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How is theme of inspiration presented in Pablo Neruda’s *Horses* and Ted Hughes’ *The Thought Fox*?

**Introduction**

Pablo Neruda was a Chilean poet who found himself travelling the world thanks to his political career, meaning that he came into contact with many new people and places that fueled his imagination. Ted Hughes lived a more settled life in 20th century UK, meaning that he had to draw upon the day to day surroundings of England he saw for creativity.

Both poets use a range of form, structural, figurative language and sound devices in order to develop their writing. Likewise, both men also present the idea of imagination as something that can emerge, as if out of nowhere, in order to rejuvenate and stimulate the brain. This is something that must have been close to their heart, as both men are considered to be amongst the greatest poets of all time and no doubt had times where they relied heavily on the instant spark of inspiration.

**Form and Structure**

The overall form of both poems is used to *emphasise* the process of regaining one’s imagination. Hughes’ poem *employs* stanzas that are organised into quatrains, but with little or no meter this reflects the fact that one's thoughts, although arriving at regular intervals, are often lacking in rhythm or clarity. **Similarly**, Neruda’s poem uses no fixed structure in order to *convey* its ideas, comparable to Hughes in the sense that the mind wanders regardless of how hard someone might try to focus. **In a similar fashion**, both poems *lack* a rhyme scheme, but every now and again contain true rhymes such as ‘greenness’ and ‘business’ on lines 17 and 18 in *The Thought Fox.* Neruda does this through the likes of ‘pride’ and ‘eyes’ on lines 17 and 18 of *Horses* also, *suggesting* perhaps that even though the mind can be blank or distracted, occasionally a connection or good idea can be formed.

Hughes and Neruda *make use of* the likes of caesura and enjambment in their work in order to manipulate the pace and place emphasis on certain ideas regarding thought. In *The Thought Fox*, Hughes *writes* ‘Something more near / though deeper within darkness / Is entering the loneliness:’ in the second stanza. This enjambment *mirrors* the slow but sure movements of the vulpine animal, which *connotes* the possible inspiration that is about to reach the speaker. **In comparison**, Neruda uses both devices in ‘Like waves of fire, they flared forward / and to my eyes filled the whole world,’ in order to *outline* the impact the horses’ sudden emergence have had on the speaker as well as the swift movements of their group.

**Lastly**, both poets *utilise* anaphora to develop their respective ideas about inspiration when writing. Hughes *uses* the word ‘something’ on lines 2 and 6 to *expand* the idea that this original idea is slowly being formed out of obscurity. **Likewise**, Neruda *includes* the anaphora of ‘Their’ on lines 14 to 16 in order to *underline* the incredible beauty and therefore influence that the horses set loose have had upon him.

**Figurative language and sound devices**

**The respective** poets *make ample use* of imagery in their work, allowing them to appeal to the readers understanding. Neruda *describes* his writer’s block as ‘white like wet bread’ on line 4 which *conveys* the bland and dense mindset he is suffering from without fresh ideas. **Comparably**, Hughes *uses* the tactile imagery of his surroundings being ‘Cold’ to *show* how he too is suffering from the absence of motivation or the flame of inspiration. **However**, this is soon *contrasted* in Neruda’s poem when he describes the horses as ‘honey, amber, fire.’ on line 15, as well as ‘a dream of salt.’ which again uses gustatory imagery to *outline* the vibrancy and sharpness that has been brought to the writer’s mind after their arrival. Ted Hughes also *exemplifies* this contrast as he describes the fox’s approach as ‘A widening deepening greenness’ which also *hints* at the growing sense of enthusiasm or energy that the speaker is experiencing.

The titles of both poems *encompass* the symbolism of animals in order to *express* the respective writers’ source of stimulation. Hughes’ ‘Thought fox’ that ‘enters the dark hole of the head.’ in the last stanza means the ‘The page is printed.’ thanks to the thought process’ stealthy progress. **Correspondingly**, Neruda’ ‘Horses’ act as a significant moment in the life of the speaker, which brings his enthusiasm for writing back like the symbols of a ‘dance of gold’ or ‘fountain’. **The respective** energy or nature of both animals *act* as a metaphor for the returning burst of creative energy that both men thrive upon.

The setting of both poems also *offers* an insight into the thought process of being a poet. The consonance or repetition of the ‘in’ sound of Neruda’s ‘I was in Berlin, in winter.’ *reflects* the confinement that the speaker is feeling, which is subsequently damaging his creative spirit. In a similar fashion, Hughes describes the ‘midnight moment's forest’, alliteration which *suggests* the dense and untraversable state of his mind as it seeks for ideas. Neruda *continues* this also using alliteration in ‘dirty, disordered winter’ on line 21 to contrast his outwardly bland environment with the salvation of witnessing something so fantastic as the herd of horses. **Again**, in contrast with earlier descriptions, Hughes has the fox appear ‘Across clearings’ as if free of the forest that it was formerly trapped or overcome by.

**Conclusion**

The two poets, who were from the UK and Chile respectively, clearly shared the same kind of problem and pleasure of overcoming the issue of writer's block. As such, even though they are continents apart, they both see inspiration as an exciting and life changing experience. Both men uses the likes of irregular form as well as animal symbolism in order to do this, conveying how the thought process is very much like an untamed, wild animal.

Readers from any time would *empathise* with both men, given that a lack of creativity can affect anyone. However, these pieces of poetry give hope to those who are striving for original ideas or imaginative thinking, as they will someday be struck with the same moment of inspiration that the two speakers experience.

**Appendix**

*Horses*

From the window I saw the horses.

I was in Berlin, in winter. The light
had no light, the sky had no heaven.

The air was white like wet bread.

And from my window a vacant arena,
bitten by the teeth of winter.

Suddenly driven out by a man,
ten horses surged through the mist.

Like waves of fire, they flared forward
and to my eyes filled the whole world,
empty till then. Perfect, ablaze,
they were like ten gods with pure white hoofs,
with manes like a dream of salt.

Their rumps were worlds and oranges.

Their color was honey, amber, fire.

Their necks were towers
cut from the stone of pride,
and behind their transparent eyes
energy raged, like a prisoner.

There, in silence, at mid-day,
in that dirty, disordered winter,
those intense horses were the blood
the rhythm, the inciting treasure of life.

I looked. I looked and was reborn:
for there, unknowing, was the fountain,
the dance of gold, heaven
and the fire that lives in beauty.

I have forgotten that dark Berlin winter.

I will not forget the light of the horses.

*The Thought-Fox*

I imagine this midnight moment's forest:
Something else is alive
Beside the clock's loneliness
And this blank page where my fingers move.

Through the window I see no star:
Something more near
though deeper within darkness
Is entering the loneliness:

Cold, delicately as the dark snow
A fox's nose touches twig, leaf;
Two eyes serve a movement, that now
And again now, and now, and now

Sets neat prints into the snow
Between trees, and warily a lame
Shadow lags by stump and in hollow
Of a body that is bold to come

Across clearings, an eye,
A widening deepening greenness,
Brilliantly, concentratedly,
Coming about its own business

Till, with a sudden sharp hot stink of fox,
It enters the dark hole of the head.
The window is starless still; the clock ticks,
The page is printed.