

Hughes, Ecocriticism and Ecopoetry

ECOCRITICAL INTERPRETATIONS OF HUGHES

Hughes has long been recognised as a prominent environmental poet. Jonathan Bate finds in his poetry ‘the hot stink of animal flesh’ (2000: 203). When Seamus Heaney calls him ‘a guardian spirit of the land and language’, a view quoted on the back cover of the hardback edition of Hughes’s *Collected Poems*, he evokes Hughes’s roles as national bard, preserver of ancient rhythms, and defender of wild places. In a 2009 newspaper article and radio broadcast, Simon Armitage pays tribute to Hughes as a ‘poet and eco warrior’.

One of the earliest ecocritical interpretations of Hughes’s work was Owen Johnson’s unpublished Ph.D thesis *Ted Hughes: Speaking for the Earth* (1991). At that point, ecocriticism had not developed sufficiently for Johnson to be able to draw on an existing body of scholarship (23). Evoking deep ecology and Gaia theory (10–11), Johnson writes that Hughes calls for the re-instatement of the Earth as a divinity (11). He sees Hughes progressing from being unable to ‘speak for the Earth’ in *Lupercal* (127) to articulating a convincing ‘religion of the Earth’ (275) in *River*, yet he views some of the conservation poems in *Wolfwatching* as uninspired (279). The thesis was written before ideas of ‘speaking for the Earth’ had been advocated by scholars such as Bate (2000: 93), and problematised by scholars such as Tarlo (2008: 17); yet in many ways it is ahead of its time. Johnson’s analysis of birdsong in ‘Evening Thrush’ and ‘The Skylark came’ encapsulate an idea that has gained headway

from Bruno Latour to post-humanism: ‘Poetry, culture, might seem only another part of nature’s exuberance’ (28). As we shall see, Hughes’s presentation of how nature, humans and culture are related is the source of important subsequent debates.

In 1994, Leonard Scigaj published ‘Ted Hughes and Ecology: A Biocentric Vision’, one of the first studies of Hughes’s biocentrism. Biocentrism is ‘the view or belief that the rights and needs of humans are not more important than those of other living things’ (*Oxford English Dictionary*); its opposite is anthropocentrism, or human-centred thinking. Scigaj writes that ‘[t]he early animal poems of the confident young adult are nevertheless anthropocentric’ (165) and that

One can see in his early poetry an emphasis upon kinship with animals and a longing to fuse with Nature’s vital energy, in *Wodwo* a questioning of anthropocentrism, in *Crow* a comprehensive critique of anthropocentrism, and from *Gaudete* through *Wolfwatching* a gradual development of a biocentric vision that often incorporates a mystical grasp of the ‘inner spiritual unity of Nature’ that he admired in Nicholson. (164)

Hughes’s nascent desire to fuse with ‘Nature’s vital energy’ can be glimpsed in poetry from his juvenilia onwards. It is not the case that ‘most of Hughes’s poetry since *Crow* offers this [spiritually] positive ecological vision’ (162)—Hughes writes many elegies for extinct species, and protest pieces about polluted landscapes, after *Crow*. However, Scigaj’s assessment, that ‘Hughes’s poetry shares a basic premise with ecologists and environmentalists: the only way to save this planet is to change the perceptions of its human inhabitants about Nature’ (2001: 160), is one that is borne out in Hughes’s writing.

Terry Gifford’s seminal book *Green Voices: Understanding Contemporary Nature Poetry* followed in 1995, and was reprinted in 2011. Gifford contends that ‘Hughes began as an anti-pastoralist’ (*Green Voices* 133), although contradictions arise in his first two collections because ‘Hughes writes “cleansing” anti-pastoral poems at the same time as “seeing” celebratory poems’ (135). As will be demonstrated in this book, Gifford’s ideas about ‘nature’s processes of decay and re-creation’ (142) and the ‘interactive whole’ of ‘culture, human life, animal and bird life, and the workings of weather upon landscape’ (145) are especially significant for other ecopoetics scholars as well. Hughes’s involvement in nature, via activities such as farming, shows him to be a ‘sensitive

inhabitant of the natural world' (145). In a later essay, Gifford returns to Hughes's supposed meshing of 'nature' with 'culture' in his later work, identifying his ecological sensibilities with Murray Bookchin's concept of 'social ecology' ('Hughes's Social Ecology' 82). This book offers a detailed problematisation of the ways in which Hughes views nature, culture, humans and other animals, arguing that his views are not always consistent; the next section will pursue this in further detail.

The ecocritic Richard Kerridge, on the other hand, takes a different view from Gifford. Kerridge aligns Hughes not with 'social ecology', but with the more fundamental thinking of Arne Naess's 'deep ecology'.

Hughes's environmentalism is clearly a variant of the kind known as Deep Ecology. Soon after ['The Environmental Revolution'], that term was introduced to environmental debate by the Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess, who defined Deep Ecology against what he saw as the 'shallow' environmentalism concerned only with pollution, damage and depletion as specific problems. 'Shallow' environmentalism sought particular solutions without making a general challenge to industrialization and consumerism. Naess saw this as inadequate. [...] The environmental movement had to be concerned with philosophy, morality, psychology and spirituality, as well as ecological science and tactical politics. It had to envision a transformed culture. Hughes comes at environmentalism from a particular set of literary and anthropological preoccupations, but his vision is one of the same radical kind. (187–188)

Kerridge bases this argument on an analogy between the ideas of Naess and the views Hughes expressed in 'The Environmental Revolution'. While these similarities are pertinent, Naess's essay on deep ecology was published three years after Hughes's article, and there are no books by Naess in Hughes's library at the Emory archive. It is more likely that Hughes's holistic view of the globe as a single living organism (or goddess), and his desire to transform culture by returning to a lost set of values, was initially formed by the 'anthropological preoccupations' that Kerridge mentions. It was later shaped by his knowledge of Gaia theory, which he *did* research.¹ Hughes's desire for a fundamental change in values was profoundly radical, but his activities cannot all be aligned with the values of deep ecology. He had an uneasy relationship with industrialisation and consumerism, as he lambasted those who would 'cash in the world' (*WP* 130)—but he was certainly in favour of environmentally conscious enterprises, from organic farming to rod and line fishing.

Hughes's environmentalism was ideologically committed and responsive to contemporary politics; Naess would no doubt dismiss societal and political engagement as 'shallow environmentalism'. Hughes, who argued that farm pesticides poisoned people as well as otters, and that sewage ruined a river for both salmon and fishermen, would see 'social ecology' as of equal importance to deep ecology.

Two other major ecocritics, Lawrence Buell from the United States and Jonathan Bate from Britain, have also written on Hughes. Bate's influential 2000 monograph *The Song of the Earth* engages with Hughes at several points. As well as commenting on Hughes's presentation of violence, Bate makes a perceptive link between Hughes's review of Max Nicholson's *The Environmental Revolution* (27–28), and the way Hughes 'ecologises' Ovid (29). Bate links Hughes to an earlier, proto-environmentalist Laureate, Wordsworth, when he explores both writers' West Country poetry about the interconnected lives of rivers and human beings. Of course, Wordsworth could not have anticipated the river pollution that Hughes criticises in his poetry (222). Bate's later biography of Hughes gives further information on Hughes's angling and campaigns against water pollution (2015: 399–412). Buell, meanwhile, analyses Hughes's 'In the Dark Violin of the Valley'. Buell comments that Hughes's metaphor of the violin 'works both for and against this poem's representation of riverness' (2001: 251) and that the metaphor of the needle provides a 'delicately fateful rendering of the ecological web of life' (250). Yet 'for the eco-poet, metaphor is both indispensable tool and occupational hazard' (251). Metaphor is so indispensable to literary creation that poets can hardly be blamed for deploying it. Buell's judgement that this metaphor is an 'occupational hazard' needs to be replaced with a more thorough examination of how Hughes negotiates the relationship between nature, artefacts and art, which this chapter will provide.

Alice Oswald's 2005 memorial address for Hughes, which was published as a newspaper article, argued that Hughes's writing demands that we change our attitudes towards the environment. Other publications in a similar vein soon followed, including Simon Armitage's 2009 championing of Hughes as a 'poet and eco warrior'. Armitage portrays Hughes as an activist who lobbied 'Michael Heseltine, John Gummer and Margaret Thatcher on the themes of pollution and poison' ('Poet and Eco Warrior' 2). More recently, Armitage has written that one of Hughes's letters to a fellow fisherman 'speaks of someone not just in touch with the landscape around him but *in tune* with it' (2012).

Armitage's article nevertheless begs the question of whether a fisherman who eats salmon can be 'in tune' with the fish he kills; this critical question is posed in Chap. 11 of this book.

Keith Sagar's book *Ted Hughes and Nature: 'Terror and Exultation'* (2009) argues that '[t]he centrality of nature in Hughes' work has been obvious from the publication of *The Hawk in the Rain*' (xi). Sagar thinks of Hughes's work as a 'struggle to get into a right relation with the source, that is, with Nature and the female' (xiv)—hence the religious tenor of many of Hughes's *River* poems. Sagar writes that 'in *River*, Hughes found the end of his poetic journey, from a world made of blood to a world made of light' (2006: 168). Yet poems about extinction and predatory violence come after *River*. Violence inflicted on vanishing species is especially visible in *Wolfwatching*, and the poems examining it bring us back to the 'world of blood'. Hughes's protest poems evoke not a 'world of light', but an environment that is irreversibly damaged and polluted. Sagar's progression from 'blood' to 'light' is unrealistically neat, and the environmental dimensions of Hughes's poetry after *River* should not be dismissed.

Lidström's 2015 monograph creates an apposite comparison of Hughes's and Heaney's ecopoetry. Drawing on the work of Serpil Opperman, Timothy Clark, Timothy Morton and others, she traces the emergence of a 'postmodern ecocriticism' (2015: 5–6)—which makes a welcome change from older studies of Hughes that shunned lengthy engagement with literary theory. She examines *Crow* and non-anthropocentric religions (22–46) and technology in *Elmet* (67–83). She evaluates his poems from the perspective of ecosemiotics—the study of sign-systems in the environment (103–118). She finds that even Hughes's early animal poems can be viewed as anti-anthropocentric. She argues that '[w]hile many of the early poems depict acts of violence or destruction, as in many of the animal poems, the later collections focus on processes of renewal' (144). She examines Hughes's supposed engagement with deep ecology, posits the innovative view that his work questions humanism's focus on our species as superior to other creatures (140–145), and deploys ecopoetic theory by Angus Fletcher, John Felstiner and Timothy Clark (147–150). Yet Lidström's book does not engage with important new insights from the archives, which give a fuller picture of Hughes's environmental campaigns and illuminate exactly which philosophical, scientific and ideological views were most important to him.

More recently, scholars of the environmental humanities have turned their attentions to the Anthropocene, our human-dominated age in which environmental damage is inscribed into the very bedrock, climate and oceans. Scholarship on Hughes has recently begun to follow suit. The term ‘Anthropocene’ was proposed by atmospheric scientists Paul Crutzen and Eugene Stoermer in 2000. Crutzen and Stoermer traced human beings’ lasting effects on the atmosphere back to the Industrial Revolution (17) and commented on how our species has become ‘a major geological force’ (18). Yet the point at which the Anthropocene begins, and the concept itself, continue to provoke debate. Estimations for its commencement range from 1610, when changes resulting from the conquest of the Americas had taken hold, to as late as 1964, the peak in fallout from nuclear testing (Solnick 4–7). The term was coined two years after Hughes’s death, and his late twentieth-century environmental awareness could only adumbrate the magnitude of the concerns that researchers such as Crutzen and Stoermer raise. Yet he was clearly extremely worried about irreversible alterations that human beings have made to our planet, as his comments about climate change show (quoted in Douglas 10).

The ecocritic Timothy Clark has offered one of the most provocative critical studies of writing in the Anthropocene. He argues that the term ‘Anthropocene’ has become a ‘shorthand term for all the new contexts and demands—cultural, ethical, aesthetic, philosophical and political—of environmental issues that are truly planetary in scale, notably climate change, ocean acidification, effects of overpopulation, deforestation, soil-erosion, overfishing and the general and accelerating degradation of ecosystems’ (2015: 1). As a concept, it ‘blurs and even scrambles some crucial categories by which people have made sense of the world and their lives. It puts in crisis the lines between culture and nature, fact and value, and between the human and the geological or meteorological’, manifesting itself as ‘a bewildering and often destructive contamination of human aims and natural causality’ (9). Individual human beings are obliged to think and act ‘as if already citizens of a world polity’ (9), in an age that demands ‘a new kind of eco-cosmopolitanism capable of uniting people across the world without erasing important cultural and political differences’ (17). He offers the sobering view that the Anthropocene is ‘independent of or indifferent to social, cultural, or political will or intent’ (13), and that its scale defies human conceptualization and representation (187). These are the grounds for his challenge to scholars

who overclaim the efficacy of cultural criticism—and indeed poetry—as a force for cultural change. For Clark, ecocriticism can help us to ‘comprehend ecological problems’, not to resolve or mitigate them (21). He offers an important counter-argument to critics such as Bate (2000: 283) who have made the hyperbolic claim that poetry can save the Earth (Clark 2015: 195). Of course it cannot. Yet Clark is too nihilistic in his appraisal of the capabilities of ecological art and literature. There is no doubt that poetry *is* capable of encouraging ecological awareness in individuals, but as a genre that is nowhere near as popular as fiction or creative non-fiction, its literary reach is limited. Faced with the scale of human alterations to the planet, the combined contributions that all the ecologically aware arts can make to mitigating our impact on our surroundings is infinitesimally small. Yet literary and artistic works need to take their place alongside environmental technology, politics and activism as one of many tools that can help our species to conceptualise the vastness of problems such as climate change. Arts for Nature, which Hughes co-founded, argued for the advantages of environmental art to appeal ‘directly to the heart’²; the emotional and aesthetic appeal of art does indeed offer an important alternative to scientific and political environmental discourse.

Sam Solnick’s 2016 monograph offers both a rigorous consideration of Hughes’s archive and a refreshing application of theories about literature in the Anthropocene to his work. Solnick’s post-human literary criticism posits that for Hughes, technologies such as language are developments of evolutionary processes: language has a pre-human evolutionary origin (70), while Hughes presents the myths that we develop from language as having an evolutionary function (72). Thus, the ‘extension of the evolutionary adaptive into the cultural and technological is crucial to Hughes’s thinking’ (72). According to Solnick’s reading, for Hughes, the human being is a ‘prosthetic creature’ (72) and frequently a ‘technological animal’ (12). This often holds true in Hughes’s work—but he also presented Neanderthals as technological animals (‘Baboons and Neanderthals’ 161), further deconstructing a humanist privileging of the primacy of the human primate. Solnick’s is one of the most nuanced considerations of Hughes’s deployment of the language of technology in his attempts to reconnect with the living world: ‘Hughes’s challenging of the rational human by foregrounding its animal impulses is matched by a technological rupturing’ (12). However, his ideas that Hughes ‘uses violence as a means of reasserting a lost sense of corporeality’ (76), and

that hunting is ‘a technologically mediated engagement with the animal’ (69) are complicated by this book. Hughes’s writings about violence towards animals—especially hunting—are more contradictory and ethically compromised than a simple ‘engagement’ with non-humans. Hughes undoubtedly wished to repair what he saw as humankind’s broken connection with nature, the ‘source’—but he also acknowledged that ‘nature’ had been fundamentally changed by human activity.

HUGHES AND THE IDEA OF NATURE

Any ecocritical study must engage with the complex idea of how human beings perceive and relate to ‘nature’. This is particularly important for Hughes, as his presentation of nature generates a broad array of critical debates. No earlier scholarship has yet given a full account of the shifts and inconsistencies that occur in Hughes’s presentation of nature, at different times. Yet there are differing views about humans and nature among ecocritics as well. Early ecocriticism acknowledged that one of environmentalism’s central dilemmas was that ‘the act of identifying the presumption of human apartness from nature as the problem is itself a symptom of that very apartness’ (Bate 2000: 37). Bate writes that there are three senses of the word ‘nature’. The first is ‘the concept of the non-human’ through which humanity visualises its difference from other species—although this definition acknowledges that the categories of ‘human’ and ‘non-human’ are being revised continually. The second relates to the inescapable ‘structures, processes and causal powers that are constantly operative within the physical world’—and which, of course, affect humans. The third is the ‘lay’ term which refers to ‘landscape’, ‘wilderness’ or ‘countryside’. These three senses of the term cannot be held apart fully (2000: 33–34). However, many environmental thinkers have problematised such views of nature, subjecting the first definition’s proposal of a divide between human and non-human to intense critical scrutiny. Bill McKibben’s seminal book on climate change, *The End of Nature* (1989), was highly significant in alerting the public to the possibility that human-caused climate change might be responsible for extreme weather events. McKibben also proposed the idea that what we call ‘nature’, in all of Bate’s senses, is fundamentally altered and changed by human influence (McKibben 51). The historian of science Bruno Latour has argued that the distinction between human beings and nature is not clear-cut, as modern civilisation has created a proliferation of hybrids (1993: 10–11). Timothy Morton

has deconstructed the term ‘Nature’ (2007, 2010), arguing for it to be superseded by a new form of thinking about ecological interconnection that ‘includes all the ways we imagine how we live together’ (2010: 4). Ecological thought, for Morton, negotiates our connection to everything from great apes to corals and artificially intelligent machines (71–73). Cary Wolfe’s work on animal ethics (2003) and post-humanism (2010) further complicates a hierarchical view of humans and non-humans. Post-humanism, for Wolfe, questions humanism’s central assumption that our species is separate from, and superior to, other species. It strives for a ‘decentring of the human’ (2010: xv). He shows that ‘one study after another’ shows how “‘reason”, then tool use, then tool *making*, then altruism, then language [...] flourish quite reliably beyond the species barrier’ (2003: 2). Not only post-human criticism, but also cultural theories that examine the Anthropocene, destabilise binary or dialectical views of ‘nature’ and ‘culture’. In the Anthropocene, according to Timothy Clark, the perceived boundary between the two is challenged: ‘The notion of nature as the other to culture has been giving way in environmental thought to more blended conceptions of the two as forming one perhaps bafflingly complex entity (as in Donna Haraway’s earlier coinage “nature-culture”’). For Clark, human alterations to ecosystems render the idea of a pristine nature ‘escapist’. Meanwhile, ‘human cultures are always entirely part of natural systems of energy exchange in the biosphere’ (2015: 56–57). It is this recent thinking in ecocriticism that informs a new generation of Hughes scholars such as Susanna Lidström, Samuel Solnick and Iris Ralph. It is also an important theoretical concept for the present book.

Early criticism tended to view Hughes as espousing a binary view of nature and human beings as essentially separate. Sagar thinks that Hughes initially rejects nature, implying that he sees it as separate from human beings (2009: 36), although Hughes longs to reunite them (xiv). More recently, Lidström and Garrard’s article—surprisingly—perpetuates this dichotomy between human civilisation and nature: ‘Hughes’s poems usually draw a clear line between nature and culture, and strongly favour the former’ (38). (‘Culture,’ here, appears to be used in Bruno Latour’s sense of ‘technologically advanced western civilisation’.) Paul Bentley nuances such views by arguing that Hughes sees the relationship between ‘nature’ and ‘culture’ as dialectical: neither can exist without the other. In his view, ‘the Other of nature is projected from the social world which becomes its underside [...] This is why Hughes’s poetry returns us in the end not to nature, but to its formative intersection with culture’

(16). Hughes certainly presents nature as a sundered Other in a letter of 1990 to Moelwyn Merchant, but as will be argued shortly, he shows the enmeshing of ‘nature’ and ‘culture’ as far more complex in his writing about evolution and in many of his poems. Indeed, in Lidström’s view, Hughes is anti-anthropocentrist and post-humanist because he ‘undermines the humanist human/animal dichotomy’, and because his work creates a ‘recognition and portrayal of nature’s own agency, apart and independent from humans’ (2015: 144). This is a more radically ‘green’ take on Hughes. Critics who wish to claim Hughes’s poetry as post-humanist need to negotiate the problem that Hughes’s library suggests that he did not research post-humanism,³ and that, during his lifetime, it was not as well known in the humanities as it is now. It is certain, though, that Hughes’s radically ‘green’ statements about other species challenge anthropocentrism and *anticipate* post-humanism.

HUMAN, ANIMAL AND MACHINE

Earlier debates about Hughes’s view of ‘nature’ have not acknowledged that what he writes about the relationship between nature, humanity and culture is highly complex, and is not always consistent. From Paul Bentley’s Marxist perspective, Hughes’s nature and culture are locked in a dialectical relationship (14): neither can exist without the other. Yet even ‘Tiger-Psalm,’ a Crow poem first published in 1969, presents a dialectical relationship between military technology and natural violence, only to question and complicate it. Hughes contrasts the tiger’s ‘exalted’, blameless kill with the ‘to-fro dialectic’ of machine guns—but the two categories blur when the tiger’s face is likened to a military ‘banner’ (*CPH* 578). The tiger becomes imbricated within Hughes’s discourse of human, martial imagery—and, needless to say, the poem that examines the tiger is itself a cultural artefact. Any critical attempts to keep ‘nature’ and ‘culture’ apart are now complicated by scholarship that indicates that ‘culture’ is not the exclusive preserve of human beings. Many biologists now accept that ‘[c]ultural phenomena have been identified in a growing number of animal species, ranging from primates to cetaceans’ (Koops et al. 1). It is this mode of thinking that informs the cultural criticism of Helena Feder, who argues for ecocriticism and post-humanism to challenge ‘the humanist ideology of culture’. She calls for ‘[a] radically expansive idea of culture, a non-speciesist multiculturalism’ capable of intervening ‘in forms of subjugation that function precisely by

excluding some from the realm of culture' (228). Hughes, who wrote that baboons' 'intuition' is impoverished by an excess of rational intellect ('Baboons and Neanderthals' 164) and who reviewed C.J. Lilly's controversial experiments to teach human language to dolphins ('Man and Superbeast'), knew of scientific research that foreshadowed such perspectives. 'Nature' cannot be kept apart from 'culture' as a pure category. We live in an age where the Earth's climatic, oceanic, terrestrial and biological systems have been permanently affected by human activities and, as we have seen, for Timothy Clark, human culture products inevitably form part of the Earth's systems of energy exchange. *Remains of Elmet*, with its 'Lumb Chimneys' that must fall to earth if they are to flower again, resonates with this idea. Applying post-humanist and Anthropocene theories to Hughes, Solnick argues that human technology, for Hughes, is an extension of evolutionary adaptation (72); in turn, 'the animal affects the technological' (67).

Hughes's famous early animal poems, such as 'Pike' and 'Thrushes', smash together organic and industrial images. Bentley perceptively argues that Hughes's characteristic animals described in industrial terms are an affront to traditional ideas of nature and culture (14), but this is undermined by his later assertion that '[t]here is nothing organic about Hughes's most memorable animals' (133). Sagar, too, argues that Hughes's 'hawks, pike, thrushes, sharks, were all machines' (2009: 90). Arguments that Hughes's part-industrial animals are merely mechanical risk misrepresenting the poems and restricting the richness of their symbolic range. It is precisely because some of Hughes's animals *combine* organic and inorganic imagery that they are so unsettling. In 'Thrushes', the thrush has a '[d]ark deadly eye' and 'delicate legs' as well as a coiled steel purpose. When Hughes describes the worm that the thrush eats, the thrush's offspring, Mozart's brain and the shark snapping at its own side (*CPH* 82), his frame of reference cannot be anything other than living, organic flesh. Mozart has 'animal brain tissue', and he and the animals represent 'divine activity in something fleshly' (*WP* 258). The pike's eye stares 'as a vice locks—The same iron in this eye | Though its film shrank in death' (85). The simile comparing eye with vice evokes figurative likeness, but the move to metaphor in the following line confounds metal and beast in a complex meshing of the organic and the artificial. Hughes was influenced by his childhood in industrial Yorkshire, by the association of organic flesh with machines in the literature of the Great War,⁴ and also by part-artificial animals in contemporary science fiction.⁵

Although he may create provocative combinations of organic and artificial, Hughes's writing still frequently searches for an unspoiled, original, paradisaical nature. Yet he finds that the only way he can attempt to access it is via culture. Hughes wrote to Moelwyn Merchant that his childhood fascination with animals, 'when I became conscious', was 'a natural gravitation towards whatever life had escaped the cultural imprint' (*LTH* 579). In this letter, nature, for Hughes, is everything 'which culture tortures & destroys' (580). Yet it was only by torturing and destroying them—by killing them 'in vast numbers' (579)—that he was initially able to reconnect with animals. The 'cultural imprint' on a damaged nature would later become manifest as a different symbol of violence done to both inner and outer nature: the blood-print of the burnt fox. However hard Hughes may try to reunify the mind with an originary nature, his poetry acknowledges that it has been culturally modified—and that the techniques of poetry can never capture its unmediated crowiness, foxiness and ferality (*PM* 119). Some of his writings do present nature as an Other, which culture destroys, and from which humankind has attempted to separate itself. Yet, as the next section shows, Hughes sees this as a disastrous evolutionary maladaptation—one that brings him back to a concept that anticipates Clark's 'bafflingly complex' web of nature and culture.

THE FALL: FROM BABOON TO *HOMO SAPIENS*

In his 1990 letter to Merchant, Hughes notes that his attempts to (re)connect with animals began when he became 'conscious'. To gain a sense of how Hughes approaches the origins of the divorce of humankind from nature, we must first look at what he has to say about consciousness and human beings' inner nature. This informs what he writes about baboons, Neanderthals and human evolution. Back at the end of the 1950s, Hughes noted down the following summary of Jung's idea of the Fall:

Jung's interpretation of the Fall: - the act of becoming conscious (ye will become like God), guilt in that spirit is robbed & subordinated to conscious control. His new consciousness alienates him from men.⁶

This corresponds to the beginning of Jung's 1930 essay 'The Stages of Life', in which Jung argues:

It is just man's turning away from instinct - his opposing himself to instinct - that creates consciousness. Instinct is nature and seeks to

perpetuate nature, whereas consciousness can only seek culture or its denial. Even when we turn back to nature, inspired by a Rousseauesque longing, we “cultivate” nature. As long as we are still submerged in nature we are unconscious, and we live in the security of instinct which knows no problems. (1960, loc. 7021)

It is this alignment of consciousness with culture and instinct with nature that will inform Hughes’s prose about how human beings have tried to view the two categories as separate. Even an attempt to turn back towards nature ‘cultivates’ it for Jung—an idea that has become more acutely pressing in our Anthropocene age of extensive environmental modification, and one that is important to Hughes’s cultural mediation of the forces of nature in his writing. Jung continues: ‘It is the sacrifice of the merely natural man, of the unconscious, ingenuous being whose tragic career began with the eating of the apple in Paradise. The biblical fall of man presents the dawn of consciousness as a curse’ (loc. 7045). Here is the core of Hughes’s argument in his essay ‘Baboons and Neanderthals: a reading of *The Inheritors*’.

In this essay, Hughes interprets William Golding’s novel as a fable of humankind’s ‘fall’ into the rational intellect. He draws on the work of South African naturalist Eugene Marais, who studied baboons and concluded that the more ‘intelligent’ his simian subjects were, the less instinctive their behaviour became. The more intelligent baboons were less able to function as well-adjusted primates. When Marais hypnotised human subjects, he found that their repressed instincts were restored (164). Hughes concludes: ‘without saying that his smarter baboons had suffered something like The Fall, he had brought zoological evidence to the argument that the free intelligence is man’s original enemy’ (164): here is the link to Jung’s idea of the Fall. However unorthodox it might be for Hughes to apply Jungian psychoanalysis to baboons and early hominids, this essay offers important information about how Hughes sees humans, animals and evolution. The rational intelligence that comes with consciousness is what separates us from Neanderthals and from other animals, for Hughes. *Homo sapiens sapiens*’ ancestor was ‘a round-eyed, pongoid, innocent dawn creature of no particular name’ rather resembling a Yeti (162), who existed in ‘the lost, natural Paradise, where the lack of intellectual enquiry and adaptive ingenuity coincided with a perfect awareness of being alive in the moment, and inreality, (an awareness approaching, maybe, a state of blessedness)’ (164). This is why sea

trout experience ‘the real samadhi’ (*CPH* 659), and why relaxing animals can seem to be ‘in a religious daze, the state of steady bliss’ that is ‘[o]ur lost birthright’ (1208–1209). But for human beings to re-attain a state of Samadhi, the ultimate blessedness, they require cultural narratives. As Hughes wrote to Merchant, ‘The animals, who were created exactly as they are by this Creation, are therefore in a state of “bliss”—they live a divine life in a divine world. They live in perpetual “Samadhi”, and have never fallen from it into ego-consciousness, into the acculturating, detached [sic] cerebation which removes us from it—separates us from the “bliss” of our animal/spiritual being’ (*LTH* 580). Hughes goes on to explain the process of how consciousness evolved among early hominids, as he did in ‘Baboons and Neanderthals’, and states that ‘culture appeared, as I say, as a substitute for what we had lost—religion appeared as a technology to regain it’ (581). Poetry, too, is a cultural method for attempting to regain that lost state of animal blessedness—but capturing animals in poems damages them (‘An Otter’) as often as it symbolically releases them (‘The Jaguar’).

Hughes’s letter to Merchant and the essay ‘Baboons and Neanderthals’ also give important insights into the way Hughes sees the question concerning technology. Solnick proposes that Hughes’s violence is ‘not a poetics of unmediated reconnection but a subtler figuration of humans’ various technologically mediated engagements with the environment and their own, and other animals’, embodiment’ (198). Yet there is a broad spectrum of ‘technologically mediated’ engagements for Hughes, and the nuances between them need to be drawn out. Hughes praises the Neanderthals for creating ‘exquisitely dainty flints’, and for performing funeral rites that indicated that they had religious beliefs (‘Baboons and Neanderthals’ 161). These are the technologies of early hominids whom Hughes does not see as possessing an excessively rational intellect; they are thus not separate from other animals. (There is some inconsistency between Hughes’s idea that Neanderthal religion belongs to a blessed, pre-cultural state, and his later letter to Merchant, which proposes human religion as a technology for reconnecting with this state.) The bloody handprint in the dream of the burnt fox, which resembles cave art, and the wolf mask in ‘February’, which echoes pre-Christian ritual, attempt to repair humankind’s damaged relationship with nature, although this cannot be done without harming individual animals: the fox ends up bloodied and the mask suggests a trophy wolf-muzzle. These primitive technologies risk harming isolated individuals, but they contrast with technologies that

create more widespread destruction: for example, the ‘concrete bunker’, ‘shotgun’ and ‘bombs’ in ‘Crow Goes Hunting’. Poetry is presented as a positive way of mediating the connections between human and non-human, in the early Hughes of ‘The Thought-Fox’; by the time of Crow’s ‘Notes for a Little Play’ and ‘Crow’s Undersong’, the representational act of literary creation becomes more problematic. Solnick argues that hunting is frequently ‘a technologically mediated engagement with the animal’ (69) for Hughes, yet in ‘Crow Goes Hunting’, this ‘engagement’ is disrupted and ineffective. The guilt that shooting provokes in ‘A Solstice’ means that the kill is fraught with contradictions and ethical tensions (see Chap. 11). Indeed, in the short story ‘The Head’, the elder brother kills a Yeti-like, ‘pongoid, innocent dawn creature’ (*DB* 149): here, technology gives human beings an evolutionary advantage over their predecessors, but it clearly sunders human beings from a more animal-like ancestor. For Hughes, technologies associated with hyper-rationality and environmental destruction are the ones that cause the most problems for humankind, and for nature, humankind’s creator. However, he sees environmentally responsible technology as offering a potential solution.

It is not the Fall into consciousness but ‘Reformed Christianity’ in its ecocidal and misogynistic forms that Hughes blames for destructive technologies and environmental damage in ‘The Environmental Revolution’ (*WP* 129). In the book that Hughes reviews here, Max Nicholson implied that humankind and nature had been separated when he argued that ‘[h]armony between man and nature is no longer a mystical and abstract but a practical and pressing matter’ (19). Here, Nicholson presents a binary view of ‘man’ and ‘nature’, which Hughes nevertheless nuances and problematises in his review. Hughes takes up Nicholson’s idea of ‘the monstrous anti-Nature that we have created, the now nearly-autonomous Technosphere’ (*WP* 128) but he undermines Nicholson’s binary relationship between technology and nature when he proposes ‘a crash programme of legislation and subsidies, of applying technological means already well researched’ (131) as a culturally mediated solution. The computer is ‘[Nature’s] oracle, speaking the language to which everybody, even Technology itself, has agreed to listen’ (133). Here, then, human beings have attempted to separate themselves from nature—but the very technologies that they employ to do this will bring them back to their creator, their evolutionary origin. The reason why environmentalists have struggled to communicate their message is that ‘[w]e have a biologically inbuilt amnesia against the fears of extinction’ (129): even

technologically advanced civilisation is invariably part of the wider system of evolution, which it cannot control. Hughes's idea of 'amnesia' about the possibility of human extinction was prescient: referring to Kari Norgaard's study of villagers' unwillingness to act on their knowledge of climate change in their everyday lives, Clark notes that climate change proves too disturbing and too vast a phenomenon for many people to attempt to take action (2015: 167). Hughes writes that '[w]hen something abandons Nature, or is abandoned by Nature, it has lost touch with its creator, and is called an evolutionary dead end. According to this, our Civilization is an evolutionary error' (129). However hard human beings may try to deny their imbrication in biological processes and systems, they are inevitably an integral part of them.

'FUSION' WITH NATURE

Hughes places increasing emphasis on how humans are linked to other organisms and take their place in ecosystemic processes from 'Wodwo' onwards, and this mode of thinking begins to introduce important new dimensions to the presentation of nature in *Crow*. It paves the way for the ecstatic poems of union with nature in *Gaudete*, and the more grounded, realistic poems of human beings' place in the ecosystem in *Moortown Diary* and *River*. He learnt from his reading of Dylan Thomas that '[t]he force that through the green fuse drives the flower' also drives blossoming youth (see Chap. 4). Even early in his career, his imagination creates hybrid thought-animals and mythical creatures: the fox-man confounds the traditional boundaries between species, the jaguar functions as a symbol of humankind's baser nature, while the Wodwo cannot decide whether he is earth, animal or wild man. This book devotes less space to the mythic poetry of *Gaudete* than to the more realistic eco-poetry of *Moortown Diary* and *River*. Yet the poetry of *Gaudete's* verse epilogue is particularly illuminating here: it illustrates how the Hughes of the 1970s, fascinated by non-Western views of nature, strives towards complete unity with the non-human.

I watched a wise beetle
 Walking about inside my body
 I saw a tree
 Grow inward from my navel. (*CPH* 359)

This suggests complete fusion with non-human creatures, a human body consumed by other organisms after death. Here is a view that anticipates the uncanny interconnections of Morton's 'ecology without nature', of which human beings are always already a part. However, in 'Trying to be a leaf', the speaker only manages to become a leaf '[f]or a moment'; a revelation from the Goddess returns him abruptly to his human 'face and hands' (360). The human speaker of the poem may be completely enmeshed in biological processes, but an attempt to experience the life of a completely different species—and one as radically different from a human as a leaf—proves impossible. A few years previously, Hughes had shown how Crow seeks to achieve unity with the nature-goddess, who represents a pure and unaltered nature—a quest that is frequently frustrated. When he sings his undersong, Crow knows that if it had not been for her, there would have been no crying in the city, for '[t]here would have been no city' (*CPH* 237). These mythical poems strive towards an ecstatic monism, for a 'fusion' with nature and the elusive goddess. Of course, such a goal is frequently problematic: here, Hughes presents nature as an untouched category, but it will prove to have been utterly defiled by human actions in poems such as 'Nymet'. A less mystical form of non-dualistic thinking about humans and nature occurs in Hughes's work when, a little later in his career, he considers our relationship and kinship with other species.

Nowadays, some ecocritics would take Hughes to task for giving his nature-goddess a human face: Joyce Kilmer's image of trees lifting their arms to pray is branded as 'an egregious example of anthropocentrism' in the *Ecopoetry Anthology* (loc. 485). Experts who have combined queer theory with ecocriticism, such as Catriona Sandilands, would question why Hughes envisages his nature-goddess as female and heterosexual when living organisms display an entire spectrum of asexual, bisexual and intersex characteristics⁷: 'intersexuality is common in too numerous forms to document; many organisms move from one kind of sexed body to another' (Sandilands 306). Nevertheless, Hughes's image of the goddess was an important, if problematic, feature of 1970s counter-culture and later of Gaia theory.

KINSHIP AND FELLOWSHIP WITH OTHER SPECIES

When Hughes is at his most prescient of post-humanist theories, he deconstructs a human-centred sense of our species as superior to others. His emphasis on the common traits that humans share with other organisms claims animals as our distant relatives, our fellow creatures—and

sometimes even our equals. By turns humorous, unsettling and radically green, these thoughts have potentially profound implications for the way we treat other species. One prose piece fundamentally re-evaluates our place in the world, stating that ‘man is a virtuoso bacteria’ when seen from the ‘objective reality of the world’ (quoted in Scigaj 1986: 1). By the time he writes *River*, he sometimes characterises the human’s inner self as animal-like: a fisherman’s inner self becomes a ‘larva from prehistory’ (*CPH* 667). Here is his Jungian picture of a primordial unconscious, the innocent dawn creature that persists within the minds of modern human beings. He goes beyond this idea to show that not just the inner self, but animals themselves, are ‘fellow’ sentient beings: he calls fish ‘fellow aliens from prehistory’ (654), reminding us of our connection to them through our earliest vertebrate ancestors. In a slightly later protest poem, the human becomes a ‘Monkey Mutant’. Hughes again acknowledges our evolutionary kinship with creatures such as baboons and Neanderthals, but he does so in this poem in the hope that we will evolve to ‘bear a brain with brains’ (731) that we can use to combat the pollution thought to be damaging human brains at the time (730). This poem is a far cry from Hughes’s desire to reconnect with a primordial nature in the letter he wrote to Merchant: its frustrated rhetoric carries its environmentalist message.

In his writing about pollution, environmentalism and other animals, Hughes continues to refine and develop his critique of anthropocentrism as his career progresses. He emphasises the shared dangers to human and non-human life in his 1993 interview about *The Iron Woman*. When commenting on those who challenged his campaigns against water pollution, Hughes said, ‘They think you’re defending fish or insects or flowers. But the effects on otters and so on are indicators of what’s happening to us. It isn’t a problem of looking after the birds and bees, but of how to ferry human beings through the next century’ (Morrison). This statement gives a Lovelockian sense of the ecosystem as a whole, of human beings as sharing the plight of fellow creatures, and also an acknowledgement of how extensively human beings have altered their environment and themselves. Hughes was a persuasive rhetorician, but this argument ranks among his most compelling statements for environmentalism. Here are thoughts that anticipate Morton’s ‘ecological thought’, which emphasises extensive ecological interconnection; here, too, he anticipates Clark’s writing on the pervasiveness of human alterations to the environment in the Anthropocene. However, towards

the end of his life, Hughes makes one statement that is 'greener' still. One of Hughes's musings to Sagar pushes the idea of 'fellowship' significantly further: 'For years I've kept having an idea that I daren't quite formulate: why aren't wild animals simply given the legal status of fellow citizens' (*PC* 257). He does not seem to have thought through the implications of his whimsical comment to Sagar: giving animals citizenship would mean that he could no longer shoot them, fish for them or eat them. It would lead to absurd consequences, such as foxes being required to respect the rights of their fellow citizens, the chickens. Some scholars of animal ethics might criticise the idea of applying a human term such as 'citizenship' to non-humans, pointing out that it keeps them within a human frame of reference (see, for example, Wolfe 2003: 192). Yet Hughes's idea of giving animals citizenship would have been seen as provocative by his hunting and fishing associates at the time; here is an important comment that anticipates post-humanism's project to decentre the human.

Hughes's views of the relationship between nature and human are highly complex, and occasionally contradictory, yet it is possible to draw out four main strands of thought. He examines humankind's 'fall' into rational consciousness, a theme which begins early in his career and to which he returns at several points; deploying insights by Jung, he argues for human beings to be put back into contact with their 'primitive' selves. He opposed reformed Christianity's perception of humankind as separate from, and superior to, other species; and he questioned Nicholson's (perhaps unwitting) perpetuation of a divide between nature and human technology. His more mystical poetry strives towards an ecstatic fusion with an unspoiled nature, although this becomes particularly fraught in collections such as *Crow*. He later develops searching statements that analyse environmental interconnection, expose human alterations of the environment, and challenge humanism's perception of the primacy of the human species. So far, this chapter has demonstrated how he does this in a sample of his poetry and prose. Yet Hughes's writing examines human beings' relationship to the environment at an even more intrinsic level. His engagement with environmental connections and dilemmas is embedded within the lexical, formal and sonic features of his poetry itself. He is a multidisciplinary writer, and deploys such methods in other literary genres as well. It is to theories about ecopoetry that we must turn in order to gain a full sense of how Hughes's poetry

articulates the wonders, challenges and tensions of our imbrication in the living world.

ECOPOETRY AND ECOPOETICS

Ecopoetics is a special branch of ecocriticism, devoted to the study of how poetry articulates our connection to our environment. ‘Nature poetry’ is a problematic term because it risks reinforcing the human/non-human binary that Bate identifies in his first definition of ‘nature’. The term *environment*, however, includes the ‘physical surroundings or conditions in which a person or other organism lives’ (*OED*), and is a more suitable term for articulating our place in the living world. Some scholars see poetry as uniquely qualified to do this. Bate’s post-Romantic concept of a poetry that ‘may effect an imaginative reunification of mind and nature’ (2000: 245) depends on Heidegger’s idea that ‘poetry is the original admission of dwelling because it is a presencing not a representation, a form of being not of mapping’ (2000: 262).⁸ Later scholars follow this line of thought, but do so somewhat uncritically. Fletcher argues for a turn away from Romanticism in American poetry (1–2), stating that ‘poetry, our imaginative making, seems to participate in nature’ (4) because it expresses uniquely ‘close personal involvements’ with the environment (3). Felstiner claims that ‘poetry more than any other form of speech reveals the vital signs and warning signs of our tenancy on earth’ (4) and benefits society because it works on the mind of the individual (xiii). Yet he does not explain why poetry accomplishes this more effectively than, say, scientific publications. These theories ignore important developments in contemporary experimental literature, which blurs the boundaries between poetry and prose. They also fail to recognise the importance of environmental prose genres such as ‘the new nature-writing’, as it was called in the summer 2008 issue of *Granta*. Among literary genres, poetry is not uniquely qualified to examine our relationship to our environment: prose nature writing, ecotopian fiction, and the ‘sacred earth’ dramas, whose creation Hughes oversaw, can contain the ‘experiential not descriptive’ components that Bate sees as unique to eco-poetry (2000: 266). Hughes’s own hybrid collections *Wodwo* and *Gaudete*, which juxtapose prose and poetry, significantly complicate Bate’s, Fletcher’s and Felstiner’s assertions. His short story ‘The Rain Horse’ evokes the experience of being among South Yorkshire landscapes and animals, as brilliantly as his Elmet poems map West Yorkshire. Environmental writing provides many other challenges to this privileging of poetry. Kathleen

Jamie's lyrical essays in *Sightlines* (2012) are as personal and as evocative of wild presences as her poetry in *The Tree House* (2004). John Muir's prose of experience and of dwelling inspired Roosevelt to participate in nature's making by inaugurating national parks and forest reserves (Macfarlane 2015). Max Porter's *Grief is the Thing with Feathers* (2015) re-imagines Hughes's *Crow* in a genre-defying blend of poetry, prose and play-script; his work is redolent of Hughes's incipiently ecological hybrid play, *Eat Crow*. A great breadth of non-literary art engages with environmental issues; a very small selection includes the work showcased at the Rachel Carson Center and Deutsches Museum's *Welcome to the Anthropocene: The Earth in our Hands* exhibition (2014–2016) and Cape Farewell's *Art & Climate Change* exhibition (2006–2010). Lidström and Garrard do not wholly subscribe to Felstiner's and Fletcher's view, but they note that '[p]oems depend on unique formal qualities, and are perhaps even more than other literary genres animated by and able to contain open-ended, multiple and even contradictory levels of meaning. This makes them especially interesting to look to for images that challenge established patterns of environmental thought and address complex, labyrinthine twenty-first century human-environment relations between local and global, social and ecological, perception and imagination' (37). If we are to examine what makes modern ecopoetry one of the best literary genres for exploring ecological issues, we need to venture beyond revivals of Romantic thinking, beyond Heidegger's hut in the Black Forest, and engage with insights into twentieth and twenty-first century poetry such as this.

Ecopoetry takes various forms: as Gifford notes, "Ecopoetry" is now broadly used for what used to be called "nature poetry", much of which is now included in anthologies of ecopoetry, whilst "green poetry" has come to refer to narrowly propagandist environmental poetry' (*Green Voices* 8). Hughes himself distinguished between his own 'protest pieces' and ecopoetry that he felt was the 'real thing' (*Green Voices* 149). Lidström and Garrard draw a similar distinction between two forms of ecopoetry. The first begins with the individual's experiences, and focuses on descriptions and appreciation of non-human nature, with roots in Romantic and deep ecology traditions. It aims to heighten individual readers' awareness of their natural surroundings. The second tries to 'grapple with the changing relationship between human societies and natural environments' (37). Fisher-Wirth and Street follow a similar line of enquiry, bracketing off transcendental, individual encounters with the more-than-human as 'nature poetry', and arguing that there are

two forms of ecopoetry: an ‘environmental’ form displaying an explicit engagement with ‘politicized environmentalism’, and an ‘ecological’ variety more willing to enact ecological processes by deploying experimental form (locs 476–500). These are useful categories for some poets, but in Hughes’s case they are not always clear-cut. Hughes’s poems of individual experience appreciate non-human nature, but they are often rooted in his knowledge of the changing relationship between human societies and the environment. The poems in *River* in particular suggest that the categories often overlap, and may be present side by side in the same poem. ‘The Gulkana’ focuses on individual epiphany when Hughes describes his communion with the river and fish, and on society and the environment when he grapples with the problems that Western consumerism has brought to a Native American village. Hughes’s ability to deploy epiphanic and political modes in the space of a single poem testifies to his ecopoetic subtlety and skill.

There is largely a consensus among ecopoets and ecopoetics scholars that ‘nature poetry’ is outmoded as a genre. As Andrew Schelling puts it, ‘most examples commonly cited cling to painfully outdated, neo-Victorian assumptions regarding both self and nature’ (90). Marcella Durand agrees: ‘We ourselves are the wilderness destroying the very systems of which we are a part’ (59). Although Romantic poetry marks a turning point in the depiction of nature (Gilcrest 2), and Wordsworth displays an early form of environmentalism (Bate 1991), environments form an important part of literature as old as *The Epic of Gilgamesh*.⁹ Indeed, Gilcrest argues that all poetry is environmental in a sense, because ‘every poem implies a *place*’ (3). Gilcrest does overgeneralise here, especially across literary periods, and it is important to note that pre-modern literature can only *anticipate* our current understanding of environmental processes. For Greg Garrard (1), literature becomes fully aware of environmental problems with the publication of *Silent Spring* in 1962. The book was also a major literary milestone in Hughes’s environmental awareness.¹⁰ Although mythological metamorphoses and animist beliefs foreshadow environmental thinking, Timothy Morton views the ‘ecological thought’ as ‘unavailable to non-modern humans’ (2010: 4). It is the task of literature in the late twentieth century and beyond to articulate the ‘theory and praxis of deliberate earthlings’, as Jonathan Skinner puts it (2001: 2).

Ecopoetry is diverse in focus and form. Skinner has identified some major themes, but his list of possible subjects is far from exhaustive, as he himself acknowledges:

For some readers, ecopoetics is the making and study of pastoral poetry, or poetry of wilderness and deep ecology. Or poetry that explores the human capacity for becoming animal, as well as humanity's ethically challenged relation to other animals. For others, it is poetry that confronts disasters and environmental injustices, including the difficulties and opportunities of urban environments. For yet others, ecopoetics is not a matter of theme, but of how certain poetic methods model ecological processes like complexity, non-linearity, feedback loops, and recycling. Or how 'slow poetry' can join in the same kind of push for a sustainable, regional economy that 'eating locally' does. Or how poetic experimentation complements scientific methods in extending a more reciprocal relation to alterity—ecopoetics as a 'poethics'. Or even how translation can diversify the 'monocrop' of a hegemonic language like English. 'Greener than thou' claims finally are the least interesting dimension of ecopoetics, especially given the ease of 'greenwashing.' Rather than locate a 'kind' of writing as 'ecopoetic', it may be more helpful to think of ecopoetics as a form of site-specificity - to shift the focus from themes to topoi, tropes and entropologies, to institutional critique of 'green' discourse itself, and to an array of practices converging on the *oikos*, the planet earth that is the only home our species currently knows. (Skinner 2011)

It is rather surprising to see the pastoral listed here, when theorists such as Gifford have revealed it to be largely irrelevant to recent and contemporary poetry (2012). Yet Hughes complicates the pastoral, examines humankind's relationship to animals, evokes disasters, mimics the cycle of the seasons, enters into dialogue with scientific theory, and performs some formal experiments. He is fascinated by the alterity of non-Western cultures. In his poems of Yorkshire, Devon and rivers in particular, he creates work that is site-specific.

How should poets live in, use and inhabit the environment? Skinner's early manifesto for ecopoetics reads thus: "Eco" here signals—no more, no less—the house we share with several million other species, our planet Earth. "Poetics" is used as *poesis* or making, not necessarily to emphasize the critical over the creative act (nor vice versa). Thus: ecopoetics, a house making (2001: 7).

The 'house' metaphor is not entirely appropriate to Skinner's ecopoetic project: it evokes something constructed out of bricks and mortar, possibly at the expense of local ecology. His evocation of a 'home' in his 2011 essay (see above) is more apt. Yet it is more appropriate to think of ecopoetry as evoking *habitats* instead of houses. Robert Pogue

Harrison has dismissed the notion of habitat as opposed to valued place (200)—but he misses the fact that a habitat can mean ‘[t]he locality in which a plant or animal naturally grows or lives’, or ‘the geographical area over which it extends’, or ‘the particular station or spot’ it occupies. Importantly for humans, habitat also means ‘[d]welling-place; habitation’ (*OED*). Eco-poetry is *poetry of habitat*: appropriate for evoking a world that encompasses local, global, biotic, abiotic, human and non-human elements; and, critically, the ways in which we have irreversibly altered our habitat.

Place and habitation are critical to one theorist of eco-poetry. Scott Bryson argues that eco-poets value the interaction between ‘two interdependent and seemingly paradoxical desires, both of which are attempts to respond to the modern divorce between humanity and the rest of nature’. These desires are ‘to *create place*, making a conscious and concerted effort to know the more-than-human world around us’ and ‘to *value space*, recognizing the extent to which that very world is ultimately unknowable’ (8). Drawing on the work of anthropologist Keith Basso, Scott Bryson argues for eco-poets to be regarded as being like Western Apache storytellers: ‘place-makers’ who evoke ‘visions of how things have been, and, implicitly, how things might be’ (10). He contends that eco-poetry encourages us to move from considering our surroundings as abstract spaces, to seeing them as valued places with which we can form an affective bond: a move towards the geographer Yi-Fu Tuan’s ‘topophilia’ or love of place (11). This helps us to form an understanding of our interrelationship with our environment (12), and to consider it as worthy of protection rather than exploitation (16). Yet Scott Bryson’s focus on place and space needs to be opened up to include a more nuanced discussion of local and global. Ecocriticism has long privileged the importance of the local, Scott Bryson’s ‘place’, as an important tool to enable us to understand global environmental issues (38–40). Hughes was deeply rooted in the English landscape and language—but there are many instances when his writing reminds us that a global environmental consciousness needs to acknowledge that identities are made up of ‘mixtures, fragments, and dispersed allegiances to diverse communities’ (Heise 2008: 43), and indeed diverse localities.

‘Ecocriticism’, ‘eco-poetry’ and ‘eco-poetics’ are by no means uncontested terms (see Buell 2005: viii; Tarlo 2011: 11; Gifford *Green Voices* 8.) However, scholars such as Jonathan Skinner, and contributors to his *eco-poetics* journal, cautiously employ the term, although it may not be

perfect. To analyse Hughes's ecopoetics, one needs to find more general information about the process of ecopoetic 'making', its relationship to environmental concerns, and its deployment of linguistic features. Most ecopoets and ecocritics agree that ecopoetry must refashion language in a way that is appropriate to its engagement with the environment. The poet Marcella Durand summarises this view: 'Experimental ecological poets are concerned with the links between words and sentences, stanzas, paragraphs, and how these systems link with energy and matter—that is, the exterior world' (62). Timothy Clark states that ecopoetry combines formal experimentation with a focus on environmentally engaged thinking:

At issue is an aesthetic interested in formal experimentation and the conception of the poet or poem as forming a kind of intellectual or spiritual frontier, newly coupled with a sense of the vulnerability and otherness of the natural world, distrust of a society dominated by materialism and instrumental reason, and sometimes giving a counteraffirmation of non-western modes of perception, thought or rhetorical practice. The poem is often conceived as a space of subjective redefinition and rediscovery through encounters with the non-human. (2011: 139)

As we shall see, the idea of the individual human's 'subjectivity' is challenged in poems by Hughes such as 'Wodwo' and 'Go Fishing'. Kinsella and Gander's experimental volume *Redstart* upholds Durand's and Clark's ideas about the formal qualities of ecopoetry: they raise the question of how 'syntax, line break, or the shape of the poem on the page express an ecological ethics'. Since 'our perceptual experience is mostly palimpsestic or endlessly juxtaposed and fragmented', events have 'layers' that reflect a biosphere composed of 'interdependency' (2). Their book contains a long ecopoem that deploys forms ranging from choric odes (19) to pared-down amygdalas of meaning (29) and open-form pages whose words cluster like nests, groves or baskets of food (44). From Britain, Tarlo's anthology *The Ground Aslant* focuses on the formal and sonic features of ecopoetry and landscape poetry, primarily on writers 'whose formal techniques are exploratory and experimental enough to be called radical' (2011: 8). There is 'a relationship between the spatial arrangement of the poem and the landscape'; such formal experiments 'affect the reading, the sounding of the poem on the air, and this is central to the philosophy of the open form poem' (9). When one thinks of experimental British ecopoets, Ian Hamilton Finlay, Mario Petrucci or

indeed Tarlo herself might spring to mind. Hughes is not renowned for the radicalism of his poetic forms. However, he is daringly innovative in his own way. In experimental poems such as ‘Milesian Encounter on the Sligachan’ and ‘A Kingfisher’, environmental sound answers environmentalist sense, rhythm is stripped down to its powerful elementary parts, and the form of the exterior world shapes stanzas, line breaks and *mise en page*. The works that Hughes created in collaboration with many artists also testify to an important visual dimension in his ecopoetry. It is undeniable that the sound of recited ecopoetry is also critically important. Skinner summarises it pithily: ‘We have filled the atmosphere with our stories, and still we cram in more. The delicacy of our planet makes its own noise. Can we listen, to listen?’ (quoted in Sweeney). Yet elsewhere, he accords too much importance to the auditory: ‘sound may be the “true north” of ecopoetics: thinking about how poems interact with their sonic environments may be the quickest (if most literal) way to check in with the environment, whether urban, “wild,” or in-between’ (2011). This narrow judgement is not borne out by the visually experimental ecopoetry that Skinner himself publishes in *ecopoetics*. Ecopoets may choose to deploy visual devices to sculpt the form of their poetry; they may opt to echo and respond to the non-human world with sound; they may evoke taste, smell, touch. Quite often, they deploy all these sensory strategies.

Elsewhere, Skinner identifies four main ‘species’ of ecopoetry. The first species, the ‘topological’, can be identified as ‘the literature and poetry of place, but more generally any referring “outside” the poem to a “natural” topos. This is a commonplace that plants at least one foot *within* the themes and motifs of pastoral tradition, as it cannot help referencing literary convention’. Skinner borrows a term from Jed Rasula, ‘tropological’, to describe the second species. Creating ‘tropological’ ecopoetry involves ‘casting poems as somehow functioning like ecosystems or complex systems, troping on language and ideas from the environmental sciences’. Gary Snyder’s description of the poet as detritus feeder is the most famous example. Skinner draws on the work of land artist and writer Robert Smithson for a term for the third species: ‘entropological’ poetics. This is ‘a practice engaged at the level of materials and processes, where entropy, transformation and decay are part of the creative work. Any “concrete” writing focused primarily on the procedures and materiality of the letter might fall into this category [...] but also other kinds

of “writing” that involve marking the land or natural processes and that might more properly be considered under the rubric of the visual arts’ (2005: 128). Skinner is prescient in his inclusion of the fourth species, the ‘ethnological’, which foreshadows later critical interest in post-colonial environments. Here is how Skinner identifies it: “Learning about the landscapes our “nature” has obscured necessarily entails tasks of translation outside Western languages and cultures; it also means becoming more self-conscious about our own ethnic projections. In this sense, an ecopoetics is always already an ethnopoetics (2005: 129).”

Hughes’s poetry contains specimens of three of these ‘species’ and elements of a fourth. The ‘groundedness’ of many of the poems in *Remains of Elmet*, for example, is topological. *River* can be seen as a collection that encapsulates aquatic ecosystems: it is tropological. Hughes’s work does not have the entropological radicality of, say, Ian Hamilton Finlay’s land installations. Nevertheless, the seasonal cycles of *Moortown Diary*, *Season Songs* and *River* echo natural processes on the page and strive towards the entropological. Even in the most traditional book of poems, the growing, felling, cutting, pulping, printing and binding entailed in making the volume, and the volume’s eventual decay, are inevitable entropological processes.

‘Ethnological’ ecopoetry should be written with care: Gander and Kinsella state that it is ‘hypocrisy to use indigenous knowledge, to co-opt it, as a way of affirming one’s own connection to the place that one has directly or indirectly helped oust indigenous people/s from anyway’. It is, indeed, problematic for a white writer to appropriate indigenous knowledge to him or herself. Stereotyping non-white races as ecological indigenes is almost as troubling to modern readers as calling them ‘primitive’, as Hughes’s Cambridge anthropology textbooks did. One can allow indigenous knowledge to ‘become a positive part of a non-indigenous discourse’ (Gander and Kinsella vii), but Gander and Kinsella are right to caution that ‘so often it’s a veneer of connection and respect hijacked to validate one’s own presence and disturbance of land’ (viii). If Hughes’s concept of indigenous people living in Palaeolithic Edens seems naïve to readers nowadays, we must remember that the texts by Haig-Brown and C.M. Bowra that he was reading in the early 1960s were current in their time. Indeed, Hughes’s very nostalgia for aboriginal ways of life is a function of his dismay at modernity, with its consumerist values and sterile artificiality. As Bate notes, ‘Idealization of the

supposed organic communities of the past, like idolization of the aboriginal peoples who have supposedly escaped the ills of modernity, may often serve as a mask for the oppressions of the present' (Bate 2000: 25). This book shows that Hughes's 'ethnological' writing is permeated with sensitive references to the mythologies of shamanic and animist cultures—and often the oppression that has threatened their belief-systems. In works such as *The Tiger's Bones* and 'The Head', Hughes shows the power-struggles that threaten both their ways of life and the environments on which they depend. However, he remains unusually reluctant to describe Native Americans in his published work, and if there are any 'ethnological' anxieties in his eco-poetry, they relate to his boyhood identification of himself as a Native American hunter and fisherman.

HUGHES AND ECOPOETIC LANGUAGE

Any attempt to evoke the environment in art raises complex questions about representation. Presuming to speak for a voiceless entity is problematic: the poet who does so anthropomorphises nature. David Gilcrest is sceptical: 'the attempt to recognize the nonhuman subject as linguistically competent strikes one as an essentially colonizing move' (53). Drawing on the work of Catriona Sandilands, Kenneth Burke and others, he states that the poet should 'eschew the nonhuman speaking subject in favor of a rhetoric of alinguistic agency' (59). Gilcrest's denial of language to non-humans would be seen as problematic by Wolfe (2003: 2) and Morton (2010: 71). The trouble with the 'voice for nature' is rather that it places *human* language into the mouths of non-humans, rather than evoking their own systems of communication. A potential solution is John Clare's transcription of the nightingale's song (quoted in Oswald, 'The Thunder Mutters' 36), or Les Murray's method of creating *Translations from the Natural World* (1992): both acknowledge the otherness of animal communication and the potential for meaning to be lost in translation. Moreover, it is sometimes necessary for an environmentally engaged author to speak on behalf of nature in some capacity. Buell finds that personification and the pathetic fallacy are essential in some degree to environmental writing: 'The rhetoric of nature's personhood speaks merely to the nominal level; what counts is the underlying ethical orientation implied by the troping [...] [T]o ban the pathetic fallacy—were such a thing possible—would be worse than to permit its

unavoidable excesses. For without it, environmental care might not find its voice' (1996: 217–218). As we have seen, he makes a case for the difficult necessity of metaphor (2001: 251). A voice for the environment might resemble the 'voice for Ariel' called for by Jonathan Bate: 'The ecocritical project always involves *speaking for* rather than *speaking as* its subject' (2000: 72). The idea of 'speaking for' an entity that cannot communicate via language remains problematic, but not entirely impossible. Hughes speaks for the Earth in his *Tales from Ovid*, translating and ecologising Ovid's voice for the Earth-goddess. Particularly exciting developments in ecopoetry occur when poets give voice to hybrids—creatures that are analysed in the criticism of Latour, Haraway, Wolfe and Morton. Hughes's Wodwo is one such hybrid, able to express his part-wild existence with a human voice. Rather than imagining hybrids, Hughes creates a 'hybrid' voice in 'Curlews' and 'Grouse-Butts', which incorporate bird-calls and sound back to the voices of nature. These 'hybrid' poems avoid appropriating non-human subjectivity, and instead allow our inter-relationship with our environment to shape their meaning and their form.

There is also debate about how ecopoets should deploy the lyric 'I', if at all. Harriet Tarlo rejects nature poetry because 'the inner self/outer world distinction so dear to nature poetry through the ages has become outdated' (2008: 15). Although this dualism is obsolete, it is still possible for the persona of an ecopoem to use the lyric 'I' to situate himself or herself within, say, a local bioregion, the global context, the processes of evolution, or his/her complicity in processes such as climate change and overconsumption. Gander and Kinsella also do not oppose the lyric 'I' per se, as it 'is always hidden away there by varying degrees of separation'. They state it should be put under pressure, in terms of 'what constitutes the self' and 'how it operates as messenger and witness' (viii). Hughes's poem 'Wodwo' begins 'What am I?' (*CPH* 183). There follows a catalogue of elements of the landscape that complicate and ultimately dissolve the Wodwo's identity. Hughes's work shows that the lyric 'I' can be problematised sufficiently for it to remain relevant to modern ecopoetry.

Indeed, some theorists view poetry's use of the pathetic fallacy, personification and the artifice of language as not just inevitable, but appropriate and desirable. Scott Knickerbocker makes a case for the artifice of poetic language as 'a way to relate meaningfully to the natural world' (2012: 2). Knickerbocker sees various poetic devices as highlighting humankind's close relationship to nature. Citing John Berger, he argues

that metaphor is at the heart of representation, and humankind's relationship to animals. Not only did language itself begin with metaphor, but the 'first subject matter for painting was animal'. For Berger, '[p]robably the first paint was animal blood' and 'the first metaphor was animal'. Even if what 'distinguished man from animals was the human capacity for symbolic thought', the 'first symbols were animals' (quoted in Knickerbocker 2012: 4). This primitivist reading of the creation of signs and symbols resonates with Hughes's poetic engagement with so-called 'primitive' chants and poems, for example, the animal symbolism in his poem 'Amulet'. Knickerbocker defends apostrophe because it accords agency to non-sentient beings: 'Apostrophe and personification overtly claim that we take note of the nonhuman world; yet they also imply the possibility that the nonhuman world takes note of us, as they rhetorically place the nonhuman in the position of interlocutor, even if silent' (2012: 6). Knickerbocker's scholarship is valuable as one of the first monographs on ecopoetics, and amid a backdrop of earlier ecocritical arguments about the way that poetry brings human beings closer to the natural world, its arguments in favour of poetic artifice give ecopoetics scholars an instructive reminder to pay attention to the potential pitfalls and narcissism of attempts to represent the environment via a linguistic medium. However, with its subtitle *The Language of Nature, the Nature of Language*, one would expect Knickerbocker's book to engage more thoroughly with philosophical debates on language, deconstruction and semiotics; ecocritics such as Serpil Opperman (2008) and Timothy Clark (2010) have long been examining the former, while Timo Maran (2010, 2014, 2016) and Timothy Morton (2010: 66–67) have been analysing the latter for many years.

Nevertheless, all this theorisation about 'capturing animals' without killing them, a voice for nature, the delicacy of our planet making its own noise, and open-form poetry where form echoes landforms, risks making ecopoetry sound naïve to the complexities of environmental representation, and blind to the changes that humans themselves have made to the nature that it purports to examine. Ecopoetics needs to enter into dialogue, firstly with literary theories that are aware of the challenges of representing nature, and secondly with critical material about writing in the Anthropocene, if it is to keep pace with developments in ecocriticism. Timothy Morton deconstructs nature writing, which he terms 'ecomimesis', in *Ecology without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics*

(2007). He urges ecocritics to beware of the ‘compelling illusion’ of nature writing that disguises its textual and aesthetic dimensions (2007: 54), which he terms ‘ecomimesis’. Reacting to prose nature writing, such as Thoreau’s *Walden*, he writes, ‘when ecomimesis renders an environment, it is implicitly saying: “This environment is real; do not think that there is an aesthetic framework here”’ (3), but of course, ‘[t]he inherent instability of language, and of the human and nonhuman worlds, ensure that ecomimesis fails to deliver’ (78). There are elements of narcissism in ‘ecomimesis’, for ‘[s]ome nature writers think that they are receiving a direct transmission from nature, when in fact they are watching a mirror of the mind’ (68). Kate Rigby’s work on ecopoetry builds on Morton’s criticism, and cautions against a fetishisation of the text: ‘The ecomimetic insistence on the capacity of really good writing to truly render the embodied experience of nature, far from bringing us any closer to the other-than-human, simply seduces us into an idolatry of the text: while claiming to celebrate nature, ecomimesis actually celebrates the human capacity to capture the other-than-human in writing’ (116). Of course, ‘the text does not deliver what it promises, if that promise is an embodied experience of the more-than-human world’ (117). Hughes did wish the immediacy of his ‘ecomimetic’ mode of composition in *Moortown Diary* to bring his reader closer to the experience of farming that he describes. Yet he was, of course, aware that words are ‘unnatural, in a way, and far from being ideal for their job’, unable ‘to capture the infinite depth of crowiness in the crow’s flight’ (*PM* 119). Rigby continues to argue for the importance of ecopoetry to turn our gaze towards the external environment: ‘as Yves Bonnefoy puts it, to “lift our eyes from the page”’ (117). For Rigby, ecopoetry that celebrates the more-than-human world is important, but a more negative form of ecopoetry that ‘bears prophetic witness, in grief and anger, to the violence of objectification, instrumentalization, and commodification’ of nature (127) is equally necessary. Rigby’s idea of ecopoetry that pays attention to the commodification of non-humans resonates with Hughes’s concerns about the desecralised objectification and commodification of nature in ‘The Environmental Revolution’, which will be analysed further in Chap. 6.

Tom Bristow’s *The Anthropocene Lyric* is one of the first monographs to put ecopoetic theory into dialogue with critical debates on the Anthropocene. Analysing the poetry of John Kinsella, Alice Oswald and John Burnside, he argues that ‘Anthropocene lyricism does not aim at

synchronicity, harmony or holism'. Instead, it aims at 'erasing human-centredness' and engaging with 'disconnection' and 'breakdown' (112). This resistance to 'harmony and holism' offers an important complication of Skinner's paradigm of tropological and entropological ecopoetics, suggesting that poetry for the Anthropocene needs to pay attention to the way that human beings alter environmental processes and systems. Hughes was interested in the 'holism' of Gaia theory, and his poetry of the 1980s reflects this, although his work is also aware that planetary systems are disrupted by human activities. Via a geocritical method that relies on 'the relationship between cultural practice and physical geography' (4), Bristow sets up productive ideas of 'connection and disconnection, diaspora and exile, union and division, harmony and discord' (6), putting the local into dialogue with global environmental issues. It is these disconnections and divisions that become particularly significant when Hughes's poetry of place interacts with his awareness of global environmental issues. Yet while he highlights the importance of breaking down holism and harmony, Bristow's focus on place-making occasionally steers perilously close to Bate's focus on the imaginative re-unification of the mind with nature: 'When coupled with Anthropocene lyricism, place is felt as it is encountered as being lived out by others, by more than ourselves, by our situatedness in history and ecology. It is the space in which we best witness the fragility, beauty and indifference of flora and fauna, climate and season—the more-than-human world' (7). Such analyses of 'situatedness' and place also become complicated when cultural artefacts engage with Anthropocene phenomena that are so vast as to be placeless: for example, Timothy Morton's idea of climate change as 'nonlocal' (2013, loc. 104), or Timothy Clark's argument that the environmental effects of overpopulation impact upon all areas of the earth, even sparsely populated regions (2015: 86).

Solnick's *Poetry in the Anthropocene* (2016) brings theories of ecopoetry into dialogue with scientific paradigms, such as systems theory and the theory of evolution. Arguing that the ideas put forward by Bate were relevant to the Romantics, but are no longer applicable to our current age of more advanced environmental change, Solnick proposes that '[p]oetry can no longer 'sing the song of the earth'. In the Anthropocene, poetry is forced to find new ways of rendering, recalibrating and mutating the complex relationships between human organisms and the environments that their behaviours and technologies have shaped' (15). Importantly, he also

explores how poetry draws attention to its own referentiality and self-referentiality (57). He envisages an important role for environmentally aware art: ‘ecologically orientated art does not simply consist of ornamenting an environmentalist message; it helps explore why and how communication about ecology, biology and technology might be affecting or (in)effective’ (57). This is a significant consideration for Hughes, who questioned the success of his environmentalist ‘semi-protest pieces’. As Chap. 9 will show, it is the effectiveness of such modes of communication—a battle of the sciences where environmental science vied with the polluting interests of large corporations—that Hughes targeted in one of his campaigns and in his article ‘If’ (1992). This book aims to pay yet closer attention to the precise scientific theories that Hughes knew, and to contemporary developments in environmentalism in which he was involved.

Poetry in the Anthropocene must acknowledge the extensive and insidious changes that human beings have made to our planet, and how these changes affect us. It is when Hughes engages with the detritus, wreckage, fallout and remains that human beings leave, that his poetry becomes especially aware of this. Eco-poetic engagement with filth, rubbish, toxicity, decay, radiation, ashes and relics requires a particular poetic mode: one that Hughes perfected in *Crow*. In exploring such super-simple, super-ugly, garbage-strewn and vermin-infested literature, ecocritical theory remained ahead of eco-poetics for a long time. Buell’s idea of toxic discourse (1998: 645), Gifford’s concept of the anti-pastoral (2012: 18–19) and Dana Phillips’s theory of ‘excremental ecocriticism’ (2014) began to suggest an alternative way of looking at writing about environmental destruction, pollution and filth, although they are too narrow to encompass the full range of ideas in Hughes’s *Crow* project. From eco-poetics theorists, Skinner’s idea that eco-poetry ‘confronts disasters and environmental injustices’ (2011) is helpful, as is Gary Snyder’s view of the poet as detritivore (71). But again, these theories are not sufficiently expansive to be fully applicable to *Crow*; nor do they explore exactly how eco-poetry accomplishes such tasks via its formal, lexical and auditory features. Publications on waste studies, such as Susan Signe Morrison’s *The Literature of Waste: Material Eco-poetics and Ethical Matter* (2015), provide new insights for the study of eco-poetry. As will be argued in Chap. 6, *Crow* exemplifies a poetic mode that focuses on waste, from the local waste of a littered moor to the planet laid waste by nuclear conflagration. Indeed, this is a poetic mode adequate to the Anthropocene: any

attempts to effect an imaginative re-unification of the mind with nature end up illustrating the extent to which ‘nature’ is modified by climate change, human predation, nuclear technology, habitat loss and species extinction.

Ecopoetry, then, is a poetry of habitat: it explores our relationship to the environments and ecologies that surround us, the alterations that we have made to them, and our imbrication within their systems. It can no longer present the supposedly untouched landscapes of earlier nature poetry. The places that it presents can include toxic wastelands, cityscapes, intensively farmed countryside, managed ‘wildernesses’, digital networks and parts of the solar system beyond the Earth. Ecopoetry engages with animals and plants: how we meet them, how we use them, and whether it is right to prioritise our needs over theirs. The visual form and sonic qualities of their poems embody their environmental engagement. If the lyric ‘I’ is used, it is not deployed in the solipsistic way earlier nature poets used it. Even personal meditations on the individual’s connection to the more-than-human world can imply an ecological ethics. For the Romantics, nature poetry necessarily predated ‘green’ politics. In the twentieth century, environmental agendas became integrated into the politics of a spectrum of parties, ranging from National Socialism in Nazi Germany¹¹ to the environmental Marxism of the 1970s and 1980s. With the rise of Green Parties in the USA and Britain, The Greens in Germany, and movements such as *Buen Vivir* in Latin America, environmental poets may choose to align their work with an array of ideological agendas. Ecopoetry of the last fifty years is sometimes apolitical, but its creator’s other writings, views and activities need to be taken into account before such a judgement is made. Ecopoetry can dramatise ecological interconnection, demonstrate what happens when ecosystemic processes are altered by human actions, or explore the complicated moral dilemmas of Western contact with hunter-gatherers who live off the land. Ecopoets can tackle issues that affect human beings and their environments equally: struggles for land ownership; the fight for environmental justice in less-developed countries; modernity’s pernicious appetite for natural resources; or the adequacy or inadequacy of different modes of environmental communication. Ecopoetry of waste can contemplate the horrific prospect of pollution and destruction on a global scale. Ecopoetry will continue to develop many further thematic and formal strategies in the future, and this synopsis is far from exhaustive. But for it to be ‘the real thing’, as Hughes put it, poets must combine

aesthetic and critical judgements with ecological ethics to avoid writing ‘semi-protest’ green propaganda. From his early years in Mytholmroyd and Mexborough, through to his years in America, his many trips abroad, his farming, his fishing and his engagement with endangered environments, Hughes’s writing is often a poetics of living with and disrupting local and global ecologies: a poetics of habitat.

NOTES

1. Hughes acquired several books by James Lovelock, including *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth* (Emory Rose QH313.L68 1982 HUGHES), and other theories about Gaia such as Peter Bunyard and Edward Goldsmith, eds. *Gaia, the thesis, the mechanisms and the implications*. Emory MARBL QH540.C36 1987 HUGHES.
2. Emory Rose archive collection 644, Series 5, box 155, folder 7, statement about Arts for Nature by Prince Philip.
3. A search for ‘post-human’, or ‘anthropocentrism’, or ‘cyborg’, or ‘hybrid’ does not reveal anything in his library at Emory.
4. When wounded, Sassoon’s character George Sherston reflects that he once again became ‘part of the war machine which needed so much flesh and blood to keep it working’ (Sassoon 241). Animals played their part in the conflict, working to transport war-machines alongside the soldiers; in Hughes’s ‘A Dream of Horses’, the horses that ‘cannoned the world from its place’ evoke horse-drawn field guns (*CPH* 66).
5. He bought Ray Bradbury’s 1951 science fiction novel *The Silver Locusts*, which mentions a battle fought with ‘metal insects and electric spiders’ (12), although the novel would also have resonated with his concerns about nuclear warfare and an altered climate. Emory Rose archive, PS3503. R18 S5 1975 HUGHES. In 1964, he acquired a science fiction anthology: Brian Aldiss, *Yet more Penguin science fiction: an anthology*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964. Emory Rose archive, PN6120.95.S33 A42 1964 HUGHES.
6. BL Add MS 88918/129/2, unpublished prose diaries and notes, 20 recto.
7. For an important study of sexual and reproductive diversity, see Joan Roughgarden, *Nature’s Rainbow: Diversity, Gender and Sexuality in Nature and People*. Berkeley, CA: California UP, 2004. Print.
8. The principal texts by Heidegger that Bate draws on in his 2000 book are ‘What Are Poets For?’, ‘Building Dwelling Thinking’, ‘Poetically Man Dwells’ and ‘The Question Concerning Technology’.
9. For more information on forests in *Gilgamesh*, see Pogue Harrison 13–18.
10. BL Add MS 88918/6/12 ‘ARTS FOR NATURE’ 2.
11. For further information, see Bramwell 1989.



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