



“The Songs That a Crow Would Sing”

Master's Thesis in English Literature
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Abstract

This thesis will attempt to pursue a further understanding of what can only be described as the unsignifiable, unsayable, ineffable, or indescribable which can be seen to stand in opposition to language and understanding. This pursuit will be conducted through an investigation of poetic revelation as represented in *Crow: From the Life and Songs of the Crow* by British poet Ted Hughes. The experience of revelation takes on an indescribable form, and manifests itself through means we do not completely understand. My investigation will therefore endeavor to observe what components of *Crow* might be instigating revelation as I attempt a description of the unsignifiable.

This investigation will be partly conducted by applying the theories of philosopher Martin Heidegger and psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva. However it will mainly focus on the use of their presented dichotomies of what is sayable and unsayable, it will also conduct the investigation on the premise that what is unsayable cannot be stated, it can only be indirectly described. Other theories will also be considered from critics of Hughes' works such as Keith Sagar, Paul Bentley, Terry Gifford and Neil Roberts. Through an understanding of the theories of poetic language, and of Hughes' poetry, the goal is to attain a description of the unsignifiable through attempting to find revelation instigating components.

These instigating components are what I will theorize as taking the form of Crow, who I will describe as transcending character and form, and eventually becoming a translinguistic embodiment generated by the poems. This concept of Crow that grows from text to concept will be described through the tropes of Whiteness and Blackness, where Whiteness is the text of his origination and Blackness is a metaphor for what grows outside of text and understanding, becoming a metaphor for the unsayable experience presented in *Crow*. The thesis will, after elucidating the concept of Crow, attempt to describe and dissect this metaphorical Blackness in order to further understand the unsignifiable realm that it represents.

However, as I will attempt to show, the binary of Whiteness and Blackness in *Crow* become part of a process of revelation which digs deep into the mind of the reader. It does this in order to create a revelation of reality, changing the reader's perspective of themselves. Crow holds nothing back in his assault on reality, and as we will find out, the only reality he has any power over is that of the reader.

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The songs that a Crow would sing

Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to undertake an analysis of that which cannot be put into words or directly referenced through language, of what is often referred to as the unsignifiable. It will attempt this analysis with a particular focus on how it may be generated in *Crow: From the Life and Songs of the Crow*¹ by Ted Hughes. My belief is that in *Crow* one can observe a mythic quest conducted both through signifiable and unsignifiable means, involving a deconstruction of our understanding of reality. My theory is that this deconstruction seeds restorative revelation through the guidance, or as Hughes refers to it, the “intermittent consciousness”, of Crow (Bentley 1998: 45).

My initial interest in this subject matter, as well as one of my most memorable personal experiences with something I would consider unsignifiable, comes from a great affection for music. It originates in the challenge one confronts when listening to a certain song or a favorite album of a specific band for years of one’s life and eventually going to see it performed live with several thousand people of a similar affection. The challenge itself emerges once one comes home afterwards and realizes that the experienced sensation, the unbound wave of euphoria that strikes and exposes the essential difference between everyday experience and everlasting memory, simply cannot be properly described or shared with anyone. No words will do the experience justice. The sensation one is hit by feels like the gathering of all life experiences which have grown roots and become associated with the music itself, of past moods of seething sorrow or boundless delight, of sincere or senseless contemplation, all coming together into one indescribable climactic experience. This is one of my biggest conscious confrontations with what is unsignifiable. It is essentially what seeded my curiosity for a deeper understanding of this unavoidable yet unmentionable part of existence, and eventually lead to the observation that language contains a frightening amount of similar deficiencies.

If we are to gather a quick understanding of what the term “unsignifiable” refers to, it

¹ Henceforth referenced as *Crow*

means the part of our existence which cannot be signified. It is what some might describe as the spiritual realm, or the realm of the unconscious, the idea-world, or the experience of Being. It lies so deeply shrouded in mystery that we have not even been able to agree on a common name for it. A more proper definition might be what William Franke, in his book *Philosophy of the Unsayable* (2014) describes as “what repels language, yet [...] requires language of some kind in order to be described, so as to register at all” (Franke 2014: 3). This description of repelling language shows us at once the inescapable problem and solution to any approach of the unsignifiable, the problem being that by the principle of its very existence, the unsignifiable ultimately cannot, no matter the approach, be referred to through or as language. The eventual solution of an investigation will therefore only always be a differently formed recognition of this initial problem. As with philosophy, poetry or religion, we can only try to describe it in an indirect way, so that it “registers at all” (ibid.).

With this description we begin observing how language and its deficiencies not only hinder an experiential recreation of a seminal moment such as my concert experience, but also consequently how this might impact normal everyday communication. This deficiency of language can be, and has been, approached from a variety of different angles, undergoing intricate presentations through philosophical elucidation, psychological rationalization, religious contemplation, or pursuits of poetic revelation. However, as is the nature of language and its opposite, everything falls short of establishing any static understanding. In this thesis this pursuit of a deeper understanding of the unsignifiable will take the form of a search for, and investigation of, how it might manifest itself through poetic revelation.

Poetry is one of the main linguistic forms that aims to pursue and mediate what is past the border of signification and language. Poems abstain from strict interpretation, they become, as Timothy Clark explains that philosopher Martin Heidegger describes it, not about something, but rather they have the function of opening “a space of its own projection for us to inhabit, possessing us like a dance or a walk to music” (Clark 2011: 119). This shows how poetry shouldn’t present meaning, but rather create an experience or sensation, having the effect of “possessing” the reader. As a result of this the proper understanding of the function of poetry becomes insight into its distinctive avoidance of a static meaning or understanding, the point of poetry is often that there is no specific point of poetry. As a result of this poems therefore often produce something outside of language, instead of meaning they present an experience or sensation. In my search for a deeper understanding of the unsignifiable, poetry thus presents itself as what seems to be a suitable linguistic medium. This is also what led to Ted Hughes as the chosen poet, as he was on his own pursuit of connecting with what I have

so far described as the unsignifiable realm.

In his article “Myth and Education” Hughes presents a more poetic perspective on the unsignifiable, exemplifying it by our lack of understanding of something as simple as “[h]ow does the biological craving for water turn into the precise notion that it is water that we want?” (Hughes 1994: 144). Hughes follows this up by referring to it, as many do, through the description of being “subjective”, however his use of this word comes with the critique that “under that vaguest of general terms lies the most important half of our experience.” (ibid.). My own investigation is therefore not intending to produce material that would revolutionize our existential understanding by answering the unanswered questions of unsignifiability. The goal of this thesis only functions as what some might call a perplexing hope of establishing an increased collection of representations of what refuses representation; of creating an increased understanding of our inherent and unavoidable lack of understanding through how the unsignifiable may present itself within the poetry of Ted Hughes.

In Hughes’ eyes society is breeding an increasingly unhealthy reliance on what is logical, on what he describes as the more objective *outer world* in opposition to the subjective *inner world* (Hughes 1994: 143-144). Hughes explains how he believes schools completely neglect this inner world, and through his poetry one can observe how these beliefs turn into his pursuit of what lies at its ineffable core (142). The components of this desired return to the unknowable inner world that comprises Hughes’ mythic quest is what this thesis will concern itself with, and by following Hughes’ quest it will be investigating how he attempts to create his own connection with the unsignifiable.

The purpose behind specifically choosing *Crow* from Hughes’ expansive collection is that within it he was not only attempting revelation, but he was doing so in a manner that transcends theme and escapes reason. Through his creation of the mythic Crow Hughes leaves nothing behind in his insistence on and persistence in unveiling reality, on breaking down the fabric of reason in order to conjure its opposite. By positing the aspects of existence and absorbing them all into Crow, as well as by exposing the distance between the inner and outer world and forcing a contemplation on their reality through Crow, Hughes gradually, carefully, as well as recklessly, manifests what I believe to be a metaphor of the functions of the unsignifiable. In what I view not as a simple mythical character or creature, nor as a description of style, but rather an accumulation of all these aspects into an indescribable translinguistic embodiment, Crow manages to claw his way into an existence that can only be subjectively described and not objectively defined. Hughes is creating what I term the concept of Crow through the establishment of an essence that is the culmination of all its

parts, consisting of the tropes of whiteness and blackness. He creates this concept through what could be seen as a translinguistic embodiment that does not span a single poem, but an entire collection.

I am not alone in viewing *Crow* as a pursuit of something unspeakable, or of producing mythical or revelatory properties, as several of the theorists that I will be employing will be shown to have a similar understanding. This can be observed in *The poetry of Ted Hughes: Language, Illusion & Beyond* (1998) where Paul Bentley describes *Crow* as an attempt to approach “through language what is finally unspeakable”, as well as in *The Art of Ted Hughes* (1978) where Keith Sagar details Hughes’ quest for reconciliation through mythic revelation (Bentley 1998: 4; cf. Sagar 1978: 4-5). The basis of my analysis of Hughes’ work will have the readings from these theorists in mind as well, but will mainly concern itself with my own reception for reasons that I will later present as a component of their revelatory process.

Through poetry analysis the goal is often to create a functional interpretation that eventually aims for a static designation of its purpose or theme. What I will approach, however, is what stands outside static designation, and strict interpretation. In *Crow* I will try to present how the unsignifiable is manifesting itself not only through *Crow*, but also as *Crow*. As each poem grows its associative roots in the mind of the reader, I believe the concept of *Crow* evolves. In a similar manner as how my concert experience became exceptionally impactful due to it being an accumulation of years of built up associations and experiences, the metaphors that are presented in *Crow* eventually mature past what a single poem could ever embody, and beyond what language can truly detail. As the reader is introduced to *Crow*, as *Crow* gains their empathy and sympathy, and as he guides them through his world, they are admitting creature and concept through the very act of reading. Through an absorption of words, a subjective concept appears that cannot emerge from words alone, but only gains existence as words become relational to Being. As words project themselves unto the conscious and unconscious of the reader I believe they are enabling the intermittent consciousness of *Crow*.

This intermittent consciousness is what I believe propels the revelatory process of *Crow* as it initiates a development that I consider similar to Ann Skea’s view of Hughes’ *Cave Birds* (1978), where it conducts what she describes as an alchemical procedure; Hughes is in *Crow* once again taking on the role as alchemist, subjecting “both himself and his readers to the purifying processes of transmutation” (Skea 1994: 47). In *Crow* we observe *Crow* as he is enlightened and transformed, and, similarly to how Skea describes of *Cave*

Birds, I believe the readers and Hughes follow the same process (48). As the reader observes and experiences what eventually amounts to a unification of existential binaries, I believe it to be initiating an unsignifiable process of revelation, which eventually leaves the reader transformed. This process and transformation will be investigated as I believe it is conducted through unsignifiable means, and that it is also specifically pursuing the unsignifiable results of revelation.

In my investigation I will mainly be using the theories of philosopher Martin Heidegger and psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva. My expectations are that they might help further understand the functions of *Crow*, and thus result in a deeper understanding of the presence of the unsignifiable in Hughes' poetry. Both the theories of Heidegger and Kristeva attempt to estimate the capacity and presence of what stands outside signification, with a particular focus on its function in poetic language. Both theorists have established their own versions of the dichotomies of signifiable and unsignifiable, and this thesis will not argue their differences as it is not the topic and is therefore not relevant. The importance is the distinction from which both dichotomies originate, and their different procedure of attempting understanding. Some theories that I use will be used in uniform in order to better understand the possible traces of the unsignifiable. This is not an attempt to generalize theories, but rather of observing similarities between ideas and connecting them in order to serve a common purpose.

The coming first chapter contains the theoretical orientation which will provide insight into the works that stand at the core of this investigation, as well as providing a theoretical infrastructure for what is to follow. The ensuing second chapter will concern itself with the construction of the concept of *Crow* within *Crow* as it stands to be the essential literary phenomenon that this thesis will concern itself with. In the third chapter this concept will be tested through further use in poetic readings, accompanying the theories of Heidegger and Kristeva. For the fourth and final chapter the conceptual construct will be evaluated based upon the findings of the second and third chapter, and what I consider to be the many functions of *Crow* will be further elucidated.

Without positing a theory on the unsignifiable of my own, and without emerging myself completely into a pre-existing one, the terminology and theoretical structures needed to produce a non-ambiguous insinuation of the unsignifiable is unachievable. My resort has therefore been to use, in some sections of this thesis, what might be described as vivid or imaginative language. To appropriate a lack of specificity in order to approach that which contains no specificity. In order to approach what is past the border of signification I have

sometimes myself had to dwell at its borders, I therefore implore the reader to approach my thesis, but mostly my poetic readings, with an open mind and a third eye turned towards what the first two cannot reach.

1 Theoretical Orientation and Literature Review

1.1 Poetry, What is Poetry?

Aristotle's *Poetics*, a text described by Edward P.J. Corbett as the most influential and the most discussed document of literary criticism in the Western world, provides a discussion on the nature and origin of poetry (Corbett in Aristotle 1984: xx). Aristotle equates poetry, along with theater and some forms of music, as a natural form of imitation (Aristotle 1984: 223). He follows this up by stating that poetry originated due to two causes, that humans are imitative by nature as it is part of how we learn, as well as that we don't only learn from it, we also take great joy in the various works of imitation (226-227).

These two statements are hard to argue against, as most people already know we learn either by imitating the old or creating the new, an idea which was epitomized by Isaac Newton's famous quote "if I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants" (Turnbull 1959: 416). Aristotle grounds his reference on taking joy in imitation through his own experience, stating that the natural attractions to viewing lowly animals and dead bodies through realistic representations in art, becomes a source of delight. Yet if the representations were real it would not necessarily be delightful at all (Aristotle 1984: 227). Aristotle claims that these mimetic properties is not only part of poetry but also part of its origin within our human nature, signaling that poetry as a literary form not only is something quite significant, but also something very personal. It is perhaps in its imitation of life that poetry turns personal. By the universal nature of its statements, by using a concentrated language that attempts to escape the grips of signification it somehow manages to produce an imitation of life itself, this results in that it approaches what some view as the very essence of being (234-235).

What is possibly another reason for our more personal attachments to poetry could be that it contains within it what is contrary to knowledge, strict representation, and specificity. Through its concentrated linguistic form it has the ability to project a much grander translinguistic meaning within the mind of the reader. Resulting in Aristotle's lowly animal or dead body creating something delightful in the mind of the observer, instead of a confrontation with some abominable reality. In its act of imitation it relies in part on the nature of perception within the observer, on the freedom from any rigid utilitarian or static

purpose. There is for example not much delight in observing a ladder, however when a ladder is viewed through its possible metaphorical representations in language, it instead enables a wealth of interesting interpretations.

Another characteristic of poetry is rhyme, rhythm, and metre. Aristotle himself referred to poetry as not a product of metre alone. If so, works of medicinal theory and physical philosophy written in metre would also have to be considered poetry, and their authors be considered poets (Aristotle 1984: 224). This brings up a different problem however, if works are not described as poems based on their metre, then what should define something as a poem. Even from a work that's over 2300 years old, with its limited amount of poetry to refer to, one can sense the uncertainty of definition. Turning to the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* for a modern definition of poetry, it describes it as "writing that formulates a concentrated imaginative awareness of experience in language chosen and arranged to create a specific emotional response through meaning, sound, and rhythm", which itself gives an example just how ambiguous the concept of poetry is (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, 2016). The key behind the dictionary definition would arguably be the reference to a more "concentrated" form of language, aiming at a more "specific" emotional response. This is further exemplified in the book *Poetry* by John Strachan & Richard Terry, where they characterize poetry in similar terms, describing how it surrenders its meaning in a "linguistically sparse and unadorned manner." (Strachan & Terry 2011: 10)

Defining a text as poetry based on its of metre, rhyme and rhythm such as Aristotle already problematized in *Poetics* also became much harder in the twentieth century, when contemporary poets started employing a new form of poetry referred to as "free verse" (Aristotle 1984: 224; Strachan & Terry 2011:104). "Free verse" is signified by a non-adherence to the classical poetic form structured according to rhyme and metre. It breaks with this tradition of stanzas and end-rhymes and instead embraces a sort of form "freedom". The result of this is what Strachan & Terry point out in their attempt to define "free verse", stating that it is easier to characterize what free verse does not do, than to describe what it does (Strachan & Terry 2011: 104). This shows us that what signifies poetry is not its form but rather its function. The inner workings of the characteristically poetic function is what will be investigated further in an attempt at understanding the process of how poetry manages to produce powerful and/or specific emotion through concentrated language.

1.2 The Metaphor: Figurative and Literal Language

In order to construct an understanding of concentrated language one must first be aware of the underlying duality of the literal and figurative nature of language, which, in addition to metre and rhyme, is something poets have always made extensive use of (111). When language is meant to be literal the words used are supposed to be as close to representing reality as possible. On the other hand when something is termed figurative, it means the words take on an expanded metaphoric meaning (ibid.). One example of this would be the classical comparison of a woman to a rose, which through figurative language gains an expanded, ambiguous meaning. It could be understood as a compliment to the woman's smell, or to her beauty, or it could be a description of her vicious nature, as she may look approachable, but has prickly thorns underneath her presented façade. Whereas if it is meant to be literal it would not make much sense. The effect that this figurative language has on the reader is the experience of deviation, the reader's attention is grabbed by the abnormality presented through figurative language and how it strays off from the general narrative (ibid.).

These deviations might be small and easily interpreted, such as understanding the insinuation of progress when saying something is moving "forwards". They might however be excessively deviational as well, such as can often be prevalent in poetry. Strachan & Terry provide a useful way to describe the functions of these deviations through their breakdown of the figurative expression of the metaphor (or simile). They do this by ascribing to it a *tenor*, a *vehicle*, and a *ground*. The tenor is what the metaphor is about, in this example a person, the vehicle is what this person would then be compared with, for example a rose, and finally the ground is then what the tenor and vehicle have in common, that is, what the metaphor is possibly trying to say or represent (118-119). The metaphor thus becomes a question of "in regard of what ground is the tenor like the vehicle?" the possible answers to which become what is termed the ground (119). Thus when the deviation from narrative and ambiguity of the metaphor increases one can picture it as an increased separation between tenor and vehicle, which in turn increases the possible ground that can be assumed, providing a larger variety of possible interpretations.

In Ted Hughes poem "Owl Song" there is an example of heavy deviation between tenor and vehicle in the last lines:

Then sat still with fear
Seeing the clawtrack of star
Hearing the wingbeat of rock”

(Hughes 1972: 48)

The description of the “clawtrack” of a star might give off an immediate association of a shooting star, yet the following line presenting the concept of a rock’s wingbeat becomes slightly more unusual. The distance between the tenor of the “rock”, and the vehicle of it producing an audible wingbeat, results in breaking open the typical metaphoric structure. A rock does not have wings it can beat, nor is it even alive, yet Hughes challenges the reader to hear the wingbeat of a rock, an impossible concept. Since this does not then produce any clear ground, it leaves the space open instead, causing heavy deviation and, perhaps to some readers, heavy frustration. This open space might however itself be a possible ground.

In *Very Little... Almost Nothing* (1997) Simon Critchley explains how he believes that Samuel Beckett is presenting a response to nihilism through his works (Critchley 1997: 27). He describes it as Beckett attempting to negate meaning, and that he is instead creating a “concrete reconstruction of the meaning of meaninglessness”, showing meaninglessness as the “achievement of the ordinary” in order to free a world “stuffed with meaning” (ibid.). The imaginative impossibilities presented by Hughes, such as we observe in the “wingbeat of rock”, present themselves as what I believe to be a similar concept of trying to produce a meaning of meaninglessness. These open spaces may also comprise a similar function and intention as Critchley attributes to Beckett through what I will later present as their essential role in the concept of Blackness. What becomes so unique about these open spaces is that the reader may be guided by the choice of tenor and vehicles that the author presents, yet the final assumption, or preference, of ground becomes one chosen by the reader, if chosen at all. Sometimes what poems express therefore depends on the mind of the beholder, as poetry creates concepts based on metaphorical thought, the read word becomes like a chameleon; it always maintains its form, yet it alters its appearance based on the characteristics of its present environment.

What concentrated language thus insinuates in this context is the variety of ground that can be achieved, and the idea of how such a variety of different concepts can be signified with only a few words. This is one of the main characteristics of poetry, concepts similar to the example within Hughes’ poem, where the tenor and vehicle just barely cling together, or are vastly separated, representing a ground of increased ambiguity, or in some cases a ground that is barely perceptible, or even thinkable. It is one of the ways concentrated language

produces powerful emotions or feelings, and thus also one of the ways poetry approaches and induces something that cannot be signified in words alone. This is when poetry produces something unsignifiable.

1.3 The Unsignifiable

The unsignifiable is something that everyone is aware of either unconsciously or consciously, we know it is something that pre-dates language acquisition quite simply because being unsignifiable or unsayable it is what language is not; it is the ineffable aspects of existence that cannot be properly referenced by a linguistic counterpart (Kristeva 1986: 13). It is what exists just one bowshot past the horizon of language. One solution then becomes to refer to it through a cluster of associated language, or what Kristeva refers to as a string of “metalanguage”, around which the black hole of what cannot be signified becomes increasingly visible by partially revealing its untraversable boundaries (30). Franke describes discourse concerned with the unsayable as “apophatic”, referring to apophatic theology which describes God through negation, describing what God is by asserting what he/she is not (Franke 2014: 2) Due to the fact that language has no possibility of signifying the unsignifiable, the discourse surrounding the concept is inevitably one based on apophatic thinking, hinting at the unsignifiable through a signifiable horizon.

Franke believes however that there is still a hope of producing the unsignifiable, as he states that “the unsayable cannot be made manifest at all, except in terms of this trace that it leaves in the speech that fails to say it” (3). He describes this hinting at the unsignifiable as observing a trace of the unsayable, claiming that discourse has the capability of being self-reflective and self-critical, to “call itself into question and to withdraw, leaving what it cannot say in its wake” (ibid.). This is due to the trajectory produced by the movement of thought and speech concerning the unsayable, where speech reaches its comprehensive horizon and recoils, whereas the mental trajectory it generates moves on to approach something translinguistic. This trajectory that thought follows but words cannot, is what produces a trace of the unsayable (ibid.). These traces are the only products of the unsignifiable that discourse such as this thesis can hope to produce, but this also further shows that language is not completely incapable of working on or with the unsignifiable.

Discourse about the ineffable has been an ongoing subject from the time of the

Neoplatonists, but has (relatively) recently become an idea of interest due to what is called the “linguistic turn” (2). The “linguistic turn” was an increased focus on the relationship with language within the humanities, affecting a multitude of authors and theorists within the areas of philosophy, history, anthropology, psychoanalysis, and literary studies (Leitch et.al. 2010: 848; Hall in Leitch et.al. 2010: 1791). The Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, who is known as the father of Structuralism, created one of the core ideas of this linguistic turn, which was the observation of a gap between signifier and signified, or what can be described as a gap in signification (Leitch et.al. 2010: 845, 847). The gap in signification is the space between signifier and signified, it is the gap in definition between concepts or ideas and their real subjects; the gap that separates an actual cat, and a referring sound-image or object, such as the spoken or read word, or symbol, of “cat” (847). This view of language brought forward by Saussure and built upon by other theorists had a large influence on and crucial importance in how the world is perceived through words, as a result of the effect it had on language and the linguistic metaphor, which in turn affected all studies of culture (Hall in Leitch et.al. 2010: 1791).

The naming powers of a signifier were eventually inspected to expose that even everyday objects are in some ways unsignifiable, for when you give the object signification you impose a homogeneity upon it and lower its individual value, thus claiming it equal to all objects that share this signification (cf. Heidegger 2011: 276). Labeling a building a building, a book a book, a human a human, are all accepted significations, but the difference in attributes or contents of each individual building, book, or human, is still something that cannot be understated. As a result of the linguistic turn the critical eyes of the academic world turned upon what is essentially its foundation, and the change in perspective was felt throughout (Leitch et. al 2010: 848). The unsignifiable encompasses and affects not only textuality but also spoken language, which in turn makes it into a subject surrounding any area of theory based on language or symbolism. This resulted in a multitude of academics writing papers and essays on the question of how ambiguity, heterogeneity, and what is to some degree unsignifiable, affects language (848; Hall in Leitch et.al. 2010: 1791).

The investigation during the linguistic turn into what is heterogeneous to language eventually also lead to an investigation of the functions of poetic language, for with all the attempts to determine true signification and discover ambiguity poetic language stood as a prime example of a form of language where specificity would be against the point (Kristeva 1980: 132). The key to poetic language is producing something that is translinguistic instead of communicative, subjective instead of objective, something figurative instead of something

literal (Kristeva 1986: 28). In a way similar to the increase in distance between the tenor and vehicle, the gap of signification fluctuates within poetry. The degree of ambiguity can reach a point where it is almost completely heterogeneous to any meaning or signification (Kristeva 1980: 133). An example of this is the presence of laughter or grinning within poetry, where the compulsion of laughter is based on instinctual drives which carry no steadfast signification (Bentley 1998: 48).

This focus on the unsignifiable might have originated an academic wave of interest, yet within contemporary poetry, specifically in England at the start of the latter half of the twentieth century, the trend was developing away from any rampant ambiguity, and towards a bigger focus on a more tangible reality. A likely unexpected result of this was the particular separation of one poet from his contemporaries, who, as it would turn out, ended up making his mark in the defining of an era.

1.4 The Movement

After the end of the Second World War the attitude of the people in Europe was one of both exhaustion and contemplation. Poets of East and West were torn between the different ways to handle what had occurred. Among the poets of Eastern Europe, such as Vasko Popa, Miroslav Holub, Zbigniew Herbert, and János Pilinszky, the attitude was one of distrust towards what can be referred to as “real” and how we would define the self, leading to a literary query of the definitions of reality (Bentley 1998: 3). While the poets of the West, England in particular, reacted by not distrusting the “real” but rather attaching themselves to it. Propelled by popular appeal, a literary wave followed World War 2 which was named “The Movement”. This movement focused on the escape from emotional excess and attempted to conduct a retrospective return in poetry towards that of tradition (Stevenson 2004: 166, 172).

The Movement was established in part due to Robert Conquest’s anthology of contemporary poetry called *New Lines*. Bentley quotes Conquest’s introduction of the anthology, where he refers to The Movement as a “‘unity of approach, a new and healthy general standpoint’ towards poetry that he finds in the work of the poets he represents” (Bentley 1998: 2). This was an attempt at becoming an “instrument of change” in the literary world and bolstered a long list of influential poets, including, but not limited to, Philip

Larkin, Kingsley Amis, D.J. Enright, Elizabeth Jennings, Donald Davie, John Holloway and John Wain, as well as Conquest himself (Bentley 1998: 2; Stevenson 2004: 166). The attempted return to empirical tradition was one with characteristics Conquest described in *New Lines* as a focus on “rational structure and comprehensive language”, as well as “integrity and judgement [sic] enough to prevent surrender to subjective moods” (Stevenson 2004: 166). This escape from subjectivity was conducted through colloquial language and an adherence to the conventional poetic forms of pre-Romantic poetry, keeping poetry free from “mythical and logical compulsions” (166, 171). The Movement was essentially trying to “play it safe”, and as a result of this avoided anything that might insult or offend.

This literary movement thus signified a general reaction of the populous of England towards the encounter with a period of war and fear, filling the need for a sort of sheltering from the horrific experiences of the past by limiting themselves to an empirical reality. The idiom of the Movement nonetheless soon clashed with a rebellion in both culture and thought, when the precursors of what would forever characterize the following decade of the 1960’s started to surface. A decade known for its rebellion and pursuit of heightened states of consciousness and emotion, the 60s saw what proponents of the Movement viewed as “a spell of lethargy”, where in the area of British poetry, not much seemed to be happening (179-180). For critics not stringing to the Movement’s view of poetry, it was a decade containing a kind of renaissance, where poetry became remarkably popular and relevant to the British population (179). The rise in popularity of poetry was in part due to its appeal to the trends popularized in the 60s, for a decade focused on beauty, emotions, mysticism, fighting the “establishment” and breaking away from tradition and convention, poetry became a fitting literary form for people to express themselves and the burdens of society (179-180).

1.5 Ted Hughes

A short while before the rebellion movement in the 60s were to properly start however, British poet Al Alvarez, a critic of contemporary poetry who was specifically critical of Conquest’s Movement, set out to offer alternatives to the Movement’s poetry. Alvarez’s critique of the Movement was presented in his introduction to *The New Poetry* (1962), where he described it as a product of social superiority, as well as creating only “a kind of unity of flatness” (Stevenson 2004: 190). The introduction was shortly followed by what alternative

artists Alvarez was able to find. Alvarez had been looking for something that was shocking and filled with powerful and complex emotion, something that broke completely with the conservative foundation of the Movement (191). There were few poet's that went against the popular stream of the Movement, resulting in his poetry anthology's main source of opposition being a single poet, Ted Hughes, with his collections *Hawk in the Rain* (1957) and *Lupercal* (1960) (192).

In relation to the idiom of the Movement, Ted Hughes' works broke away from all their stringent rules and principles. Hughes adhered more to the Eastern European approach of investigating and questioning reality, through a language that was, as Stevenson describes it, "[h]abitually dark, physical, and bloody" (Bentley 1998: 3; Stevenson 2004: 193). As for Hughes' personal thoughts on the matter, he stated his position in a later interview with Ekbert Faas as one that was against the Movements want for being comfortable and safe, and rather searched for a way of "opening negotiations with whatever happened to be out there" (Faas 1980: 201). Compared to the empirically focused doctrine of the Movement, Hughes' use of language, dissent from strict form, and consistent aim at connecting with the otherworldly, was perhaps as much it's opposite as is possible.

1.5.1 Hughes' Mythology

In Hughes' interview with Ekbert Faas, the subject of the personal development of writers comes up. While answering a question about T.S. Eliot Hughes explains his view that every writer, if developing at all, develops either outwardly into society and history, or inwardly into imagination and, beyond that, into spirit (Faas 1980: 204). He goes on, describing how by developing inwardly one eventually organizes the inner world of the self, searching out and establishing the patterns that are there (ibid.). This is what Hughes refers to as a mythology, which might be pre-established through religion, or one may find it to be an original mythology (ibid.). If one thing is clear, it is that Hughes developed inwards and discovered within himself an original mythology, or, if not, at least a very ancient one.

Hughes' own mythology seems to have originated from the influences of his family. Two things especially signify the works of Ted Hughes, or, in particular, his own perspective on his work. These are his consistent attempts at contacting, reaching, or influencing whatever otherworldly, spiritual realm that might be out there, as well as his admiration of

nature, and view of the inspiration of poems as animals that he catches, and give form through words (Faas 1980: 201; Hughes 1994: 13-15). The inspiration for these foundations is believed to be from Hughes' mother and brother. According to Joanny Moulin, Hughes inherited from his mother a very unique form of spirituality, as she was a psychic seer who believed to have premonitory visions of tragedies (Moulin in Gifford 2011: 15). Moulin further believes that Hughes was convinced he had inherited this gift, and was a seer as well (ibid.). Chen Hong further describes how Hughes perceived the connection between this "animal/spiritual consciousness", and started seeing the connection between his poetic practice and the ancient mythology of shamanism (Hong in Gifford 2011: 40). This begins to show how Hughes' mythology becomes increasingly important as it also influences his poetic methodology, which will be further looked into later on.

In *The Art of Ted Hughes* (1978) author and literary critic Keith Sagar further describes parts of Hughes' mythology through his understanding of Hughes' poetry as well as a result of their longstanding friendship. Sagar views it as an attempt at reconciliation with the energies, powers, and presences of the non-human cosmos (Sagar 1978:4). The want for this reconciliation was an important part of Hughes' poetic mythology, as he was concerned with discovering the possibility of a negotiation between man and nature so as to start mending what he believed to be a complete collapse in communication (ibid.). The symptoms of this "complete collapse" was, according to Sagar, the persistence of science, philosophy and religion (5). He viewed Hughes as a source of diagnosis and healing for these distractive institutions of civilization, which pulls us away from the questions of who we are and what life is (ibid.). Relating this to Hughes' earlier statements about personal development, society was focusing too much outwardly, and not enough inwardly, this is part of what Sagar hoped Hughes would influence.

While reviewing the work of Isaac Bashevis Singer, Hughes' own discontent with modern society is voiced through what he observes as a resemblance between the real occurrences recounted in *Satan in Goray* (1955) and his perception of modern Western society. The story is about a Hasidic community in seventeenth-century Poland that hoped to gain salvation through an ecstasy of sinning and submerging themselves in the forbidden (Hughes 1994: 61). Hughes follows with the remark that "[o]ne could argue that the whole of modern Western life is one vast scientifically programmed surrender to what was formerly unknown and forbidden, as if salvation lay that way" (62). This gives further traction to Sagar's statement that Hughes also believed that blindly complying with the modern attractions to material existence was a fault in society, or a wound in need of mending (Sagar

1978:5). Hughes directly follows up the previous quote in what seems an elaboration on his point, by describing the story as “an accurate metaphor for a cultural landslide that has destroyed all spiritual principles and dumped an entire age into a cynical materialism emptied of meaning” (Hughes 1994: 62)

From this we can observe how Hughes’ view of the faults of modern society lies at the roots of his mythology, and how, as Sagar mentions, his poetic methodology aimed at a reconciliation with nature and the non-human cosmos. This pursuit of a reconciliation was Hughes’ attempt at healing society, and of mending the bond with nature that he feared was broken, it became part of the mythic quest for healing which Brandes describes as defining the poetic works standing “at the nadir and nexus and nucleus of Hughes’ poetic being” (Brandes in Gifford 2011: 72).

1.5.2 Hughes on Healing

In his book *Laughter of Foxes* (2006), Sagar describes Hughes’ poetry as containing “healing gifts” which is his “legacy to us all” (Sagar 2006: xi). The details of this healing process emerge partly in a passage from an interview with Hughes where he explains his own thoughts on the healing powers of art and poetry.

Every work of art stems from a wound in the soul of the artist. [...] Art is a psychological component of the auto-immune system that gives expression to the healing process. That is why great works of art make us feel good. There are artists who concentrate on expressing the damage, the blood, the mangled bones, the explosion of pain, in order to rouse and shock the reader. And there are those who hardly mention the circumstances of the wound, they are concerned with the cure.
(Sagar 2006: xi)

As for the wound of the artist, Hughes certainly was not without scars, yet for the wounds of readers as part of society, this shows how Hughes believed also they could benefit from the restorative properties of art and poetry. Sagar follows up the quote by mentioning that there are also artists that go through both the expression of damage, as well as the concern with a cure, and in doing so they are enacting the classic quest myth (ibid.). Concerning himself with both expression and cure, as well as enacting the quest myth, Sagar states, is exactly what Hughes does in his work (xi-xii). Hughes gives expression to his own healing process and through sharing his “healing gifts” takes part in becoming the auto-immune system of society.

As for how the mythic quest might generate these “healing gifts”, there are several varying theories, the manners in which text might provide healing is in itself an expansive subject. If we start at the foundation however, Hughes defines what pertains to a description of “mythic” in that it requires an inclusion of a revelation (Zajko in Gifford 2011: 108). The mythic quest is therefore a pursuit of revelation. Hughes’ understanding of how this revelation might work is further elucidated by Brandes’ article on the poetic use of myth, where he describes Hughes’ view as myths providing “passionate access to deeper truths and higher realities” (Brandes in Gifford 2011: 71). Brandes himself believes that Hughes’ use of myth has an effect of shocking the reader’s imagination and starting the healing process, describing it as the “strongest medicine Hughes could find” (79). This shows that the healing that Hughes is pursuing comes through revelation, the function of this revelation, of providing “deeper truths and higher realities”, is in itself of a mystical nature (Brandes in Gifford 2011: 71; Zajko in Gifford 2011: 108). In my pursuit of the means of a manifestation of the unsignifiable, this thus moves the focus on to the process in which Hughes’ poetry functions to provide these remedying revelations

One very important detail to this process is Hughes’ mention that when poems produce revelation they are termed “visionary”, while for the definition of “mythic” it must include personalities or creatures (108). This manifestation of a creature is part of how Hughes’ mythology influences his methodology, and, most importantly, of how he believes his poems manifest something different, how they become “a new specimen of the life outside your own” (Hughes 1994: 12). It is through this manifestation of life outside one’s own that these mythic revelations are provided, and this is thus how Crow will be perceived. Through Hughes’ view of Crow as a revelation producing spirit, both creature, process and result will be investigated as possible manifestations of the ineffable.

1.5.3 Where All Other Ways of Apprehending Reality Falter: Hughes and the Unsignifiable

Throughout this thesis I will be making extensive use of the book *Ted Hughes: A Critical Study* (1981) by Terry Gifford and Neil Roberts², this study was the first lengthy analysis of Hughes, and G&R’s research has since been highly influential. They describe Hughes’ work as making of language something that is “both familiar and different from anything we had

² Henceforth referenced as G&R

thought possible”, of being capable of “registering the reality of things and of inner states” (G&R 1981: 11). This shows how G&R have the perspective that through Hughes’ writing he manages to reach something that normally lies untouched, or that usually goes unmentioned. This is likely a product of Hughes’ own, and rather unique, approach to poetry.

Hughes has through several of his works detailed what he perceives as the translinguistic nature of poetic language. What is perhaps most foundational surfaces in how he describes his construction of poetry, viewing them as living parts assembled into a single spirit, where the words that are living are the ones that affect the senses in some way. Words that can be heard, such as “click” or “chuckle”, or which can be seen such as “freckled” or “veined”, or which produce taste, such as “vinegar” or “sugar” (Hughes 1994: 12). The fact that these words affect the senses in some way shows how objective signifiers may construct subjective significations (although it might of course be argued that all significations are subjective), and the continual insinuation of these significations which are composed through poetry may take part in producing what Hughes refers to as the “spirit” of the poem, something that is per definition unsignifiable.

In order to begin understanding Hughes’ view of poetry as spirits, one must once again go back to his roots. Moulin mentions that Hughes explained in the series of BBC Radio talks called *Poetry in the Making* how he believed his hunting trips with his brother had developed in him a “sixth sense, very much like their mother’s psychic ability” (Moulin in Gifford 2011: 15-16). The two influences seem to eventually have melded together, where the process of writing down a poem became not only a search for contact with the otherworldly, but a hunt for it. Hughes describes it more poignantly; “[t]his is hunting and the poem is a new species of creature, a new specimen of the life outside your own” (Hughes 1994: 12).

Through careful assembly of the “living” words, Hughes says he captures the “spirit” of the animal and gives it form on a piece of paper, and this is how his poems come to be (ibid.). For Hughes the poem isn’t just words on paper, nor is it the concepts projected through those words, it is the “world” that is created by all of the combined words and how they impact the senses and produce an overall experience (14-15). This living world is the animal and spirit of the poem (ibid.). The experience of reading the poem is, according to Hughes, the captured animal coming to life again, its spirit setting foot into the mind of the reader (15). In what might be reminiscent of the conduct of a shaman, his poem acts to reveal something that is ineffable and otherworldly, in the words of Mircea Eliade when describing the shamanistic séance, he reveals a “fabulous world of the gods and magicians, the world in

which everything seems possible” (Eliade 1964: 511).

That Hughes took on the role as a shaman is a clear belief of Sagar, and it was also of Hughes’ belief that the role of the poet was similar to that of the shaman (Sagar 1978: 3; Zajko in Gifford 2011: 108; Hong in Gifford 2011: 40). Hughes’ mythology has thus infused into his language in the attempt, and belief that it could conduct a form of contact with the otherworldly, of inducing what Hughes’ describes as spirits (Faas 1980: 201; Hughes 1994: 13). Sagar offers an impassioned description of the properties of Hughes’ mythologically infused language in his introduction to *The Art of Ted Hughes*:

I believe Hughes to be a great poet because he possesses the kind of imagination which issues in the purest poetry, charged poetry, visionary, revelatory poetry that sees into the life of things, that takes over where all other modes of apprehending reality falter.

(Sagar 1978:3)

Hughes’ poems, through his perspective of mythological values, and with its partially religious foundation, take on an entirely different form of translinguistic representation in comparison to conventional language (cf. Gifford 2011:7). By following Hughes’ mythology when absorbing his poetry, the presence of something unsignifiable becomes clear, whether it be spiritual or unconscious, it has the possibility of representing something that cannot be signified through symbols, it represents some “other” in which all other modes of apprehension falters. In the same way that the Holy Scriptures present something “other” due to their mythological foundation, Hughes’ poems represent something “other” according to his. Yet in both cases this mythology is not one that can be proven or disproven by words alone, because it represents something other than words, and is contrary to the limitation of any physicality.

When considering the nature of the unsignifiable the connection is always inevitably made between word and experience, and how the words try to relay an experience like what Hughes attempts to produce through his poetry. Yet this is an impossibility in itself, the simple experience of observing a forest, with its countless surrounding factors and impacts on the senses, could never be summed up completely by words alone. Hughes even makes an example in “Poetry in the Making” of how the simple experience of watching someone walk produces such an experiential impact as to be worthy of its own biography (Hughes 1994:21). If someone were to try to describe through language the experience of being within a town or school, if they were to get even close to detailing all the facets and details of such an experience that to any perceiver is simply being lived, it would fill up libraries with books

about the walks of the people, their facial expressions, the emotions projected through all the small encounters, the cause and effect function of their observed material existence, before finally getting to what impact it has on the senses other than sight as well. Yet even if this was done, and the books were written, Hughes states that the most important factor would still have been lost, because what is experienced is seen and understood by the spectator in one flash, “a single 1,000-volt shock, that lit up everything and drove it into his bones, whereas in so many words and phrases he is dribbling it out over pages in tinglings that can only just be felt.” (ibid.).

These “tinglings” of life, these small encounters with real experience is what is produced through conventional writing. Yet through the concentrated figurative language of poetry, observed through the lens of a mythology with the shamanistic foundation of using the words to peer into the spiritual realm of ineffability, the tinglings might turn into a more powerful experience. Sagar quotes Strauss as he describes Hughes’ poetry collection *Crow* as one such experience, he describes it as having the effect of exhaustion, one that is physical, mental, nervous and emotional; “[t]he experience is like having gone through some terrible destructive fight” (Sagar 1978: 2). I believe this is the result of Hughes’ creation scouring for revelation, of *Crow* manifesting himself in the mind of the reader and starting to incessantly push every boundary of reality in the attempt of reaching what might lie beyond our normal understanding.

1.6 What is *Crow*?

Hughes’ collection of what is described as “Crow poems” is among his most widely admired work, and the carnivalistic behavior of the *Crow* was for many characteristic of a period of black comedy that followed as a legacy of the war, although Hughes himself argued stringently against equating the Trickster literature of *Crow* with black comedy (Stevenson 2004: 193-194; Hughes 1994: 239). English writer Roy Fuller was one of many that found Hughes’ collection *Crow* hard to swallow due to the “pathological violence of its language”, and its “anti-human ideas and sadistic imagery” (Bentley 1998: 39). Hughes, on the other hand, describes it as an intentional attempt at a “super-ugly” language, which he hoped would shed everything except what he (*Crow*) wanted to say (Faas 1980: 208). One of the possible reason for this impression of “anti-human” ideology, is the lack of a human perspective in

Crow. The poems are told through the actions and experiences of a crow, and not through that of the author, which according to Bentley helps create a language that avoids any material, linguistic, cultural and unconscious determinants (Bentley 1998: 39). Through the character of Crow Ted Hughes thus removes himself as the leading perspective that the poems are to be perceived through, which in turn releases it from any conditions of contextualization, and allows for a higher degree of freedom from the earthly reality that Hughes is so insistent on escaping.

A different possibility for the recurring description of “anti-humanity” could also be Hughes’ reliance on myth and mythology, basing his own mythology from which the poems originate on the ancient mythologies and folklore of shamanism and spirituality. The original concept of the Crow itself came from Hughes being invited by artist Leonard Baskin to create poems to accompany his engravings of crows, through this proposition Baskin ended up giving a form and symbol to what would forever afterwards be a characteristic of Ted Hughes (Hughes 1994: 243). Hughes uses his mythology as his approach, and the concept of Crow as medium, playing with a new perspective on what constitutes as the foundations and institutions of modern reality.

Crow establishes all of the pre-existing conditions and preoccupations of Hughes as mythic poet. Crow destroys Platonic philosophy and eats logic for breakfast. Crow deconstructs Christianity and tears the Bible apart. God, Adam, Eve and the snake are like puppets in a play.

(Brandes in Gifford 2011: 72-73)

Brandes here describes the exploits of Crow, and his interactions with mainstream philosophy, religion, and the logical foundation on which the modern world functions. These subjects, as well as aspects of human conduct such as sexuality and war, are flipped, twisted and re-represented as a part of the absurd exposition that Crow offers through the poems of “Crow’s Account of the Battle”, “Crow’s First Lesson”, “Crow’s Theology”, and “Oedipus Crow” (Hughes 1972: 15, 9, 27, 35). The very foundations of reality, of what can be described as the core of human value, become shaken and distorted, creating what can be perceived as an anti-human ideology. Through Crow Hughes found a conductor for his mythology, one that shifts, displaces and juxtaposes all aspects of the comfortable reliance on a tangible reality which has, according to Hughes, become an increasing blight on humanity.

1.6.1 Who is Crow?

The reason for my eventual creation of a concept of Crow is not only to separate my own judgment and understanding of *Crow* from that of the independent poems, their author, and the applied literary theories, but also due to the inherent lack of proper signification of Crow. The creation of a character synopsis is not enough for something that encompasses the kind of existence that Crow becomes. Before elucidating the concept based on my understanding however, this is Crow based on Hughes' description.

In order to understand who or what Crow originated as, one has to start at the basics within Hughes' mythology, meaning his perspective of poems as animals. Yet in this case the poem isn't necessarily the animal, the source of the poem is. The first idea of Crow was not as a source of any specific poem, but of a style of writing (Faas 1980: 208). The style of writing was to be a representation of the songs a crow would sing, songs with "no music whatsoever" conducted through a "super-simple" and "super-ugly" language (ibid.). This style was, as mentioned, also supplemented with a replacement of the metaphysical self of the author, with that of a squawking crow (ibid.). Hughes has also stated that it was a style he wished he had always used, but whether it is due to the apparent unity of this writing style with his mythology is uncertain (212). For, as Hughes stated, he viewed poems as animals, spirits that approached him which he captured on paper. With Crow it seems that he captured a spirit that he felt equal to, that worked with him, or through him, and impacted not just one, but a series of poems. Even though Hughes states Crow was at first an idea of a style of writing, eventually the character of Crow also manifested itself.

Hughes' "guiding metaphor" for the creation of the character of the Crow was the figure of the Trickster originating from primitive tales and mythologies (Hughes 1994: 239, 241; Bentley 1998: 40). The reason Hughes did not want Crow equated to the post-Second World War trend of black comedy, even though he acknowledged their resemblances, was that he still believed them to be direct opposites (Hughes 1994: 239). According to Hughes, the fundamentals of black comedy are despair and nihilism, while in Trickster literature optimism and creative joy stands as the foundation (ibid.). The differences perceived are comparable to what would cause in someone the impression of the "anti-human" Crow. One who views it as black comedy would possibly see *Crow* as the statement of hopelessness, of the author's acknowledgement of the death, or destined decay, of everything that makes us human; yet what the Trickster represents, and likely where Hughes' intentions lie, is in

displaying the most important factor at the core of such tragedy, which is the renewing, sacred spirit, “exploring towards new emergence and growth” (240). Instead of focusing on the death and despair of modern society, the Trickster, and as already established, Hughes himself, is trying to acknowledge the affliction, in the attempt of restoration, and rebirth.

Laurence Coupe describes the character of a Trickster as the phallic-focused “mischievous male” who takes part in the creation of the world and yet is also associated with all its disasters, straddling the boundary between cosmos and chaos (Coupe in Gifford 2015: 16). This definition could be taken as one for Crow as he shows himself fitting the description in several poems, such as in “A Horrible Religious Error”, “A Childish Prank”, and “Song for a Phallus” (Hughes 1972: 37, 8, 69). One must nonetheless be aware of the variety in definition as the Trickster is described through a multitude of different mythologies. For the character of the Crow, we will focus on the mythology that was at the base of its origination. Hughes states that the view of the Trickster saga that he presents in his article “Crow on the Beach” is that which Crow originated from (Hughes 1994: 240). It corresponds to the infantile and irresponsible naivety of sexual love, it is at its core an all-out commitment to salvaging life against the odds, and his existence makes up a series of tragicomedies as a result of his repetitive and indestructible nature (240-1). In other words, Crow is Trickster in that he is mischievous, as Coupe stated, but he is also optimistic and essentially good-natured, as Hughes repeatedly describes.

Due to the Trickster’s mischievous nature one starts to expect the unexpected, however this also has the result of making the appearance of what is expected of poetry, the odes or stanzas with obligatory end-rhymes, into something unusual. What is generally presented as a traditional concept of poetry is the opposite of what is presented by Crow, therefore a presentation of normal form or function becomes immediately suspicious, such as the form of “Robin Song”, and the ode in “Littleblood” (Hughes 1972: 45, 89). Crow is straddling the boundary between cosmos and chaos, making the reader ever less aware of whatever his motivation or insinuation might be. This constructs an instability promoted by uncertainty, and is likely one approach that Hughes makes in his attempted contact with the “unspeakable” (Bentley 1998: 4).

If a character synopsis were to be created of Crow, it would be that of the Trickster, yet its nature is that of deceit and mischief, of avoiding certainty and pursuing mystery. Such a character synopsis would be betraying itself in that a Trickster as character is simply a statement of an unknown nature originating from unknown intentions. I believe it is through this defining characteristic of an absence of definition that Crow is able to manifest himself

as concept, as something that stands outside signification and certainty. In an investigation of the unsignifiable, one can start to see why *Crow* is a fitting test subject.

1.6.2 Why *Crow*?

Crow has been the target of a wealth of literary criticism, and stands as what is to some the most prominent work of one of the pre-eminent English poets of the latter twentieth century (Stevenson 2004: 193-194). The collection itself willfully invites investigation, yet it is through an understanding of the perspectives of the author Ted Hughes that another realm within *Crow* opens itself up. The focus on Hughes' mythology is important in order to understand how he believes the unsignifiable projects itself through his work, the *Crow* as writing style and as character seems to be a manifestation of that mythology. Through that mythology, and through the manifested writing style, Hughes gets ever closer to, as he described it, "whatever happened to be out there" (Faas 1980: 201). Hughes is however not always the hunter of these spirits, sometimes he becomes the hunted. This is also an experience that the reader will be confronted with, as will be shown later through my investigation of the actions of *Crow*, as well as in my elucidation of the sensation of the "Black Beast".

As a result of his mythic quest Hughes was attempting to approach a revelation rooted in ineffability, as the nature of mythological spirituality is itself one of inherent unsignifiability. *Crow* has its foundation in personal as well as primitive mythology. Hughes attempted no less than to reconstruct mythology for the irreligious post-Second World War age with the ambition of providing healing (Stevenson 2004: 194). Through his personal development it seems Hughes ended up turning his mythology into a methodology, and there *Crow* emerged. This perspective of Hughes work as well as his mythology is the foundation for choosing *Crow* for this analysis. *Crow* exists within a literary form which projects itself based on the ineffability of the subjective mind, being projected through the medium of the enigmatic Trickster known as *Crow*, as well as being a style of language intentionally directed towards, and assumedly inspired by, something "other" that escapes physicality.

Through my analysis I will show how I believe Hughes is attempting a connection to this "other" by using blackness as a metaphor for the unsignifiable. As blackness becomes synonymous with *Crow* in *Crow*, as both terms show how they avoid definition, I will show

how this metaphor carries increasingly complex connotations. This will be done by positing my own understanding of Hughes' use of blackness as the concept of metaphorical Blackness³. I will also show how I believe this Blackness manifests itself as a result of the presentation of language in *Crow*, a language which will take form as the juxtaposed concept of Whiteness. The purpose for creating these concepts will be to theorize how *Crow* is granted life both in text and from text. This will be done by attempting to show how he exists through the Whiteness of language as well as the metaphorical Blackness of unsignifiability.

The means of this investigation will, as mentioned, be partly based on the mythology of Hughes, it will however also be based on the literary theories of two theorists in particular who have both created works specifically concerning the ineffable attributes of poetry. These are the literary theorist and psychologist Julia Kristeva, and philosopher Martin Heidegger. Kristeva approaches poetic language from her view of the semiotic, focusing on the nature of rhythm and instinctual language. She asks if this kind of language is a return to the pre-mirror stage, an escape from certainty and a breaking out of the physical and objective shell of existence imposed after our "forced" acquisition of symbolism. Heidegger, through his philosophical works, shows it as a possible conductor of a contact with the essence of being and truth, a means of touching the very essence of existence. Their focus on the unsignifiable within poetry from two different perspectives, that of the literary theory constructed by a psychoanalyst, and that of the philosophical search for the ontological question of the truth of Being, supplies two additional foundations for attempting the observation of the unsignifiable within poetry.

Both Kristeva and Heidegger also observe an aspect of restoration within poetic language, similar to what Hughes states he wanted to create within his own works. This restoration comes as a result of analysis or observation of poetry, which, for both of them, leads to a connection and reflection on the world presented within the artwork. When the reader creates an understanding of the world within, it allows for contact with the semiotic chora or the essence, the "aletheia", within the piece, something that both theorists believe to carry positive effects (Kristeva 1986: 17-18; Heidegger 2011: 116).

What I view as the common aspects of Hughes' mythology and Heidegger and Kristeva's theories, meaning the pursuit of an undefinable revelatory result through a use of

³ When capitalized, "Blackness" will be referring to my conceptual metaphor of the ineffable, using it as a description for a possible presence of something unsignifiable. When non-capitalized, "blackness" will refer to the word's use in the poems of *Crow*.

the ineffable aspects of poetry, is what I believe makes *Crow* such a suitable candidate, and Heidegger and Kristeva's theories such relevant tools.

1.7 The Semiotic Chora of the Mother

In Julia Kristeva's book *Desire in Language, A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* (1980) she constructs a psycho-linguistic understanding of language through her theorized signifying disposition containing what she calls the semiotic, referring to what is heterogeneous to meaning, in contrast to signification (Kristeva 1980: 133). She proposes a link between semiotic heterogeneity and what she terms the "semiotic chora", reconstructing the Platonic philosophical concept of the "Khôra" as a concept of psycho-linguistic theory (ibid.). As Moi describes in the introduction to *The Kristeva Reader* (1986), this semiotic chora can only be perceived as "pulsional pressure on or within symbolic language: as contradictions, meaninglessness, disruption, silences and absences." constituting the heterogeneous, disruptive dimension of language (Kristeva 1986: 13). Moi also specifies that it can be separated into the two contrasting concepts of the semiotic and the symbolic (12). Kristeva therefore creates a theory of what is essentially other than the symbolic and signification, meaning what is unsignifiable, within language. She also maintains a focus on poetic language as a key conductor of these characteristic heterogeneous properties, in the sense that she believes it has a more pronounced presence than in ordinary language (Kristeva 1980: 133).

Within her psychoanalytic theory Kristeva articulates the semiotic chora in terms of a presignifying state which can be designated and regulated, but never posited (Kristeva 1984: 26). This results in something that can be described, but never asserted, meaning something that is unsignifiable (ibid.). The general meaning of the presignifying, pre-mirror, or pre-Oedipal state which she continually refers to is the state every child exists in before acquiring a symbolic understanding of the world, where they still exist symbiotically with their mother, and are driven by the forces of the primary drives within the semiotic chora, before acquiring signification and becoming a self-conscious subject among objects (Kristeva 1986: 13, 100; Kristeva 1980: 136). This means that the end of this stage is the moment when the realm of symbolism and signification starts taking root, and the baby becomes aware of objective existence and its limitations. Kristeva thus equates the semiotic chora to the pre-Oedipal

primary processes, what she believes is the instinctual drive-forces of every pre-mirror stage boy or girl, the drives that result in their instinctual language, sounds, and rhythm (Kristeva 1986: 12; Kristeva 1980: 133).

One cannot get too far into these theories without noticing the attachment of gender to concept. Within her paper Kristeva refers to the semiotic chora as being a product of the maternal, and the realm of symbols and laws therefore become that of the paternal. Kelly Oliver points out that this is due to Freud and Lacan's ignorance of the significance of the maternal function prefiguring the paternal Law (Oliver 1993: 5-6). Oliver also says that Kristeva wants to make a point that their theories of how the paternal "functions to initiate the child into language and the social" neglects the importance of the pre-mirror stage development (6). This pre-mirror stage development is impactful enough that Kristeva therefore believes the separation from it motivates a want for return.

The semiotic chora originates within humans as a pre-signifying state and is an active part in the dichotomy between symbolism and unsignifiability for Kristeva, yet Jacques Derrida states in his essay *Khôra* (1993) that the *Khôra* is not a part of any dichotomy or polarity, and that "it would itself not submit to any reversal" (Derrida 1995: 92). This would immediately exclude the *Khôra* from the possible signification of relaying itself to a "mother", since the characteristics of the concept so heavily relies on the opposite binary of a father. Kristeva's theories therefore do not stand unopposed, and her view and designation of the possibilities of the chora could be argued to be selective or biased. Yet if every academic theory that stood opposed were to be nullified, especially one that is within the science of semiotics and which is about a concept which can only achieve description through endless speculation, one would probably conclude that there would be no theories of merit left.

1.7.1 The Semiotic in Poetic Language

Signification represents the relationship between signifier and signified. It symbolizes attribution of meaning and specificity of connection between symbol and referent; it is the literal function of language. All language encompasses a mixture of both signification and the semiotic, meaning there is nothing that is truly without meaning or signification, and that there is no symbol that does not have ambiguity (Kristeva 1980: 133). According to Kristeva the dependence on the mother in the pre-mirror stage, and the drive-force of the semiotic

chora prepare the future speaker for entrance into the symbolic (136). This undecidable process between the symbolic and the semiotic, its ebb and flow, is what drives language, yet language, through a focus on its symbolic function represses instinctual drives and thus the relation to the mother (ibid.). Figurative, poetic language, however, functions through a reactivation of this “repressed” instinctual maternal element of the semiotic chora, initiating a sense of return to that stage of development (ibid.). Kristeva makes it clear that as one might be drawn towards the semiotic due to a want for regression, a complete regression is unwanted as it would have severe consequences, resulting in an eventual disavowal of reality which would lead to psychosis (Kristeva 1986: 226, 239).

Kristeva defines poetic language and literature as that which is contrary to knowledge, where attempting signification is against the point (132). The nature of poetic language thus becomes that of the figurative, which naturally composes an ambiguity of signification. According to Kristeva this gap in signification is what poetic language confronts us with, and exposes the struggle for true definition in relation to language in general (135). In other words through a form of figurative ambiguity poetic language can create a deeper understanding of the nature of conventional language. The semiotic component of unsignifiability thus more often presents itself in poetic language, where a true signified cannot be stated. The only way of even speaking properly of the semiotic is through its binary opposite of increased symbolic specificity, achieved through metalanguage (Kristeva 1986: 30). Signifying the unsignifiable is an impossibility. One can only approach it through metalanguage or metaphor, as metaphors are the only linguistic means of producing translinguistic meaning (ibid.).

When commenting on how the semiotic function in poetry stands in opposition to the study for meaning and signification, Kristeva hails poetic language as being a source of release.

The poetic function departs from the signified [...] and makes of what is known as “literature” something other than knowledge: the very place where social code is destroyed and renewed, thus providing, as Artaud writes, ‘A release for the anguish of its time’ by ‘animating, attracting, lowering onto its shoulders the wandering anger of a particular time for the discharge of its psychological evil-being.’

(Kristeva 1980: 132)

Thus the semiotic space within poetic language may instigate a reflection on the state of society, or the self-reflection of an individual, and has the possibility of conjuring a revolution in these general perceptions of self or society, creating a motivation for a rebirth creating change and likely progress. Kristeva’s view of the capabilities of poetic language

thus includes the possibility of originating restorative progress and growth through a cathartic contemplative process, through what, in other words, might be described as a revelation. I believe Kristeva's work on the semiotic chora, by investigating this revelatory nature of poetic language, therefore establishes itself as one theory for how the "healing gifts" that Hughes attempts to procure and produce within his poetry could function (Sagar 2006: xi).

1.8 Martin Heidegger and the *Aletheia*

Martin Heidegger is a German philosopher often credited with being the most important philosopher of the twentieth century, especially for his work in the field of ontology (Clark 2011: 5). His essay "The Origin of the Work of Art" (1950) will be especially focused on due to his direct elucidations on poetic language, going so far as to state that the very essence of language must be understood based on the essence of poetry (Heidegger 2009: 125). In the text Heidegger presents a discussion on what defines and characterizes art while conducting a search for what lies at its essential origin, of what is at the source of its "truth". He believes that the work of art itself originates at the same time as its essence, this essence, the *dichtung* of the poetry is passed on from the gods as an interception of inspirational "hints" (Heidegger 2009: 127). The essential source is then one of unattainable understanding unless you conduct a communion with God or the spiritual realm, drawing similarities with Ted Hughes' view of his own poetic inspiration. After its conception, the work of art itself, and its essence, exists within what Heidegger defines as the *work-being* of the work of art. This work-being consists of the *Earth* and the *World* of the work of art, meaning its physicality, and what is projected beyond that physicality (Heidegger 2011: 108, 111).

Heidegger's philosophical roots in ontology lie at the core of many of his works, roots which concern themselves with the inevitably ineffable nature of the concept of Being. The concept of Being is intricately explored through Heidegger's work *Being and Time* (1927) (Heidegger 2011: 1). In it, he states that Being is itself a "self-evident concept" that is used in "all knowing and predicating", yet is however intrinsically undefinable (Heidegger 2011: 9). The question of how to define Being has gone unanswered since the age of Plato, and my use of the term throughout this thesis will therefore not be able to be precisely defined. For the context of this paper, my use of Heidegger's concept of Being will be viewed as self-perceived existence. This is partly synonymous with how Heidegger defines human beings as

Dasein; “the human is who he is precisely in bearing witness to his own existence” (Heidegger 2009: 120). This self-awareness of existence as it stands at the root of the description of *Dasein* will therefore serve as the present definition of the term Being.

1.8.1 Earth and World

As mentioned earlier Heidegger perceived the work-being of a work of art as consisting of an Earth and a World (Heidegger 2011: 108, 111). Heidegger describes the World as the “ever-nonobjective to which we are subject as long as the paths of birth and death [...] keep us transported into Being” (Heidegger 2011: 108). This shows that the concept is not just limited to a work of art, but is in effect also partly the ineffable aspects of experienced reality. It is my understanding that the World stands as what one could describe as the byproduct of signification, meaning the ineffable sensation produced by the projected allegory of a work of art, the theoretical substance that is beyond its physicality, as well as beyond all physicality (cf. Heidegger 2011: 108-9; cf. Ziarek 1989: 119). In his elucidation of the World it seems that Heidegger emphasizes art’s relationship with the self as Being, approaching the ineffable through an interaction with what is the nature of existence (cf. Heidegger 2011: 108-9). An experience of the World therefore seems dependent on a human perceiver, just as what is unsignifiable is in need of a subjective observer, and does not seem to empirically manifest itself outside of the human mind. As Heidegger describes it as the “ever-nonobjective”, it thus stands as another description of something unsignifiable (108). In this thesis I will base my use of the concept of World on my perception that it stands as part of a philosophical framework aiming for an understanding of the unsignifiable as it is presented through art. I will therefore not pursue a definition of World itself, I will instead attempt to understand its role in the framework presented by Heidegger so as to apply it to *Crow*.

The contrasting aspect to World in Heidegger’s dichotomy of art is what he terms Earth, described as the physical background against which every meaningful Worlding emerges (109-110). The Earth is the “thingly” character of the work, the World is anchored in a recognition of Earth as Earth is the materials used to create it; it is the chosen color of paint, the density of language, it is the allegory presented by a work of art which in turn projects the uniquely experienced World (91, 109-110). My understanding is therefore that as language, Earth would consist of the signifier and the signified, yet what is signified differentiates

based on the observer and may generate an unsignifiable byproduct, this byproduct thus develops as the Earth and World interact. These interactions of the dichotomy, what I have so far described as their byproduct, is referenced by Heidegger as the *Strife* between World and Earth, this Strife in turn becomes the *work-being* of the work (112). This Strife appears to be the work of art constructing and maintaining a work-being as it maintains a struggle between Earth and World. It seems to manifest from the constant interaction of the thresholds of the Earth and World, which might be what makes the boundary where the paint, word, or marble stops, and art begins, so hard to pinpoint.

The Earth and World could be viewed as representing signification and the unsignifiable, or by the descriptions of being objective and subjective, yet if their understanding were that easy then these words would simply be used, and the involvement of grand philosophies avoided. Through his theory Heidegger provides another framework for investigating revelation, one that is not steeped in myth, nor psychology, but of a philosophical discourse thousands of years old. Ontology discusses the nature of Being, and Heidegger expands on this nature by examining how it stands in relation to art, or, rather how art emerges as truth when it relates to Being. In his review of Heidegger, Krzysztof Ziarek explains the words of Heidegger in *On the Way to Language* (1959) where he defines words as not being a part of Being, but as being “relational” to Being (Ziarek 1989: 119). This is essential to my investigation because it shows how words could carry a relational bond to Being, a relation which, due to the nature of Being, likely also maintain an ineffable nature. Thus by observing the Earth and World of *Crow* and by attempting to present the subjective Strife that unfolds, I believe it has the possibility of providing an understanding of the framework that stands as the path to the revelation, and truth, within it (116)

The understanding of words’ relation to Being and the establishment of Strife as it leads to truth is what I believe might help present how *Crow* approaches something ineffable. It is part of what has inspired my creation of the concepts of Blackness and Whiteness as they will stand as my own framework in approaching the unsignifiable. Blackness could be viewed as the World of *Crow*, and Whiteness could be understood as its Earth, and their Strife would thus become *Crow* as translinguistic embodiment. The concepts carry similarities, however the rules of Heidegger’s concepts come from his works, and the rules of mine come, as I will later show, from my understanding of *Crow*. But in order to fully understand Heidegger’s framework, his perspective on the possibly revelatory truth must be reviewed as well.

1.8.2 Truth as Aletheia

In *On the Essence of Truth* (1930) Heidegger scours the philosophical horizon for a true definition of the concept of truth, including what it can be defined as, along with what it shouldn't be in a philosophical context. He initially starts at the traditional description of truth with its correspondence of matter to knowledge, which is basically saying that truth depends on its concurrence with matter, a matter of fact (Heidegger 2011: 67). But what he is trying to reach is not a detailed definition of empirical truth, but rather what lies at the essence of truth itself, for which he uses the term and concept *aletheia*. The definitions of Heidegger's aletheia switches between various descriptions primarily associated with truth as well as correctness, mainly focusing on the concepts of unconcealment and disclosure (Dahlstrom in Davis 2010: 116). According to Heidegger aletheia comes in no other forms than art, and the essence of art is within poetry, poetry is the founding of truth, meaning truth's bestowal, grounding, and beginning (Heidegger 2011: 117, 129).

As an understanding of aletheia is based on an increasing variety of descriptive words, Heidegger specifies the concept by especially maintaining its description as unconcealment. In *Martin Heidegger: Key Concepts* (2010), Davis provides a useful example to show how Heidegger's use of unconcealment provides an understanding that equates to truth, where unconcealment is explained through a dependency on an active observer.

For example, 'The tree is sprouting' is true, that is, correct, only if the tree shows sprouts. Since what is hidden *from* someone, truth as the unhiddenness of 'things' also entails their actual or potential presence *to* someone, someone with an understanding of them.

(Dahlstrom in Davis 2010: 116)

In order for something to be unconcealed it needs to not only show itself, but it also needs to be observed by someone with an understanding of what its unconcealment means. It does not exist independently.

Another concept that helps us understand what Heidegger means with aletheia is beauty, as he equates beauty with how truth occurs as unconcealment (Heidegger 2011: 116). But as Heidegger believes the aestheticizing of art is the cause of its decline, beauty has to be understood not in just in the experience of observing the beautiful, but in understanding why it is beautiful, in observing beauty's "unconcealment" as truth (Clark 2011: 65; Heidegger 2011: 116). Thus through art and the artist beauty can be presented as long as an essential

truth is conveyed and understood, such as when a piece of writing or poetry hits at the source of a subject, hitting the metaphorical “nail on the head”. That is likely when we touch at its truth, or its *aletheia*, which could also be viewed as the creation of a revelation. This unconcealment is presented, or rather projected, unto what Heidegger calls the *Clearing* (Heidegger 2011: 121)

The actions of the Strife between World and Earth are those of Clearing and Concealing (121; Dronsfield in Davis 2010: 133). Concealment is the opposite of unconcealment, thus the opposite of truth and essence, it is the “not-yet-revealed” (Heidegger 2011: 115, 119). The Clearing should not be understood by the meaning of destruction or removal, but rather that of producing an open place where everything is other than usual (127). Heidegger thus views poetry as “clearing projection”, it projects the Clearing as “an open region which poetry lets happen” (128). Viewing poetic language in this way draws similarities towards that of the concept of the semiotic chora; it is an open or womb-like area where living happens (Kristeva 1986: 12). To Heidegger the construction of the Clearing is unique to the cognition of the *Dasein*, and it is not a phenomenon in itself, but rather the “clarity of phenomena” (Dahlstrom in Davis 2010: 119, 42). The Clearing is then to be understood as the opening through which we perceive *aletheia*, as well as unconcealment, and through which we observe what is “truly” signified at the essence of the work of art. For Heidegger the work of art therefore does not simply provide imitation, nor signification, but displacement. It provides, as Clark describes it, “something for the reader, beholder or listener to dwell within and not merely something to de-code” (Clark 2011: 45). It is through building an understanding of this process of displacement that I believe a Heideggerian analysis is not only possible, but also promising.

1.8.3 Heideggerian Analysis

Heidegger puts a high value on the poetic form, since he believes truth must happen as art, and then further states all art that produces the essence of truth, is in essence poetry (Heidegger 2011: 117, 127). Yet when it comes to breaking them down through criticisms, it is a practice that Heidegger believes to be one of the things slowly killing art (Clark 2011: 65). Contrary to this standpoint, both Heidegger and Clark have produced works showing how Heidegger’s theories can be used for literary criticism, shortly summarized; by avoiding

the conventional structure of criticism.

Heidegger's love for Hölderlin leads him to conduct what can only be described as criticisms of his work in order to show how it is the "poetry of poetry" (109, 122) Clark uses, among other elements, Heidegger's theory of the *Grundstimmung* of poetic works to show how the direct symbolic interpretation conducted by many literary critics is not one that can be conducted through Heidegger (121-122). For when following the concept of a *Grundstimmung* one must allow not only for a thematization, without which there would be no substance, but also hold the poem open, and observe the unsaid, what is unrepresented, what is still Concealed (122) Showing the poetry of poetry, giving the enhanced focus on the non-symbolic interpretation and a respect for what is "unsaid" (as well as unsayable), that is when Heidegger becomes the correct tool for the job.

Heidegger gives an example of how you experience the truth of a piece of art through a description of one of Van Gogh's paintings of a farmer's shoes. He explains how the truth is contained and projected in the painting.

This [truth] does not mean that something at hand is correctly portrayed, but rather that in the revelation of the equipmental being of the shoes beings as a whole – world and earth in their counterplay – attain to unconcealment.

(Heidegger 2011: 116)

In different terms, the contemplation of the signified within the painting, the shoes' "being", brought on by the signifier and symbolism of Heidegger's earth and the physical painting, is what *aletheia*, or unconcealment, is. Davis refers to it as a displacement of the observer to "somewhere other than where we usually are. That place Heidegger names truth" (Dronsfield in Davis 2010: 131). This place named "truth" or experience named "unconcealment" is untouchable by the constraints of the earth that Heidegger has put forwards, it only comes as a product of the Strife between Earth and World, and it exists as a translinguistic construct which words, or earth, keep a fluctuating boundary towards. The World is "never an object that stands before us and can be seen", it is only an ineffable consequence (Heidegger 2011: 108).

When observing an analysis Heidegger performed on Hölderlin's poem "Homecoming", Clark provides some details as to why Heidegger so delicately describes it as having the properties of a sort of "poetry of poetry" (Clark 2011: 109, 122). Within his critique Clark provides a quote from Heidegger's writing where Heidegger says that "Homecoming is not a poem about homecoming; rather, the elegy, the poetic activity which it is, is the homecoming itself" (Clark 2011: 110). What Heidegger describes is that the poem

becomes a manifestation of what it's supposed to narrate. It is not a signifier of something else claiming the description of a homecoming, it has instead itself become the experience of a homecoming.

This is also what I believe occurs within Hughes' "Robin Song", its repeated and generously ambiguous introductory descriptions structures the appearance of what can be seen as the demonstration of a bird's song (Hughes 1972: 45). However Hughes creates it through the use of symbolic language instead of what otherwise consists of notes and rhythms, for this Hughes replaces sounds with line indentations, creating a three-stage rhythm within the poem reminiscent to that of a bird's call (ibid.). In the same way that "Homecoming" felt like a homecoming to Heidegger, "Robin Song" produces a feeling of being a bird's song, and not just the presentation or narration of one. Without immediately stating it, Hughes has produced the experience of a bird's song to the untrained ear who can't recognize its context. Heidegger also emphasized the importance of the experience of the work of art when he stated that "[t]he way in which man experiences art is supposed to give information about its essence" (Heidegger 2011: 133).

Concerning the case of the independence of poetry from their authors, Heidegger points out that the creation and preservation are essential to a work of art, but are nonetheless independent of each other, claiming that the proper way of preserving the poem is "co-created and prescribed only and exclusively by the work", as well as stating that "[t]he work is to be released by the artist to its pure self-subsistence" (125, 105). The work when created thus stands alone. The creation of the poem is however at the origin of the work of art, and is what Heidegger refers to as its "essential source" (89). In this perspective Heidegger and Hughes seem to have similarities when it comes to the attribution of essence or spirit of the poems, as well as where they originate, being inspired by something outside the author (Heidegger and Figal 2009: 127; Hughes 1994: 12). Hughes' mythology mainly applies to the way the poems are read, one does not necessarily need to know the theory and mythology of "The Thought-Fox" in order to experience the sensation of the poem itself (Hughes 2003: 21). Yet the awareness of such a foundation brings a whole new realm of possibilities to its interpretation, and a whole new depth to its presented World.

Heidegger might not have agreed to the focus on Hughes' mythology in an analysis of his methodology, considering that the foundation for the readings no longer exclusively originate within the works themselves. However the perspective of Hughes is one based on contacting some "other". The preservation of the mythological source of his poetry is not strictly necessary but comes as what I believe to be a powerful addition in the pursuit of

creating an understanding of the World that they present. The pursuit of revelation is a shared trait of poetry through the eyes of Hughes and Heidegger, and in pursuing an understanding of this pursuit and possible product, I believe one theory to be strengthened by the other, instead of misaligning itself from any true revelation.

The earlier mentioned view of poetry as Aristotle's mirror on reality, as imitation, is arguably more focused on reflection and estheticizing than revelation. It works on what is already known. This is not the goal of Hughes, as he is more in the pursuit of what is not already known and established, a pursuit that he is pointing in the opposite direction of imitation and instead towards revelation. Hughes made it clear that he had a goal of creating revelation in *Crow*, by letting his poetry function as a tool of enlightenment, of attempting to touch at something new and different than what the reader as a part of modern society is used to. This view of poetry is embraced by the philosophies of Martin Heidegger, and his version of the revelation is the aletheia. In pursuing this revelation I will therefore follow some of Heidegger's philosophies, and break off from others. The use of Heidegger's theories will therefore not be based on a genuinely philosophical pursuit, but rather of a literal investigation of revelation based on the core belief that these presented revelations would likely also be the experience of truth as aletheia.

While discussing the function of the World, Heidegger points out that "the dawning world brings out what is as yet undecided and measureless, and thus discloses the hidden necessity of measure and decisiveness." (Heidegger 2011: 121). This likely establishes how the creation of the projected World confronts the observer with unseen aspects of reality, and forces upon him a reflection on these aspects. This resulting contemplation leads to arguably what both Heidegger and Kristeva view as healing processes, either as the experience and understanding of essential truths, or that of cathartic contemplative processes. I believe analyzing this process by investigating what leads to these essential truths, or what leads to the experience of the semiotic chora, could help build an understanding of how the unsignifiable becomes projected as a product or byproduct, consciously or unconsciously, through poetry.

2 Crow Conception

In *Crow* I believe Hughes' mythic quest is undertaken as he introduces the reader to the character of Crow and then gradually through the collection Crow grows and evolves until he eventually manifests himself as something that surpasses both character and text. This manifestation, which is partly unsignifiable in nature, is what I term the concept of Crow. This concept exists as, and through, the binary of what I have termed the Whiteness of signification and the metaphorical Blackness.

This concept of Crow originates in the conception of both Blackness and Whiteness, where Crow is born in text, he also becomes born in the mind of the reader, and from there grows from figure to concept, from myth and methodology to ineffable spirit, in the quest for revelation. As Crow straddles the boundary between Black and White, the question arises whether Crow is pursuing revelation for himself, or for the reader.

2.1 Genesis

The purpose of Hughes' poetic methodology seems to be introducing modern society to something both new and old. Through poetry he wants to recreate a connection he feels has been lost. The methodology itself consists of his mythological project, what I have detailed as his mythic quest; a quest for remedying revelation that functions through the capture of spiritual animals into living words. These are what I will refer to as *Animal-poems*, the reasoning for my capitalization is that they don't only contain animals or have a certain animal-based subject, rather they function to project some existence within them, some experience of otherness, instead of simply representing a recurring theme. The main characteristics of the idea of an Animal-poem is that through the unity of its living words, the poem gains some animalistic characteristics.

The *Crow* collection carries a very characteristically recognizable series of works due to the consistent concept of the animal and persona named Crow. In Hughes' attempts to reach something outside of language, he decided upon the crow especially due to its insignificance in a modern context, as he, in his own words, threw out the eagles and instead

chose the Crow (Faas 1980: 208). The purpose of my construction of what I term the concept of Crow is that Hughes not only included Crow as a persona within his works, but also bestowed upon it the mythological character of Trickster, as well as attached to it its own literary style, which eventually resulted in Crow having his very own language. The significance of this language is the effect of releasing Hughes from the role of creator, from being the metaphysical self from which the poem is spoken, which works to distance the poem from both author and its materialistic, logical, human origin. When reading the *Crow* poems the sensation is not one necessarily based on the perception and perspective of its author Ted Hughes, but rather on a more simplistic and alternative view of the world and everything in it. Hughes likely manages to create this perceived distance from the poem in part through his mythological process of projecting what is only moving through him, and not originating within him. His mythology of poems as captured spirit animals adapts to become a methodology of a dynamic complexity which, in his own words create poems which seem “quite separate from any person, even from their author” (Hughes 1994: 10).

Through his poems Crow takes shape not only as a persona, style or a consistent subject matter, but as a continually described but never defined concept, a concept that escapes any static designation due to its dynamic nature of consistently altering styles; it moves from a narrative structure such as in “Crow’s Elephant Totem Song” to a strictly consistent stanzaic structure in “Robin Song”, the subject matter changes from a love story in “Lovesong” to an introspective assault through the description of Crow’s thoughts in “Crow’s Nerve Fails”, and for poems such as “Crow Tyrannosaurus” and “Crow Alights” one can’t be sure whether the style intends to describe what occurs to Crow, or what occurs in the mind of the reader, due to Crow (Hughes 1972: 50, 45, 82, 40, 13, 10). It is this tendency of breaking perspective boundaries that give the poems an eerie, uncanny feel of over-treading the borders of text and paper. Crow thus exists on several levels, seemingly escaping any true definition or static formulation.

When read, the Crow poems create a sensation similar to perceiving the fox in “The Thought Fox”, an experience Hughes describes as that “the fox comes up again out of the darkness and steps into my head” every time he reads it, and he says he believes this experience stays with the poem, so that every time someone else reads it the fox will come out of the darkness again and walk towards them (Hughes 1994: 15). This presentation of poems as animal incarnations is what makes Hughes’ Crow poems contain something that is not easily grasped at in any other way than reading them. Hughes points out the importance of the unity of each piece of the Animal-poem, saying that nothing should be added or taken

away from them, as this could maim or even kill the captured animal (10). The animal then does not exist through the living words alone, but through their unity within the entirety of the poem. Hughes further describes the Animal-poem as knowing something special, and having a certain wisdom, “something perhaps which we are very curious to learn.” (ibid.) The traits of what Hughes describes as an Animal-poem is also what is at the core of a Crow poem, it takes roots within the animal of the Crow, but from that foundation any subject, structure, or story can spring up.

More specifically, the Crow poems differentiate from the Animal-poems that Hughes has earlier created by their adherence to his mythology, to the questioning of what is real in order to reach what is outside that reality, of traversing the boundaries between the natural world and the human world, of projecting something that works outside the basis of language and communication from which the foundation of modern life has been built. Yet these are only descriptions and not true definitions, the language of Crow has no true rules, and the only law in the language of Crow is the melody under which its creation is taken place, which controls the selection of words “as a physical act summons just the right hormones” (242).

Crow becomes more than just an animal or a style, it becomes what can only be described as a complex concept, which Hughes has constructed in his process of reaching something extraordinary. The Crow poems become a fitting medium for the purpose of conjuring something ineffable, something that gives the poems themselves the sensation of having a life of its own, like an animal (10). Through the lens of Hughes’ mythology there is another road to something that stands on the outside of representation and language, the true nature of perceiving a poem as an animal is itself a connotation that is not able to be explained, only experienced. It is an experience which will be condensed into the characteristics of the concept called Crow.

2.1 Naturalistic Crow

In order to properly establish the concept of Crow, the first step is the fundamental part of the character. The persona of Crow is at its foundation the nature of the animal it is inspired by, as is shown in “Crow Tyrannosaurus” where, despite his elevated cognition and self-awareness he is still a slave to the instinct of needing to feed (Hughes 1972: 13). The reflection on his nature shows through his contemplation “To stop eating | And try to become

the light?” but his nature still prevails when his head stabs, “trapsprung” at some grubs through the sound of his own weeping (ibid.). Becoming the light is itself a possible metaphor for the impossible fact of changing what is an inherent part of his manifestation, which is his blackness. The instinct of feeding also manifests itself in “That Moment”, divulging itself in the very final-line seemingly out of context with the rest of the text, much like an instinctual drive surfaces not just out of context but out of necessity (Hughes 1972: 11).

In “Crow and the Birds” Crow even separates himself from the other birds in the simplicity of his acts:

When the eagle soared clear through a dawn distilling of
emerald
When the curlew trawled in seadusk through a chime of
wineglasses

(Hughes 1972: 29)

The eagle, the curlew, and all the other birds in the poem come with metaphors of either beauty or ambiguity, which in itself creates a flow typical of poetry, where concepts and ideas inspire the senses and imagination. Yet when it comes to Crow at the final line, all inspiration is seemingly gone, the ambiguity is given up, and the sensation of flying through the concepts and connotations which is within the text is abruptly stopped as one is landing unto Crow.

Crow spraddled head-down in the beach-garbage, guzzling
a dropped ice-cream.

(ibid.)

This poem creates the impression that it’s a presentation of Crow in relation to other birds, like a reminiscent echo of Hughes’ statement of not picking the eagle, but the croaking crow. In what is possibly similar to his attitude on avoiding the use of metre and rhythm, where he wanted to use a language “that raises no ghosts” of the past, it is likely that Hughes chose the crow over a more fabled, or adored figure for the same reason (Sagar 1978: 104). This poem gives off a sense of exemplifying this attitude. Through this poem Crow becomes the most relatable bird, while the others are sailing, swooping, peering and trawling through metaphor and imagination, Crow spraddles and guzzles an ice-cream. This is an important aspect due to the foundation it creates within the reader, Crow doesn’t seem like anything special, and he is just doing what comes naturally to him, it produces a certain charm of normality.

The initial reaction to Crow for a reader is most likely that of analysis, of trying to

build an understanding, creating an attachment or relationship that carries the goal of understanding Crow, of relating oneself to him as humans often do, and finding his nature as well as his purpose. The attachment to Crow as persona is one not easily left behind, as it becomes the only tangible red line that goes through the Crow poems, their only consistent character. Even when the persona of Crow is not present, the poem still gives off a sensation of Crow. This is likely due to Crow's manifestation as both style and character, providing an example Crow's original origin as a writing style (Faas 1980: 208). The reader's connection of this style to Crow is likely first established within the early poems "Crow's Account of The Battle" and then "Crow's Account of St George", where one can see how a poem where he does not appear is still insinuated to be produced based on Crow's description (Hughes 1972: 15, 21). This becomes almost an assumption in later poems such as "Criminal Ballad", where the subject and style, the simple and ugly language with its revolutionary endings, are the same as when the title states it is one of Crow's accounts (30).

The manifestation as style has the function of creating a life for Crow not only within the poems, but through the consistency of style and subject matter he lives in the poems themselves. Not only as the persona stated by text, but by text alone. In Chen Hong's analysis of "The Thought-Fox" he describes the poem as containing at once three animals, one biological, one symbolic and one textual (Hong in Gifford 2011: 41). By this analysis Hong shows that the functions of the Animal-poem, at what some consider to be its very best form in "The Thought-Fox", is not only to present a textual animal, but to project what would be the "biological" experience of the animal, as well as conveying a symbolic or even totemic function. These are some of the characteristics that define a poem as an Animal-poem from a perspective that is not dependent on Hughes' process of creation. Not everyone can be expected to know what Hughes was thinking when he wrote the poems of *Crow*, these "layers" of animal are what may define them as an Animal-poem to readers. This is why, within *Crow*, even if Crow isn't mentioned in any way, the sensation is still one quite separate from any author. The presented perspective, or the metaphysical self, is somehow perceived to be that of Crow. An accomplishment which, I believe, is part of what makes the collection feel so unique.

This animalistic sensation is one of the things that establish *Crow* poems as Animal-poems. However it is the attachment to a consistent mythology which takes it one step further, and earns it the description of a Crow-poem. As the mythology of Crow grows, so does Crow as concept. Crow establishes himself not based on a single poem, but instead grows from the connections between all the poems of the collection. As a result of this a

mythology is created, from which the concept emerges. As Crow's multilayered existence is conceived, it breaks away from the fox of "The Thought-Fox" in that it attempts a further growth, eventually producing not only the sensation of an animal, but what I view as an imitation of humanity.

2.3 Hatched into Myth

The animalistic nature that is at the foundation of Crow swiftly evolves into something more complicated, through the tales of Crow he is established simultaneously as animal and as the instigator of his own mythology. In *Shakespeare and the Goddess of Complete Being* Hughes states that he has yet to see a satisfactory definition of the term mythic (cf. Zajko in Gifford 2011: 108). For many it is when the subject matter concerns a mythology which is based in culture, but he claims that is not necessarily true within poetry (ibid.). Hughes points out that many poems have myths as subject matter, or make images of subjective events without being described as visionary or mythic.

It is only when the image opens inwardly towards what we recognize as a first-hand as-if religious experience, or mystical revelation, that we call it 'visionary', and when 'personalities' or creatures are involved, we call it 'mythic'.

(ibid.)

In *Crow* one could therefore not be faulted for saying that Hughes is on a mythic quest, that he is chasing this revelatory experience in order to obtain access to some essential truth (Brandes in Gifford 2011: 71). Hughes intended for this mystical revelation to provide healing. As he believed mythology to be a possible source of this healing, we can observe the purpose of him creating a new mythology in *Crow*.

This new mythology is constructed with pieces of other mythologies. It is created by a gathering of fragments such as the repeated accounts of the biblical Genesis in "A Childish Prank", "Snake Hymn" and "Apple Tragedy", or of Christ's crucifixion in "The Contender", the Greek legend of Icharus in "Crow's Fall", and the tale of Oedipus in "Oedipus Crow" and "Song for a Phallus" (Hughes 1972: 8, 81, 72, 33, 35, 69). All these fragments are included in the Crow mythology in a process similar to the one presented in "Crowego", where occurrences seemingly not of Crow's choice leads to Crow eating, drinking, and practically absorbing the mythological characters of Ulysses, Hercules and Beowulf, eventually gazing into the past "Like a leopard into a fat land" (54). Feasting on other mythologies and

absorbing them or tearing them apart is the nature of Crow as myth and Trickster, who consistently claws at the foundations of humanity while, according to Hughes, simultaneously carrying the ambition of eventually becoming human (Bentley 1998: 49).

In the created mythology Crow has, as mentioned, taken on the role of the Trickster of primitive myths, which becomes another absorbed mythological fragment. The Trickster myth is, similar to the other mythological roots, based on a historical mythology. Nonetheless, judging by how Christianity and ancient Greek mythology is treated in *Crow*, it becomes increasingly doubtful that it is a true to origin version. Imposing a historically mythological interpretation of the Trickster character unto Crow carries less validity due to what the history shows of its behavioral patterns, of its core trait of mischief, which would inherently disobey an adherence to such a view (Coupe in Gifford 2015: 16). This is the reason that the historical mythology of Trickster will not be used in the oncoming analyses, as what lies at the basis of its description goes against any certainty of definition or intention.

The origin of Crow as Trickster will however still function to strengthen the aforementioned aspects of symbolic and systemic uncertainty projected in *Crow*. This uncertainty, which is at first initiated by Hughes distancing himself from the metaphysical self of the poems and attempting to replace it with Crow, is only enhanced by his acknowledgment of Crow being constructed through the guiding metaphor of Trickster. The sensation of an intangible otherness to the poems is further enhanced by Crow carrying what coupe describes as the characteristics of the Trickster, who effectively straddles “the boundary between cosmos and chaos”, bending the boundary of what is literary and what is not (Coupe in Gifford 2015: 16).

The dichotomy of cosmos and chaos is one of several binaries that is traversed in *Crow*, or in other terms it is a boundary that is traversed in a multitude of ways. As one studies the growth of the concept of Crow, one can observe a consistency of presenting binaries, and, instead of proposing hierarchy, Crow straddles the boundary. Crow’s focus on dichotomy and duality has the result of consistently exploring the existence of a separation, and the terms of such separations in reality. *Crow* aims at dissecting how the reader perceives something as worldly or otherworldly. It also separates the known from the unknown throughout the collection as one’s associations and connotations are explored to the extreme in the often futile pursuit of a certainty of interpretation.

This exploration can be viewed in the examination of metaphor and language occurring in poems such as “Fragment of an Ancient Tablet”, “A Disaster” and “The Battle of Osfrontalis”, where the instinct of interpretation is confronted with an uncertainty of

signification (Hughes 1972: 79, 23, 25). The other dualities are of black and white (“Crow’s Fall”), of creation and destruction which often goes hand in hand with the pairing of signifier and signified (“Crow’s Last Stand”), of what separates something and nothing (“Conjuring in Heaven”), of what is human and inhuman (“Crow’s Account of the Battle”), of the aspects of life and death (“That Moment”), of the boundary between Crow and reader (“Crow Alights”), or even the act of binary thinking itself (“Crow’s Theology”) (Hughes 1972: 28, 75, 46, 15, 11, 10, 27). These are all concepts which Crow emphasizes and problematizes, whether consciously or not, seeing as the defining questions of existence and existing seemingly follow him wherever he goes.

In the conduct of confronting these challenging questions G&R describe how Crow establishes himself as God, animal, human being, hero, buffoon, denier, affirmer, destroyer and creator, nearly always presenting perspectives foreign or unusual to the reader (G&R 1981: 121). In establishing dualities and dichotomies within unique perspectives, Crow, and Hughes, force a reflection, an investigation into what these things mean. By straddling the boundary between concepts and questions both big and small, and then forcing a continual crossing, the boundary, or the lack of one, eventually becomes increasingly visible.

One of the examples of Hughes’ use of binaries is presented in “Crow’s Theology”:

Crow realized God loved him -
Otherwise, he would have dropped dead.
So that was proved
...
And what loved the shot-pellets
That dribbled from those strung-up mummifying crows?
What spoke the silence of lead?

Crow realized there were two Gods -

(Hughes 1972: 27)

Crow bases his belief that God loves him on the non-existence of the opposite, if God hated him then he would not be alive - therefore if he is alive God must love him. Shortly after he uses the same binary logic to establish that God speaks Crow, for if he did not then he could not have been created. Towards the end of the poem he applies the binary perspective to God and existence as well, concluding that if God is the source of all things good and of life itself, then the source of evil and death must be another God who is “much bigger than the other” (ibid.). The reason for this last conclusion, without delving too far into the character of God in relation to the Christian God, is elaborated when looking back at the earlier poem “Examination at the Womb-door”, where a repetition of inquiry is created establishing the

all-encompassing nature of death (3). The poem's last stanza before its final lines asks who is stronger than hope, stronger than will, stronger than love, and stronger than life, and follows every question mark with the sentence-ending "Death." (ibid.). By stating that the opposite of God is mightiest in "Crow's Theology" Crow thus simply follows a relatively logical conclusion, if life always ends in death, then whatever creates death must be strongest.

By pursuing the natural affinity for binaries and contrast within the modern mind such as in "Crow's Theology" and applying it in ways that it is not normally used, Crow dissects both foundations at once. It questions the nature of God as the all-powerful, of loving him as a natural reaction to simply existing, of the supremacy of death over life, and through these essential questions it critiques the concept of binary thinking itself. As the reader observes Crow's critique they might be intrigued to start their own, proposing what I believe Crow is attempting to show within what Jacques Derrida has already established; a setting up of opposites is an instrument and consequence of making equal (Spivak in Derrida 1997: xxviii). In the translator's preface to *Of Grammatology* Spivak refers to the nature of binary opposites as "merely accomplices of each other", and that in order to deconstruct their opposition she references how Derrida states that one must first overthrow the hierarchy (xxviii, lxxvii). I believe that Crow's consistent presentation of dichotomies is an attempt at overthrowing their hierarchy, and constructing unity in the act of making them equal.

By grabbing at the mythological, logical, and philosophical tools we use to perceive and understand reality and turning them on their heads, by problematizing opposites and their hierarchical tendency, I believe Crow initiates a breakdown of reality. One's personal definitions of reality become visible while following Crow as he establishes his. However, as Crow negates hierarchy it instead has the possibility of showing an underlying unity. In this underlying unity I believe one can observe Hughes' mythic quest for restoration, and it occurs within how *Crow*, as Gifford describes it, "can attempt to heal dualities by holding them in counterbalancing juxtapositions" (Gifford 2011: 9). Assailing dichotomies becomes part of Crow's conduct, yet the impact this has on the reader is not one of simply reading statements. Through what I perceive as the experience of an obscuration or melding of perspectives with Crow I believe he is providing the reader with what becomes more of a proxy-experience than a product of pure narration. This melding of perspectives will later be theorized in my analyses of "Crow Alights" and "That Moment", where I believe Crow grows from mysterious Animal-poem to ineffable concept.

The growth of the concept of Crow's ineffability occurs as part of a process that starts with a metaphoric blackness that grows to become increasingly synonymous with Crow

then becomes whether the black rainbow simply becomes an inclusion of this fragment of mythology along with all the others, if it heralds the coming of a new covenant, or if it is just a reference to the curious conclusion of creating a rainbow as a promise to never again commit mass-genocide. The emphasis of the peculiar nature of the rainbow as an apology becomes increasingly likely as one can observe in the later poems of, for example “Crow and Mama” and “In Laughter”, that Crow is often connected with, or the originator of, a certain layer of absurdity (Hughes 1972: 5, 41).

The only consistent description given of the character of Crow is of his animal features, his feathers, claws, and beak, yet what is perhaps most important is the descriptions of his blackness. This could be viewed as another description of his appearance as a crow, which are usually black all over, but the contexts and descriptions of this specific feature have a possibility of going much further than just a detail of color. The multitude of different poems referring to blackness start to produce associations where Crow and blackness become synonymous, until in “Crowcolour” where the direct association is given:

Crow was so much blacker
Than the moon’s shadow

(Hughes 1972: 59)

Though “Crowcolour” directly connects the two concepts of blackness and Crow, it also proposes in the same manner as “Two Legends” a variety of gradients within the blackness (59, 1). In order for Crow to be “so much blacker” or be a “black rainbow” blackness has to have a color gradient, again Hughes insists on a figurative reception of what different degrees of blackness may represent, as well as the properties of blackness itself (59, 1). If the goal is to adhere to Hughes’ description of blackness and expose it as metaphor, then the first step will be to return to the initiation of the metaphor in the beginning of “Two Legends”.

If its first line “Black was the without eye” is viewed as a statement equating the state of being without eyes to blindness, then already within the first line Hughes has crossed a boundary that most readers can’t follow. This possible representation of blackness is repeated in “Crowcolour” where the final line states Crow’s color is “Blacker | Than any blindness”, the correlation takes on a more philosophical evaluation than a representational one, and becomes a query for the experience of a sense based on the lack of that sense (59). A similar inquiry is assigned to the imagination as the crow is “Bent in emptiness | over emptiness”, where Hughes tasks the reader to find what is signified by the signification of essentially being in nothing, over nothing (ibid.). This is an exercise often presented to the reader, where Hughes initiates an imaginative impossibility, where signification no longer takes place and

is replaced with an imaginative open space, some ineffable nothingness which has the possibility of projecting nothing, as well as projecting anything.

I view these imaginative impossibilities as Hughes presenting his own version of what Critchley described as the “meaning of meaninglessness” (Critchley 1997: 27). As an imaginative impossibility, or by conveying a meaning of meaninglessness, it escapes the reach of the imagination and instead bases itself on the creation of a false binary that attempts to assume no ties to tangible reality. If there ever were a way to signify what stands outside of language, then this would likely be one such way. The act of projection, and the ineffable nothingness that manifests it, is how I believe Hughes, through the metaphor of blackness, and through the concept of Crow, reaches towards something unattainable in language, chasing a sensation that is beyond representation.

Blackness thus simultaneously carries an increasing amount of signification, as well as the pursuit of an absolution from signification. This absolution might also be part of Hughes’ mythic quest. The idea of blackness as blindness could tie together with his view of modern society, where he fears a blindness of the third eye of the imagination might be building. As mentioned earlier Hughes has stated that he believes we are neglecting the inner world, he also further describes the addiction to the false dream of modern life not as the creation of a society, “but a hell.” (Hughes 1994: 142-144; Faas 1980: 198). As a result of this the blackness could therefore also represent a lifelessness and senselessness, the lack of color and imagination if an adherence to creativity and the inner world is abandoned. The concept of blackness therefore has the possibility of representing the duality of damnation as well as salvation in Hughes’ mythological project in *Crow*.

“Two Legends” also presents a more biological blackness as it shows blackness in the blood and bowels, and in the muscles and the brain (Hughes 1972: 1). This produces a quite clear literal meaning, stating the often not contemplated fact that these parts are indeed without light, and are only exposed to light when something goes very wrong. Though with this the poem initiates a dynamic nature, where the interpretation could be seen as purely literal, yet also purely figurative at the same time. Other than the aforementioned imaginative impossibilities, one leap into obscurity is found within the final lines of the first part of “Two Legends” where blackness is also equated to the soul, which initiates a mental leap of the reader into what is perceived by them as the spiritual essence of an individual.

This mental leap produces a contemplation of the otherworldly, and as the poem continues describing a blackness which is not able to “Pronounce its sun”, one could assume it is representing a juxtaposed reality, seeing as the sun is the source of light which alleviates

blackness. This statement produces a reflection on how reality is not able to “pronounce” its opposite, the otherworldly, either. As with the resulting “tinglings” felt of experience as described by Hughes when trying to write down what lies in the experience of existence, reality cannot pronounce its opposite, it can only spell it out very slowly. I view this as a statement to what was earlier exemplified through imaginative impossibilities, where instead of showing how language cannot state it’s opposite, the poem is directly referencing it. As we observe the conception of Crow, his tendency of straddling binaries even precedes his hatching, providing an introductory perspective of his enigmatic existence.

Leading up to the hatching of Crow we can see another mental leap and layer to the metaphor which is not as much stated as it is insinuated.

Black is the earth-globe, one inch under,
An egg of blackness
Where sun and moon alternate their weathers

(Hughes 1972: 1)

Wherever the light touches, one inch below is darkness, commence digging and the darkness would still always be an inch out of reach. The dichotomy is one not only touching the nature of blackness, but also the nature of knowledge, certainty, and reality itself; their boundaries are never broken, it is only moved.

Thus in the first poem the conception of Crow is established, the animal is born, the fragments of mythology is within the title and structure as the two legends of origin, the style molded by its simple words, while at the end, as with the end of “Finale” in *Cave Birds*, “up comes a goblin” (Hughes 2003: 440). The concept of Crow as a gathering of all its parts is experienced through the unity of the poem. Through the leaps of imagination and the flights from tangibility, through the inconceivable other that one touches at due to the double-edged words, and careful connotations. As it conceives both Crow and blackness, it initiates the pursuit of revelation, as well as of understanding, a pursuit in which Crow and blackness again, as I have shown within the poems themselves, become synonymous. It is therefore my belief that through the analysis of blackness as metaphor, we are also observing the nature of Crow as metaphor.

This is what I believe to be the origination of Hughes’ approach towards the otherworldly, an approach that is melded into his metaphor of blackness being a metaphor for the otherworldly. This is also what originated my construction of the concept of Blackness, where the concept is founded in my perspective of Hughes’ use of blackness as a metaphor for the ineffable.

2.5 The Blackness of the Unknown

According to J. Hillis Miller Western language has three theories of poetry written into its fabric, and it is so inherent in the nature of Western metaphor and concepts of speech that these theories go back to the ages of Plato and Aristotle (Miller 1985: 5). One of these theories is the previously mentioned Aristotelian theory of poetry as imitation which concerns the mirroring and recreation of reality presented through poetry (6). This theory of poetry naturally leads to a question of the representation of the unknown that is unique to art and poetry, if there is something inherent and unique to poetry itself, then it cannot simply be an imitation of the reality outside the poem. This unique property is described as the concept of unconcealment, revelation, and *aletheia*, it is the theory embraced by Heidegger, and described by Miller as looking at the words of poetry not as a mirror, but a lamp (*ibid.*). When elucidating on this second theory Miller describes it as an act:

It is the act of the mind seeking a revelation through the words and in the words. Poetry is a revelation in the visible and reasonable of that which as the base of reason cannot be faced or said directly.

(Miller 1985: 7)

According to this theory it is thus not only Hughes that pursues a revelation in his poetry, but the reader is, on some level, doing the same thing. The revelation itself stands outside of language, for poetry as pure imitation neglects the nature of the hidden, something Miller describes as the vanishing of Being, as it is “dispersed into its representation.” (*ibid.*). This shows how the pursuit of living words, of tropes connoting some effect on the senses, is not enough when reaching for what is outside language and pure imitation. If the point is to procure sources of a revelatory instigator, the signifiers of something that cannot be faced or said directly, then it must go deeper than acts of imitation. I believe one such instigator could be the metaphoric blackness, as it is used in *Crow*.

Initially the description of Crow as blackness creates a binary association, if he is associated with blackness then light or whiteness is likely his opposite. In order to understand this binary the definition of Crow’s blackness must be further understood, seeing as the metaphorical comparatives of black and white are the possible root foundation of nearly any reflection on a dichotomy. It is the second dichotomy in Christian mythology, following the creation of the heavens and earth. Yet this might itself be the point, Crow existing at the root and origin of any opposite, binary, duality, or dichotomy. In reference to language, light

would likely be considered what details and describes, the nature of language itself, blackness would then represent its opposite, that which is without language. The dichotomy of black and white becomes an analyst's wet dream, seeing as it is a seed from which nearly any connotation can be projected as a result of the Western binary approach to reality. It takes on whatever form is given to it by the reader, thus settling on one definition of its signification would be counteracting the intention and potential of this concept.

Instead of becoming a signified, it becomes an emptiness waiting to be filled by the reader, in whatever shape their subjective Blackness might take form. Instead of promoting imitation, it provokes contemplation. This is the nature of Crow, though he will never take form, he does convey a certain function. The necessary perspective when looking at Crow is the perspective that must be taken when searching for something outside the nature of language itself; to abstain from looking at its form, and instead present its function. This is because Crow exists at first only in language, and it is the creation of something outside that language that eventually becomes the concept of Crow, and this is done through a function of the language itself. The function, as given to Crow, is Hughes' revelatory quest; the creation of myth in order to produce a revelation in the reader. However in order to build an understanding of the function of Blackness within *Crow*, as well as defining the concept itself, one must nonetheless start with its various forms and features.

2.6 Metaphor within *Crow*: Turning Nothing into Something

When reviewing the concept of Crow there is a clear standpoint that should be taken into consideration, it requires that one stand on one metaphor (that of Crow) and from that foundation attempt to perceive the others. The interplay with metaphor within *Crow* is one of a highly dynamic nature which carries the symbolic and systemic uncertainty of Crow poetry as its base-line, as its relational "reality". The inception of metaphor within metaphor has the possibility of carrying one through an imaginative journey without measure or meaning, as Hughes seems to have wanted, one must let loose the foundation from which materialistic life is based, and journey into the unknown.

The conductor of this journey is the foundation of signification, a foundation which, as Hughes has stated, is formed on "the songs that a Crow would sing", and in the style that a crow would sing them (Faas 1980: 208). The purpose being to only convey what the Crow

wanted to say, and shed everything else (ibid.). The language of *Crow* is thus predicated on the language of a crow, meaning simple and ugly. The simplification of language does not result in a more direct one however, the simple words instead have the possibility of conveying an increased diversity of reception. This becomes apparent when looking at several of the poems, such as in “Crow Goes Hunting” where Crow hunts down a hare with words, eventually ending with:

The earthquake turned into a hare and leaped for the hill
Having eaten Crow’s words

Crow gazed after the bounding hare
Speechless with admiration

(Hughes 1972: 47)

What Hughes manages to do is to create something that seems increasingly complex out of simple words that would be likely to confound very few readers. Through a series of words that would rarely call for a dictionary the poems somehow still manage to create a divergence of explanations. Yet the explanation and following stagnation of the imagination that is achieved by attaching meaning is perhaps not the song that the Crow wants to sing. What Hughes conducts is something that seems opposite to metalanguage. Instead of a complicated language creating specificity, Hughes’ simple language creates complexity.

Like roots growing into branches, his words spring into a whole realm of associations and connotations, such as the beginning of “A Horrible Religious Error”:

When the serpent emerged, earth-bowel brown,
From the hatched atom
With its alibi self twisted around it

Lifting a long neck
And balancing that deaf and mineral stare
The sphinx of the final fact

And flexing on that double flameflicker tongue
A syllable like the rustling of spheres

(Hughes 1972: 37)

Through simple words one can see several complex concepts emerge, from the serpent representing Christianity, to the physical building blocks of existence of the atom, and ending with the structure of Egyptian heritage that is the sphinx. One can also hear the alliteration in the “earth-bowel brown” color of the serpent, as well as the consistent, almost musical appearance of the lip-biting alliteration in the “sphinx of the final fact” followed by the “flexing on that double flameflicker tongue” (ibid.).

voiced through simple, colloquial words, containing a simple touch of comedy and irony in the thought of beating “the hell out of” the devil that the serpent represents in Christianity (Hughes 1972: 37). This signature style of Crow becomes the music of his croaking, filled with the essential fragments of humanity. It is a style purposefully created by Hughes in an attempt to guide the reader into a contact with the unknown, and the fragments of what already feels known to the reader is an important part of his séance.

In relation to Heidegger’s earlier description of Hölderlin’s “Homecoming” as representing a sensation and experience of homecoming instead of simply narrating one, I believe that *Crow* is not just a presentation of Crow, but a sensation and experience of the concept of Crow. Its function is to remove the reader from the foundation of the known, to impose a loss of the foundation of association that is normally used as a lens of perception, and introduce something not based on logic, nor founded on knowledge. It does this not through submerging the reader completely in the unknown, but rather guiding one into the descent like the steps of a staircase, where each step is formed through a fragment of what we already consider real, of concepts that is already known. An example of this is with the established concept of God as the almighty being and creator, in “A Horrible Religious Error” and “Crow’s Theology” Hughes lets the reader stand on this concept, and then take one step into the unknown, where the existence of something greater is acknowledged (37, 27). The first step in the continual descent is taken by building on this already established understanding of God by having Crow casually and carelessly establish not only a superiority but a seeming dominance.

In a process similar to the creation of the traces of the unsayable presented by Franke, in order to produce the unsayable it needs to be projected through language (Franke 2014:3). The trajectory produced by the known, by the aspects of humanity, imitation, language and laughter are some of the concepts that have their foundation in reality, yet in *Crow* become trajectories towards the unknown, and the unknowable (ibid.). Signification thus becomes the means of a steady submersion into the sea of the unknown and unknowable, the fragments of reality is the support that maintains the descent, and an interchanging balance needs to be upheld, Hughes is guiding the readers, not forcing them.

This is what initially forms the breakdown of reality within *Crow*, where Crow brings up what we already view as real, and imposes binaries, forces contemplation, and insists on criticism. As the known becomes what I refer to as Whiteness as it is juxtaposed with the unknown and unknowable Blackness, I believe Crow enables the inception of both concepts in himself, before imposing them on the reader. I view Blackness as a conceptual metaphor in

Crow which represents the unsayable, a black void from which, as a result of this manifestation, everything, and nothing, can emerge.

2.6.1 Blackness Manifesting Something

Descriptions of black and blackness don't surface too often in *Crow*, however once they occur they immediately give off associations of representing much more than just color. In the already covered "Two Legends" the first incarnation of blackness comes in a description of impossible gradients, a variety of nothingness. Blackness is mentioned again in the poem "A Kill" which starts out with a description of violence which throughout provide graphic images projecting an experience of some kind of bloody murder. Yet the murder is being committed by "his" own body parts:

Clubbed unconscious by his own heart

Seeing his life stab through him, a dream flash
As he drowned in his own blood

Dragged under by the weight of his guts

(Hughes 1972: 4)

This experience continues, creating a sensation of oncoming death, until at the last three lines where it turns from a kill to what seems like a birth.

And smashes into the rubbish of the ground

He managed to hear, faint and far – 'It's a boy!'

Then everything went black

(ibid.)

As a reader the expectation of everything going black at the end was likely apparent after being shot and strangled, but the penultimate line turns the entire poem on its head, and makes the concluding blackness even more mysterious. Instead of being a poem of death it becomes one of life, and of being born. It is something that has occurred to every reader, yet is remembered by no one, resulting in the blackness overflowing with possibilities. It could be that "he" dies after being born, it could be that existence outside the womb, or being born at all, is part of some darkness, such as with eastern mythology where being born again is a denial of *moksha* and the release from the cycle of rebirth, or it could, in some peculiar way, be the narration of the birth of *Crow*. It could also be a narration of a normal birth, a

description of the sensations that a baby goes through during conception, the blackness being pre-mirror stage existence, where no words exist and thus none offer description. The blackness in “A Kill” thus represents a multitude of meanings, and yet maintains none, the death-to-life story ends abruptly on the blackness of its ending, and resists any light from being shed on its intent.

Blackness emerges again in the poems “The Door” and “Crow Hears Fate Knock on the Door”, which contain what seems to be some common factors when it comes to its function. Both poems start out by depicting the earthly, physical, and logical world in unexpected fashion:

“The Door”

It is part of the world’s earthen wall
The earth’s plants – such as the genitals
And the flowerless navel
Live in its crevices.

(Hughes 1972: 7)

And:

“Crow Hears Fate Knock on the Door”

He looked in front of his feet at the little stream
Chugging on like an auxiliary motor
Fastened to this infinite engine.

He imagined the whole engineering
Of its assembly, repairs and maintenance -
And felt helpless.

(Hughes 1972: 12)

Both poems stand out, unexpectedly, because they make sense. The metaphors have logical associations, the earth as body and plants as a means of reproduction, physical reality as an infinite engine, an unfathomable engineering marvel. They both start out with uncanny certainty, yet as the poem goes on, grow gradually unsteady. The oncoming blackness acts like an abyss that is void of any meaning, or a gravitational black hole of signification, rapidly destabilizing its surroundings, until the event horizon is breached, and it leaves certainty far behind.

“The Door”

All are rooted in earth, or eat earth, earthy,
Thickening the wall

Only there is a doorway in the wall -
A black doorway:
The eye's pupil.

Through that doorway came Crow.

Flying from sun to sun, he found this home.

(Hughes 1972: 7)

And:

“Crow Hears Fate Knock on the Door”

Yet the prophecy inside him, like a grimace,
Was I WILL MEASURE IT ALL AND OWN IT ALL
AND I WILL BE INSIDE IT
AS INSIDE MY OWN LAUGHTER
AND NOT STARING OUT AT IT THROUGH WALLS
OF MY EYE'S COLD QUARANTINE
FROM A BURIED CELL OF BLOODY BLACKNESS –

(Hughes 1972: 12)

The understanding that can be built here is still one of non-certainty, but the experience created by the use of blackness is very different from that of “A Kill”.

In “The Door” one at first encounters the uncertainty when the metaphor of the body of earth is followed by the world's “earthen wall”, which is thickened by the earth's creatures rooted in earth, eating “earth, earthy”. The continual use of the word “earth” creates a connotation and experience of something grounded, realistic and physical, the connection of earth with body has a similar effect. Yet the introduction of the concept of a “wall” becomes the first step into obscurity, yet still not outside reason with the possible references it could convey. However when there appears in the wall a black doorway, the metaphoric ground becomes uprooted, widening the metaphor with another layer. The black doorway, which exists in the wall consisting of the “growth of the solid world” becomes “The eye's pupil” which is where Crow came through and “found this home.” As the poem moves towards the black doorway, the instinctual reason-making process is thrown for a spin, the search for its imitative counterpart abandoned. The language of the poem no longer gives a ground of signification or certain association, and the “earthly” connections to reality become severed. As the reading eye scans the paper, the signification of blackness at once becomes simultaneously highly figurative, yet also literal; Crow enters through a black doorway to the body, through which all perceptions of *Crow* are constructed, Crow is conceived and conserved in the reader through the eye's pupil.

As the blackness is approached in “Crow Hears Fate Knock on the Door” there seems

to be a narrative focused on the pursuit of meaning inherent in existence. As Crow looks at the world he finds it to be like an infinite engine, meaning that he has a curiosity towards his surrounding nature, and has also grasped some understanding of it, then:

He plucked grass-heads and gazed into them
Waiting for first instructions.

(Hughes 1972: 12)

Crow has acknowledged that the rest of existence seems to have some unfathomable purpose which leaves him feeling helpless just by observing it, he has also reached the conclusion that it has some kind of logical function. Yet then he reflects this nature unto himself, and contemplates his purpose, what is his function. He wanders in search of it, however all he finds is the prophecy inside him, presenting the simile of it being “like a grimace”. The initial separation from Crow and prophecy created by this grimace gives a certain otherness to it, the term prophecy itself assumes that whatever it is, it has not been decided by Crow, and is not demanded, it is simply a prediction of what is to come.

The blackness at the end of the prophecy is again at the core of several layers of possible interpretation, a prophecy carries mythological and religious connotations, or it can be an understanding of nature, as with nature one can only foresee and predict what is to happen, and never completely assure it. In context with the rest of the poem this seems like Crow’s query for the meaning of life, and the term of a prophecy contains both its possible origin within a spiritual belief, as well as the estimation built on scientific understanding. What might be Crow’s perception of the prophecy as a grimace contains no more insinuation than that of a grin or a frown, these facial expressions are based on a foundation of human expression, which is loosely based on a reaction, which is in turn based on a personality. In order to find proper meaning one has to know the details of some, if not all these layers, while here there is no trace, no detail. The prophecy is itself like a grimace, leaving the assumption of what it might be signifying up to the reader’s perception, instead of being asserted by the signifier itself. Yet signification may be decided on when the vehicle of the simile is given its tenor, thus establishing the ground of how the prophecy is like a grimace.

The prophecy in its capital letters stands out on the page, further strengthening the sensation of otherness that it has established. It can be divided into two halves, one stating what will happen, and one stating what will not happen. If the prophecy is true, then Crow will follow what seems like the empirical and imperialistic foundation of modern civilizations, where everything is measured, and everything is owned. The next line however grows increasingly diffuse, querying the reader for the possible connotations of being

“inside” of something, then providing a simile as to how it would be like being “inside my own laughter”. This line will be approached further in the later section on laughter, yet will in this analysis serve to show the increasing divergence of signification that it connotes. The concept of laughter will later be viewed as a possible regression to the primary drives, and instigator of the semiotic chora; in short, laughter in poetic language creates no “true” signified, and instead creates an effect of a devalorization of subject matter.

The negating half of the prophecy which follows brings the reader back to the walls and eyes mentioned in “The Door”, yet it adopts these figures unto blackness in a manner that is exponentially harder to contextualize as each word steps forward. If the first half of the prophecy is to be understood as societal norms, then the negating second half would likely represent an opposite or an alternative due to it starting with “AND NOT”. This presented alternative is to stare “OUT AT IT”, meaning staring at the results of the first half of the prophecy, through walls within the eye’s “COLD QUARANTINE”, and not through an eye as a doorway in the wall, as is presented in “The Door”. Both these concepts are only imaginary, yet the walls obscuring the eye of the prophecy bring on a stronger connotation of blindness and coldness due to its insinuation of staring “THROUGH WALLS” instead of through a doorway in a wall, as well as attributing to them a “COLD QUARANTINE” within a “BURIED CELL”. Thus “The Door” represents blackness as more of an opening up and breaking through borders, walls and boundaries, producing a sensation of a de-limitation. In “Crow Hears Fate Knock on the Door” the threshold of the wall has no black doorway, and instead produces an experience of a limitation, of a reduction in perception within the quarantined eye. It exchanges the black doorway with a “BURIED CELL OF BLOODY BLACKNESS”, and suddenly one can see the sensation of limitation and uncertain delineation meeting its climax within the bloody blackness.

The blackness can be seen as portraying two very different, yet in themselves ambiguous, sensations within these two poems. In one it carries a certain warmth, comprising a possible doorway into the imagination or the unconscious, into whatever the reader imagines as a likely place for Crow to emerge, where he has flown from “sun to sun”, eventually entering it to find “this home”. In the other the blackness becomes the dark side of a prophecy possibly representing the essential question of existence, a prophecy that was inside Crow “like a steel spring”, and started “Slowly rending the vital fibres” within him. The language is simple yet harsh, the coldness of “quarantine” and “steel”, the staring out through walls reminiscent of a prisoner held back from freedom, staring out into the world through steel bars within a buried cell of bloody blackness. Through these different uses of

blackness the reader's imagination has the possibility of being filled with entirely different connotations, their sensation of the living words likely ones of a stark contrast. Yet these sensations have been created not necessarily through a strict description of the blackness, nor is blackness at what seems to be the focus point of the poems. What is occurring is rather a creation and alteration of the presence of the blackness within the text, and the sensation it produces when it is read. In the context of the indefinability of blackness as presented in *Crow*, and in how this context represents not a description of color, but what I believe to be a manifestation of a concept, it is therefore referenced as a construct of its own, as the concept of Blackness.

This Blackness manifests itself in the reader in ways I view similar to a gravitational black hole. This metaphor of a black hole is best explained when observing how Hughes describes a word as being "its own little solar system of meanings" (Hughes 1994: 19). Hughes problematizes the function of words by pointing out how we want it to carry some part of the meaning of our experience, following it up with:

The meaning of our experience is finally unfathomable, it reaches into our toes and back to before we were born and into the atom, with vague shadows and changing features, and elements that no expression of any kind can take hold of. And this is true of even the simplest experiences.

(Hughes 1994: 19)

The "solar system of meanings" of words thus can never represent the gravitational black hole of experience or existence, of what stands outside the function and materialistic reality of words. The word "black" itself represents an absence of color, a void. The signified space becomes a void that works by pulling the nearby "solar systems of meaning" into it which gives it the possible signification based on all its absorbed associations, but it still does not give it a form of its own. This is exemplified by the uncertainty of "Then everything went black" in "A Kill", where "black" exists as an absence which can only be filled with suggestions of signification based on the earlier words (Hughes 1972: 4). Blackness is effectively representing an open space, or as Critchley described it, a meaning of meaninglessness (Critchley 1997: 27). I therefore believe that the blackness in *Crow* carries traces of the Blackness as concept, of this uncertain, unknown and unfathomable "meaning of our experience" which Hughes describes that "no expression of any kind can take hold of" (Hughes 1994: 19). Through blackness as Blackness, I believe that Hughes is nonetheless making his attempt.

I have thus attempted to show how the blackness of "A Kill", "The Door" and "Crow

Hears Fate Knock on the Door” has the possibility of conjuring an open space or a meaning of meaninglessness, resulting not so much in the blackness producing a clear meaning but rather a perceptible confrontation with Blackness as experience or sensation. This open space has the possibility of being filled with whatever meaning the reader projects upon it based on their own interpretation, or it further promotes the atmosphere produced by the poem itself such as with “The Door” and “Crow Hears Fate Knock on the Door”. Through this analysis I have attempted to show how blackness can represent something, whether it is meaning or sensation, within the next reading I will attempt to show how blackness could also represent nothing.

2.6.2 Blackness Manifesting Nothing

One manifestation of blackness representing nothing comes in the form of the “Black Beast” as presented in *Crow*, and shows how a sensation that most are accustomed to carries something ineffable as its source, through which blackness is used as its substituting literary term. According to Sagar, as well as G&R, through the poems “Black Beast” and “Crow’s Nerve Fails” one can observe how Crow at first chases the Black Beast as an exterior being, but then, through the introspection presented in “Crow’s Nerve Fails”, manages to realize that he himself is the Black Beast (Sagar 1978: 113-114; G&R 1981: 144).

The Black Beast that is presented in “The Black Beast” and “Crow’s Nerve Fails” is something that is not described, confronted or presented. In “Crow’s Nerve Fails” it is not even mentioned, but is more a creation of a sensation, which is based on an uncertainty, which in turn originates in the existence of a “nothing”. Due to perhaps the dark nature inherent to several of the Crow poems, the “black” in the title of the poem breaks away from connoting a simple description of color and instead builds an expectation of an uncertain quality, of the “beast” being one of an unknown darkness. The word “beast” itself has the signification of a certain ferocity that would be mostly characteristic of animalistic behavior, which, as Hughes comments on the criticism of the violence of his animal poems, might just be a sign of a misunderstanding, and a projection of false expectations (Hughes 1994: 255). As a violent interpretation stands as the result of projecting an illogical demand of social norms upon animals, the black beast might then itself represent such a misunderstanding, or, as I will attempt to show, a general lack of understanding.

Where is the Black Beast?
Crow, like an owl, swivelled his head.
Where is the Black Beast?
Crow hid in its bed, to ambush it.
...
Where is the Black Beast?
Crow split his enemy's skull to the pineal gland.
...
Where is it? Where is the Black Beast?

(Hughes 1972: 18)

The entire poem of “The Black Beast” is paced like a chase. Step by step Crow questions, and acts, questions, and acts. He searches, provokes, chases, murders, roasts the earth and travels to space in his pursuit of the Black Beast. This insinuates a degree of intensity in the desire to find it, understand it, and, not least, to get rid of it. G&R claim that Crow is displaying a simple self-ignorance by “looking for the beast everywhere but in himself”, Sagar seems to be of the same opinion as he states that “Crow destroys everything he wanted to save from the Beast and looks everywhere but within himself” (G&R 1981: 144; Sagar 1978: 113). Based on sharing this concordance of interpretation and of the experience presented by the poem itself, I believe the Black Beast to be a metaphor for anxiety or depression.

It might represent anxiety in the context of it being a feeling similar to fear, worry and unease, yet which separates itself from these sensations by a factor of uncertainty. It might also be depression in that it is an inescapable sadness, despair or sorrow, yet as with anxiety it also separates itself from these feelings by the possibility of an uncertainty of its origin. Seeing as these concepts carry such similarity, I will, in the attempt to maintain an unconvoluted reading, only focus on the Black Beast as representing anxiety.

The OED⁴ defines anxiety as “a feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease about something with an uncertain outcome” (*Oxford English Dictionaries Online*, 2016). Anxiety has the possibility of becoming worse than fear due to the nothing that is attached to it, the nothing that is the basis of the uncertainty it presents; if there is certainty then there is something to fear, if there is uncertainty then there is a lack of certainty to what is feared, this establishes a nothing instead of a something, and this nothing becomes an opening waiting to be filled by the conjuration of the imagination. In the example of an experience of anxiety due to trauma, the nothing becomes the uncertainty filled with what the mind compulsively conjures. Instead of the anxiety being an uncertain fear still felt, it becomes a fear felt due to

⁴ Oxford English Dictionary

something being uncertain. This uncertainty is the cause of separation between the concepts of fear and anxiety, as well as the presence of a “nothing” within anxiety, a “nothing” which I believe is taking representative form in the Black Beast.

In “The Black Beast” the acts of Crow seem to be fueled by a deep-rooted fear of the Black Beast. This understanding is built on the extreme acts he goes through to find it, going from swiveling his head as if it’s standing right behind him, to killing his brother and getting lost in space in his pursuit. The poem is also continually layered with questions of “Where is it? Where is the Black Beast?” exclaiming Crow’s uncertainty in his pursuit, a question which the poem also has as its final-line, signaling a failure in ascertaining what and where the Black Beast is. Through fear and uncertainty the sensation of anxiety emerges, and the Black Beast, as a representative of the uncertainty, becomes the nothing that creates something.

This understanding of anxiety as a confrontation with a nothing is also presented by Martin Heidegger in *Basic Writings*, where it came as a result of him pursuing a particular mood that would divulge “something essential about man’s existence as a whole”.

In anxiety I realize that I have been “thrown” into the world and that my life and death – my being as such – is an issue I must face. In anxiety, ‘Dasein finds itself face to face with the nothing of the possible impossibility of its own existence.’

(Heidegger 2011: 43)

In this quote, Heidegger describes anxiety as existential fear. As Being becomes Dasein in witnessing its own existence, anxiety then manifests itself in the questioning of that existence due to the purposeless fear of not being able to understand it (Heidegger 2009: 120). The lack of understanding of Being becomes a nothing, and it is through this nothing that existential fear as anxiety is established, as it becomes the “nothing that anxiety brings before us” (Heidegger 2011: 43). In Heidegger’s elucidation of anxiety one sees the fault of Crow in “The Black Beast”, as an increased awareness comes from a contemplation on the internal and not the external world. This is what Sagar and G&R also point out, that within “The Black Beast” Crow maintains a self-ignorance, ignoring the internal root of the Black Beast (G&R 1981: 144; Sagar 1978: 113).

This changes in “Crow’s Nerve Fails”, where Crow seemingly experiences an advancement in consciousness as one can see Crow conducting an introspective analysis as a result of being a recipient of accusations. However he does this without the mention of the Black Beast, it is not present in title nor text. It is instead present in the common theme and sensation produced by the poem, partly taking the form of what I view as its Blackness.

Crow, feeling his brain slip,
Finds his every feather the fossil of a murder.

Who murdered all these?
These living dead, that root in his nerves and his blood
Till he is visibly black?

(Hughes 1972: 40)

The title “Crow’s Nerve Fails” along with the first two lines immediately conjure a connotation of something being wrong, or of Crow having done something wrong, followed up by a sensation of fear as a result of the losing of nerves. As the “nerve fails” and as Crow is “feeling his brain slip” we are confronted both with something not being as it should be in the mind of Crow, as well as Crow’s self-awareness of this fact. Already within the first lines a certainty of uncertainty is created, Crow feels that something is wrong, but is not certain of what. When the second line where Crow finds his every feather to be the fossil of a murder is combined with the question in the third line it produces a connotation of guilt. As Crow must feed to survive, his feathers are sustained through the death of others, showing his recognition of the fact that we are all guilty. Through this recognition and his earlier attempt to disobey his predatory instinct in “Crow Tyrannosaurus”, where despite his attempts his head strikes “trapsprung” at the grubs, we are observing Crow moving away from animal, and closer towards becoming human.

In “Crow’s Nerve Fails” we can see the anxiety returning, the Black Beast striking again. A fear is instilled in Crow of the potential of the presented existential uncertainty, how can he flee from himself and his murdering nature, as it follows, “how can he fly from his feathers?” (ibid.). The further growth in consciousness becomes visible in Crow due to his reaction, this time he does not chase the Black Beast to the end of space, this time he immediately looks at himself.

How can he fly from his feathers?
And why have they homed on him?

Is he the archive of their accusations?
Or their ghostly purpose, their pining vengeance?
Or their unforgiven prisoner?

(Hughes 1972: 40)

The paradox presented in the suggestion of flying from his feathers becomes akin to the paradox of facing the issue of life and death, of, as Heidegger stated, facing the possible impossibility of existence. Crow faces the intentions of his own feathers, an introspection into himself where he queries questions that will never be answered. It is the same as man

philosophizing on the meaning of life and the purpose of existence, which only leads to uncertainty, and induces anxiety.

Towards the last lines of the poem it seems Crow has come to the same lack of conclusion - uncertain as to why, he is now heavily flying with the anxiety of existence.

He cannot be forgiven.

His prison is the earth. Clothed in his conviction,
Trying to remember his crimes

Heavily he flies.

(Hughes 1972: 40)

Similar to Heidegger's earlier statement, G&R describe Crow's burden as what Sartre called "the sin of existing", the guilt that Crow feels originates in the fact of physically existing (G&R 1981: 145). Existence as it is perceived by Heidegger as anxiety, is the guilt as experienced by Crow, Crow has thus as a result of this come to recognize himself as the Black Beast, gaining awareness of existence as anxiety. Nothing has changed except for Crow's awareness of existential paradoxes, however through this awareness and observation Crow takes a step towards becoming Dasein, and thus becomes a step closer to his final ambition of becoming human. The Black Beast becomes the anxiety of existence, a fear that becomes anxiety due to a presence of some unknown, the presence of a lack of solution and meaning, the presence of a nothing.

As mentioned, the existence of the Black Beast in "Crow's Nerve Fails" is produced in no other way than a suggestion of a sensation, its connection with "The Black Beast" is created through the common features of this sensation. Through the use of Black Beast as concept in these poems, as well as its possible representation of anxiety, the metaphoric Blackness manifests itself. Blackness manifests itself as the ineffable sensation that bolsters the similarities between the poems past what a simple description of theme can convey. It takes form as a lack of something rather than a nothing that stands as a presentation of a possible everything as presented in the earlier section. It also presents what I believe to be the possible representation of Blackness as a sensation due to the poem's construction of the sensation of anxiety. Through its presentation the poems show the creation of a nothing, and this nothing as it conveys anxiety as sensation, is what is rooted in the concept of Blackness. Blackness is projected through what stands outside language and can only be experienced, of what is akin to existential angst. It is in the nothingness at the source of anxiety where logic, reason, and language fails. As it takes form within the nothingness of existential impossibility

Blackness begins to show itself as a component of existence itself, rooted in the unfathomable nature of Being.

Risking repeating myself, yet feeling the necessity due to an insistence on a clarity of the concept, what I view as the definition of Blackness is what I believe to be Hughes' metaphor for the unsignifiable realm. As Hughes commences a crossing from the fathomable and towards the unfathomable as part of his mythic quest, Blackness becomes his bridge. It is undefinable by nature, similar to Heidegger's World and Kristeva's semiotic chora, it can therefore only be defined through a description of its opposite. As Heidegger and Kristeva's theories will be used to further define what Blackness is, the concept's point of origin within *Crow* must however be considered. In order to further define Blackness, and find its borders, the area past those borders would need to be defined, the opposite concept that I will term Whiteness will therefore need to be posited.

2.7 The Whiteness

Whiteness carries all the properties of a binary opposite of the concept of Blackness. It is inspired by their opposition as color due to the belief that blackness already exists as part of a metaphoric dichotomy with whiteness or lightness in *Crow*. Due to the characteristics associated with Blackness, and its increased amount of description in *Crow*, this Whiteness as its opposite would have to be created through an apophatic approach, similar to how the unsayable is defined by what is sayable, it would need to be mostly defined by what Blackness is not, rather than what Whiteness is. In defining the characteristics of this metaphoric dichotomy it will therefore do so on the assumption that, within *Crow*, where there is white there is Whiteness, in the same way as where there is black there is Blackness.

The purpose for not constructing a concept of Whiteness based on presented description instead of the binary of Blackness is due to the different prevalence in descriptive material in *Crow*. The reference to whiteness only occurs in one poem, "Crow's Fall", which narrates of a time when Crow was white and will be looked at later (Hughes 1972: 28). First however, in regard to this discussion of the binary nature in *Crow*, Bentley provides a suitable elaboration on the purpose and existence of Crow, providing an idea of a separation between the thoughts of Crow and the existence of Crow.

Crow's ransacking of history and culture attests to a quest for meaning other than the alienating meanings supported by a social and linguistic order that cannot hold him, an impossible conundrum – as paradoxical as Lacan's parodic reformulation of Descartes's 'I think, therefore I am': I think where I am not, therefore I am where I do not think'.

(Bentley 1998: 50)

If thoughts become interpretations of instincts, sensations and impulses, then Being and thinking is separate, for if thinking is Being then how can one judge and dissect one's own thoughts. If the language of Crow is his thinking, then the translanguistic is his Being, and this Being does not exist independently. Bentley describes Crow as representing what is "residual to and irreducible to language and culture", and recounts that as a result "he can thus only 'think' where he is not (i.e. in language)" (ibid.). If Crow is understood as synonymous with blackness, this thus shows a concord with my understanding of blackness as a metaphorical representation of the ineffable.

What Bentley points out with this is what Hughes mentioned, that Crow is "intermittently conscious" within the dialogic space of *Crow* (cf. Bentley 1998: 45). The language is Crow's thoughts, as the language is read and becomes, as Heidegger refers to it, relational to Being, we see a possibility as to how Crow might be bestowed with an intermittent consciousness (Ziarek 1989: 119). Following this preconception, if Blackness is understood as representative of the un-signifiable which is within the Being of Crow, which exists as a relation to the being of reader, then Whiteness would be representative of the signifiable within thinking, and language. The relationship of Crow and reader will be further elucidated in the second chapter, for now however the possible definition of Whiteness must first be established.

If Whiteness stands as a possible representation of signification and language, then it must fit in with its use in *Crow*, which means it must support its representation through a functional reading of "Crow's Fall":

When Crow was white he decided the sun was too white.

He decided it glared much too whitely.

He decided to attack it and defeat it.

...

He laughed himself to the centre of himself

And attacked

At his battle cry trees grew suddenly old,
Shadows flattened.

But the sun brightened-
It brightened, and Crow returned charred black.

He opened his mouth but what came out was charred black.

‘Up there,’ he managed,
‘Where white is black and black is white, I won.’

(Hughes 1972: 28)

The first observation when reading “Crow’s Fall” is perhaps the similarities to the Greek tale of the fall of Icarus, which is a story of the consequences of hubris, of Icarus going against his father’s advice and flying too close to the sun. It stands as a cautionary tale to others of the risk of hubris, and of acting against what one is told to do. The narrative of the poem seems to be that Crow is not necessarily going against what he is told, but rather that he is attempting to go against what he is by being white.

When Crow was white, his acts and his nature still return him to blackness. Though this might just be no more than a sign of hubris, the intentions of Crow seem to be elucidated as the final line is disclosed. Where white is black, where Crow is Blackness and so is the sun, he wins. This is because if they are absorbed into complete Blackness the difference between winning and losing no longer exists, in Blackness they are both everything and nothing in that they possess no representation, the concept of superiority would therefore no longer exist, as it would be within the unfathomable, and all signification would be abandoned. As the final line also has the possibility of suggesting, if Crow attacks the sun and comes back white from black, he would succeed. This shows that this is a narration of Crow attempting to escape into Whiteness, and yet this does not happen, “Crow’s Fall” shows that this cannot happen. Crow cannot exist purely as Whiteness, he cannot exist only as his thoughts, for thoughts do not emerge separate from Being. He must instead exist as both.

Other incentives for viewing Whiteness as a representative of signification can be observed when looking at the reviewed descriptions of blackness. As blackness is referenced as blindness, it would become the opposite of the functions of vision. Vision carries the representation of an attachment to physicality, an attachment to the observable and empirical world, of perceiving what is light, or white. In “Crow Tyrannosaurus” when Crow contemplates if he should stop eating “and try to become the light” he establishes light as “other” to his present self as Blackness (Hughes 1972: 13). As becoming “the light” requires a prohibition from feeding, the instincts of nature could therefore also be understood as being attributed to Blackness (ibid.). This further insinuates that Whiteness is not part of nature, but part of a perceived opposite to nature. By definition what stands as opposite to nature only

leaves the known possibility of being a product of the only source of something that is termed “unnatural”, which is something that originates from humans. All these earlier references fit the description of Whiteness representing signification and language, of pertaining to a characteristic of specificity instead of ambiguity.

As mentioned, Crow must exist as both Whiteness and Blackness, in the linguistic realm from which he originates there cannot be one without the other. The characteristics of this Blackness and Whiteness take on similar associations as Kristeva’s signification and the semiotic, or Heidegger’s Earth and World in that they are both at work as functions of poetic language. From my perspective Hughes has therefore not created a new world, but rather altered a pre-existing one. Bentley comments on the fact that Hughes mentioned the poems “wrote themselves” as something to be taken literally, through the use of myth and cultural narratives Crow does not so much produce new meaning but rather “re-accentuates it, blackly” (Bentley 1998: 45). My understanding of Blackness and Whiteness is not the establishment of entirely new ideas, but rather a re-accentuation of pre-existing ones; they are the laws of human nature that, as Hughes refers to it, “only the greatest artists are able to restate” (Hughes 1994: 150).

The concept of Crow exists as a manifestation of both Blackness and Whiteness, it sustains itself on the unity of the binary. As this thesis pursues the unsignifiable in *Crow*, it is my theory that the existence and persistence of these two concepts become arbitrators of Crow’s ability to straddle another boundary, the sensation of Crow comes through the concept of Blackness. This Blackness as everything and nothing is presented in a variety of shapes, and is the side of the duality which comes naturally to pursue when looking at functions which manifest something unsignifiable. These functions take form as the unity of the poem itself, gradually constructing the animal that is treading into your mind and onto your shoulders. One can experience this particularly in “The Door”, as well as the two poems “Crow Alights” and “That Moment”, which have a particular, unavoidable synergy of sensation (Hughes 1972: 7, 10, 11).

As the functions of this theoretical framework of Whiteness and Blackness has now been elucidated, the next chapters will attempt to further investigate the relationship of the dichotomy in the aim of understanding their possible role in also promoting revelation.

3 This and That

Through the use of simple words I believe Hughes is manifesting increasingly complex ideas, and as unsignifiability and Blackness escapes specificity, perhaps simple words are the most suitable approach. In this chapter I will be focusing on how single words or simple phrases, as well as the undisrupted unity of poems, generate complex experiences for the reader, and the possible results these experiences might produce. I will explain how the concept of Crow, following its conception, is flying towards a revelatory experience intended for himself as well as the reader. I will also attempt to show how I perceive that the line between the two decreases, eventually showing how Crow confronts the reader with the harsh reality of whether they have more in common with than they would like, or even want, to admit.

3.1 The Truth of Experience

For my analysis of the experience of a poem, through which I also believe we are given an experience of Crow, I have chosen Heidegger not as a strict theoretical foundation for my reading, but rather as inspiration for it. Observing his impassioned belief that the essence of poetry is removed from any sign of literal interpretation, I believe his theories might provide a suitable starting point. Clark elaborates on this understanding by stating that what lies at the heart of a Heideggerian reading is not interpretation, but rather a sensation of some kind of displacement.

We should no longer be thinking of the poem as something we can know as being ‘about’ something, but as opening a space of its own projection for us to inhabit, possessing us like a dance or a walk to music. ‘Giving the tonality, (the poetry) should attune us to the place from which the totality of being opens itself to a new experience.’”

(Clark 2011: 119)

As Clark elaborates on his understanding of a Heideggerian reading, he also offers up a quote from Heidegger’s *Gesamtausgabe* at the end. This opening up of a space “for us to inhabit” is repeated in several places in Heidegger’s *Basic Writings*, the artwork opens itself up in its way to Being, the World opens itself when it is created, and when describing the Clearing

which projects unconcealment, he describes it as art breaking “open an open place, in whose openness everything is other than usual.” (Heidegger 2011: 105, 121, 127). As the earlier described open space or absence representing the metaphorical Blackness through the use of blackness, I believe that it functions in a similar way as the openness or Clearing that Heidegger describes. The experience and sensation of the uncertainty, of the meaning of meaninglessness which was exemplified through the presentation of uncertainty as nothingness in the analysis of the Black Beast, is one of the processes that I believe is a result of a Strife between Whiteness and Blackness.

It is this open space of Blackness that can be presented through the unity of poetry and that is unapproachable through the specificity and certainty of language, it is only a by-product of the ambiguity as well as uncertainty that is inherent to poetic language. It is the nothingness of existential angst, which can only be understood through the experience of existence, and is thus a part of, and dependent on, something at the essence of Being. The function leading to this openness however, the function of a Strife between Earth and World, is something inherently more approachable. Earth can be understood as signification and the creations thereof, while World can be seen as the unmentionable that lies past its borders, where referencing something within it only works for those who have already been there. It is this Strife that I have experienced that I have attempted to reproduce. As with poetry leading to a tonality which makes the reader dance, the tonality can still be focused on, and perhaps even understood, yet the reactionary dance is one that can only be lived, and can only be understood by someone that has in one way or another already lived it.

The Heideggerian analysis will have to focus on the aspects of World and Earth as presented within the artwork of *Crow*, and how those have the possibility of interacting and causing Strife. It will not be a stringently Heideggerian reading seeing as that does not exist, as the philosophies of Heidegger have repeatedly been stated to not be tools of literary criticism (Clark 2011: 101-102). It will instead be inspired by the concepts of Heidegger, of his understanding and contribution to understanding of the dichotomy of literature, of the realm that lies past signification. However it will be directed not only by the premises of Heidegger’s understanding of poetry but also those of Hughes, because to the philosophy of poetry as a conductor of aletheia and revelation, *Crow* is shaped like a lightning-rod.

In Heidegger’s theory of Earth and World the concept of Blackness melds with the concept of its World, meaning, as Clark describes it, that it is something for the reader to dwell within, and not “merely something to de-code” (Clark 2011: 45). As with *Crow* existing as a combination of the Blackness and Whiteness of the poems, it is in the work-

being of the work of art that the Earth and World initiate a strife which produces clearing and concealing, and the essence and truth of the work of art is a product of this strife (Heidegger 2011: 112, 116, 121). This strife as with the concept of Crow is thus a product of the unity of the work of art, and vice-versa, as Heidegger points out the unity of the poem is a product of the strife between Earth and World (112).

As mentioned above, Hughes viewed his poems as Animals, and was convinced that each part was dependent on each other, and the “life” of the poem itself depended on being a summary of its parts (Hughes 1994: 10). Similarly, a Heideggerian reading of poetry is not one of chunks, but one of holism (Clark 2011: 121). Clark describes it as both a focus on interpretation and thematization, as well as a preservation of “the singularity and strangeness of what is said, undecoded, unthematized and resistant to our totalizing efforts.” (ibid.). He simplifies by stating that the texts must be “recognized as holding back, as well as offering forth.” (ibid.) In other words the acknowledgment of both Earth and World, Whiteness and Blackness; a recognition of what the poem is presenting, as well as what it is keeping hidden, it’s concealment and unconcealment.

These are the premises from which I will conduct my analysis, through an evolution of the concepts of Blackness and Whiteness as a result of a perception of Earth and World as their parallels, and the strife between Earth and World that generates the work-being will be seen as Blackness and Whiteness conducting a unification into the concept of Crow.

3.2 Gaining Self-Awareness

Through Hughes’ mythical Crow I believe “Crow Alights” and “That Moment” not only carry what is a presentation of a possible revelation in Crow, but the experience of the strife of Earth and World also produce the seeds for a possible revelation within the reader. I will for this reason present my observation of how this revelation unfolds through the thoughts of Crow in the hope that it could provide a perspective of how this revelation might also subsequently be bestowed upon the mind of the reader.

The title of the first of these two poems, which coincidentally face each other as they occur on page ten and eleven of *Crow*, is “Crow Alights”, and initially its use of the word “Alights” sets an impression of Crow landing, of touching the earth after being out flying. This start gives off the association of being at the end of something else, an obscurity of

temporality, the question arises of Crow's actions prior to the poem. Whereas when one looks at it through the perspective of an Animal-poem the capture of the animal would coincide with this description of initiation, the capture and end of the spiritual flight of the animal, is the start of the animal as poem.

The inclusion of this poem in other analyses of *Crow* is rather lacking, Sagar is one of the few that makes any mention of it, and he sees it as a repulsion of reality, and a drawing of obvious conclusions (Sagar 1978: 110). He observes the first section as Crow observing earth, and perceiving it to be so horrible that it must be a hallucination, the rest a representation of a reality where "nothing is in a vital relationship with anything else." (111) It becomes in the eyes of Sagar a critique of humanity, and how absurd and redundant humans have become (ibid.) This seems to be a reading closely tied with the principles of Hughes, and might be a good representation of Hughes' own thought of the poem, but only adhering to Hughes would be disconnecting from the self-subsistence of the poem, and the life inside of it. The interpretation of Sagar seems rather established within the rest of the poems and the general dogma of Hughes, but once the scope is moved away from the principles of Hughes and unto the poem itself, there is within "Crow Alights" what seems to possibly be a revelation and self-realization of Crow.

The title itself insinuates a landing of Crow, an earthly, reasonable connotation. The form more logically associated with the verb of a bird descending and settling, less logically creates an association with the adjective form of alight, meaning shining brightly, or being on fire. When this is applied to the perspective of the concept of Crow, of living as the dichotomy of Whiteness and Blackness, where light represents language and logic, learning and realization, the possibilities of the poem go far beyond that of a statement of world-view ideology.

Crow saw the herded mountains, steaming in the morning.
And he saw the sea
Dark-spined, with the whole earth in its coils.
He saw the stars, fuming away into the black, mushrooms
of the nothing forest, clouding their spores, the virus of
God.

And he shivered with the horror of Creation.

(Hughes 1972: 10)

Crow sees the mountains, the clouds, the sea, the stars, and shivers with its horror. This could, as Sagar mentions, be just a perspective of the world, and Crow shivering in what is possibly dislike at its horror. Yet the components of the metaphorical Whiteness, of the light

shining on Crow, is observable in between its metaphorical cracks. The herded mountains, controlled, gathered and embellished by a sense of a cloudy dawn, give off a sensation of creation, of a herdsman's intention. Crow touches the opposite polarity of earthly life by then observing the sea, the dark spine and coils giving it life similar to the herded mountains. The opposition of the sea's darkness to the morning light of the mountains containing a double-dichotomy of high and low, light and dark. As the bright mountains are steaming, the stars are fuming, the connection with light and heat established in the title is maintained, offering a possible precursor to the scorching events of "Crow's Fall". Though the confrontation with whiteness is one of hubris "Crow's Fall", the confrontation in "Crow Alights" is one seeding Crow's awareness of the powers of Creation (28, 10).

The first stanza shows a gradual deterioration into blackness both in the representation of color and in the experience of metaphorical uncertainty. The light is at first shown through grand mountainsides basked in morning sun, then reduced to stars fuming away into the black. The representations follow the same path, going from the simple metaphor of a row of mountains and a coiling sea which don't deviate excessively from conventional observation, and eventually turn into what seems a purely metaphoric, sinisterly permeating, "nothing forest" (10). The stars fuming away into the black seemingly becomes a point of dissipation of the literal, and from there creation turns towards metaphorical Blackness, as well as darkness. Spores and viruses work on the premises of nature itself, of reproducing and creating conditions best suitable for further reproduction. It becomes understandable, and even relatable, due to identical biological purpose they have to all other living things. It is the wonder of creation, but through a contemplating consciousness it is also the horror of existence, to think that the purpose of life is simply biological reproduction, for no greater purpose than the existential subsistence of one's species. Once again the awareness of a nothing has the ability of causing that greatest of anxieties, surfacing in what I believe to be an increased presence of the ineffable Blackness.

The simultaneous representation of both Blackness and unsettling darkness are shown with the uncomfortable truth of biology along with the uncertainty of a nothing forest, as well as the unconceivable concept of a God. The problematization of the concept of creation surfaces with the impossible imaginative creation of a nothing forest, as well as the paradox of creation within God as the creator, a creator which could not exist without first having been created. It thus represents the horror of Creation, where whether one consults science or religion, the purpose is still unattainable, or unwanted. This existential horror is itself created through the Earth of the art-work, the Whiteness of its language, through the creation of

language, and language as creation. It shows the entire specter of Whiteness to Blackness, of something clearly being shown, while there's still a multitude of things being held back. Traversing the aspects of tangible imagination within the mountains and clouds, it suddenly leaps to the realm of imaginative impossibilities within the nothing forest, and even though it leaves breadcrumbs along the way it shows how the border between Whiteness and Blackness is easily traversed, yet not in a manner which is easily explained, as it also presents the inevitable end of signification. Through the poem's lines we can observe the entire spectrum of creation as we see the simplest functions of language closely followed by its greatest shortcoming, and it is through this shortcoming that the traces of something other must fill its projected deficiencies.

The horror shown by Crow is possibly one of the nature of Whiteness as certainty of language and logic itself. As he alights unto the poem, he leaves the freedom outside of the poem, as Hughes describes he is captured, as Bentley mentions his consciousness is limited to the dialogic space presented by the poems themselves, and as Heidegger points out the Earth is just the background against which every meaningful World emerges (Hughes 1994: 10; Bentley 1998: 45; Heidegger 2011: 109-110). There is within "Crow Alights" what I believe to be the possibility of Crow experiencing a realization of his existential duality, a personal revelation of living both as Blackness and Whiteness, of him first experiencing the existential angst later emphasized in "The Black Beast". This is what causes him to shiver with the sheer horror of Creation, being at once conscious of his own creation within this imperfect world of language, as well as his dependence on it.

In the next stanza one can see what I believe to be Crow reflecting on the realm of Whiteness, and the function of signification.

In the hallucination of the horror
He saw this shoe, with no sole, rain-sodden,
Lying on a moor.
And there was this garbage can, bottom rusted away,
A playing place for the wind, in a waste of puddles.

(Hughes 1972: 10)

One could assume that the description of "hallucination" is describing the frail function of imaginative creation as it is produced by signification, of being as Heidegger refers to it, the allegory of art, where language through the mind's eye constructs pictures and images (Heidegger 2011: 91). Just as Crow "saw" the herded mountains, it creates a hallucination of mountains in the mind of the reader. The further lines of the stanza would thus detail what Crow views within this hallucination. He is possibly exposing what he perceives of this

process of signification, divulging his thoughts on the realm of tangible imagination which stands the borderland between Whiteness and Blackness; he sees a sole-less, rain-sodden shoe, a moor, a bottomless garbage can, and a playing place for the wind. The equipmental being that Heidegger describes of Van Gogh's shoe is brought to mind, where the reflection on its utilitarian purpose, its realm of connotations, brings one closer to the essence of the artwork, as Dronsfield describes it, displacing the viewer to a place Heidegger names truth (Dronsfield in Davis 2010: 131). But in this context this reflection, and this displacement, does not occur. The only displacement is of the visual senses, which connotes a mental image, a hallucination. The shoe has no special function, further exemplified through a loss of its sole, which makes it lose the one function that it had. This lack of any function is repeated by the shoes lying in the uncultivated field of a moor, as well as by the garbage can with no bottom.

This could then simply be seen as a reflection of Crow on the nonfunctional nature of the imagination, and how it removes itself from the nature of the physical world by not taking part in its consistent material manifestation of a function of cause and effect. If this is indeed a process of revelation for Crow, and the text is a representation of his thoughts, then it seems a logical contemplation of the functionality of signification after gaining awareness of his unavoidable attachment to it. The last line shows an example of the paradoxical nothingness of signification, another aspect of its nature. Somewhere that is a playing place for the winds, is at the same time empty of anything other, as well as having the potential of everything else. The imagination, and the inner world as well, is itself like wind and air, ever-changing, all-encompassing, and always filling the emptiness that is left behind by things more tangible.

There is however a detail of this stanza that seems like it seeds the following section, the demonstrative determiner "this", which occurs when the hallucinations are described ("this shoe", "this garbage can"). Lending more credence to Crow's growing awareness of the imagination, the evolution has gone from observation of Creation, to what seems more like a demonstration.

There was this coat, in the dark cupboard, in the silent
room, in the silent house.
There was this face, smoking its cigarette between the dusk
window and the fire's embers.

Near the face, this hand, motionless.

Near the hand, this cup.

(Hughes 1972: 10)

The subtlety of “There was” is followed by the demonstrative certainty of “this” as the reader is confronted with what I perceive to be evolving imaginative creations. The poem functions as a representation of the nature of creation through language. It first references a certain focus by the specificity that is created through the word “this”, shown in “this coat” and “this face” (ibid.). From this the language, as a representation of imaginative creation, extrapolates, and produces extended context and association. The coat is contextualized into a cupboard, within a silent room, within a silent house, this shows the imaginative space growing bigger. As we approach the face it is contextualized into a speculation of complexity instead of space. It instead handles the nature of imagined darkness and light. As the coat is present within a darkness of the cupboard, it grows into a different form of darkness where it replaces visual darkness with auditory silence. As the silence continues, and the face appears, the visual darkness is broken by an insinuation of light. An insinuation that through three different sources create a similar mild orange glow, that of a cigarette, a dusk window, and a fire’s embers.

These insinuations of light cause similar visual representations, yet noticeably unprovoked, and through different literary means, making one contemplate if they would be viewed as hallucinatory or have the same visual impact if there were no earlier focus on sight, and no contrast with the darkness of the cupboard. Sagar views it as a representation of failure and disconnection, describing it as light failing at the window, heat failing in the hearth, and life burning away like a smoking cigarette, using it as an exemplification for how he perceives the poem shows a lack of any vital relationships (Sagar 1978: 111). Yet viewed through the scope of unity constructing sensation, everything becomes vitally connected, as every piece becomes part of a greater picture.

The cigarette is compared to the window, the window to the ember, through the commonalities of light their differences are immediately posited as being in need of dissection due to their relationship with each other. As Sagar shows, the natural critical reaction becomes a comparison of motives or meanings between the three different concepts in the process of establishing one overarching theme, which is mainly connected due to their visual connotations of light. The overarching theme that will be posited here is the already established proponent of light representing Whiteness as language, I believe the relationships between light sources thus construct an example of the core relativistic function of language itself; language as well as the concept of the cigarette, window, and ember, consists of subjective representations built through a relational comparison, of words and symbols manifesting individual meaning due to their connection with each other. The concepts of a

cigarette, a window and an ember become individual representations for the reader, which are then intuitively compared due to their connection of being sources of light, in the same way that signifiers construct an increased specificity of signifieds through their relationship with other signifiers

As the beginning of the demonstration of creation had a connotation of growth, of showing the layers outside the focused coat and face, the last two lines have a function of concentration, the demonstrative calling is still going as the focus shifts from the face to the hand, and from the hand to the cup. The lines themselves start with the word “Near” which produces a sensation of proximity, of narrowing in, their length supplementing the sensation by growing shorter and less ambiguous. The demonstrative wave seemingly finishes as the focus returns to Crow.

Crow blinked. He blinked. Nothing faded.

He stared at the evidence.

Nothing escaped him. (Nothing could escape.)

(Hughes 1972: 10)

The last lines of this poem show a possible separation that is not evident earlier, that of Crow and the pronoun “He”. In the first parts of the poem it is seemingly connected with Crow, and there is given no reason for it not to be, except for when the poem is completed. The cryptic ending is as mentioned something to be expected from Hughes, and often ends up changing the overall perspective of the poem. The exaggerated spacing between “Crow blinked” and “He blinked”, the reasoning for repetition if it indeed is Crow blinking twice, the possibility of a separation is there and is thus as “true” as any other. This produces the possibility of the final two lines representing Crow, or the separate “He”, who stares at the evidence and from which nothing escapes. The possible representation of the separate “He” will be theorized in the fourth chapter, as it is connected with the totality of the thesis, and not just this reading. This reading will instead focus on the “He” being a representation of Crow.

Viewing this as an apparent revelation of Crow to the nature of his existence, the final lines give off a feeling of the blinking as signs of disbelief, the blinking an intended reality check, similar to pinching one’s arm so make sure it is all not a weird dream. Nothing fades however, and nothing changes, leading Crow to stare at the “evidence” of his existence through words on paper. The final line works in several equally applicable ways, which are differentiated according to whether “nothing” is used as pronoun or noun, or it could even first be “nothing” as pronoun and then as noun; “Nothing escaped him” with nothing as

pronoun could represent an all-awareness, in which nothing escapes Crow's contemplation or vision; "Nothing could escape" could be using nothing as a noun, showing how nothing as concept itself escapes him, as it is not something, thus he cannot maintain a hold on something that already isn't there. Yet as the words of the poem are his thoughts, it shows an awareness of his own ignorance, possibly representing a further realization of Whiteness as language being based on false binaries. It shows Crow's awareness of the non-existence of a "nothing", as it becomes a signifier without a signified, and one of Derrida's purely imagined binaries.

It could also be viewed as a statement of hubris, as a result of the increased awareness of Crow. It could be a confident assumption of his completeness as he now has an understanding of his own origin and composition as literary concept, and has given a demonstration of its function, as well as lack of function. A final option, is Crow as translinguistic embodiment stating the all-encompassing nature that follows the revelation of the dichotomy of his existence. In becoming aware of Whiteness as language as well as his own manifestation from it, he now knows that truly nothing escapes him, whatever is spawned from the language of his poems, whatever concept, idea, sensation or feeling projected, is part of him. Stepping out of the poem and into the mind of the reader he is given life, thus all life as both Whiteness and Blackness that springs from the poem is him, and this becomes a statement of his own awareness to that fact.

We thus observe what I believe to be the revelation of self-awareness in Crow. Through the use of Heidegger's theories I will attempt to show how this may as a result seed a revelation of self-awareness in the reader as well, as we are confronted with the same existential predicament as Crow.

3.3 The Tonality of the Totality

Heidegger and Hughes both seem to believe that a reading of a poem should be holistic, and maintain unity. Through the use of Whiteness and Blackness as concepts as well as the Heideggerian Earth and World, I will risk combining the terms into common references as to what is present in language and signification, and what is not. This understanding will then be used for a close analysis which attempts not to break with either respective views of poetry, and rather attempts to let one supplement the other. The holistic view that I will now present

must come at the end of the reading as it attempts to reproduce the perspective of the strife and temporality of the poem maintained through a retrospective overview. As “Crow Alights” has been thematized and contextualized through the binary of Whiteness and Blackness, Heidegger’s philosophy of poetry might help shed some further light on the intricacies of how this binary becomes unified into the concept of Crow.

A small amount of the area of the Earth in the artwork has been given an overview, in accordance with the perspective of the author, the World that is projected is one that cannot be held in front of us, so therefore the investigation is toward the border towards which language cannot follow (Heidegger 2011: 108). The work-being of “Crow Alights” comes through in this strife, and the reading of the poem as well as the World that is created is like an instinctual dance to music, highly individual and inherently subjective, the reading is therefore driven by how I have perceived the poem (112). The overall experience I perceive within this poem becomes one of the revelation of Crow as conceptual character, as shown not just by the meaning of the words, but by the experience projected by those words. This has already been shown in the perspective of my reading so far, which became for me, instead of killing to dissect as Hughes feared, more like observing notes on a note sheet in order to understand an already experienced great musical composition. One cannot share such an experience through a description of its notes however, yet one can approach an elucidation of the personal experience through presenting the notes as they were at first perceived.

The meaning of this is that the reading that has been produced of “Crow Alights” is one inspired by a personal realization, or fabrication, of Crow’s revelation, and thus, as Sagar likely kept his personal knowledge of Hughes in mind when constructing his criticism, my first impression of the poem is what I tried to emulate through mine. The entire poem is structured like a confrontation with Creation, experimentation with its nature, followed by awareness of its presence, and the consequences of this presence. I believe this is a summation of the natural procedure that beings often go through when encountering something new and unknown, whether it be with an idea, an object, or another being. The World as presented to me was one of the nature of learning, and revelation, which through what seemed a proxy-experience of Crow’s revelation became a personal one of the nature of language. My hope is that through a view of the unity of my reading one may start to perceive the unity of my experience.

What spurred my reception initially was the change in the sensation of intent of the language, starting off with the herded mountains and leading into the descriptions starting with “He saw” and going to “there was this”, which eerily produce what can only be

described as an increasingly demonstrative connotation. The function of being functionless of the things Crow is seeing, where he observes things that no longer have their designated function, opens up a sensation that designation and original purpose is being betrayed, producing the thought of a change in purpose, and a change in concept. One can then observe the literal and figurative wave of creation that follows, where both the lines and imaginative figures grow and shrink like a pulsation or a deep breath, mirroring the reflection on Creation at the start. It mainly gains this description of a sensation of a wave through its creation of the by-products of ideas and concepts, through the allegory of signification producing something extra, which is partly shown through its contextualization; a coat, in a dark cupboard, in a silent room, in a silent house has a very simple representation, yet through the unity and context of “Crow Alights”, it gains something that stands outside this representation, which can be experienced in part as a sensation of a wave. A sensation of expansion and contraction. A wave which, as mentioned with the relation between the cigarette, window, and ember, has the possibility of representing the nature of language, due to the nature of language. It all molds together and becomes the structure of an experience of revelation. A revelation only experienced, which can be described in no other way than presenting the artwork, and tinting the Earth in the color of personal perception.

This revelation that I experienced was due to the personal World of experience projected through the Earth of the poem, it is the unsignifiable that envelops existence, and which flows through the veins of poetry. It is this realization that lead to the conclusion on the concept of Crow, as well as my experience of the following poem “That Moment”:

When the pistol muzzle oozing blue vapour
Was lifted away
Like a cigarette lifted from an ashtray

And the only face left in the world
Lay broken
Between hands that relaxed, being too late

And the trees closed forever
And the streets closed forever

And the body lay on the gravel
Of the abandoned world
Among abandoned utilities
Exposed to infinity forever

Crow had to start searching for something to eat.

(Hughes 1972: 11)

The experimentation and demonstration of *Crow* has gone from exposing Whiteness, to stabbing at the heart of Blackness. Through the close reading of “Crow Alights” the experience and perceived World of that poem is attempted explanation, yet as a consequence of its revelation, the unity of the following poem demands preservation. As “Crow Alights” has the possibility of representing Crow setting his conscious claw tracks in the Whiteness of his existence, thus demonstrating the nature of his realization, “That Moment” has a similar demonstrative trait; instead of a confrontation with Creation leading to awareness, the awareness of Creation, as well as of existence, has lead Crow to a confrontation with death.

What is possibly the most widely experienced essence and truth of this poem is a rarity in that it can be explained in one word, death. If, as Heidegger states, the way humankind experiences art is meant to give information about its essence, then the experience constructed by this poem continually conjures associations of the consequence of mortality (Heidegger 2011: 133). The obvious problem follows however that no living person knows the meaning of the concept of death, of what non-existence means, or feels like, and the word itself brings on a whole world of connotations not easily confronted. A refusal of death as an overarching theme is arduous as it might be considered the zenith of the unknown, a concept of absolute uncertainty, and it emerges in an unexpectedly serene way. This serene sensation is possibly the reason for G&R’s description of the language of “That Moment” as being a more restrained, less crudely shocking language than many of the other poems in *Crow* (G&R 1981: 94). They connect this with how the poem still met with favor from critics who might have disliked the rest of the collection (ibid.). There is no effort needed to make death sound ruthless, however presenting it serenely, or even peacefully, is a more unusual trait.

Crow produces the only thing we know of death, which is the sensation, the Blackness of uncertainty that surrounds a term such as the inevitability of death, often attributed the description of the fear of death. The title of the poem itself, “That Moment”, creates what seems a ruthless understatement, yet only seems ruthless due to its simplistic truth. It also once again creates connotations of a certain demonstrative nature. As Crow points out a focus on the imaginative creations of “Crow Alights” with “This”, as he points out a demonstration of the sensation of death, and the end of imagination, with “That”, he is once again underlining the sometimes brutal simplicity through which complex concepts are created in *Crow*. This eventually also became the inspiration for the title of this chapter, as I felt it epitomized these analyses and how they attempt to move from simple words to ineffable interpretation, from this to “that”.

Death is at the heart of Blackness as it is part of life, existence, and Being. Crow’s

being, his consciousness, dwells in Blackness, and through the revelation of his own existence it becomes a natural reaction; once the premises of life are understood the question of death arises. This question and its connotations trump context, as G&R further point out how the distinction as to whether it is a murder or a suicide becomes unimportant at the shocking moment of loss (95). The experience of inevitable death, of being “exposed to infinity forever”, is what the poem produces, and what the reader will likely focus on (Hughes 1972: 11). The World of this connotation is uniquely separate between individuals and their perception of death. It has the possibility of insinuating rebirth, an entrance into the afterlife, or an end to all things, these ideas are then shaped by each individual’s perception of their nature, whether it be boundless fear, or absolute joy. It produces a confrontation of the reader with non-existence as a consequence of existence, with what lies at the essence of Being.

Many of these reactions are however still based on a belief in a possible afterlife. Instead of creating a restatement of these beliefs, I believe Crow is trying to pick apart our need for understanding. I am of the same impression that Critchley earlier explained of Beckett, that this poem originates from an attempt to free a world “stuffed with meaning” (Critchley 1997: 27). Through the encounter with finite existence our binary instincts fall apart as the idea of infinity becomes another imaginative impossibility which inherently avoids any understanding or meaning. Critchley describes the representation of death as “an absence”, as always being a mask, “*a memento mori* – behind which nothing stands”⁵ (Critchley 1997: 26). The observed presence made of absence in “That Moment”, the meaning made of meaninglessness, seems intended to be an unavoidable reminder of death’s inevitability. In Hughes quest for the inner world, I view this as him pushing the reader into the deep-end, of providing the serene sensation of death in the form of “infinity forever” in an attempt to further the emancipation from our reliance on meaning and understanding.

The representation of the unity of each of these poems is what I believe to be the product of its strife. It is not only a strict reading based on the artwork’s Earth, meaning the representation of the words, but it is also based on the sensation and impression that the presented allegory has on the mind (Heidegger 2011: 112). The reading is rather my understanding based on the tangible impressions that I perceive the displacement to truth is leaving behind in the work-being that comes to life when it is read (ibid.). It is these readings, which slowly and gradually work at producing a minor reproduction of the sensation of

⁵ Author’s emphasis

reality that, as Hughes puts it, hits the reader like a “a single 1,000-volt shock” that lights up everything and drives it into their bones (Hughes 1994: 21). These readings try to recreate the process of unconcealment and displacement, and the contact with essence that Heidegger explains is at the core of the poetic function. The width of the Earth has been presented, in an attempt to show, describe, or even simply project towards what become traces of the unsignifiable subjective World and Blackness that is created through these poems.

The metaphor Dahlstrom presented for a simplified representation of *aletheia* as unconcealment becomes fitting for the foregoing thematized presentation; unconcealment occurs where a proclamation of a sprouting tree becomes true only if the sprouts are visible to someone with an understanding of them as sprouts (Dahlstrom in Davis 2010: 116). This metaphor shows an example of the concept of truth as unconcealment, and also insinuates the opposite characteristic of concealment, of what is not yet either discovered, or understood. These readings are the proclamation of an understanding, of seeing sprouts and claiming them to be for a certain reason, a sprouting tree. Yet as *aletheia* as truth is approached through poetry, it shows how it differs from truth as correctness. The understanding based on a sprouting tree might be empirically true, but the understanding based on a poem is both true and false, or as Heidegger describes it both concealment and unconcealment (Heidegger 2011: 115). By presenting this unconcealment, it has the effect of denying and concealing other possible unconcealments, effectively negating other experiences due to a prioritization of its own, this is how correctness works, but not how poetry works.

Truth is un-truth, insofar as there belongs to it the reservoir of the not-yet-revealed, the un-uncovered, in the sense of concealment.

(Heidegger 2011: 119)

A Heideggerian reading of poetry demands an awareness of the presence of both the concealment and the unconcealment of the poem (Clark 2011: 122). It is also part of what inspired the conceptualized Whiteness and Blackness presented as the concept of Crow, Whiteness instigating the process of unconcealment of the Blackness which is forever concealed. It is the core of the work-being of the artwork, it is Crow in “Crow Alights”, exclaiming at the end that nothing will escape him, for he is the alpha and the omega, the essence and the *aletheia*; he is both the concealed and unconcealed within the poem.

For these analyses Heidegger helps provide formulations for what the layers of my experience of the translanguistic embodiment of “Crow Alights” and “That Moment” becomes, thus helping to formulate how I have experienced the poems. My elucidated understanding is itself built on an interpretation of my own experience, an attempt at a

reproduction of my own displacement and experience of Blackness. This personal experience of the poems are not intended to produce a statement of their truth, or insinuating any impression of static interpretation, they are what I perceive to be a personal confrontation with the unsignifiable, and a resulting personal revelation. These two poems stand as the core of this thesis due to the function of this revelation in forcing a reconsideration, and a realization, of the nature of the concept of Crow. This realization became revelation and produced the inspiration for my present understanding of the concept of Crow, seen being established in this thesis. The binary concepts of Blackness and Whiteness can therefore be explained, but I believe their unification as the translinguistic embodiment of Crow can only be experienced, as I have.

As we may observe the revelation of Crow in “Crow Alights” and passively produce a revelation of our own, I believe that in “In Laughter” Crow is actively attempting a deeper pursuit of a similar revelation in the mind of the reader. Through the use of Kristeva’s psycho-linguistic theory I believe we may observe how Crow is attempting to problematize the nature of consciousness through a criticism of free will.

3.4 Without Rhyme or Reason

In *The Poetry of Ted Hughes: Language, Illusion & Beyond* Paul Bentley presents one possible way of adapting Kristeva’s theory for a critical view on poetry, where he makes a case for how the regression provided by Hughes’ language and imagery within *Crow* can, based on the theories of Lacan, push someone “right back to the ‘mirror stage’” (Bentley 1998: 46-47). Hughes’ “Crow” style of language thus becomes a possible conductor of the semiotic chora in itself. The regression within the language of *Crow* produces something that not only is a characteristic of the mirror-stage, but of the pre-mirror stage as well, specifically the “enigmatic and at times grotesque images of laughter, smiling and grinning” that occurs throughout the collection (48). In his elucidation Bentley points out how Kristeva locates the origin of laughter ‘Chronologically and logically long before the mirror stage’”, describing it as originating as a release of a tension of pleasure within the pre-mirror self (ibid.) Since the idea of a specific sense of humor has not yet been established it is a purely instinctual reaction, Kelly Oliver specifically describes pre-mirror stage laughter as the response to motor tension being linked to vision (ibid.). Explaining why the sudden flailing of limbs or

slamming into objects continually garners a response worthy of a comedic genius from babies.

Since laughter is rooted in the pre-mirror stage, it thus originates from the semiotic chora, this is unless a signification and expectation is created by an awareness of the evolution of a specific sense of humor, which would move it away from any semiotic characteristic as it would gain signifiability. In Crow's case, this becomes unlikely due to his non-human nature and origin. Even with age and a developed sense of humor, the motivations for laughter can be varied enough that laughter itself becomes an increasingly ambiguous subject. Hughes himself, as already stated, said that he wasn't signifying anything particular with the laughter and grinning of Crow. Crow's irregular and ecstatic behavior throughout *Crow*, as well as being based on the traits of a Trickster, do not help construct a general purpose behind the laughter either (Bentley 1998: 41-42; Faas 1980: 207). Kristeva's theory will here be applied to laughter as signifier through an analysis of the poem "In Laughter", where I believe Crow conducts a regression to the pre-mirror stage of semiotic existence in order to question the current stage of existence of the reader. As a regression into the semiotic state emphasizes the nature of primary drives as instinctual reactions, I believe Crow's use of laughter forces a comparative reflection between past and present.

The presence of a regression to the semiotic chora will therefore be investigated through the perspective of an insinuation of primary drives as it is created by laughter. These drives are what, as mentioned according to Kristeva, mainly control the actions of a pre-mirror stage child. As the reader is confronted by the state of existence before possessing an objective self-awareness, I believe it problematizes their current certainty of self-awareness and self-control, questioning how much of the "mother" is still within them, and just how much control they have. I believe Crow is attempting to show the reader what their roots are, what their inner world consists of, and how their free will might simply be a falsely constructed rationalization of these drives.

In G&R's analysis of "In Laughter" it is described as a "very good re-creation of the experience of helpless laughter, particularly forbidden laughter", as well as a successful suggestion of laughter being a manifestation of violent, Dionysiac energy (G&R 1981: 113, 114). Their analysis at first brings to mind the concept of laughter, what produces helpless laughter, what defines forbidden laughter, and more importantly where laughter originates. In Bentley's analysis of *Crow* the laughter in "In Laughter" is explained as the establishment of a theme of regression to the pre-mirror stage (Bentley 1998: 47-48). The analysis uses Kristeva's theories to show laughter taking form as an expelling of sound in order to release

tension that is produced through the primary drives (ibid.).

How the poem itself generated such noticeably drive-focused analyses is revealed after the first lines, where the cause for laughter is best understood as a release of unconscious drives due to the difficulty in relating a humorous reaction to exploding aircraft and flying limbs:

Cars collide and erupt luggage and babies
In laughter
The steamer upends and goes under saluting like a
stuntman
In laughter
The nosediving aircraft concludes with a boom
In laughter
People's arms and legs fly off and fly on again
In laughter

(Hughes 1972: 41)

Laughter is most often connected to comedy, though the occurrences in the beginning of “In Laughter” seem more characteristic of tragedy, however the relationship between the tragedy and comedy might not be as clear as one would think, especially in *Crow*. Concerning the relationship of tragedy and comedy, G&R quote J. M. Newton as saying that “[i]n *Crow* they aren't different” (G&R 1981: 114). We are therefore in “In Laughter” immediately confronted with another obfuscated boundary between a well-known binary, forcing contemplation on the foundation of each concept and the cause of their separation. We are nonetheless presented with collisions, death, flying limbs and flying babies, the literal connotations are filled with death and sorrow, yet it all happens “In laughter” (Hughes 1972: 41). The immediate juxtaposition between tragedy and comedy creates a certain bewilderment, where one attempts to pinpoint the intent of and reason for the laughter. The answer that it has no intent or purpose becomes a reasonable conclusion, and is also something that G&R and Bentley both decided on, in the sense that they see the laughter as happening for lack of any reason. Hence it might constitute a primary drive.

It may represent a drive as it comprises a reaction not linked to sense or reason, and also because it is a bodily reaction, an impulse, meaning you have very little or no control of its manifestation. As mentioned, G&R pointed out that the kind of laughter that is present in this poem also represents helpless or forbidden laughter, which shows that every drive has context, and some contexts are more expected than others. We normally observe the release of a drive through a certain expected context, but the release of an unwanted drive through an unexpected context makes for a problematic situation. In “In Laughter” I believe this

problematic situation is emphasizing how drives essentially impact us, and possibly control us. Whether they are expected or even wanted, there is no stopping their advances.

In “In Laughter” Crow turns his scalpel on the reader, and begins opening up the shell of the interior functions which control human nature and existence. The lack of purpose and lack of intent of laughter in “In Laughter” is an example of the function inherent to the primary drives. There is no reason behind it, it is only something that one senses and which necessitates a reaction. The pre-mirror stage existence maintains a detachment from a self, it exists prior to the formation of any identity, and hence it comprises an existence driven purely by the primary drives. A simple example of this is that the laughter in “In Laughter” would likely be considered helpless, forbidden and morbid if it were from an adult, yet if it were the laughter of a baby such claims would less likely be made due to the fact that they are purely driven by reactionary instincts and drives, not intentions. Bentley also describes one reason that the innocent laughter could occur due to the external causes as observed in “In Laughter”, he explains it as a reactionary laughter as motor tension is linked to vision, manifesting itself as a reaction to the flying limbs of “In Laughter” as they represent bodily distortion and exaggerated or unmastered movements (Bentley 1998: 48). The reason for referring to this as “innocent laughter” is that there is already an inherent awareness of the drive-driven existence of babies in society, they cannot be guilty of intention.

The semiotic existence takes on the form of what is opposite of signification, it thus becomes the realm of the unconscious as well as the drives. With “In Laughter” Crow admits a new contemplative undertaking to his presented realm of Blackness, that is, the primary drives and instincts that function to drive both humans and animals. As Kristeva states, it functions as a regression to a state based on instincts and primary drives, a state without symbolism, the separation between this existence and an animalistic existence becomes increasingly narrow. Crow is once again crossing borders, this time it is the one that separates conscious intent and unconscious impulse.

Only the teeth work on
And the heart, dancing on in its open cave
Helpless on the strings of laughter

While the tears are nickel-plated and come through doors
with a bang

And the wails stun with fear
And the bones
Jump from the torment flesh has to stay for

Stagger some distance and fall in full view

(Hughes 1972: 41)

“In Laughter” presents laughter in a manner reminiscent of how “Crow Tyrannosaurus” presented hunger, the heart is “Helpless on the strings of laughter”, while Crow is helpless in his attempts to disobey his nature as has his head “trapstrung” stabbing at grubs as he is weeping (Hughes 1972: 13). This becomes a dominant theme in “In Laughter”, where the primary drives are conjured to emphasize their unruly nature. Here, Crow is exposing the dominion of the drives of the reader. The growth out of the pre-mirror stage and establishment of a self may however lead to the belief that intent starts shaping drive, though that is a topic for a different thesis.

The following “nickel-plated” tears continue to show the persistence as well as unruliness of some drives, tears of sorrow or joy are hard to hold back, often breaking the threshold of willpower and thus “come through doors with a bang” (41). The door might here also represent a different component that is trying to prevent the surfacing of drives, as their relationship with intentions might be as motivators, or it may also go against intention and expose them, just as tears expose compassion, laughter might unwillingly expose contempt. The connection between drive and intent is so far presented through laughter and tears, however the connection is suddenly severed as the wails that “stun with fear” are not those of intent, but of a reactionary instinct. This is possibly exemplified afterwards with the bones jumping from the “torment flesh has to stay for” if bones, which stand at the core of our biological body, are given a representation relating to instincts as they stand at the core of our conscious being. This can be seen to represent a reaction of fear, when the body jumps and the heart starts racing, yet that is the end of the extent of the instinct, and the torment of fear that follows shock is something the conscious being is left with. Jumping bones carry the representation of both shock as physical reaction to unexpected stimuli, and as mental aggravator. In the moment of instinct, the experience of being startled is separated from originating intention or cause, it produces only an overbearing sensation of shock.

It becomes almost a statement from Crow, that instinct is devoid of intent as it jumps from “the torment flesh has to stay for” and ends up falling “in full view”, with no mystery or need for a query of intent.

Still laughter scampers around on centipede boots
Still it runs all over on caterpillar tread
And rolls back onto the mattress, legs in the air
But it's only human

(Hughes 1972: 41)

Laughter continues nonetheless, the evocation of scampering centipedes and caterpillars bringing connotations of the rolling rhythm of laughter. Assuming the last line is directed towards laughter itself, the saying “it’s only human” evokes quite a different being. “It’s only/just human” is mostly used as a form of excuse in the way of elucidating the reason behind something that becomes a product of human nature, OLD⁶ defines the saying as “showing the weaknesses that are typical of people” (*Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries*, 2016). The line shows up almost as a form of conclusion to the previous inquiries, as the nature of instincts and drives are opened up and their functions presented it is all eventually excused by the way of it being human nature, thus seemingly becoming an eventuality. As the nature of laughter at first was probed for meaning, the purpose of referring to something as “simply human” becomes investigated as well, of whether it is intended as an elucidation of purpose, or an accusation of accepted abnormalities. Using the excuse of something only being human nature in relation to the content of “In Laughter” thus promotes the concept that humans are helpless in the face of their own humanity, that free will is not absolute.

A deviation from reality instigates reflection on what it is deviating from, and why it is viewed as a deviation. The drives and instincts presented in “In Laughter”, however, do not deviate from reality, they instead emphasize its abnormality. The deviation from reason that occurs as a result of drives is itself part of human reality, and the deviation from the self that allows for an excuse of actions simply because they are based on ones drives becomes a problem in need of contemplation. It is what I believe to be Crow’s statement of the divided self, his presentation of the semiotic chora which through a regression to the primary drives exposes the human dependence on them, and thus Crow pecks at the foundation of free will.

And finally it’s had enough – enough!
And slowly sits up, exhausted,
And slowly starts to fasten buttons,
With long pauses,

Like somebody the police have come for

(Hughes 1972: 41)

The ending of the poem itself brings one to a sensation of its unity, as the drive of laughter which at first runs rampant gradually dies down through the poem, the end of laughter is connoted through the simile of a sensation that is equaled to that of “somebody the police

⁶ Oxford Learner’s Dictionary

have come for” (ibid.).

What was concealed at first becomes the unconcealment of experience that is produced only through unity. The poem is in the form of a laughing fit. It occurs suddenly, and lessening gradually, until it scampers and ends with a sensation of a return to sincerity, with an urge to keep one’s behavior at point, sometimes with an ineffable trace of some unexplainable and undeserved guilt. In Crow’s case it could be a return to his existential guilt as presented in “Crow’s Nerve Fails”, where laughter is temporarily providing a relief from his otherwise heavy flight (40).

The unity of the poem becomes the unity of laughter, my understanding of the Heideggerian unconcealment is opened up as a result of my reading’s totality, and as a result of this the presented contemplation of human nature and threat to free will takes place, as the title points out, in, and as, laughter. Yet laughter itself has no clear meaning, except for being, as Kristeva describes, the release of a drive through sound. Bentley however points out how Mikhail Bakhtin states it is not meant to signify anything, but rather works as a structuring force or principle. He points out that

[i]t is precisely laughter that destroys the epic, and in general destroys any hierarchical (distancing and valorized) distance. [...] Laughter demolishes fear and piety before an object, before a world, making of it an object of familiar contact and thus clearing the ground for an absolutely free investigation of it.

(Bentley 1998: 41-42)

The functions of laughter as described by Bakhtin, then, becomes the production of an increased clarity, an escape from the “fear and piety” that surrounds an object. One can see how the ending of “In Laughter” reflects this by the sensation of a return of both piety and fear referenced by the sensation of being pursued by police. Bakhtin thus gives an idea of what happens when something is “in laughter”. Whether it is a subject matter or a person it becomes more approachable through laughter’s effects of displacement.

In the earlier analysis of “Crow Hears Fate Knock on the Door”, where a simile is made comparing being inside “IT ALL” to being as if “INSIDE MY OWN LAUGHTER”, the idea of inserting the self as subject matter within laughter arises, of, as a result of Bakhtin’s statement, trying to destroy any hierarchical distance from one’s self (Hughes 1972: 12). If laughter lays the foundation for a truly free investigation, then observing the self in laughter could itself instigate revelation simply out of the change in perspective. If all piety and fear surrounding the self is removed, then it increases the likelihood that the confrontation with our drives as presented in “In Laughter” is absorbed or contemplated.

This can be seen to suggest that instead of laughter creating a clear signified, it becomes a clearing of other signifieds, of it becoming a proponent presenting an increased clarity of phenomena. As Kristeva states its effect is rooted in a regression, the mere presence of its created clarity of perspective as described by Bakhtin could thus be viewed as a product of the recipient's existence through a pre-mirror phase, as well as the continued presence of the semiotic chora within them. The roots of laughter thus attain a certain ineffability in nature, and their effect in poetic language aspires to the same description. The mention of laughter creates an effect that is easily experienced and yet not so easily explained, as the roots of what motivates laughter lies outside of language, and its effects as signifier is to remove distance and hinder a hierarchy which is itself a natural component of language.

With "In Laughter" the first step is taken towards a confrontation that I believe to be at the core of Crow's nature. Within "In Laughter" the conditions are prepared and what I believe to be a regression to the semiotic chora of the past is constructed in order to provide a clarity in the perspective of the present. As laughter creates freedom from piety and fear, it constructs a fitting lens through which a contemplation on the nature of free will might arise. As Crow showed a revelation of his binary existence in "Crow Alights", I believe he insists on a similar revelation of the reader "In laughter" by presenting a truth of the uncertain origin of thought and drives, a presence of Blackness within the reader as well (10, 41). As Crow's thoughts are manifested in the Whiteness of *Crow's* language, and his Blackness in its unsignifiable gaps, I believe he is attempting to apply the same framework to the reader, of making them see how human existence also consists of the binary of Whiteness and Blackness, manifesting itself instead as what we perceive as the conscious and the unconscious.

3.5 As the Crow Flies

If the concepts of Blackness and Whiteness as Crow were to be applied to the nature of the reader, then the appearance of a binary dichotomy would surface within the foundation of their selves. The dichotomy presented by experiencing the metaphorical Blackness created in *Crow* and creating its juxtaposed Whiteness is one that I believe works to present another version of a theory of the fathomable and the unfathomable that is of a similar nature to Kristeva and Heidegger's. It is a binary that I think is manifested in Crow, and turns a mirror

unto the reader to cause a revelation of the foundation of their reality. I have observed one possible presentation of the nature of this dichotomy of Blackness and Whiteness within the reader presented in the poem “A Bedtime Story”, where the borders of known and unknown are traversed through what I perceive as an almost ritualistic corruption of empathy and imagination (Hughes 1972: 64).

Due to its title and first line the poem at first creates an impression of abnormal normality. The use of “Once upon a time” only occurs twice in *Crow*, in “A Bedtime Story” and “Crow’s Elephant Totem Song”, and each time it creates the impression of being unusually usual, as if it were a trap, or a trick (ibid, 50). As one gets more familiar with the *Crow* collection any sign of normality starts creating a sense of abnormality, possibly due to the trickster nature of Crow, or just the unruly nature of its contents. Either way it seems to have a function of always keeping the reader on their toes, and of carefully rounding every twist and turn, causing the history of many fairytales first being conceived as cautionary tales to almost be an expected feature of “A Bedtime Story”. It is shortly after its unusual start beginning to show its deep, mystifying roots:

Once upon a time there was a person
Almost a person

Somehow he could not quite see
Somehow he could not quite hear
He could not quite think
Somehow his body, for instance,
Was intermittent

(Hughes 1972: 64)

The definition of what would constitute “Almost a person” is difficult to assume, once again Hughes presents a fragment of a totality that is not itself easily explained, as one must first properly define the term person before deducing what constitutes “Almost a person”. One answer however, could be Crow, as Hughes has stated that he is trying to become a person. Also the mention of an intermittent body draws parallels with Hughes’ mention of Crow’s intermittent conscience (Bentley 1998: 45). G&R have a similar assumption as they view “A Bedtime Story” as showing Crow being “ignorant of and perplexed by his own being” and is simply providing an ironic commentary to that fact (G&R 1981: 121). However if what seems the obvious answer isn’t taken as truth, then the question of who the “He” could be referring to stands open as possibly being both Crow and other, as it did at the end of my analysis of “Crow Alights”.

If the mention of an intermittent body could be perceived as referring to the recipient

of Crow's intermittent consciousness, then it would be the body of the reader. As the intermittent consciousness has no other space to take place than in the consciousness of the reader, so would likely the intermittent body have to be that which is given shape in the reader. This would mean that the "He" is not just referring to Crow, but the reader as well. This is also shown in the line "Somehow he could not quite see" and "Somehow he could not quite hear", where imagination becomes what is not quite seen or heard, in a similar manner as the hallucinations in "Crow Alights" (Hughes 1972: 64). In the transcendent realm of the imagination, in the World presented by the Earth of the poem, the "He" of "A Bedtime Story" becomes the "I" of the mind, where empathy creates sensation, and "Somehow" things happen. The theme reoccurs in the title of "A Bedtime Story", which is a story that most often takes place when the eyes of the recipient are already shut, where the only thing that is seen is through the third eye of the imagination. Another connection to the imagination that is created through the repeated references to hearing and seeing in "A Bedtime Story" is to how the "word" is described in the poem "A Disaster", where "The word oozed its way, all mouth, | Earless, eyeless." (23). The words themselves thus only have a mouth, and only speak, they cannot hear nor see, as they lack eyes and ears, the pictures and sounds created by words belong to the imagination, to the signified and not the signifier. This is made blatantly clear in "A Bedtime Story", as it is referencing the imaginative realm repeatedly in what seems like a provocation or a challenge.

The following stanza conjures what "He could see" such as "the bread he cut" and "the letters of words he read", yet still ends with "But somehow he could not quite see" (Hughes 1972: 64). Whether it states an ineptitude of creativity or the transcendent properties of the imagination, the connotations become nearly an echo of the last stanza. It is after this where the text runs rampant, creating what seems a tour de force of the imagination, where some lines appear more potent than others.

Nevertheless the Grand Canyon spread wide open
 Like a surgical operation for him
 But somehow he had only half a face there
 ...
 He stared he groped to feel
 But his hands were funny hooves just at the crucial moment
 And though his eyes worked
 Half his head was jellyfish, nothing could connect

(Hughes 1972: 64)

The tour de force creates an imaginative landscape perceived by "half a face", later on half of his head is presented as a disconnected jellyfish. The insinuation of this inferior half, of "not

quite seeing”, of hands turning to hooves “just at the crucial moment”, is likely as signs or statements of the weakening inner world of the imagination. In the aforementioned binary of inner and outer worlds presented in “Myth and Education”, Hughes also argues for the importance of maintaining a strong inner world, and voices his dissatisfaction with its neglect (Hughes 1994: 142-144). Hughes thus shows one possible understanding for the hierarchical binary created in “A Bedtime Story”, as he believes the inner world to be wrongfully deemed as inferior in society, while he himself views it as the most important half (144). This statement of imaginative inferiority could also be read as what lies behind the interpretation of the repeated use of “blindness” in *Crow*, where it could be viewed as a signification of the blindness of the third eye. The reference to an inner world shows how I believe Hughes also sees a hierarchical binary in the functions of the mind. He further describes the inner world as not easily talked about due to the fact that nobody has ever come close to understanding it, describing it as living “in it as on an unexplored planet in space.” (ibid.) The inner world therefore carries similar traits to what has been so far described as Blackness, as they both consist of the part of Being for which there is no true understanding or signification.

As there is often a cautionary tale subliminally hidden underneath a fairytale, the implication of the imagination as presented in “A Bedtime Story” has the potential of carrying a different message as well. If the imagination functions as Hughes describes, fully automatically and using associations as “the pattern of one set of images to organize quite a different set”, and if it is as he also states in his interview with Faas that “[t]he symbol opens all these things [...] it is the reader’s own nature that selects”, then the pathways of the imagination is out of our control (152; Faas 1980: 199). As a result what happens when we read poetry or absorb language is in a way predetermined based on the wealth of associations that is retained. If this is viewed as the Whiteness and Blackness of *Crow*, as the living poem naturally taking shape in the mind of the reader, then we have the foundation of the basis and summary of my initial analyses. Yet if this structure of Blackness and Whiteness is transferred to the reader as well, then the Blackness becomes the reader’s unfathomable Being, and Whiteness becomes their understanding through signification of that Being. This would then result in that the Blackness of the unconscious in “A Bedtime Story”, through the process of an inherently uncontrollable imagination, would inspire and determine the Whiteness of its signification. What I believe this is problematizing is that if the same relationship was to be applied to the proposed structure of Whiteness and Blackness in the reader, then the Blackness of the unconscious would inspire and essentially determine the Whiteness of consciousness, endangering free will.

By narrowing the relationship between Crow and reader, by viewing Crow's thoughts and actions as a luring trick that functions similarly to a shaman's guidance of the unknowing reader's own thoughts, it has the possibility of changing the established narrative to one where the reader becomes as G&R described Crow, "ignorant of and perplexed by his own being" (G&R 1981: 121). The basis of Whiteness attempting to understand Blackness is also what has concerned this thesis from the start, of signification approaching the unsignifiable, I believe this impossible process is also shown in "A Bedtime Story" through the repeated use of "somehow" (Hughes 1972: 64). It shows the ineptitude of language in the face of the process of imagination. It shows the ultimately unapproachable nature of language towards the unconscious, towards Being or Blackness, as they will only ever be described in a differently worded version of the term "somehow"; we somehow have free will, somehow our decisions are made, somehow conscience is assumed and somehow reality becomes individually "ours".

In what G&R describe disdainfully as "rock-bottom language", and Bentley refers to as the same manner of "throwaway expressiveness" that Hughes found in Shakespeare's language, the final lines of the poem present to me a simplistic summary of the inevitable results of the foregoing analysis (G&R 1981: 103, Bentley 1998: 46). In what is perhaps a sign of the deep divergence that is possible through the different readings of Hughes, through my reading the finale presents the folly of man in the never-ending quest for understanding. It shows how eventually we are only being left with the choice of simply doing what we can do, of assuming control while assuming that we are in control, yet facing the inevitability of never understanding how or why:

So he just went and ate what he could
And did what he could
And grabbed what he could
And saw what he could

Then sat down to write his autobiography

But somehow his arms were just bits of stick
Somehow his guts were an old watch-chain
Somehow his feet were two old postcards
Somehow his head was a broken windowpane

'I give up,' he said. He gave up.

Creation had failed again.

(Hughes 1972: 65)

The failed attempt at writing an autobiography epitomizes the faulty assumption that life can be put into words, even by the person who lived it. It shows how even when words only need to stand as imitations of past experiences they come up short, misrepresenting reality in such a way that arms become “just bits of stick”, and feet become “two old postcards”. It shows how Being is represented by something which it is not, and through these deficiencies of imitation, it problematizes the understanding we assume to have of our own existence. Whiteness can never approach the fullness of Blackness, of imitating the experience of Being, therefore “He” gives up, and creation fails again.

As Heidegger’s theory of unconcealment has as its assumption that there is something already concealed, Hughes has what I view as a similar view on what surfaces through the reading of narratives:

What began as an idle reading of a fairy tale ends, by simple natural activity of the imagination, as a rich perception of values of feeling, emotion and spirit which would otherwise have remained unconscious and languageless. [...] A simple tale, told at the right moment, transforms a person’s life with the order its pattern brings to incoherent energies.

(Hughes 1994: 153)

It is thus according to Hughes through conscious words that the unconscious manifests itself by bringing order to its chaos, by bringing what one could view as intention to its impulse or meaning to its nature. Through associations and what presents itself as a byproduct of signification there is some experience of the chaotic and incoherent Blackness underneath. Whiteness may not fully understand Blackness, but it becomes the only source of understanding there is, the only source of structure and meaning. It is the assumption of correctness and of truth that I believe “A Bedtime Story” problematizes; if language is faulty and deficient, then truth and superiority lies with Blackness, yet if this is true, then free will’s control and logic as it stands as our foundation for understanding are also mistaken concepts. If Blackness reigns supreme then we essentially become like animals again, propelled only by our instincts and primary drives.

If the unconscious is the dominant factor in cognition, as Blackness is in “A Bedtime Story”, then the question stands if Hughes is conducting a return to our naturalistic roots, or instead approaching a revelation of their already inescapable presence, and of our blindness to them, showing how we have become like ants in an anthill, unaware of the scope of our own nature.

4 Black and White

As I have now presented the framework of Whiteness and Blackness, as well as the revelatory results it might produce, this chapter will concern itself with a further understanding of both the results and functions of this framework as perceived through the aforementioned analyses. It will present my understanding of how this framework represents the translinguistic embodiment of the concept of Crow, and how this concept channels revelations by manifesting itself within the mind of the reader.

4.1 Blackness as Being

The breakdown of reality that is conducted through the conception and construction of the concept of Crow in *Crow* is one that at the surface seems like the narrative of a being learning what defines humanity, and through gaining that understanding deconstructs how humanity defines reality. Yet as with the story of Crow and the Black Beast, it is once the focus turns inwards instead of outwards that the pursuit might yield a deeper revelation. As mentioned in the first chapter it is through this possible revelation in poetry that Hughes bestows on it the proper definition of “mythic” (Gifford 2011: 108). My perception of the mythic quest in *Crow* is the deconstruction of reality. This deconstruction fuels revelation through the guidance, or as Hughes refers to it the intermittent consciousness, of Crow.

Bentley refers to the text as the thoughts of Crow, as these thoughts are read and initiate the process of signification they also manifest themselves as thoughts of the reader, manifesting what I view as Heidegger’s aforementioned allegory of the poem (Heidegger 2011: 91). Through empathy the feelings shown of Crow also become the feelings of the reader, as Crow struggles to say love in “Crow’s First Lesson” the assumptions grow to whether it is because he cannot know what it is and therefore cannot use the word, whether saying is creating and Crow cannot create love, or whether an inexperience in the sensation limits him (Hughes 1972: 9). The last line “Crow flew guiltily off” which comes after failing to create love and therefore maddening God, thus manifests an empathic sensation of guilt along with Crow, just as an understanding of the black beast comes through a process of empathy (ibid.). Mircea Eliade describes the similarities of a shaman and a lyrical poet to be, among others, “the creation of a personal universe, of a completely closed world” (Eliade

1976: 282). As Hughes has related himself to the role of a shaman, we can observe in *Crow* his guiding spirit animal, as the reader becomes gradually immersed in the world and existence of *Crow*, Hughes has the power to guide *Crow*, and as a result guide the reader.

The words in *Crow* become as Ziarek described Heidegger's view of words in general, relational to Being (Ziarek 1989: 119). Words therefore become the way that "Being imparts itself to beings", which I understand in the manner that what the reader experiences, the Blackness in *Crow*, are the words in relation to their own Beings (ibid.). This connects the metaphor of blackness within the poems not only with the theoretical concept of Blackness within *Crow*, but also connects it with the Blackness of Being within the reader. The poems in *Crow* all become relational to Being, and thus become the Whiteness to not only *Crow*'s Blackness, but also the reader's, creating an undeniable symbiosis between the two.

This function of the poems is also exemplified in Hughes' perception of them as Animal-poems. In his analysis of Hughes' use of animals Hong refers to Bleakley's description of Hughes' practice as "a modern animal-centred shamanism", as trying to "articulate human existence 'through the medium of animal life, as a sur-reality'" (Hong in Gifford 2011: 40). The sur-reality that Bleakley is referring to is the one that emerges in *Crow*, the one that guides the reader and as I have argued through its process begins melding reader and *Crow*. As the metaphysical *Crow* becomes trapped in language by Hughes, he becomes temporarily free as he escapes the poem and becomes part of the reader's Blackness, or one could say that the reader experiences *Crow*'s Blackness.

As mentioned in the analysis of "Crow Alights", in the possibility of the final two lines representing *Crow* or a separate "He", we see that the separate "he", due to this theory, has a possibility of being a reference to the reader (Hughes 1972: 10). The reader is the relation to which all the words of the poem are compared and projected, their signification are all produced in relation to a Being, which is the reader's Being. The poem itself almost punctuates this conclusion by following it with "He stared at the evidence" as the reader's physical eyes stare at the text, and his "third eye" stares at the imaginative realm projected from the text (ibid.). With the ending "Nothing escaped him" the possibility grows from that of the earlier analysis to include the possibility of a reference to the "completely closed world" Eliade mentions, the individual Being that Heidegger states words relate themselves to, and the sur-reality that Bleakley describes (ibid.; Eliade 1976: 282; Ziarek 1989: 119; Hong in Gifford 2011: 40). In the symbiosis between reader and text, nothing escapes the reader, as everything is related, held, and experienced within them.

Once the reader is emerged in this projected experience of *Crow*, *Crow* creates a

displacement of what is usually conceived as normal and turns it into something abnormal. I believe it is part of what gives the sensation of an alteration in the metaphysical self, of what removes the sensation of Hughes as author which was mentioned in the first chapter. This abnormality is experienced in what I perceive as a result of Crow adapting the same means that Bakhtin claims is inherent in laughter's function of cleansing piety and fear (Bentley 1998: 41-42). The signs of this are in the impression *Crow* creates of an "assault" on religion, mythology and logic; exemplified in "A Childish Prank" as Crow carelessly manipulates the Christian tale of Eden, in "Crow's Playmates" as Crow removes any reverence of Gods by creating them to be his playmates, in "Crowego" as he absorbs ancient mythology, in "A Disaster" as he corrodes signification, it is also apparent in "In Laughter" as the very piety of life is laughed away (Hughes 1972: 8, 53, 54, 23, 41). As Crow emancipates these foundational concepts from their piety and their power, it becomes an assault on their general perception, resulting in him exposing how the perception is based on a fundamental requisite of piety and power. Crow's approach of each topic is relentless and without respect, resulting in an abnormal representation, and as a result, as Bakhtin characterizes laughter, I believe he is "thus clearing the ground for an absolutely free investigation of it." (Bentley 1998: 42)

Since experience is the best path to knowledge, this "proxy-experience" also has the possibility of an increased potential for reflection. As the reader constructs an experience of the text based on a relation the Blackness of their own Being, the reader finds what latent concepts and associations the mind has concealed, and creates a temporary truth in their imagination. I believe this temporary truth can take on the same shape as how Kristeva refers to a truth in analysis. She does not see it as an absolute concept, but rather a truth "constructed in the here and now of the analytic session" (Kristeva 1986: 17-18). This temporary, and likely ephemeral, truth can still have an effect on the reader, either of reaffirming old knowledge, or it could introduce new knowledge. Kristeva's view shows how the truth that matters most for cognitive health is the one in the here and now, the one that mends. This truth can take on many forms, but most importantly one possibility of those forms is a correct intervention. This intervention is what I perceive as taking shape as the "Healing gifts" that Hughes was pursuing, and the relation to Being and individuality of the poem strengthens the possibilities of these gifts (Sagar 2006: xi).

An example of the possibility of this process is a revelation of the sensation of anxiety through the Black Beast, due to an imitation and alteration of the sensation of anxiety which might produce a change in perspective. It could also emerge as a product of the conceptual width of the poem "Lovesong" (Hughes 1972: 82). As it initiates all facets of the emotions of

love and lust I believe it instigates reflection through how “known” the various aspects of love feels. It could be as G&R mention, seemingly representing a “fixed and hopeless view of love”, or as they also mention it could be considered in the light of “Bride and Groom” which changes its perception through a deeper view into Hughes’ further portrayal of love and relationships (G&R 1981: 117, 137). It could also be whatever the reader finds, whether a cynical view of love and sexuality, or an appraisal, an open invitation to revel in the aspects of love that one agree and disagree with at the same time. In playing this role the poem acts in what I view to be a similar way to how Heidegger describes the dawning World, of it showing “what is as yet undecided and measureless, and thus discloses the hidden necessity of measure and decisiveness” (Heidegger 2011: 121).

It is the individual truth, the “truth in analysis” if you will, that is most relevant to the reader. As my personal readings of this thesis’ analyzed poems carry more impact to me than the academic ones of Sagar or Gifford, so would another person’s personal reading carry more weight to them than what they could perceive through an elucidation of mine. The individuality of this truth is created due to the unsignifiable aspects projected from the poems, as the Blackness first perceived as that of Crow, and later shown to be that of the reader. This individuality is fueling the potential for personal revelations, as Heidegger details with the revelation of the equipmental being of Van Gogh’s shoes, it is a product of the subjective World, as much as it is a product of the objective Earth (Heidegger 2011: 116). The pursuit of revelation in *Crow* is what I have so far described as the breakdown of reality, where Crow dissects not only the foundation of the Hughesian “outer world”, but also, indescribably, he has managed to present and alter the understanding of the “inner” world.

This alteration of the “inner” world is nothing that can be thoroughly described, but so far in this thesis I believe I have shown the process that approaches this alteration, and the unconcealed roots from which what I perceive as a revelation springs up.

4.2 Crow Crossing

As I have propositioned the melding of Crow and the reader, the narrative, or sur-reality, that the reader goes through must thus be of a similar nature to the one that can be observed of Crow. This is the proponent from which I view a similarity with Skea’s view of *Cave Birds*, where Hughes pushes “both himself and his readers to the purifying processes of transmutation”

(Skea 1994: 47). This section will attempt show how the description of Crow becomes synonymous with the experiences of the reader, as they both go through the process of transmutation through a breakdown of reality. One can see what I view as a description of this transmutation, as well as an acknowledgment of a chronology, being related in how Hughes' describes the adventures of Crow:

Having been created, he's put through various adventures and disasters and trials and ordeals, and the effect of these is to alter him not at all, then alter him a great deal, completely transform him, tear him to bits, put him together again, and produce him a little bit changed.

(Bentley 1998: 49)

This description would be fitting of the life experiences of most conscious beings, and a high number of impactful experiences, which is however exactly what Crow is pursuing, to experience normality instead of abnormality and gain life, thus becoming "human". The process of this is first shown in "Two Legends" where he hatches as the "black rainbow" from "An egg of blackness" which by association of blackness as an imaginative void becomes how he first equates himself to the metaphorical void of the concept of Blackness (Hughes 1972: 1). The gradients of blackness explores the limits of the imagination, and being a "black rainbow" exclaims how Crow exists past these limits (ibid.). So black that not words nor imagination can fathom it, it shows Crow born of the Blackness of Being.

His relation to others is shown in "Crow and the Birds", where he establishes a normality as a bird among birds, and yet separates himself from the nature of the others through his actions and thus introduces individuality, a shared trait of conscious beings, and a relatable attribute in animals (29). The individuality of Crow is conceived in his deviancy from conventionality, had Crow been "swooping" alongside the swallow then the experience of individuality would not be portrayed. It becomes a simple but effective metaphor for individuality, where Crow as a bird among birds allows a conversion into the perspective of a human among humans.

In "A Childish Prank" the reader then observes as Crow at first approaches the world through myth, giving an example of the stories that mold everyone's world-view as they take shape before personal experience eventually takes over. Yet as he creates his own version and breaks away from the mythical narratives the reader encounters another sign of Crow's tendency towards non-conformity, of wanting to break free, of both pursuing, and breaking down what is "normal" (8). He also extrapolates on what he learns through binary thinking in "Crow's Theology", yet does so in a way which disavows God as all-powerful, producing a

dilemma which problematizes the nature of binary thinking that is so inherent to modern Western thinking (27).

Through his obscurity Crow also establishes himself as a Trickster, a chameleon, following no true ideal or ideology, which expands on the properties of the nothing and everything that is, as argued earlier, part of his Blackness. As in “The Door”, Crow is conceived and constructed in the reader through the “eye’s pupil”, and this construction becomes based on the reader’s individuality and personality, through Crow’s blackness and Trickster nature he takes on all shapes (7). The metaphor of blackness is approached from a variety of angles, creating and growing as a reference to what I have termed the concept of Blackness as the ineffable aspects within *Crow*.

As Crow moves towards self-awareness we observe the creation of the double “he”, such as in “Crow Alights” and eventually “A Bedtime Story”, insinuating the possibility of a duality of selves (10, 64). The “self” of the self-awareness becomes increasingly diffuse as Crow takes shape as both figurative character and poetic style, his “true” presence defying definition. This is where the barrier between reader and concept starts melding, not only as words relate to Being, but also as Crow relates to reader, as the text itself projects the experience of self-awareness and, as I have understood it, unconceals the connection it is making with the reader.

With each new step and from each new angle that Hughes approaches Blackness he is breaking down another layer of reality, by discovering Crow’s story of obscurity and abnormality, and by creating it as an experience of our own. It becomes an experience of a breakdown of all the aspects of our existence, from birth in “A Kill”, to self-realization and existential introspection in “Crow Alights”, and consequently then the contemplation of death in “That Moment”, all the uncomfortable truths that might not yet be unconcealed (4, 10, 11). This experience that is created is what I view as a conducted confrontation with the Blackness of our existence, the mystery of our Being, and the grand questions which stand as uncertainties of our society and world. Sagar quotes Strauss as he describes Crow’s restless and diversified approaches in *The Art of Ted Hughes* as carrying aspects of exhaustion:

Hughes shows Crow exhausting all avenues – testing all the possibilities of illumination, transcendence, freedom, escape, and being rejected by them all – and this has the effect on the reader of a different kind of exhaustion: an exhaustion physical, mental, nervous and emotional. The experience is like having gone through some terrible destructive fight.

(Sagar 1978: 2)

The “fight” that Strauss refers to, and the “possibilities” tested by Crow, is what I believe to be the relentless assaults on Whiteness in order to convey the Blackness of Being, the scouring of the borders of how we define our existence. The pursuit of these borders is what I believe is tearing to bits not only Crow, as Hughes mentioned in the earlier quote, but also the reader. By dissecting the concepts born of Blackness it unveils what they are, and how they lie on the very border of our understanding. These borders of understanding are observable through, among other aspects, how I have presented *Crow* constructing the sense of individuality, the establishment of understanding based on myth due to uncertainty, the extrapolating based on binaries, understanding based on language, anxieties of existential awareness and death, as well as the mysteries of free will and fate.

I believe Hughes’ “quest” for increased sensibility and against what Sagar refers to as the “mass neurosis of our urban society”, is partially derived from society fleeing towards certainty and away from uncertainty, of escaping into the meaningful Whiteness and away from the mysteries of the undetermined Blackness (Sagar 1978: 143). A false certainty is often more wanted and appreciated than a true uncertainty, exemplified by the variety of the countless theories that are embraced of death, however as Kristeva’s perspective on “truth in analysis” shows it might also in some cases be more helpful (Kristeva 1986: 17-18). I nonetheless consider part of Hughes’ quest as an attempt at a distancing from false certainties, and instead attempting to open up perceptions to uncertainty, to the mystery of Being as the originator of our selves.

This quest is conducted through Crow, as he manifests as a shamanistic medium that “crosses over” between real and symbolic worlds, and thus enables a similar experience of “crossing over” for the reader. This shamanistic “crossing over” is as Zajko quotes Bassnett’s description, aiming to “proffer healing to fractured communities” (Zajko in Gifford 2011: 108). As this crossing over manifests itself, I believe Hughes’ ambition for the reader becomes akin to that of Crow as he describes Crow’s adventure; he is tearing them apart to show them their components, and at the end put them together again, producing them “a little bit changed” (Bentley 1998: 49).

4.3 Free Will and Free Won’t

When commenting on the function of Crow, Bentley quotes Hughes’ description of Freud saying that the basis of Freud’s therapeutic technique is that “the right fantasy can free the

neurotic, temporarily at least, from his neurosis” (Bentley 1998: 42-43). The fantasy of Crow, in his role of producing healing truths, is from this viewpoint attempting to free a society living in “mass neurosis”, and is doing so essentially by searching for the “right fantasy” (ibid., Sagar 1978: 143). I believe this “right” fantasy is approached in the function of Crow “straddling the boundary” between order and chaos, between the dichotomies, binaries and juxtapositions presented. Crow consistently activates a multitude of angles and approaches for each topic. By the imagined constructions of binaries essentially representing unity, the poems, as Gifford states:

Attempt to heal dualities by holding them in counterbalancing juxtapositions so that human life, in all its tensions and contradictions, can be understood to be part of those in the wider ecology in which we live.

(Gifford 2011: 9)

This means that Hughes’ attempt at restoration would function as a result of the revelation provided through juxtaposition by establishing a balance of dualities. As Crow straddles the boundary, it effectively means that he is at the intersection between opposites. Crow thus does not take sides, nor does he impose a hierarchy, but rather works to expose what separates, or unifies, the dichotomy. Through a crossing of binaries, dichotomies and juxtapositions, both present in text and extrapolated from it, the boundary eventually evaporates, and instead presents a grander unity. One example of this process starts with “Crow Hears Fate Knock at the Door” forewarning one of the biggest confrontations and deconstructions I have observed of Crow, which is targeted at free will as the root of existential freedom.

Free will is defined in the OED⁷ as “[t]he power of acting without the constraint of necessity or fate; the ability to act at one’s own discretion” (*Oxford English Dictionaries Online*, 2016). Free will therefore becomes the ability to act out of the invaluable attribute of a freedom of choice, and as with all the other foundations of reality, Crow is pecking it apart. The concepts of fate and free will are part of a binary from which the entire meaning of existence has its roots, it faces us in the same uncomfortably uncertain form as the prophecy of “Crow Hears Fate Knock at the Door” - “like a grimace” (Hughes 1972: 12). This uninterpretable “grimace” of existence is part of what is presented in the analysis of “In Laughter” as well as “A Bedtime Story”, where the prominent issue becomes our lack of understanding of what is in control when we are not. This lack of understanding, through the

⁷ Oxford English Dictionary

immediate instinct of binary thinking, also questions what is in control when we are, of what is at the essence of our conscious self. As I have shown, my understanding is that “In Laughter” presents the inescapable fact of the impact of our primary drives on our existence, of what drives us besides our conscious choices. “A Bedtime Story” follows this up by exposing the lack of understanding we have of our Being, as well as what makes our conscious choices. Together they confront the reader with the void of the unknown that is the grounds of separation for the concepts of Whiteness and Blackness, and through it the inescapably uncertain foundation of their existence.

As the questions of what is at the essence of Being are presented, we start hearing “fate knock at the door”, as the function of primary drives must be acknowledged, and so must the inferiority of our understanding of existence. The foundation of existential freedom is thus itself problematized by Crow, limiting our Being to our free will, which are our choices based on an understanding of ourselves, which is itself rooted in Whiteness. The reason for rooting free will in Whiteness is not because it resides in language, but rather it resides under the same functionality as language, in relativistic understanding. It resides in what we term consciousness, which becomes based on a referential understanding, functioning in a similar manner as language.

The similarities between language and consciousness are based on a comparison of the signifier and the drives and instincts of the unconscious, which are produced through the process of experience, or through signification. When these signifiers become interpreted into signifieds, the Whiteness manifests Blackness, and consciousness manifests unconsciousness. This manifestation takes shape as the reactionary actions of free will by consciousness, as the reaction we “choose” to have to our drives, impulses and instincts. Once one gets an inclination of what needs to be done, the only choice one really has is in which manner one deals with the inclination. Free will thus becomes the freedom of choice in how one handles their impulses, and not in which impulses to handle. Thus, in a manner similar to how Hughes explained earlier that the imagination works autonomously, we are only left to observe, and not dictate, its creation.

This perspective of the binary of fate and free will is created through the Blackness and Whiteness of the poems in *Crow*, and exemplified in some of them. As the “He” of “A Bedtime Story” is propelled along a narrative of occurrences, where everything “somehow” happens, it mimics the conscious’ lack of understanding of the unconscious, its lack of understanding of the drives, instincts and impulses which influence all our choices (64). This also mirrors Whiteness’ lack of understanding of Blackness, and the reason for their polarity.

Within poetry, as the word as signifier relates to Being and initiates its process of signification, so do life occurrences turn into life experiences as it relates to Being, initiating a process of understanding. This is one example of how poetry acts as an imitation of life. As Miller states when speaking of the nature of poetry as imitation, “[t]he structure of the poem should correspond to the structure of reality” (Miller 1985: 5). However I believe the revelatory structure of the entirety of *Crow*, especially exemplified in “A Bedtime Story”, functions not only as an imitation of the occurrences of reality, it is an imitation of the Blackness and Whiteness that creates the sensation of Being, becoming an imitation of the sensation of existence.

In “A Bedtime Story”, as the language relates to Being, and words take shape as imitations of life occurrences, the only understanding that Whiteness can create is the ever-mysterious “somehow” (Hughes 1972: 64). The term “somehow” embraces the unknown and the unmentionable nature of the process of signification through what I have originally viewed as its commentary on imagination. However as Hughes summarizes the root of the imagination as an integral part of the ineffable “inner world” which “cannot be seen objectively”, I believe it thus also has the possibility of representing Blackness (Hughes 1994: 143-144). In the same way the occurrences of life relate to Being and produce the unsignifiable offspring that forms the sensations of experience, so do words in relation to Blackness create the unsignifiable offspring of signification, as I’ve attempted to show with my analysis of “Crow Alights” and “That Moment”. The “inner world” of life and poetry thus already have their commonalities. I view the use of “somehow” as a statement of our lack of understanding, showing the inherent ignorance of this unknown “inner world” as an aspect of existence. As the unexplainable foundation of the imagination is presented, it thus mirrors that of the unconscious, and it is upon this foundation of the unconscious that our choices are made, and our freedom of choice has its roots. The argument against free will in “A Bedtime Story” therefore takes form in the argument for fate, which presents itself as the problematization of our freedom of choice.

In problematizing the ignorance of the imagination, the unconscious, as well as the Blackness as a function of the self, “A Bedtime Story” forces a self-admittance of a binary, of the known and unknown, the conscious and the unconscious. Through this admittance of an unknown polarity to consciousness, our freedom of choice is deconstructed, and the poem creates an allegorical statement that forces a reflection on the mystery inherent to our existence. This mystery as a lack of understanding, or a hole in consciousness, can be what would define one as “[a]lmost a person”, as is mentioned in the poem’s first lines. If

Whiteness is dominant, then its ignorance of Blackness hinders its integrity, and breaks with its unity. The presentation of this faulty hierarchy then forces a contemplation on the balance between concepts.

In the end of the poem the “He” person is giving up, frustrated with the mysterious nature of his reality, ultimately resulting in the final line “Creation had failed again” (Hughes 1972: 64). The focus on absolute understanding, and increased adherence to Whiteness, has thus failed as the person of the poem gives up possibly due to his aggravation of its ineffable process. The problematization of fate and free will becomes an argument against absolute logic and reason, against the binary hierarchical dominance of Whiteness. The result is a forced balancing of concepts, where the presence of an absolute free will is negated, as well as the absolute chaos of its opposite. It shows Blackness as based on the unconscious and the drives, it is what we cannot understand, and what we cannot decide. The revelation that I believe is pursued is that our power is therefore not to decide or understand how it is “somehow” created, our power is instead to afterwards deny its process. As a result Crow presents a fault in the perspective of our consciousness, which must change from the description of free will, to free won’t.

The possible revelation that follows, the “right” fantasy in this case, is the contemplation of the function of our nature, and of our Being. As it proposes the composition of Whiteness as conscious self and Blackness as Being within the reader, it then either forces an existential crisis due to the separation of self and the hierarchical placement of the conscious and unconscious into which would be defined as the “true” self, or it produces an existential revelation of balance and unity. If Whiteness is the part of the self that denies the suggestions, instincts, and drives of Blackness, then Whiteness is what separates us from animals through self-control, and the awareness and selective application of our drives. Yet as Crow straddles the boundaries Hughes’ intention of balance shows in the equalization of Whiteness to Blackness, in what separates us from animals as a balanced quantity with that which we have in common with animals. It shows a statement of not the lack of nature within us, but the lack of our acceptance of that nature, of the acceptance of a certain degree of chaos.

4.4 A Revelation of Reconciliation

As the previous section on the problematization of free will puts forward, the process that I have perceived within *Crow* of presenting the concepts of Blackness and Whiteness is not due to an intended statement or revelation of their separation, but rather an attempt at their revelatory reconciliation. I view the process to be as Spivak describes the use of intersubstituting opposites in the translator's preface to Derrida's *Of Grammatology*, where he describes it as a way of creating balance: "the setting up of unitary opposites is an instrument and a consequence of 'making equal'" (Spivak in Derrida 1997: xxviii). Through the admittance of a Blackness within the self it therefore does not devalue Whiteness, but rather removes the hierarchy between them and attempts to make them equal. As the counterbalancing of juxtapositions that often describes Hughes' work, it shows how he is not trying to remove Whiteness, understanding, and logic, but rather balance what he perceives as its present hierarchical superiority.

Gifford makes a point of Hughes project having a critical consensus of being a religious one, which is a possibility present within what I have described as his metaphorical presentation of the ineffable Blackness (Gifford 2011: 7). This concept of Blackness might be, as Hughes' describes his original intentions, a pathway to a spiritual, otherworldly existence whose contact has been weakened or even lost. The true intention of Hughes is unknown, but his project, his ideology, the aspects of his nature, the details of his religion, whichever term one chooses to call it, is as an undeniable paternal DNA within *Crow*'s composition. This residual trace of Hughes composes itself in a way similar to how, in his interview with Faas, he describes his belief of what is one of the main functions of poetry, recalling it as the "record of just how the forces of the Universe try to redress some balance disturbed by human error" (Faas 1980: 198). This perspective of Hughes's wish of a reconciliation of imbalances is repeated in his essay "Myth and Education", where he again speaks of the inner and outer worlds, and of how what "we" need, is a "faculty that embraces both worlds simultaneously" (Hughes 1994: 150). He follows with a description of the function of great works of art, which he believes concerns a reconciliation of their own:

This really is imagination. This is the faculty we mean when we talk about the imagination of the great artists. The character of great works is exactly this: that in them the full presence of the inner world combines with and is reconciled to the full presence of the outer world. And in them we see that the laws of these two worlds are not contradictory at all; they are one all-inclusive system; they are laws that somehow we find it all but impossible to keep, laws that only the greatest artists are able to

restate. They are the laws, simply, of human nature.

(Hughes 1994: 150)

There is no single poem in *Crow* which I can pinpoint that would amount to this characteristic of great work, but through the unity of its separate pieces emerges what cannot be presented in one piece alone. As with unity being represented only as a function of the reconciliation of its parts, so does the root binary of *Crow* set off the dominoes which unifies the rest; if there is a unification and reconciliation of Whiteness and Blackness as the components of Being at the foundation of the self, my belief is that it has the possibility of fueling a revelation that proposes reconciliation of the other dichotomies and dualities.

Through the diversity of the experiences in *Crow*, the “full presence” of the inner and outer world are more likely to be produced, as it presents what is so common in such uncommon ways; it shows the art of binary perception as a source of our understanding of reality through its multiple presentations of dualities, and then even shows *Crow* dissecting this foundational practice in his own theology in “*Crow’s Theology*” (Hughes 1972: 27). What I believe to be Hughes’ method of showing the “full presence” of the inner and outer worlds is through *Crow’s* presence as an analogy for both, where Blackness is the presence of the inner world, and Whiteness the presence of the outer world. Through *Crow* as medium he acknowledges the mystery of existence through Blackness, and assaults the premises of understanding and certainty through *Crow’s* relationship with Whiteness. As this continues it feeds into the possibility of a revelation of *Crow* as the self of the reader, as a representation of Being and a restatement of the “laws” of reality which modern society has circumvented in its divergent focus on Whiteness. I believe this presentation of Blackness and assault on Whiteness not to be due to Hughes initiating a “war on humanity” or sustaining an “anti-human” sentiment, but rather it is him addressing what he views as the imbalance between this binary of reality.

The interpretation of an “anti-human” sentiment is possibly itself a reaction based on the presence of this imbalance. It might be a product of a similar process as Hughes’ reaction to the critique of his poems being too violent, he addresses it rather as a misunderstanding of nature, of the recipient projecting “the killing procedure intended for others” unto the animals (Hughes 1994: 255). In a similar misunderstanding or act of false projection *Crow* presents the predicament to the reader of whether it is the poems that are adversely representing reality, or if it is the reader’s understanding of reality which is wrongfully founded.

The revelation within *Crow* is thus not within its text nor within its methodology, it is rather accumulated as the poems confront Being, as they become relational to the reader, and

create a sur-reality, something that is not only reader, and not only text, but rather takes place in between. It straddles the boundary between Whiteness and Blackness, not uniquely descendant from either, but rather a product of both. This reconciliation does not necessarily produce revelation, but instead provides the right fantasy for one. It provides the suitable conditions for what I believe to be a revelation of, as Hughes describes it, a restatement of “the laws, simply, of human nature” (Hughes 1994: 150).

5 Conclusion: Where white is black and black is white, I won

The aim of this thesis was to undertake an analysis of that which cannot be put into words or referenced through language with a particular focus on Crow in *Crow*. My initial belief was that Hughes' mythic quest would be observable through both signifiable and unsignifiable means in *Crow*, and my theory based on this was that this mythic quest was being conducted through what Hughes described as the intermittent consciousness of Crow (Bentley 1998: 45). Through my investigation I have attempted to present what I have described as the concept of Crow, which I have established in order to show how Crow manifests himself not only as character and style, but also eventually leading to his manifestation as translinguistic embodiment as a result of becoming intermittently conscious due to the reader.

The mythic quest of Hughes, his hunt for revelation and search for a connection with the indescribable "other" through signifiable and unsignifiable means has been attempted description through my use of Whiteness and Blackness. In the introduction of this thesis I quoted William Franke as he stated that our only hope when approaching the unsignifiable is an act of description so that it "registers at all" (Franke 2014: 3). This is essentially what I have attempted to achieve through establishing and describing the concept of Blackness. By showing how it may be juxtaposed with Whiteness, as well as the descriptions I have created within my poetic analyses, my hope has been to approach one such description of the unsayable through my investigation of Blackness. As Hughes conducted his hunt for this ineffable creature, we have observed through the process of this thesis that it can truly only be experienced or observed through experience. My resulting approach was therefore a written description of my experience in the hopes that empathy might enable the communication of ideas and sensations producing a common reference in the reader. If I have achieved this, then my belief is that I have not replicated, nor signified, but rather communicated some parts of the unmentionable experience that can be projected in *Crow*. This is a communication that, as I have for example attempted to show through my comparison of Black Beast with the sensation of anxiety, I believe is only possible through common reference points to our experiences of the unsignifiable.

What I have attempted to communicate is hopefully quite clear, it is my revelation, my perception, and my understanding of Crow. I have attempted to seed in the mind of the reader my experience of Crow as translinguistic embodiment, as spirit-animal. It is the

creature I now observe every time I read a Crow poem, and one that has grown in affection since our excitedly confusing first encounter. Crow has become a growing manifestation of my understanding of the unsignifiable, where just as the concert experience that I could not sufficiently explain to anyone, I feel I have barely started to provide a proper explanation of him even after completing an academic thesis spanning over a hundred pages. What began as an investigation of Hughes' poetry, which led to *Crow*, has eventually become both a mirror and a lamp unto myself. This has resulted in my contemplation of a possible pursuit of observing the rest of Hughes' poetry, whether Crow-poems or not, in a similar manner of approaching and getting to know their unsignifiable "spirits". It has also uncovered the interesting thought of observing poetry in general in a similar manner, of approaching them as living beings, as something indescribable from which an investigation is slowly unveiling the mirror and lamp not unto the poem or author, but unto one's self.

What has influenced me most from this undertaking is perhaps the interconnection of this view of poetry with experience in general, of how many of the aspects that have been researched touch at the core of how we understand language, knowledge, nature, ourselves and our Being. As a result of this my work does not feel narrowed down to uniquely concerning poetry, rather it feels like it has also grown my understanding of our relationship with the unsignifiable in general. It has made me aware of how it has always manifested itself in every aspect of reality, and as a result this has created an insatiable curiosity towards its mystery. This is a result I never would have expected from embarking upon a thesis where I would be conducting poetry analysis.

As I have produced this thesis several other possible topics that I could have covered further, but which time and space limitations did not allow, have come to mind. One such possibility is whether applying the established interpretations of Sagar, Bentley, Gifford and Roberts, as I have done, give the poems a greater essence, thus leading to a greater chance of revelation, or if it just makes them more filled with tangible theory. Both Hughes and Heidegger are, as I have shown, of the belief that the dissection or detailed analysis of poetry is not to the benefit of its "life" or "essence". Reading through analyses of the theorists would lead to an increase in the potential certainty of definition of each part of the poem, however this in turn would lessen the uncertainty and ambiguity of the poem, which is potentially presenting the meaning of meaninglessness from which my theory of Blackness originates. One could arguably maintain this uncertainty by not claiming any of the readings as a "true" reading, but the impact of more tangible theory in the consideration of each metaphor or in the search for one's own understanding is still something that I feel could be the product of

further investigation.

The healing powers that Hughes was pursuing is also something I did not have the time to look further into. How the healing functions through revelation or catharsis, as well as how and why mental restoration could be possible through poetry. This could be viewed as the act of the mirror or lamp, as a process of understanding and evaluating the self which might produce growth through revelation. However why a poem about anxiety might cause relief for the anxious, or how the act of writing these poems might produce a healing effect on their author, is something I don't know enough about.

A different aspect that I wished I could have covered more as well is Crow's attempt at becoming human. I believe he presents his tales through tragedy and comedy, or tragicomedy, in order to manifest himself in a manner that is relatable to humans, yet inherently unnatural to animals, manifesting himself to the reader in some unknown distinction which is neither human nor animal. This could also be pursued through an investigation into what defines something as human or non-human, as well as what might separate the two definitions.

A possibility I have also thought of is the investigation of space-time as an existence presented through poetry, inspired by the thoughts on temporality and Being as Heidegger presents in his text *Being and Time*. As Heidegger theorizes that existence, or experience, is something that is possible due to the passing of time, this leads to interesting ways of looking at poetry. One perspective could be towards the intermittent consciousness of Crow, observing how through the time given to its existence, we observe a growth and change of the concept. Through deeper analysis and a more thorough reading a larger existence and more complex experience seems to be created, meaning more life seems to be given to the metaphorical translanguistic embodiment of Crow. A development of this viewpoint could be based on the quote in *Poetry & Geography* by Alexander & Cooper where Edward Casey is stating the ontological viewpoint that “[t]o be at all – to exist in any way- is to be somewhere, and to be somewhere is to be in some kind of place” (Alexander 2013: 5). If words relating to Being causes the experience of displacement as I have observed of Heidegger's arguments, then this displacement could be viewed as an altering of perceived space-time, the creation of a new “place”. I believe a spatial investigation of Being such as this could therefore also provide further description of the unsignifiable through an analysis of the displacement one experiences when reading poetry.

However, as I have shown through this investigation, the problem still stands of the presence of the inner and outer world. If we were to conquer mystery, then that would

certainly alter our experience of enjoyment, love and wonder, it would arguably even remove curiosity, creativity and ingenuity which are essential parts of human nature. As I mentioned in the analysis of “Crow’s Fall” in Chapter 2, if we break down our own meaning, our own purpose based on pure understanding, then that would lead to our meaning being the same as that of a mushroom. True understanding would possibly be the horror of Creation, yet we will keep chasing it through scientific research as it feeds our everlasting thirst for understanding.

“Where white is black and black is white, I won” stands as the title of this section as it is the last line of “Crow’s Fall”, and becomes a fitting quote to my concluding understanding of both inner and outer worlds as well as language and the unsignifiable in relation to Being (Hughes 1972: 28). It shows what I have presented as the most apparent revelation within *Crow*, the one that runs through everything else, and that carries connotations only a self-aware person would find challenging. This is because when confronted with the existence of this dichotomy, we manifest our unsignifiable component in the difficulty we have confronting the thought of its separation. It is therefore only when white and black becomes one that I believe the “I” is won. This could be the “I” as Dasein observing his/her own existence, establishing both existence and an understanding of this existence as the black and white components, or it could simply be the realization that we exist as both, thus gaining what I believe to be a true awareness of what makes up our selves.

As I have attempted to show when presenting the Blackness and Whiteness as aspects of Being, if one denies the unity of binaries, the individual becomes a dichotomy. What I believe that Hughes’ is trying to present to the reader through this example is that instituting hierarchy is an act of disallowing the totality of one’s self. As one starts to rely on understanding one still cannot escape uncertainty and the unsignifiable aspect of existence. As we attempt to give it names through our countless approaches of understanding, we are attempting to pressure unto it an inadequate existence through an empirical definition. We must instead accept, and respect, its inherent mystery. It is what will hopefully always resist signification, for I dare not imagine what our understanding of it might entail. For now I know reveling in the thought of its mystery, even though it involves ignorance, does at times feel like bliss.

Some truths cannot be told, they must be experienced, and that is what I believe Hughes has attempted to do. In *Crow* I believe they do so in the shape of the mirror and lamp as they bring awareness to Crow, this awareness also reflects upon the self of the reader. The reader ends up observing their self through Crow, and as a result they illuminate the dark corners of their mind which are too often, and too easily, avoided.

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