaphor to disclose the struggle against a negative state, the condition of imprisonment.

A Monstrously Famous Poet

Keats's argument that "Men of Genius … have not any individuality" shows itself in Hughes's poem, "Famous Poet" in which Hughes addresses rhetorical questions to the reader. The poem begins with a distinctive command, "Stare at the monster;" the speaker underlines the difference between appearance and reality. The speaker says, "… remark / How difficult it is to define just what / Amounts to monstrosity in that / Very ordinary appearance" (Hughes 2003, p. 23). The speaker is depicted as "Neither thin nor fat, / Hair between light and dark" (p. 23). At the beginning of the poem, such opposition is emphasised both in the character and the appearance of the speaker to reveal that the poet-speaker is different from the other poets with his monstrosity. The speaker, further, pushes the reader to participate in finding an answer to the question, who is the monster? He says, "It is his dreg-boozed inner demon / Still tankarding from tissue and follicle / The vital fire, the spirit electrical / That puts the gloss on the normal hearty male?" (Hughes 2003, p. 23). Also, he confuses the mind of the reader through his phrase, "Or is it woman," which signifies that the poet is not necessarily a man. So, the reader is not allowed to identify themselves with the speaker of the poem, so-called Hughes. On the other hand, by placing himself above the restrictions of gender patterns Hughes frees himself from the confinement of individuality that Keats argues in his letter.

One of the most renowned poems of Hughes's, "The Thought-Fox," published in his collection *The Hawk in the Rain* in 1957, can be considered as a metaphor for the creating problems of a poet in the middle of mysteries and doubts. The poem has the precision of meaning that represents writer's block in general, but the focal point on the personal struggle of artistic creation indicates the role of the unconscious mind. The speaker in "The Thought-Fox" is all alone at winter midnight, with complete silence but the clock's ticks. The blank page on the table signifies that the poet-speaker has difficulty in writing his poem. Besides, the phrase that the poet cannot see any stars through the window establishes that he/she needs divine inspiration like muses. And something "cold and delicately" suddenly appears in the darkness, it is a fox whose "nose touches twig, leaf" (Hughes 2003, p. 21). The fox "Sets neat prints into the snow / Between trees" (p. 21). The fox's prints on the snow symbolise the simultaneous writing of the poet's on the white page. Finally, "The page is printed" (p. 21). And "the first 'animal' poem [he] ever wrote" came out (Hughes 1969, 19).

Regarding the fox, Hughes (1969) states, "[i]t is both a fox and a spirit. It is a real fox; as I read the poem I see it move, I see it setting its prints, I see its shadow going over the irregular surface of the snow. The words show me all this, bringing it nearer and nearer. It is very real to me. The words have made a body for it and given it somewhere to walk" (p. 20). Hughes reveals how he employed the imagery of the fox in his poem and transformed it into a work of art. Now, it is not the fox in his garden. The way Hughes composes his poem is not different from the way Keats does in his "Ode to a Grecian Urn." By looking at the urn that has certain decorative images Keats's speaker is fascinated and reads the poem. Keats's claim "Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard / Are sweeter" is a lament reference to the artistic creation of the poet because the word "unheard" covers the possible lines, imageries, and metaphors. Similarly, by employing the spirit of the fox in his lines, Hughes created a new real fox through the words, which became "sweeter" than the seen fox.

Hughes's "The Thought-Fox" carries the aspect of Keats's negative capability in a way that the poet-speaker struggles to find a solution to his/her trapped condition. Through the imagery of darkness at the beginning of the poem, Hughes directly points out the difficulty of the poet caught between doubts. In order to overcome the negative situation, the poet uses the fox as a metaphor. Besides, Hughes turns the poem itself into another metaphor of survival, as long as the poem is read, the fox, and of course, the poet will live eternally. In this regard, Hughes (1969) explains that "… in

some ways, my fox is better than an ordinary fox. It will live forever, it will never suffer from hunger or hounds. I have it with me wherever I go. And I made it. And all through imagining it clearly enough and finding the living words" (p. 21). Through poems like "The Thought-Fox" and "Famous Poet," Hughes emphasizes the power of art to go beyond personal and collective traumas and like Keats, proposes that poetry captures temporary moments of beauty and emotion and suggests a form of immortality that tolerates human suffering and loss.

Conclusion

Hughes's poems exemplify the marks of personal and public traumas. His first three books, especially *Lupercal*, represent the difficulties Hughes faced in his life. At the beginning of *Lupercal*, the poem, "Things Present" refers to the uncertain condition and "A Woman Unconscious" handles the political and social atmosphere suffered during the cold-war years. In terms of personal difficulties, Hughes alludes to bitter events, for example, Plath's suicide is a serious matter that affected his poetry too. Written after the suicide, "Song of a Rat" embodies the depressive atmosphere and deals with the feeling of confinement. The state of imprisonment can also be followed in "The Jaguar" too, and the poet as the creator is represented in "Famous Poet" and "The Thought-Fox."

When analysed from the theory of Keats's Negative Capability, it can be claimed that Hughes deals with the difficulties he faced in his both personal and social lives. Keats's chameleon identity is represented in the poems of Hughes, for instance, he employs the dualistic nature of the otter in "The Otter" or in "The Jaguar," he recreates the imagery of imprisonment. Thus, while Hughes deals with uncertainties, mysteries and doubts with a chameleon-like identity, he adapts himself to traumatic situations. His struggle against the troubles proves the presence of Keats's Negative Capability in his poetry. And the image of the poet in the middle of mysteries and doubts is embodied in "The Thought-Fox" in which the fox becomes the symbol of Hughes's artistic creation. To sum up, although Hughes is known to be an "Animal Poet," for many of his poems are entitled, horses, hawks and crows, Hughes's poems also cope with inner problems and personal traumas. Hughes uses animals as a metaphor to unveil hidden feelings and human experiences. Accordingly, Hughes's concern with trauma and resilience through a chameleon-like adaptability reveals his mastery of Keats's Negative Capability, as he deals with uncertainty and complexity and transforms these experiences into poetic symbols like the fox in "The Thought-Fox," which encapsulates his creative spirit. In seizing Keats's Negative Capability, Hughes's poetry allows him to confront and transform personal and social traumas through an artistic lens that captures immortality, resistance, and creativity at the heart of human experience.

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