The Goddess in Hughes work takes as many forms as she does in Nature. In his very early poem, ‘Song’, which he said came to him “as such things should in your nineteenth year – literally a voice in the air”, she, like the goddess of Robert Graves’s writings, is a moon goddess and a muse to whom Hughes pledges allegiance, knowing already the enthralling wonder of her presence and the heartbreak when she turns from him.

‘Song’, however, was written before Hughes had read Graves's The White Goddess and, in a letter written to Nick Gammage years later, he recalled that on reading that book for the first time in September 1951 he felt “slight resentment to find [Graves] taking possession of what I considered to be my secret patch”. He was, he said, already familiar with “the more arcane bits” of Middle Eastern, Egyptian, Welsh and Irish mythology, and he regarded them as his specialty; he was especially interested in the “supernatural women”, in particular the “underworld women”; and Indian, Chinese and Japanese mythology had fed into this obsession. He had, he said, “worked out a kind of relationship to it all.”

Nevertheless, he recognized that he and Graves “shared an obsession” and he acknowledged that repeated reading of Graves’s book during his three years at Cambridge University had eventually had a big effect on him. That effect, however, he believed to be largely shaped by his even earlier absorption of the theory of Jung’s Psychological Types. He had “read Graves through Jung” and understood Graves’s analysis of various myths as a description of something which “had its roots in biology”.

Briefly, Jung’s Psychological Types describes people as belonging to two categories: Introvert (those who see the world primarily through their own internal state and experience); and Extrovert (those who relate to the world primarily through objects). Jung also distinguishes between two pairs of functions: Thinking and Feeling, both of which are rational, conscious processes (Feeling being judgment, not emotion); and Sensation and Intuition, both of which are irrational and unconscious. For Jung, all these functions are present in the human psyche, where the unconscious, especially Intuition, balances and is balanced by rational consciousness. Whichever functions dominate, the opposite tend to be repressed; a balance is essential, and gross imbalance is the cause of psychological disorder.

Having absorbed these Jungian theories, Hughes was well prepared to accept Graves’s arguments against the Socratic emphasis on rationality and logic at the expense of myth, imagination and intuition. Especially, he would have agreed with Graves about the value of myth. This is borne out by his two essays on myth and education, and by Cave Birds, which he described in two letters to me as “a critique of sorts of the Socratic abstraction and its consequences and as the judgment and expiation of the crime for which “history holds him responsible, namely, the murder of the Mediterranean Goddess”. Two early poems also deal directly with our alienation from Nature due to Socratic teachings: ‘Egg head’, in which man’s brain with “deft opacities” and “lucid sophistries” arrogantly shuts out the evidence of the senses; and ‘The Perfect Forms’, in which Socrates is seen as ‘complacent as a phallus’ in his belief in an Absolute which can be understood only through rationality and logic, not through the “fosterings” of nature and the natural evolution of all the many abilities, conscious and unconscious, which have always been essential to our survival.

On the whole, Jung’s Psychological Types seems not greatly to have influenced Hughes’ early poetry: the presence of Robert Graves multi-faceted goddess is very much more apparent.

She is the poet’s “Threefold Muse”, Mother, Bride and Hag, and every true poem ‘is necessarily an invocation of the Goddess, or Muse, the Mother of All, the ancient power of fright and lust – the female spider or the queen–bee whose embrace is death’. She is Nature, “mistress and governess of all elements”, controller of “the planets and the sky, the wholesome winds and the seas”, and, especially in Hughes’s poetry, she is a shape–shifter possessing the terrible beauty of jaguar, wolf, horse, fox, otter, hare and other creatures which have traditionally been claimed by the Goddess as her own. This is the same Great Goddess who is described by Hughes in Shakespeare and the Goddess of Complete Being and whose influence he traced in great detail in Shakespeare’s work.

Present in Hughes’s poetry, too, is the Gravesian ‘Theme’ of the warring twins: the battle between the God of the Waxing Year (who is the poet) and his twin, the God of the Waning Year (who is the poet’s rival, “his blood-brother, his other self, his weird”), for the love of the capricious and all–powerful Goddess.

Of course there are elements here, too, of Jung’s theory of the dissociation of the psyche and the dark, inner, psychic state of the repressed unconscious; and of the split between the female aspect of the personality (the anima) and the male aspect (the animus). Hughes would have come across these ideas in his later, extensive reading of Jung’s works.
and he explored them in plays like *Eat Crow* and *The Wound*, where the suppressed female energies become demonic, hallucinatory, dream figures.

The Goddess, everywhere in Hughes’s work is Nature but she is also the alienated female energies in us and in our world; and from 1963 on, he began to use alchemy as a method of healing these divisions.

In *Cave Birds: An Alchemical Cave Drama*, Hughes used alchemy’s traditional combination of myth, poetry, spiritual quest and chemical process as a framework for a sequence of poems which culminates, in ‘Bride and Groom Lie Hidden for Three Days’, with the loving, mutual, re-creation of male and female, who bring each other to perfection immediately before the final poems of wholeness and reunion with the natural source of life.

In *Remains of Elmet*, and *River*, the alchemy is in the poems, the photographs and in Nature herself. She is again the Mother of All, but her world is sick, her creatures poisoned and dying. In *Remains of Elmet*, Hughes charts the death of a Kingdom where industrialization and a rigid Puritanical religious fervour left the “withered scalps of souls / In the trees that stand for men”, but Nature survives in the howling skylines, the wind, and the “glooms of purple” which swab “the human shape from the freed stones”. And in *River*, the “fallen river” “lies across the lap of his mother/ broken by world”, like a peta. Yet the whole sequence is Hughes’s alchemical attempt to recreate in these poems, in these toilings of psalm, the eternal, healing, nurturing energies, the “nameless/ Teeming inside atoms – and inside the haze / And inside the sun and inside the earth”, the energies of the Goddess who is the font, the Mother of All.

Christian Cabbala, too, became a framework for Hughes’s words, and the Goddess became the Hebrew Shekinah, the female aspect of God, exiled in our world. In Hebrew teachings, it is the duty of Adam and his descendents to rescue the Shekinah from exile and reunite her with the male aspect of God. So, in *Adam and the Sacred Nine*, the angelic messengers, the nine birds, come to awaken Adam to his task. Finally, with the “sole of a foot/ Pressed to world-rock”, in intimate contact with Nature, Adam understands: “I was made”, he acknowledges, “For you”.

Like Adam, the poet is subservient to the Muse/ Goddess. In accepting her call he binds himself irrevocably to her. Nowhere is this more apparent in Hughes’s work than in the poems he wrote after reading A.K. Ramanujan’s translations of the Vacanas of Southern Indian mystics. For these mystics, the god, Siva, was their ‘husband’ and they devoted their lives completely to his worship. Hughes Vacanas, some of which became part of the *Gaudete Epilogue* and of *Orts*, are spoken directly to the Goddess, who is, again, “my Lady”, as she was in ‘Song’. He speak simply and directly to her of his devotion, rejection, ecstasy and despair, but one unpublished poem in particular is notable for its statement of the role of real women in Hughes’s poetry. “Every living woman”, he wrote, represents a test which the Goddess sets for the human male. Every living woman embodies the Goddess. So, in Hughes’s poetry real women are all representatives of the Goddess, and it is notable that never, even in *Birthday Letters, Howls & Whispers* and *Capriccio*, where Sylvia Plath and Assia Wevill are clearly re-membered and present, are the women named.

In Hughes’s lifelong negotiations with the Goddess, the healing he sought to achieve was both personal and, through the magical power of the word, universal. Poetry, for Hughes, like magic, was “one way of making things happen the way you want them to happen”.

**REFERENCES AND NOTES**


5. This book belonged to Hughes’s sister, Olwyn. Later, as he told Ekbert Fass (*The Unaccommodated Universe*, Black Sparrow Press, Santa Barbara, 1980, p.37), he read all the translated volumes, and many of Jung’s works are present in his library which is now held at Emory University, Atlanta, USA.


11. The early poem ‘Fair Choice’ (Hughes, Collected Poems, p.31) deals with this inner battle and specifically links the twins to Cain and Abel, as Graves does.


14. Jung’s *Mysterium conjunctio: an enquiry into the separation of psychic opposites in alchemy* Routledge, 1963, and *Alchemy Studies*, Routledge, 1967, are both in Hughes’s library at Emory University.


17 Hughes, Faber,1979.


21. Christian Cabbala was introduced to the Occult Neoplatonism of the Renaissance by Pico della Mirandola as a way of linking sacred Hebrew texts with those of Hermeticism and astrology within a Christian framework. Hughes describes it and its use in detail in *Shakespeare and the Goddess of Complete Being* pp.18-34.


24. Hughes read A.K.Ramanujan, *Speaking of Siva*, Penguin Classic, 1973, shortly after it was published and proceeded to write 96 of his own vacanas in a notebook now held in Emory University’s Rare Book Library; Ted Hughes Papers, Box 57/16. My detailed examination of these poems is scheduled to be published in *Ted Hughes: Cambridge to Collected*, by Palgrave Macmillan early in 2013.


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