

Poetry of Pathetic Fallacy: A Dissection of the Select Poetic Works of Ted Hughes' *River*

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Abstract:

The research paper attempts to pick out the features of pathetic fallacy inferred in the select poems of Ted Hughes' *River*. It also explores the beauty of nature and its components in the light of pathetic fallacy. The paper significantly intends to sketch the aesthetic picture of nature and its objects with respect to the function pathetic fallacy. Pathetic fallacy is defined as ascribing human qualities and emotions to the lifeless objects of nature. It is vivid that Ted Hughes has rendered human feelings to nature and its elements which are validated in "Japanese River Tales", "Low Water", "The Morning Before Christmas", "Four March Watercolour", "Creation of Fishes" and "After Moonless Midnight". The poems explicate that the poet has catered animate feelings to bird, fish, river and so on.

Introduction:

The literary and stylistic device, Pathetic fallacy was invented by the 19th century writer, John Ruskin and it is identified in Ted Hughes' poetic composition. Furthermore, the device is found to function as a complement in literary genres. Pathetic fallacy ascribes human qualities and emotions to the lifeless objects of nature. The word, 'fallacy' refers to imparting emotions to something else: an improper definition of Pathetic fallacy and personification merely drags into doubtful mind but an illustrated definition of both draw a distinct line between them with regard to their functions respectively. The former one attributes human emotions to inanimate things of nature and whereas the latter one attributes human emotions to ideas or animals, objects or ideas. It is evident that Ted Hughes has made avail of the stylistic device, pathetic fallacy in his *River* in order to display his elevated style.

Presence of pathetic fallacy:

In “Japanese River Tales” the presence of pathetic fallacy is bright and it has consequently enhanced the texture. The poem describes a river and its environment superbly with a realistic imagery of a snowy day. The poet has ascribed human emotion to the lithe river and also to the snow princess; the continuing poetic lines make it apparent:

The lithe river rejoices all morning
In his juicy bride- the snow princess
Who peeped from cloud, and chose him,
and descended. “Japanese River Tales” (18-20)

The river is referred to as a lithe river because of its sleek and bending ability in its movement. And it explicates the river as flexible and elegant, in addition to its poetry of aesthetic appearance. The poetic work evidences the presence and function of pathetic fallacy. In reality, ascribing human emotion and feeling to the objects of nature have raised the beauty of the poem. ‘River rejoices’ indicates the merry mood of the river and also it makes apparent of the function of pathetic fallacy. The word ‘rejoice’ is habitually used for human beings to emphasize their joyful emotion but the poet has revolutionized the usage by making avail of it for the object of nature. Similarly, the term ‘princess’ is used for a human who is a descendant of a king but the poet has employed it to describe snow to designate the snow in a prestigious manner and beautify the snow even more through his language. It also throws light on his love for nature and its object, and also to embellish the appearance of nature in his composition. The poet calls the snow as a snow princess to enhance the context with an aesthetic appeal. Moreover, he adds that the snow has peeped down from cloud to descend over the river and it emphasizes the human sense rendered to snow. This shows, the poet has ascribed the human sense of visualizing to the snow which is an inanimate object of nature. Using human description has honoured and beautified the inanimate objects of nature with human emotion and sense. Therefore, it validates the presence and function of pathetic fallacy.

Ted Hughes’ “Low Water” is enriched with Pathetic fallacy. The Poetic work portrays river and her appearance with regard to the aesthetic appeal. The poet observes the entire pictures of “Low Water” in an evening time. Assuming the river as a woman, the poet has rendered a feminine explication for the river. The poem springs out in a metaphorical context

stating the river as a beautiful idle woman. Presence of Pathetic fallacy in “Low Water” can be validated through the following poetic line:

This evening
The river is a beautiful idle woman.

.....
She lies back, bored and tipsy.

She bolls on her deep couch. And a long thigh
Lifts from the flash of her silks.

Adoring trees kneeling, ogreish eunuchs
Out her spread hair, massage her fingers.

She stretches-and an ecstasy tightens
Over skin, and deep in her gold body

Thrills spasm and dissolve. She drowns.

Her half-dreams life out of her, light –minded
Love –pact suicides. Copulation and death. (1-2, 5-14)

The style of Hughes demands extraordinary imaginative power to the readers in order to experience his feelings. He has unbounded his imagination power by accentuating that the river is intoxicated and, therefore, she lies flat on her couch. Her long thigh lifts from the flash of her silks and the trees adore her and comb her spread hair. In addition, they also massage her finger which indicates the human description rendered to the river. She stretches her golden body and ecstasy tightens over her skin. Since the river is intoxicated, she is drowsed and her dreams lifted out of her to make her light-mended. The dreams mirror that the love pact has failed and reminds her about copulation and death of life. The poem strongly emphasizes the presence of pathetic fallacy in the context by rendering human feelings and emotions to the river. The poet adds, she stirs her love proportion that is the ooze of balsam and it is thickened with that of fish mucus and algae, a very simple plant. In most

of the contexts, the poem validates the function of pathetic fallacy with much respect to aesthetic pleasure. The poem displays the boundless imaginative ability and perplexing complexity of Ted Hughes. Human feelings and emotion are ascribed to the river an inanimate object of nature her feelings and emotions are extravagantly exaggerated to beautiful the form and content. The idea of the poem is embellished by the stylistic device, Pathetic fallacy with additional regard to the complicating poetic language.

The fragrance of pathetic fallacy can be sensed to a minimal degree in “The Morning Before Christmas”. And the line, “The frost –smoking sun embellishes her beauty” “The Morning Before Christmas” (26) validates the function of pathetic fallacy. The poet pens that the Sun beautifies the hen fish and this marks the function of pathetic fallacy in the poetic line. The pronoun, ‘Her’ in the poetic line refers to the hen fish. The Sun is an object of nature and it has been given the capability of humans to embellish. The poem explicates, the sun embellishes the hen fish and displays it more beautiful. Thus, it divulges that the sun plays the role of a beautician in Hughes’ composition.

Like “The Morning Before Christmas”, “Four March Watercolours” also given the fragrance of pathetic fallacy at the beginning line of the poetic work. The poetic lines, “Earth is just unsettling / Her first faint scents” “Four March watercolour” (1, 2) stress the use of pathetic fallacy to elevate the style and taste. According to Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary the word, ‘unsettling’ means making someone feel upset, nervous or worried. It is contextually said that the earth is unhappy which overtly underlines the treatment of pathetic fallacy. It throws light on the act of rendering human feelings to the earth which is an object of nature. Thus, the use of Pathetic fallacy has enhanced the context.

The aesthetic beauty of “Creation of Fishes” is fortified by using pathetic fallacy as a stylistic device. Pathetic fallacy plays a vital role in the aesthetic function of the poem with much regard to the power of imagination. The poet has personified the sun, the moon and their families, quoting their beauty additionally. The conversation between the sun and the moon supports pathetic fallacy and the following lines authenticate it:

Earth gaped: tongue and root shrivelled.

Said Moon to Sun: ‘Our children are too much

For this creation. In their flame-beauty.

They are too intolerably beautiful.

If the world is to live, they must be quenched.’

Sun and Moon, solemn,
Gathered their children into a sack, to drown them.

Noble sun, tear-blind, plucked his darlings.
Subtle Moon gathered glossy pebbles.
Both emptied their sack into the rivers.

Enraged, the hoodwinked Sun stared down, bereft.
Smiling, the Moon sloped away with her family.

The raving Sun fished up his loveliest daughter
To set her again beside him, in heaven,
But she spasmed and stiffened, in a torture of colours.

He fished up his fieriest son who leaped
In agony from his hands, and plunged under.
He fished up his quickest, youngest daughter-
With dumb lips, with rigid working eye
She died in his fingers.

Flaring, his children fled through the river glooms.

Fingers dripping, the Sun wept in heaven.

Smiling, the Moon hid. “Creation of Fishes” (8-30)

The poetic lines reveal the sun has got a masculine depiction and the Moon, a feminine explication effectively. By making avail of the poetic language, the poet has granted animate feelings to the Sun, the Moon and their children respectively.

The sun brightens the day and his children as the Moon flames the night and her offspring are shone. The poem is enriched with overstatements and the phrase ‘Earth gaped’

substantiates it. Naturally the sun and the moon make no conversation between them but the poet has extraordinarily portrayed the conversational scenery of the both to mark the human feelings granted to them in order to beautify the texture of the poetic work. The moon says, their children are very bright and beautiful so it will harm the earth, therefore, they must be extinguished. The idea unfolds the imaginary thought of the poet which employed with an intention to amuse the readers. Suddenly, in the world of the poet, the sun and the moon become solemn and eventually they decide to sack their children and plunge them into the rivers. However, the loss of his children makes him mournful. The poem pictures the sorrowful and infuriated appearance of the sun and the hoodwinked and smiling face of the moon. This validates the human description rendered to the sun and the moon. Thereafter, the poem covertly tells that the Moon is subtle and has persuaded the sun to drown his children. Hughes has employed 'noble' as an adjective for the Moon; as the manner the human beings are being distinguished according to their character and morality.

Since the sun is unable to bear the grief of the loss of his children, he is mournful and infuriated, and thus he tries to recover his children. But the subtle Moon and her family slopes away with smiling face. Her smile is pictured as a hoodwinked smile; this shows that the poet has imparted negative capability of humans to the moon. Whatsoever, the context stresses that the poet has granted human traits to the object of nature. The sun fishes up his loveliest daughter and sets her again beside him in the heaven but she is stiffened and feels unhappy. The poet calls the daughter of moon as a loveliest daughter. The word, 'loveliest' is bound to function in human context but the poet has revolutionized the usage by employing it as an adjective to the daughter of the Moon. It highlights the manner that the human feelings are being distributed to the inanimate objects of nature; thus, the idea specifies the presence of pathetic fallacy.

Correspondingly, he fishes up his 'fiercest' son who leaped from his hands in agony. This lightens the fact that the poet has granted human description to the son of the sun. Eventually, he fishes up his quickest and youngest daughter who has dumb lips and rigid working eye; sadly she dies in his fingers. Though the poetic work instigates ambiguity, still the treatment of pathetic fallacy has beautified the content. The poem ends by sketching the tearful Sun in heaven and the smiling Moon hiding herself. It explicates the sun as noble and is mournful because of losing his children but the Moon is portrayed as subtle and is happy despite her craftiness. She pays no remorse for making him a foolish with her hoodwink trait.

Thus, the poetic work clearly distinguishes and differentiates virtue and vice in personality of the Sun and the Moon by drawing a distinct line between them. The poem vividly explicates the human feelings and emotions rendered to the sun, the moon and their children. In each and every context the poem evinces the human feelings and emotion of the objects of nature. Therefore, it is evident that “Creation of Fishes” is predominated by the stylistic device - pathetic fallacy; in addition, pathetic fallacy embellishes the poetic work exceedingly by its function and presence.

The pathetic fallacy has minimal function in “After Moonless Midnight”. The poetic work vividly picturizes the fluvial landscape by additionally portraying its creatures. The imaginative power of the poet and his concern for the natural world is explicit in the light of rendering human feelings to nature and its objects:

They waited for me. The whole river
Listened to me, and, blind,
Invisibly watched me. And held me deeper
With its blind, invisible hands. “After Moonless Midnight” (9-12)

The lines disclose that the poet has given human sense to river in order to illuminate his idea. The poet confesses that the river has keenly listened to him; it marks the hearing sense of the river which it does not possess naturally. He also tells that the river has held him in its blindness with its invisible hands. In addition, the poet has penned that the river has watched him keenly that realistically never happens. This shows that the poet has rendered hearing and visualizing ability to the river which consequently underlines the function of pathetic fallacy. The aesthetic words of the poet appear to be fiction to the readers but the underlying intention of the poet is to entertain his readers with his power of imagination in regard to the aesthetic scenery.

Conclusion:

Comprehensively, pathetic fallacy demands the power of imagination for its formation and experience. The analysis of the poems validate that pathetic fallacy is apparent in Ted Hughes’ poetic composition which has rendered human feeling to river, fish, gull, Sun, Moon and so on to upgrade the taste and beauty of Hughes’ thought. Therefore, it is evident that the function of pathetic fallacy has embellished the idea and thought of the poet. It also brings one more fact to light, since Hughes has passion for nature and its components,

he has respected and dignified it by granting human feelings to it. Thus, the function of pathetic fallacy discloses his ardent love for the Mother Nature.

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