The Ted Hughes
Society Journal

Volume VII Issue 1

Special Issue **Ted Hughes and Place**
Guest Editor **James Underwood**

Contents

Editorial

For those of us born in the Mytholmroyds and Mexboroughs of this world, Ted Hughes is one of those writers we appreciate deeply for their ability to summon poetry from the most unlikely or unpromising of places; and who, in doing so, show us that there was never anything unlikely or unpromising about them. Huddersfield, where the Ted Hughes Network was established at the University in 2016, sits somewhere between Hughes's Mytholmroyd and Mexborough. Though at the edge of Hughes's Elmet, there are those who claim that this Pennine town is actually at the centre of the poetry universe; whatever the truth of this mysterious claim, it was Hughes's relation to place which seemed the obvious focus for the Network's inaugural conference, which was held at the University in June 2017. Hughes's vision, of course, stretched far beyond his native Yorkshire, taking in Cambridge, London, Devon, Ireland, America's eastern seaboard, wild Alaska, and the ruins of Persepolis, to name just some of the locations of his life and work. In devising the conference, however, we also wanted to explore this writer's 'place' in literary, cultural, and social histories: his relation to the poetic tradition, for example, and to his contemporaries, or to the post-war world. The result of this deliberately baggy theme was a rich two days of discussion and exchange, with twenty-five fascinating papers presented by scholars who themselves approached the topic from a wide range of places, geographical and intellectual. Some of the fruits of that conference were published in the most recent number of the *Journal*, and it gives me great pleasure, as guest editor of the present one, to introduce seven more in this Special Issue on *Ted Hughes and Place*.

The essays published here reflect the breadth of proceedings during those two days last summer. Robert Layton, an eminent anthropologist, opens this Special Issue by asking what Hughes learned from his discipline. Although Hughes's experience of the Cambridge Anthropology degree may not have given him everything he wanted, Layton shows how Hughes's studies would pay off in his poetry and prose, not least in the form of his masterpiece *Crow*, a work which also looms large in Felicity Powell's exploration of the poet's post-nuclear landscapes. Her essay argues that Hughes's life was 'shaped by the atomic events of the twentieth century', and his writing 'charged by nuclear activity'. As in Layton's essay, the figure of the trickster emerges as a way for Hughes to heal rifts, in this case those opened up by Cold War culture.

The essays by Ruth Crossley and Kyra Piperides also speak to one another in intriguing ways. Though both explore Hughes's Elmet, each one takes a very different approach. Crossley's literary-geographical project is rooted in a charming and totally unique archive created by her late father. Her multifaceted mapping of Elmet reveals an intensely personal kingdom with two capitals, Mytholmroyd and Heptonstall. Duality and difference also feature strongly in Piperides's lexical study, which tracks linguistic changes between *Remains of Elmet* and *Elmet* in order to interpret the evolution of these texts. Where the 1979 book focuses largely on the area's 'histories and geographies', *Elmet* opens up those 'personal histories' which Crossley's research is also uncovering and amplifying.

The final trio of essays demonstrate Hughes's far-reaching and diverse impact on his contemporaries and on contemporary culture. Perceptively and persuasively, Peter Fydler shows Hughes's influence on Nick Cave, in a paper which also glances at Captain Beefheart, Graham Coxon, and The Human League. With some remarkable intertextualities to be found in both Cave's lyrics and novels, Fydler's essay adds a new strand to the story of Hughes's influence. Nicola Presley looks at a more conservative figure in her exploration of the literary relationship between the poet and William Golding, whose novels clearly appealed to Hughes's anthropological imagination. Hughes's verse, in turn, seemingly appealed to Golding, whose bemused attitude to contemporary poetry may have prevented his own entry into that arena, but did not prevent his appreciation of a fellow grammar school boy he once called 'the greatest living English-language poet'. Daniel Weston brings the record up to date by discussing Hughes's impact on two immensely accomplished contemporary poets, Alice Oswald and John Burnside. These writers do not simply inherit Hughes's legacy, but, as Weston argues, help to re-shape it by attending to the 'creatureliness' of his animal poems, a phenomenon neglected in early critical assessments of his work.

One of the gratifying aspects of guest-editing the *Journal* has been the opportunity to work with and present here a number of new voices in Hughes studies; I am grateful to Mark Wormald and to the Ted Hughes Society for the invitation to assemble this Special Issue. Attention now turns to the Society's 8th International Ted Hughes Conference, *Poetry in the Making*, taking place this August at Gregynog Hall in Powys, with an impressive line-up organised by Carrie Smith.

James Underwood
University of Huddersfield

List of abbreviations of works by Ted Hughes

C	*Crow* (London: Faber & Faber, 1970)
CP	*Collected Poems*, ed. Paul Keegan (London: Faber & Faber, 2003)
E	*Elmet* (London: Faber & Faber, 1994)
G	*Gaudete* (London: Faber & Faber, 1977)
LTH	*Letters of Ted Hughes*, ed. Christopher Reid (London: Faber & Faber, 2007)
PM	*Poetry in the Making* (London: Faber & Faber, 1989 [1967])
RE	*Remains of Elmet* (London: Faber & Faber, 1979)
W	*Wodwo* (London: Faber & Faber, 1967)
WP	*Winter Pollen* (London: Faber & Faber, 1994)

What Did Ted Hughes Learn from Anthropology?

Robert Layton

During the second year of his undergraduate career in Cambridge, Ted Hughes found that study in the English Department was stifling his creativity, and he transferred to Anthropology. I never met Ted Hughes, although we had a friend in common, Sue Alliston. Sue and I were among the twelve or so Bachelor's degree students studying Anthropology at University College London from 1963 to 1966. Yet it was only recently I learned that Hughes switched from English Literature to Archaeology and Anthropology in the autumn of 1953.[1] The paper asks what Hughes may have hoped to gain from anthropology, what he is likely to have actually learned, and how anthropological knowledge informs his poetry and prose. The dramatic story of Hughes's flight from English is related in his 1993 essay 'The Burnt Fox'. Hughes read English for his first two years as an undergraduate (1951–3). Although he had expected a course in English would help him with his own writing, it had the opposite effect. Elaine Feinstein records that Hughes disliked F.R. Leavis's practice of dissecting poetry, although Neil Roberts argues that Hughes exaggerated Leavis's destructive effect.[2] The problem came to a head as he struggled with one of the last essays he had to submit before his Part I exams. Going to bed with only the first sentence completed, Hughes dreamed the figure of a fox the size of a wolf entered his room. It spread a burnt and bleeding hand on the blank space of the essay page saying, 'Stop this – you

[2] Elaine Feinstein, *Ted Hughes: The Life of a Poet* (New York: Norton, 2001), p. 23, p. 39; Neil Roberts, 'Ted Hughes and Cambridge', in *Ted Hughes: from Cambridge to Collected*, eds. Mark Wormald, Neil Roberts and Terry Gifford (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 17–32; Lucas Myers, *Crow Steered/Bergs Appeared: Additional Notes and Minor Corrections*, at http://www.ted-hughes.info/biographical/reviews/myers-crow-steered-notes-corrections (accessed 24 April 2018).

are destroying us' (*WP* 9). Thus it was that Hughes transferred to Archaeology and Anthropology for his third and final year of studies in 1953.

Robert Graves's *The White Goddess*

What did Hughes hope to learn from anthropology? When a teenager, his two passions had been poetry and nature. As a younger child, Hughes had accompanied his older brother on shooting expeditions. When he was fifteen, after his brother left home, Hughes began to see animals from their point of view and realised he had been disturbing their lives. At the same time he began to write poems, although not animal poems (*WP* 11). These two passions were brought together in Robert Graves's book, *The White Goddess*, which Hughes's old English master gave him in 1951, before he began his undergraduate studies. Ann Skea cites a letter Hughes wrote to Nick Gammage saying that when he first read *The White Goddess* he felt 'slight resentment to find [Graves] taking possession of what I considered my secret patch'.[3]

There are two main themes in *The White Goddess*. One is a lament for the loss of a poetic world view founded on the worship of the White Goddess, the three-fold muse. A Greek alphabet, originating in Bronze Age Crete and sacred to the Goddess, was taken to ancient Ireland, where it was used to construct riddles encoding the identity of the Goddess and her male followers. The rise of a patriarchal male god forced the cult of the Goddess underground, where it survived concealed in the medieval worship of the Virgin Mary, only to be finally destroyed by Puritanism and the Darwinian debunking of Biblical myth.

The second principal theme in *The White Goddess* consists of the purported decoding of the medieval Welsh poetic riddles, revealing to the reader a rich, but lost, world of metaphor and transformation, a poetic language uniting people, animals and plants, and the seasons. The Goddess's consorts are the gods of the seasons, nurtured, loved and then torn apart, only to be reborn. Gwion, tasked to stir the Goddess Cerridwen's cauldron in which she is preparing a potion to make her own son highly intelligent, accidentally licks some of the potion from his finger, and immediately becomes infinitely wise. She pursues him: he changes himself into a hare, she into a greyhound; he into a fish, she into an otter; he a bird, she a hawk. 'The Song of Amergin' begins with 13 statements, including: 'I am a hawk on a cliff, I am a tear of the sun, I am fair among flowers, I am a boar, I am a salmon in a pool [...]'.[4] This,

---

[3] Feinstein, p. 20; Ann Skea, 'Ted Hughes and The Goddess', at http://ann.skea.com/THandGoddess.html.

[4] Robert Graves, *The White Goddess: A Historical Grammar of Poetic Myth* (London: Faber, 1961), p. 205.

Graves argues, signifies qualities such as deftness and immersion in 'the pool of knowledge'.[5] No wonder Ted Hughes felt Graves had stolen his patch!

Although F.R. Leavis's approach to literary criticism may have destroyed Hughes's hope of gaining inspiration from the study of English at Cambridge, two other senior members of the Cambridge department may have influenced his decision positively. Basil Willey was Professor of English Literature at Cambridge from 1946 to 1965 and a Fellow of Hughes's college, Pembroke. E.M.W. Tillyard was Master of Jesus College from 1945 to 1959. His book *The Elizabethan World Picture* was widely read: first published in 1943, the sixth impression was issued in 1952. Tillyard described a world view that had been commonplace from the Middle Ages until the eighteenth century, 'a conception of order [that] was so taken for granted, so much a part of the collective mind of the people, that it is hardly mentioned except in explicitly didactic passages'.[6] It was a cosmic order based on harmony, on which depended both social order on Earth and the orderly passage of the seasons. Minerals were situated at the base, then plant life, then sentient life, then man, then the angels, with God at the apex. Although its existence had become precarious by Elizabethan times, Tillyard provided numerous quotations to show how Elizabethan poets and playwrights drew on this world view to image a particular point.

Willey explored what had happened to the Medieval world view once it was exposed to the Enlightenment. Scholastic thought, as he terms it, was predominantly metaphysical, concerned with being and essence; answering the 'why' questions that children ask, but adults dismiss as unanswerable and then forget. Science, on the other hand, addressed 'how' questions. The rejection of scholasticism was a disaster in as much as science unduly elevated empirical truth and claimed a privileged representation of 'reality'. A poet who feels his constructions are 'true' as well as agreeable or expressive will write a different sort of poetry to one who feels they are fictions.[7] Hughes echoes Willey when he writes that 'the undertow of Eliot's early tortured self-examination was the knowledge that […] religious institutions and rituals had ceased to be real in the old sense, and that they continued to exist only as forms of "make-believe" […]. A new kind of reality had supplanted them' (*WP* 269).

Graves recognized what the scientific revolution had done to poetry: while the function of poetry was once 'a warning to man that he must keep in harmony with the family of living creatures among which he was born, by obedience to the lady of the house; it is now a reminder that he has disregarded the warnings, turned the house upside down by capricious experiments in philosophy, science and industry, and

---

[5] Graves, p. 205.

[6] E.M.W. Tillyard, *The Elizabethan World Picture* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1945), p. 7.

[7] Basil Willey, *The Seventeenth Century Background: Studies in the Thought of the Age in Relation to Poetry and Religion* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1949), p. 87.

brought ruin on himself and his family'.[8] Graves defines poetic thought as the ability 'to resolve speech into its original images and rhythms and re-combine these on several simultaneous levels of thought into a multiple sense'. In prose, by contrast, 'one only thinks on one level at a time, and no combination of words needs to contain more than a single sense'.[9] This chimes well with Thomas Sprat's 1667 *History of the Royal Society*, which reports that the Society's members deliberately stripped their speech of digressions and swellings of style to return to clear sense and mathematical plainness.[10] Graves's conclusion thus concurs with Willey's, but Graves tells the story through the personae of the White Goddess and her rival, the Male God of War. Willey writes within the Cartesian discourse, Graves in the 'Scholastic' discourse. Since Jonathan Miles-Watson also identifies the recurrent theme of a 'Sovereignty goddess' and her two male consorts in Welsh legend, perhaps (as Mary-Ann Constantine notes) it is less important that Graves's extended historical reconstruction is scientifically improbable, and his translations linguistically approximate, if his argument stimulates great poetry.[11] Perhaps it does not; Graves himself wrote that '*The White Goddess* is about how poets think; it's not a scientific book'.[12] Hughes follows Graves's poetic idiom, telling the story of the loss of poetic truth as the contest between two embodied forces, the White Goddess and the God of scientific rationalism (e.g. *WP* 106).

Graves, unlike Tillyard, drew attention to the half-hearted representation of the Medieval world picture in some of Shakespeare's work. Graves's argument feeds directly into Hughes's essays on Shakespeare. In his 'Notes on Shakespeare', for example, Hughes argues that Elizabeth was 'already, automatically, the representative of the old goddess – the real deity of Medieval England, the Celtic, pre-Christian goddess, with her tail wound round those still very much alive pre-Christian and non-Christian worlds' (*WP* 109). In *Venus and Adonis*, on the other hand, 'Adonis's Calvinist spectacles […] divide nature, and especially love, the creative force of nature, into abstract good and physical evil' (*WP* 114).

It is therefore reasonable to suppose that what Hughes particularly wanted from anthropology was access to world views that had not been destroyed by the scientific revolution: at the start of 'Myths, Metres, Rhythms', Hughes noted that 'When the shared group understanding of all members is complete then a mere

---

[8] Graves, p. 14.
[9] Graves, p. 223.
[10] Willey, p. 212.
[11] Jonathan Miles-Watson, *Welsh Mythology: A Neo-Structuralist Analysis* (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2009); Mary-Ann Constantine, 'The Battle for the "Battle of the Trees"', in *Graves and the Goddess: Essays on Robert Graves's The White Goddess*, eds. Ian Firla and Grevel Lindop (London: Associated University Presses, 2003), p. 48.
[12] Quoted in Grevel Lindop, 'The White Goddess: Sources, Contexts, Meanings', in Firla and Lindop (eds.), p. 38.

touching of the tokens of their mythology is enough for complete communication' (*WP* 310).

Undergraduate Anthropology at Cambridge in the 1950s[13]
It is striking that Ted Hughes was by no means unique at Cambridge in transferring from another discipline into Anthropology. John Barnes transferred into Anthropology for his final year in 1938, after two years studying Mathematics. Jack Goody was accepted to study English Literature in 1938, but spent three years in a German prisoner-of-war camp. When he resumed university study in 1946, Goody transferred to Archaeology and Anthropology. Jean la Fontaine recalls two students who subsequently became professional anthropologists, Martin Southwold and Wyatt MacGaffey, transferring into Anthropology in 1952, 'I think', la Fontaine says, from English. James Woodburn was accepted to study History at Cambridge in 1952 but, like Hughes, was required to undertake two years' National Service, and on arrival at Cambridge transferred to Anthropology. Lucas Myers started a degree in English in the autumn of 1954, but had transferred to Social Anthropology by Christmas.[14]

Hirschberg infers that by changing his course of study, Hughes came under the influence of what he terms the 'Cambridge School' of Anthropology, indebted most prominently to James Frazer, and to Jane Harrison, Gilbert Murray, Francis Cornford, and A.B. Cook.[15] All of these had, however, long retired by the time Hughes arrived; Harrison and Murray ceased lecturing in the 1920s, Cornford and Cook in the 1930s. Their speculative history, asserting that classical myth and theatre originated in the rituals of Divine Kingship, had been completely rejected by the following generation of anthropologists, including the Head of Department, Meyer Fortes. Two schools of thought dominated British anthropology during the mid-twentieth century, Functionalism and Structuralism. Fortes's generation were trained in Functionalism by Bronislaw Malinowski and Alfred Radcliffe-Brown, who introduced rigorous, long-term fieldwork among small-scale, non-literate societies in what were then British colonies. Speculative history, classing the variety of contemporary societies as representatives of supposed stages in the ascent to civilisation, was emphatically rejected in favour of studying the contemporary role of myth and ritual in justifying

---

[13] Thanks to the dedicated work of Alan MacFarlane, an emeritus member of staff in the Cambridge Anthropology Department, an extensive collection of interviews with former students is available on the internet at http://www.alanmacfarlane.com/ go to'Projects', then 'Anthropological ancestors'). Among those students whose time nearly overlapped with Hughes, and who went on to become professional anthropologists, there are revealing interviews with Jean la Fontaine, Nur Yalman, and Anthony Forge (undergraduates 1950–3), and James Woodburn (1954–7). Additional relevant information is provided by John Barnes, who took Part II in Anthropology in 1938.

[14] Myers, p. 3

[15] Stuart Hirschberg, *Myth in the Poetry of Ted Hughes: A Guide to the Poems* (Wolfhound Press, Dublin, 1981), p. 7.

and upholding the social order. Customs in small-scale societies were interpreted as functioning elements in an integrated social system that had to be explained in context. Malinowski argued that myth 'is always made *ad hoc* to fulfil a certain sociological function', providing a charter for action in the present. He emphatically rejected the use of myth to reconstruct a people's long-term history, dismissing such attempts as 'a mental game, attractive and absorbing [...] but always remaining outside the field of observation and sound conclusion'.[16]

Structuralism was popularised in France by Claude Lévi-Strauss and brought to Britain by Edmund Leach in Cambridge and Mary Douglas at University College London.[17] Structuralists argued that the *meaning* of a custom had to be deduced from its place in a cognitive structure. Lévi-Strauss identified a number of mythical themes that recurred through lowland South America. Legends about the origin of cooking represented the transition from nature to culture. Legends of the first two men to exchange their sisters in marriage represented the origin of society.[18] Like the Functionalists, Lévi-Strauss rejected the idea that such legends had any historical truth; they were cognitive models for people to think with. It is therefore not easy to work out what poetic stimulus Hughes might have gained from the Functionalist approach he would have been taught. Hughes studied the Part I programme, which included introductory courses in ethnography, prehistory, and physical and social anthropology (see Figure 1).[19] Almost all the staff were experts in West Africa and, if they had an interest in theory, it was with Functionalist theories explaining how social order was sustained in societies lacking overall leadership. Extended social kinship provided the answer.

Meyer Fortes discouraged appeals to psycho-analysis. He told Nur Yalman to read Durkheim and Weber, and Durkheim is regarded as the founding father of Functionalism.[20] Durkheim assumed that what he called psychological impulses were general to humankind as part of our bodily constitution and could not, therefore, explain the diversity of human societies or their beliefs.[21] Reo Fortune is recalled as the wild man of the Cambridge department. His lectures and conversations were hard to follow, but he was a charming person. As Neil Roberts suggests, Fortune's 1932 study of sorcerery in Melanesia, *Sorcerers of Dobu*, may have appealed to Hughes, but

---

[16] Bronislaw Malinowski, *Magic, Science and Religion* (New York: Doubleday, 1954), p. 125.

[17] Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 1966).

[18] See, for example, Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked: Introduction to the Science of Mythology*, transl. J. and D. Weightman (London: Cape, 1970).

[19] See also Roberts, 'Ted Hughes and Cambridge', p. 19. My thanks to Neil for supplying a copy of the Part I syllabus, reproduced as Figure 1.

[20] See Robert Layton, *An Introduction to Theory in Anthropology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 18–24 and chapter 2.

[21] Emile Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method* (London: Macmillan, 1938).

it is a Functionalist account.[22] Miles Burkett lectured on Archaeology. According to John Barnes, Burkett *was* the archaeologist; his more famous colleagues did not lecture to undergraduates. Like a number of other Cambridge staff he had published his lectures, and we can therefore follow them in his book. Ethel Lindgren, a now-forgotten anthropologist, is recalled by Jean la Fontaine as a very tall woman married to a much smaller Lapp (Saami) who was reputed to be a Lapp millionaire with reindeer all over Sweden. Immediately after Hughes graduated, Fortes persuaded Ethel Lindgren to resign and, in an inspired move, appointed Edmund Leach in her place. The dominant trend in Cambridge anthropology in 1953–4 was, therefore, the analysis of how different institutions within a society support each other to create a system in equilibrium. Speculative history is rejected. Anthropology studies the emergent properties of social systems, not individual psychology. The legends and poetry of other cultures must be placed in their cultural context for their social functions to be understood.

Shamanism fascinated Hughes. Did he learn anything about it during his undergraduate study of anthropology? While Hughes was doing his own reading on the occult, Burkett's lecture on Upper Palaeolithic art is a possible influence.[23] Burkett sticks largely to the early twentieth-century interpretation of this art as the product of sympathetic magic. Republished in several of his books, Burkett's interpretation envisages:

> A group of Magdalenians led on ever deeper into the hill by the sorcerer – a man who by temperament, training and custom is no longer troubled by the strange surroundings. Surely by the time our party had reached the paintings they would be in a suggestible state of mind which could be readily influenced by the officiating sorcerer? Surely he would be able to inspire them with confidence as he shows them the animals that they need for food whose spirits he has already captured [...]?[24]

Lindgren undoubtedly had an interest in shamanism, confirmed in a report by Violet Alford:

> The second lecture was by Dr Ethel John Lindgren, Editor of the Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, on Dec. 11th [1944] at Cecil Sharp House. Her subject was Shamanism, and her field of work Manchuria [...]. Dr Lindgren noted the neurotic or hysteric tendencies in these people, who do not conform to the usual tribal type. Yet these eccentricities [...] by no means prevent them possessing a shrewdness and sharpness of observation which serve them well enough in their dealings with their own people [...]. The chief magical object is the

---

[22] Personal communication.
[23] See Feinstein, p. 37.
[24] Miles Burkett, *The Old Stone Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1933), pp. 212–3.

drum which is beaten throughout the séance, while the Priestess is dancing, singing and prophesying [...]. The Shaman's performance, in a small tent, crowded with people, looked upon as a manifestation of spirit-power, some times of animal spirits, when beast cries are uttered, goes on for three days.[25]

The term 'séance', and the references to 'animal spirits' and 'beast cries', are interesting foretastes of Hughes's later work.

Edmund Leach became the foremost advocate of cognitive structuralism in British anthropology. During his first year in Cambridge, Leach acted as James Woodburn's final-year tutor and supervisor; Woodburn found him wonderfully charismatic. Leach was also Lucas Myers's academic supervisor.[26] Myers asked Leach for his opinion of *The White Goddess*, to which Leach responded, 'Oh, does that interest you? The trouble is that those societies were not really matriarchal'. (Leach was correct: ancient matriarchy is best regarded as a Malinowskian mythical charter for poetic inspiration.) Myers continues:

Ted, if pressed, would have acknowledged reservation about the extent to which Graves was 'historical', but he and Dan [Huws] and members of our circle were attracted to the 'grammar of the language of poetic myth' and its central thesis: True poetry rises from a sense of the forces of life and death as they pass through nature and can be stirred forth or represented by a White Goddess.[27]

At the time when Myers was an undergraduate, however, Leach's approach to myth remained quasi-Functionalist: alternative tellings of a particular myth were shaped to provide a justification for factionalism and social change.[28] Stanley Tambiah's biography of Leach dates the start of his interest in Lévi-Strauss's approach to myth as a cognitive system to 1961, citing an early paper titled 'Lévi-Strauss in the Garden of Eden', written after Leach had met the linguist Roman Jakobson, and revised in 1962 and again in 1969. [29] This was already six years after Myers had graduated. Hughes clearly developed an interest in Structuralism. His library contains Roland Barthes's *Elements of Semiology* (1967) and *Writing Degree Zero* (1967), Lévi-Strauss's *Totemism* (1964), and the first three volumes of Lévi-Strauss's *Introduction to a Science of Mythology*: *The Raw and the Cooked* (1970), *From Honey to Ashes* (1973), and *The Origin of Table Manners* (1978).

---

[25] Violet Alford, 'Anthropology and Folk Art', *Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society* 4:5 (1944), pp. 204–5.

[26] Myers, p. 6.

[27] Myers, pp. 6–7.

[28] See, for example, Edmund Leach, *Political Systems of Highland Burma* (London: Athlone, 1954).

[29] Stanley J. Tambiah, 'Edmund Ronald Leach 1910–1989', in the *Proceedings of the British Academy* 97:293 (1997), at https://www.britac.ac.uk/pubs/proc/files/97p293.pdf (accessed 24 April 2018); Edmund Leach, *Genesis as Myth and Other Essays* (London: Cape, 1969).

Hughes's Prose Essays

When *Winter Pollen* was published in 1994, Ted Hughes sent a copy to his old Cambridge tutor, Doris Wheatley. He wrote:

> Dear Doris –
>
> I don't know if I should even oppress your attention with such a big heavy book. I mean – just the effort of looking at it tires me a little. Anyway, it's what an editor has made of all the essays I didn't write at Cambridge. The ideal use for it is – as a mat for your teacup.[30]

How Wheatley responded is not known, but if I were marking these essays, I would have given top marks to 'Tricksters and Tar Babies', the review of John Greenway's *Literature Among the Primitives* (1964) and *The Primitive Reader* (1965). 'Primitive' literature, Hughes clarifies, is the literature of oral cultures. Little primitive literature has been properly recorded: missionaries emasculated it, as did lawmakers, and the early anthropologists were not much better, treating it as 'infantile fantasies' or fairy-tales unfit for children (*WP* 74). Frazer, Muller, Jane Harrison, Jung, Graves, Radin and others have tried to draw bold conclusions, 'but their grand hypotheses proliferate like the tales themselves' (note Hughes's rejection of Frazer and Harrison, two of the early anthropologists whom Hirschberg claimed had influenced him) (*WP* 75). Hughes appears to paraphrase Malinowski when he writes that, 'Tracing the paths of cultural diffusion is no more than a briefly amusing game' and, he adds, the picture is further confused because not only does every narrator of a tale in oral literature tell a different version, the same performer even tells a different version at each narration. Oral tales are generally regarded as useless for historical research: the anthropologist must go into the field to discover 'how these tales do work for the society they are formed in, how they justify and fortify and explain the prevailing ethos, and just what they reveal that is otherwise secret, the deeper attitudes behind the ones that society sanctions openly' (*WP* 76). Interestingly, Hughes expresses disappointment that Greenway excludes the tales which Hughes finds the most inspired and astonishing, 'and which resemble nothing in Western Literature except Kafka', namely, those collected by Radin in *African Folktales and Sculpture* and his documentation of the Winnebago Trickster Cycle (*WP* 77). Hughes explained why he found this literature important: 'Trickster literature expresses […] the renewing, sacred spirit, searching its depths for new resources and directives, exploring towards new emergence and growth' (*WP* 240).

---

[30] Quoted in a personal communication from Aidan Baker, 30 January 2013. Wheatley had contacted Hughes in 1989, and they continued to correspond until she died a few months before Hughes himself in 1998.

Spirit Helper and Shaman

Mircea Eliade, in his study of shamanism, reviewed by Hughes in 1964, describes how the trainee shaman must learn a secret language in order to communicate with spirits: 'Very often this secret language is actually the "animal language" or originates in animal cries'.[31] While Eliade apparently reinforces the report of Hughes's teacher Ethel Lindgren of the shaman uttering 'beast cries', these are not nonsense syllables. Based on her own fieldwork in Siberia, the anthropologist Roberte Hamayon maps out the structural logic of the shaman's relationship with the spirit world. The animal species on which hunters rely are animated by spirits. Human society stands in a reciprocal relationship with the world of spirits. The shaman's role is to negotiate an exchange in which the gift of animal prey from the spirits creates a debt paid for by sickness and death in the human community. To legitimate his role as the one who carries out the exchange, the shaman must marry the daughter or sister of the game-giving spirit, elk or reindeer. He must also make himself as identical as he can to his spirit affines (relatives by marriage), incorporating antlers into his headgear and imitating the behaviour of elk or reindeer. This is why 'he jumps, prances, cries or snorts'.[32] They are not the beast cries of a pre-linguistic stage in human evolution, nor are the female spirits described by Eliade survivals from an ancient matriarchy; both are meaningful elements in a contemporary culture.

Hirschberg divides Hughes's career up to *Gaudete* into three phases: 'We see Hughes as self-sufficient, self-centred Shaman, then as misfit trickster and lastly as tormented Scapegoat'. He goes on: 'For Hughes, in his earliest animal poems, the process of writing the poem recreates the rite of blood brotherhood between the Shaman and his animal Helper'.[33] Yet genuine shamanism is, as Hughes was aware, a dangerous profession requiring lengthy training. In a letter of August 1964 to Myers, Hughes noted that an Asian shaman undergoes several years' training (*LTH*, 235). In his 1970 interview with Ekbert Faas, Hughes spoke of 'invoking a jaguar-like body of elemental force, demonic force', continuing: 'In a perfectly cultured society one imagines that the jaguar-like elementals would be invoked only by self-disciplinarians of a very advanced grade. I am not one'.[34]

The North American institution of the spirit helper seems, in my assessment, closer to Hughes's inspiration in his early poems. Radin says all Winnebago seek a

---

[31] Mircea Eliade, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* (London: Routledge, 1964), p. 97.

[32] Roberte Hamayon, 'Shamanism in Siberia: From Partnership in Supernature to Counter-Power in Society', in *Shamanism, History, and the State*, eds. Nicholas Thomas and Caroline Humphrey (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), p. 79.

[33] Hirschberg, p. 9, p. 8.

[34] Ekbert Faas, *Ted Hughes: The Unaccommodated Universe* (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1980), p. 199.

spirit helper: 'every child, male and female, fasted between the ages of nine and eleven, and tried to acquire [...] a guardian spirit'.[35] I was fortunate to be told about the spirit quest among the Chinook of the Columbia River at a conference on rock art in September 2002.[36] Participants visited Miller Island on the Columbia River with the Chinook elders Viola Kalama and Tuxli Winch, where the quest for a spirit helper was elucidated for us. Viola explained that rock shelters on the island contained paintings made by young people on their personal spirit quest, seeking their helper, a painting of the animal that was going to help them through their lives. Later in the day a third elder, James Selam, explained that each child has his own timeline, his own creative power: 'When a child is ready they [the elders] send them out into the mountain. You have to go on your own. If there's two of you, you get talking'. Willy Selam, James's son, noted the purity of vision achieved through the quest. He said: 'you see in your mind's eye the power in everything, even in a blade of grass. That's why people become singers. The world is too beautiful for even our language to describe'.[37]

Hughes's account of inspiration in *Poetry in the Making* resembles Willy Selam's account. We cannot write poetry, Hughes states, until we learn to break into our inner life, the 'world of final reality', of memory, emotion, imagination, intelligence, and natural common sense (*WP* 16). In order to do so, we must learn to focus on one thing, as Hughes himself does in 'View of a Pig' (*WP* 17; for the origin of this poem, see Faas, pp. 208–9). The same process occurs when a fisherman stares at his float for hours: all the nagging, distracting impulses dissolve, and '*you enter one of the orders of bliss*' (*WP* 19, my emphasis). When Faas asked Hughes about 'Hawk Roosting' during their 1970 interview, Hughes replied: 'Actually what I had in mind was that in this hawk Nature is thinking. Simply Nature'.[38]

Shamanism is different to the spirit quest. On the north-west coast of North America, shamans have passed through a second stage of initiation after the spirit quest, open only to the gifted.[39] In 1918 J. A. Teit, who worked closely with the anthropologist Franz Boas, noted that in the Columbia River area the training to become a shaman took four years.[40] Chinook elders also made it clear to us that the art of adolescents on the spirit quest must be distinguished from the art of shamans

---

[35] Paul Radin, *The Trickster: A Study in American Indian Mythology* (New York: Philosophical Society, 1956), p. 115.

[36] Robert Layton, 'Rock Art, Identity and Indigeneity', in *A Companion to Rock Art*, eds. Jo McDonald and Peter Veth (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), pp. 439–54.

[37] These are close paraphrases, based on notes I made at the time.

[38] Faas, p. 199

[39] See, for example, Violet Garfield and Paul Wingert, *The Tsimshian Indians and their Arts* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1966); and Aldonis Jonaitis, *From the Land of the Totem Poles* (New York: American Museum of Natural History, 1988).

[40] J.A. Teit, 'Notes on rock painting in general, by J.A. Teit, Spences Bridge, 1918', J.A. Teit papers, MSS M3689, original hand-written typescript, National Archives of Canada.

on the Columbia River. Tuxli Winch said medicine people had different sites to those young people going on the vision quest. Willy Selam added that 'a person of power would place his mark in a certain place and that would take care of his power; that's a personal thing and it's not generally discussed in public'.

If Hughes had a spirit helper, it was surely the fox. He had already experienced close encounters with foxes before the burnt fox warned him to abandon the study of English at Cambridge. Gerald Hughes records the occasion when he and his brother found a fox killed by a deadfall trap. That night, while they were camping, Ted told him 'of a vivid dream about an old lady and a fox cub that, the old lady said, had been orphaned by the trap'. Gerald continues: 'I've often felt that this incident marked the beginning of Ted's great interest in the fox'.[41] Keith Sagar describes another such encounter, when Hughes and his parents were living in Mexborough: 'on one occasion, as he climbed one side of the hollow, quite unknown to him a fox was climbing the other. They arrived at the ridge simultaneously, and looked into each other's eyes from a distance of a few inches. For a split second, which seemed timeless, Hughes felt the fox had leapt into his head'.[42] It was two years after Hughes's encounter with the burnt fox that he wrote his first animal poem.[43] While 'sitting up late one snowy night in dreary lodgings in London', Hughes sensed a fox approaching, leaving its paw prints in the snow:

> 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. (*CP* 21)

Recounting this experience, Hughes asks what kind of fox can step right into his head, answering: 'It is both a fox and a spirit' (*WP* 14). Hughes seems to have experienced, without the guidance of elders, a kind of poetic insight that was institutionalised in the North American spirit quest.

Shamanism

The spirit quest was not an institution Hughes would have learned about in his study of anthropology (on the contrary, it was the burnt fox who led him to anthropology), but it does seem likely that he would have heard Ethel Lindgren lecture on shamanism. David Ross, who shared lodgings with Myers, 'was impressed by Hughes's knowledge of primitive legends and was attracted to his notions of shamanism, as practised in primitive societies [...]. Hughes came to find this way of thinking a fruitful means of

---

[41] Gerald Hughes, *Ted and I: A Brother's Memoir* (London: Robson Press, 2012), p. 56.
[42] Keith Sagar, *The Laughter of Foxes: A Study of Ted Hughes* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), p. 42.
[43] Ann Skea, 'A Timeline of Hughes' Life and Work', in Sagar, pp. xiv–xxxiv.

releasing his own imagination'.[44] Brian Cox, a fellow student, told Elaine Feinstein that Hughes was already fascinated by the Ouija board while an undergraduate.[45]

The role of the shaman in central Asia and northern North America is to secure good hunting for their community and, during trance, to discover the cause of illness and starvation. If Hughes did seek to emulate this role, then it was surely through his use of the Ouija board to help Sylvia Plath's creativity and relieve her of the weight of her dead father's influence. According to Sagar, Hughes and Plath asked the spirit who spoke to them through the Ouija board to suggest good subjects for poems.[46] Daniel Huws confesses that during a Ouija board session in 1956 he made up answers purporting to come from spirits, and wonders whether other participants in later sessions succumbed to the same temptation.[47]

Hughes appears to have been captivated by accounts of the shaman's initiation and there are numerous books on shamanism in his library held by Emory University. In his letter to Anne-Lorraine Bujon, Hughes refers to Knut Rasmussen's account of the North American Inuit (*LTH* 628). Rasmussen's book contains several vivid accounts of becoming an Angakoq (shaman), a process that combines instruction with periods of deprivation in solitude.[48] During August 1964, after he had received Eliade's *Shamanism* for review, Hughes wrote to Myers: 'You'll be glad to know that your (& my) obsession with physical disintegration, being torn into fragments & fitted together again, is the great Shaman initiation dream, & that after such a dream, an Asiatic knows that if he does not take up shamanising he will die' (*LTH* 235). The shaman's experience of being taken apart and re-assembled by spirits is well documented.[49] Faas provides the powerful insight that Hughes was haunted by Plath's account of experiencing electric shock therapy as a sense that her body was being reassembled from spare parts.[50]

Anthropology and Poetry: *Crow* and the Winnebago Trickster
Perhaps the greatest reward that Hughes gained from anthropology was the inspiration it provided for *Crow*. The first Crow poems were published in 1967, eighteen months after Hughes's review of Greenway's *The Primitive Reader*.[51] Radin's work on the North American Trickster, in particular his transcription of a performance of the trickster legend by a Winnebago (Ho-chunk) elder that had been recorded for

---

[44] Myers, p. 31.
[45] Feinstein, p. 41, p. 26.
[46] Sagar, p. 59.
[47] Daniel Huws, *Memories of Ted Hughes, 1952–1963* (Nottingham: Five Leaves Press, 2010), p. 43.
[48] Knut Rasmussen, *Across Arctic America* (New York: Puttnam, 1927), pp. 31–4, pp. 82–6, p. 127, pp. 271–8.
[49] See, for example, Piers Vitebsky, *Shamanism* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995).
[50] Faas, pp. 74–6
[51] Skea, n.p.

him by Sam Blowsnake, provided Hughes with a poetic world view with which he could intuitively identify.[52] Given his acknowledgement of the anthropological assertion that customs must be understood in their cultural context, how could Hughes legitimately draw on another cosmology as a source for his own poetry? The Trickster dwells in a pre-colonial landscape, inhabited by native animals and people living in seasonally-occupied villages; Crow mostly occupies an industrial landscape. The Trickster starts as a tribal chief, becomes an outcast after ridiculing an important ceremony, but is eventually readmitted to human society. Crow is never human, but embarks on an error-strewn quest to become human.

Why Crow? Asked by Faas why he had chosen Crow as protagonist, Hughes replied that he had been inspired by folktales in which the hero succeeds by rejecting the obvious choice, such as the fine horses in the stable, in favour of the dirty, scabby little foal in the corner: 'I throw out the eagles and choose the Crow'.[53] The crow is not an arbitrary choice: he is not a hunter (like the 'Hawk in the Rain') but a scavenger. Radcliffe-Brown wrote an influential paper on totemism, originally published in 1929 but republished in a collection of essays in 1952. This collection was essential reading in my undergraduate days ten years later, and it is possible that Hughes also read it. Radcliffe-Brown pointed out that the local groups in Australian Aboriginal society are often divided into moieties identified with paired but opposed animal totems, often birds such as white cockatoo and black cockatoo, or eaglehawk and crow – hunter and scavenger.[54] In his book *Totemism*, which Hughes owned, Lévi-Strauss celebrates Radcliffe-Brown's insight at some length, writing: 'While both birds [eaglehawk and crow] are carnivorous, one is a "hunter" and the other is a "thief"'.[55] Sagar proposes that Crow reaches for an irreducible starting point – 'I eat therefore I am' – and this is the Winnebago Trickster's position after he has been ejected from human society.[56] As analysed by Radin, the remainder of the cycle recounts his evolution from 'an amorphous, instinctual and unintegrated being into the one with the lineaments of man'.[57]

The Trickster narrative is humorous, but it is often a cruel humour; Crow is deadly serious, but at times bursts into apparently inexplicable laughter. Crow's laughter at colliding cars and nose-diving aircraft, and at the sight of death 'a hair's breadth out of the world' (*CP* 233, 243–4), has challenged critics. Bentley interprets it as the laughter of an infant whose bodily coherence is unsettled, while for Sagar it is

---

[52] Radin, p. 111.
[53] Faas, p. 199.
[54] Alfred Radcliffe-Brown, *Structure and Function in Primitive Society* (London: Cohen and West, 1952), p. 118.
[55] Claude Lévi-Strauss, Totemism (London: Merlin Press, 1964), pp. 87–8.
[56] Sagar, p. 123.
[57] Radin, p. 113.

the hollow, bitter laugh of a suffering but experienced adult close to despair.[58] Gifford and Roberts view the laughter as a manifestation of violent, Dionysiac energy.[59] It is also possible that Crow begins, like Trickster, as an outsider who is not fully socialised, incapable of empathising with other's feelings. In the 1970 Faas interview, Hughes says he is not quite sure what the laughter in *Crow* signifies, but he later explained in his 1985 essay 'Crow on the Beach' that the contrast between black comedy and trickster literature is like the contrast between two laughters, one bitter and destructive, one defiant and creative (*WP* 239–40).[60]

The Winnebago Trickster cycle is not the only source for *Crow*'s imagery. Following Scigaj, the White Goddess is evoked in 'Crow and Mama', 'Revenge Fable', 'Crow Goes Hunting' (the hare as a shape-changer), 'A Bedtime Story', 'Crow Blacker than Ever' and 'Truth Kills Everybody'.[61] There are also poems that draw on Hughes's personal experience: 'Lovesong', in which the male lover's kisses 'sucked out her whole past and future or tried to', while 'She bit him she gnawed him' recalls Hughes's first meeting with Plath as related by Feinstein: 'Plath bit him so long and so hard on his cheek that blood was running down his face' (*CP* 255–6).[62] 'Dawn's Rose' is a memory of Hughes hunting with his older brother at dawn (before Hughes moved from hunting to communing with nature): a crow calling, a gunshot, and blood from a wounded creature falls to the ground (*CP* 239). 'Crow's Account of the Battle' appears to describe an assault during the trench warfare of World War One, and perhaps alludes to his father's shell-shocked experiences: the horror of war, with intestines, brains, legs blown apart (*CP* 222–3). The image of a 'plane crashing in flames in 'In Laughter' was a recurrent nightmare Hughes suffered (*CP* 233).[63]

Sagar records that Hughes had been deeply impressed by the stoicism of the East European poets of his own generation whose work he published in *Modern Poetry in Translation*. One particular poem, 'The Fly', is strikingly similar in sentiment to *Crow*. Written by the Czech poet Miroslav Holub, whom Hughes says he first read in 1963, it appeared in the first issue of *Modern Poetry in Translation*. Gifford and Roberts note similarities between *Crow* and Zbigniew Herbert's poem 'At the Gate of the Valley'.[64]

---

[58] Paul Bentley, 'Depression and Ted Hughes's Crow, or through the Looking Glass and What Crow Found There', *Twentieth Century Literature* 43:1 (Spring 1997), p. 32; Sagar, p. 125.
[59] Terry Gifford and Neil Roberts, *Ted Hughes: A Critical Study* (London: Faber and Faber, 1981), p. 113.
[60] Faas, p. 207.
[61] Leonard Scigaj, *The Poetry of Ted Hughes: Form and Imagination* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1986), p. 132.
[62] Feinstein, p. 48.
[63] Faas, p. 121, p. 139.
[64] Sagar, p. 124; Faas, p. 211, 213; Gifford and Roberts, p. 131.

At times, Hughes seems to follow the logical sequence of the Trickster's descent into chaos and subsequent redemption that Radin elucidates, but if the published sequence of the *Crow* poems is mapped against that of the Trickster, then Crow has a Sisyphus-like quality of repeatedly falling back into despair. As Hughes comments in a 1979 letter to Gifford and Roberts, 'he regresses and has to make it again and again'.[65] Although Hughes denied any consistent structural parallels between *Crow* and any particular Trickster narrative, he explained to Faas that the mythic folktale behind *Crow* was a way to get 'a big body of ideas and energy moving on a track'.[66] In my assessment (see Table 1), the majority of the poems in the original (1970) version of *Crow* do indeed draw closely upon the logic of the Winnebago cycle published by Radin, another book that Hughes owned. In Radin's analysis, the Trickster begins his exile from human society as a barely conscious being whose body parts fight each other; he drifts blindly in the sea, and when he comes ashore, he cannot understand the language of the birds.[67] His first awakenings of consciousness occur when he experiences fear and recognises his name. He learns painfully that his body parts belong to him. Half-way through both sequences, there is an interlude of hope (see Table 1, Trickster episodes 32–3 and *Crow* 53, 56). Composition of the original series was halted by the suicide of Assia Wevill and death of their daughter Shura in 1969, forestalling a positive conclusion, but Crow was also finally to achieve redemption.[68]

Bentley relies on the re-cycled Freudianism of Lacan and Kristeva to reduce *Crow* to an infantile regression.[69] Scigaj depends, more reliably, on Hughes's own statements about *Crow*: it is a critique of reformed Christianity, which 'deposes Mother Nature and begets, on her prostrate body, Science, which proceeds to destroy Nature'.[70] In his 1979 letter to Gifford and Roberts, Hughes wrote that 'What Crow is grappling with is [...] what becomes – at the end of his mistakes and errantry – his bride and his almost humanity [...] the difference between his ego-system and the spirit dimension of his inner link with his creator'.[71]

*

Asking how anthropological knowledge informs Hughes's prose and poetry, I conclude that the teaching Hughes is likely to have experienced in the Cambridge Anthropology Department, with its emphasis on Functionalism (the importance of placing customs

---

[65] Quoted in Gifford and Roberts, p. 256.
[66] Scigaj, p. 145; Faas, p. 213.
[67] Radin, pp. 132–46.
[68] Sagar, p. 26.
[69] Bentley, p. 32.
[70] Scigaj, p. 122.
[71] Gifford and Roberts, p. 256.

and beliefs in their context and its aversion to speculative histories), may not have been as fruitful as he hoped, but did inform his reviews of books on oral literature. Lévi-Strauss's subsequent development of Structuralist theory was evidently more influential on his poetry. I take a critical view of claims that Hughes was a 'shaman', suggesting the individual spirit quest provides a closer parallel to Hughes's early experiences, and argue that Hughes's greatest reward from anthropology lies in his transformation of the Winnebago Trickster legend into *Crow*, by retaining the structure and logic of the original yet substituting images drawn from his own culture and experience for those in the original.

Figure 1: Syllabus for Part I of the Cambridge Archaeology and Anthropology Tripos for 1954–5
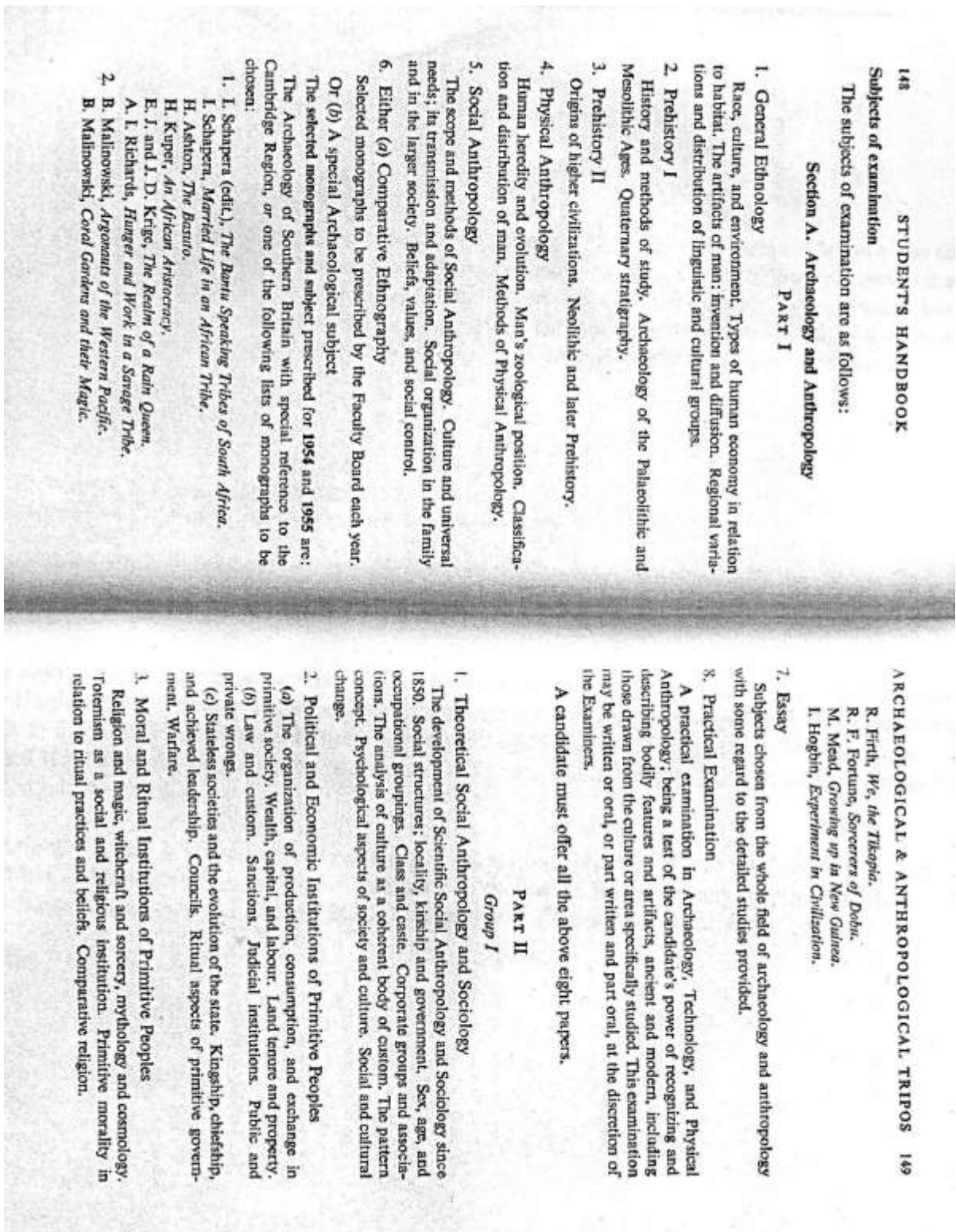
148   STUDENT'S HANDBOOK

Subjects of examination

The subjects of examination are as follows:

Section A. Archaeology and Anthropology

PART I

1. **General Ethnology**
Race, culture, and environment. Types of human economy in relation to habitat. The artifacts of man: invention and diffusion. Regional variations and distribution of linguistic and cultural groups.

2. **Prehistory I**
History and methods of study. Archaeology of the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic Ages. Quaternary stratigraphy.

3. **Prehistory II**
Origins of higher civilizations. Neolithic and later Prehistory.

4. **Physical Anthropology**
Human heredity and evolution. Man's zoological position. Classification and distribution of man. Methods of Physical Anthropology.

5. **Social Anthropology**
The scope and methods of Social Anthropology. Culture and universal needs; its transmission and adaptation. Social organization in the family and in the larger society. Beliefs, values, and social control.

6. **Either (a) Comparative Ethnography**
Selected monographs to be prescribed by the Faculty Board each year.

Or (b) A special Archaeological subject

The selected monographs and subject prescribed for 1954 and 1955 are:
The Archaeology of Southern Britain with special reference to the Cambridge Region, or one of the following lists of monographs to be chosen:

1. I. Schapera (edit.), *The Bantu Speaking Tribes of South Africa.*
   I. Schapera, *Married Life in an African Tribe.*
   H. Ashton, *The Basuto.*
   H. Kuper, *An African Aristocracy.*
   E. J. and J. D. Krige, *The Realm of a Rain Queen.*
   A. I. Richards, *Hunger and Work in a Savage Tribe.*
2. B. Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific.*
   B. Malinowski, *Coral Gardens and their Magic.*

ARCHAEOLOGICAL & ANTHROPOLOGICAL TRIPOS   149

R. Firth, *We, the Tikopia.*
R. F. Fortune, *Sorcerers of Dobu.*
M. Mead, *Growing up in New Guinea.*
I. Hogbin, *Experiment in Civilization.*

7. **Essay**
Subjects chosen from the whole field of archaeology and anthropology with some regard to the detailed studies provided.

8. **Practical Examination**
A practical examination in Archaeology, Technology, and Physical Anthropology; being a test of the candidate's power of recognizing and describing bodily features and artifacts, ancient and modern, including those drawn from the culture or area specifically studied. This examination may be written or oral, or part written and part oral, at the discretion of the Examiners.

A candidate must offer all the above eight papers.

PART II
Group I

1. **Theoretical Social Anthropology and Sociology**
The development of Scientific Social Anthropology and Sociology since 1850. Social structures; locality, kinship and government. Sex, age, and occupational groupings. Class and caste. Corporate groups and associations. The analysis of culture as a coherent body of custom. The pattern concept. Psychological aspects of society and culture. Social and cultural change.

2. **Political and Economic Institutions of Primitive Peoples**
(a) The organization of production, consumption, and exchange in primitive society. Wealth, capital, and labour. Land tenure and property.
(b) Law and custom. Sanctions. Judicial institutions. Public and private wrongs.
(c) Stateless societies and the evolution of the state. Kingship, chiefship, and achieved leadership. Councils. Ritual aspects of primitive government. Warfare.

3. **Moral and Ritual Institutions of Primitive Peoples**
Religion and magic, witchcraft and sorcery, mythology and cosmology. Totemism as a social and religious institution. Primitive morality in relation to ritual practices and beliefs. Comparative religion.

Table 1: Parallels between the Trickster and *Crow*

Trickster	Crow
1 Trickster is ejected from human society as punishment for abusing a ceremony.	1-4 Crow is born an outcast; 31 is created out of nothingness.
4-10 Completely unanchored, barely conscious; birds can speak but Trickster cannot understand them.	8 God's futile attempt to teach Crow speech; 49 Crow cannot comprehend the sea.
11 First awakenings of Trickster's consciousness: he becomes frightened, recognises his own name.	6 Crow separates himself from nature; 8 Crow experiences guilt; 9 Crow shivers when he sees the created world; 10 Crow is compelled to search for food; 45 Crow cannot separate himself from his body
12-14 Trickster learns that his body parts belong to him, but cannot accept responsibility for his own actions.	15 Crow makes the first joke; 22 Crow's consciousness of the World is enhanced; 40 Crow's organs are set loose and replaced.
15-21 Trickster becomes morally aware and attempts to become (re)socialised.	11 Hearing the lamentations of dead creatures, Crow wonders if he should become the light; 28 Crow waits for someone to make use of his abilities.
22 Suddenly Trickster becomes a good citizen.	33 Owl's song tells how things came to be as they are; 34 A woman comes to the threshold of being.
23-24 Humorously, Trickster's enormous farts scatter a village and its inhabitants' possessions.	7 Crow irresponsibly creates sex by cutting a worm in half, stuffing one half in woman, the other in man.
25-26 Blinded by his own excrement, Trickster asks various trees where to find water. He realises he has been tricked by a reflection.	24 Crow looks into the evil mirror, but the glass is misted.
27-31 Trickster inflicts meaningless cruelty on others to obtain food, but is	12 Crow watches the horror of trench warfare; 13 Crow dissects animals and kills his own brother; 27 Senseless and

always frustrated or suffers from trying to imitate his victims.	amoral human violence; 41 Crow grins at the pain he has caused.
32-33 Trickster attempts to return to society.	53 After the destruction, two simple bodies come together in the darkness; 56 Crow catches a glimpse of beauty.
38-39 Trickster is shown how to control his penis and uses the severed parts to create useful objects.	44 God hammers, roasts and crushes Crow, but each act produces some useful resource.
40-46 Trickster remarries and stays in his wife's village for a season, but when the village moves, Trickster lives in isolation with his family.	58 Crow trades the sight he has just acquired for the song he hears a woman singing.
47-8 Trickster and his family rejoin society; after living amicably in his wife's village, he departs, going first to the ocean, then into heaven.	59 Crow asks the shrunken but immensely experienced Littleblood to become his spirit companion. The aborted final poems, in which Crow carries an ogress across a river and successfully answers her riddles provide the resolution to Crow's struggle (see Sagar, p. 128).

Ted Hughes and the Post-Nuclear Landscape

by Felicity Powell

'First – the sun coming closer, growing by the minute.' (*C* 72)

The climax of Ted Hughes's 1970 collection *Crow* arrives with the poem 'Notes for a Little Play', and its vision of an apocalyptic nuclear event. The poem's opening line takes its cue from the statements of those who witnessed the power of a nuclear explosion first-hand. In 1945, standing in the desert for the testing of the first atomic bomb at Alamogordo, New Mexico, Brigadier General Thomas F. Farrell recalled that 'The whole country was lighted by a searing light with the intensity many times that of the midday sun'.[1] Among the testimonies of Hiroshima survivors collected by John Hersey in 1946, a copy of which can be found in Hughes's personal library, were such statements as 'Then a tremendous flash of light cut across the sky [...] it seemed a sheet of sun'.[2] The initial blasts of the bombs that fell on Hiroshima and Nagasaki killed a combined total of 210,000 people; however, the utter destruction caused by the blinding sun-flash was surpassed by the devastation wrought by its invisible accompaniment. The explosion released ionizing waves of radiation, which attacked the bodies of those within the two-mile fallout zone at the level of the tissues, cells, and genes. According to the report issued by the Committee for the Compilation of Materials on Damage by the Atomic Bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki (henceforth ABHN Committee), the genetic damage caused 'may well last for several generations, if not indefinitely', a conclusion based upon observations of the bomb survivors' descendants continuing to be born with genetic defects.[3] The deadliness of radioactive fallout and its ability to infiltrate bodily defences made it, according to Adam Piette,

---

[1] From General Leslie Grove's 'Report on Alamogordo Atomic Bomb Test', 18 July 1945, quoted in Martin J. Sherwin, *A World Destroyed: Hiroshima and its Legacies* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), p. 312.

[2] John Hersey, *Hiroshima* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1946), p. 18. Formerly owned by Ted Hughes, Locked Stacks D767.25 .H6 H4 1946B HUGHES, Ted Hughes papers, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

[3] Committee for the Compilation of Materials on Damage by the Atomic Bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, 'Preface to the English Edition' *of Hiroshima and Nagasaki: The Physical, Medical and Social Effects of the Atomic Bombings*, transl. Eisei Ishikawa and David L. Swain (London: Hutchinson, 1981), p. xliii. Henceforth referred to as 'ABHN Committee'.

'the evil twin to the sun's benign rays'.[4] Hughes's poem captures the moment when the nuclear sun casts out its destructive beams, signalling the dawn of a new period in human existence, a new era in the Earth's history: the nuclear age, and the inception of the Anthropocene. This article will investigate how Hughes's life was shaped by the atomic events of the twentieth century, and examine how his writing has been charged by nuclear activity. I will commence by reflecting on the impact of Cold War tensions on his relationship with the natural world, and will follow with an analysis of the genetic intersection Hughes conceives between radioactivity, trickster literature and storytelling, and how this is mitigated by his self-identification as a shamanic healer of humanity.

The true date of the Anthropocene's beginning has been highly contested by scientists, some arguing it to be at the beginning of the nineteenth century with the rise of the Industrial Revolution, others suggesting that it can be traced back to the earliest agricultural activities in human history.[5] However, there is general agreement that the detonations of nuclear weapons resulted in an indisputable change to the global environment. Jan Zalasiewicz et al. propose that the Anthropocene therefore 'be defined to begin historically at the moment of detonation of the Trinity A-bomb at Alamogordo, New Mexico', as this was 'the beginning of the nuclear age [...] that led to the dispersal of artificial radionuclides worldwide'.[6] The global distribution of radioactive particles may constitute the true beginning of the Anthropocene since they engender a change upon the biosphere that is irrevocable. Since there is no means by which the damage inflicted by radiation and radioactive matter upon the landscape and the human body can be undone, it is easy to understand why 'Anthropocene discourse remains closely associated with attention to environmental crises'.[7] I would argue that a desire to represent and deter such a disaster is the principal motivator behind Ted Hughes's environmentalism and poetic vision.

Deterrence could only be accomplished by a revolution in twentieth-century thinking. When the world bore witness to the atom bomb and its effects, a transformation was stimulated in the global post-war psyche. In the wake of Hiroshima, the US government initially attempted to censor information about the effects of radiation. However, when such knowledge eventually became widely known, it led to a call for a change in political philosophy. In 1945 the *New York Times* proclaimed 'civilisation and humanity can now survive only if there is a revolution in

---

[4] Adam Piette, *The Literary Cold War, 1945 to Vietnam* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), p. 107.

[5] Jan Zalasiewicz et al., 'When did the Anthropocene begin? A mid-twentieth century boundary level is stratigraphically optimal', *Quaternary International* 383 (2015), p. 196.

[6] Zalasiewicz et al., p. 200.

[7] Siri Veland and Amanda H. Lynch, 'Scaling the Anthropocene: How the stories we tell matter', *Geoforum* 72 (2016), p. 2.

mankind's political thinking', insisting that 'the necessary mentality, national and world political institutions must be created without delay'.[8] Albert Einstein, who would later advocate for the limitation of nuclear weapons, is quoted in the foreword to the ABHN Committee's report referenced above:

> Einstein has clearly warned us: 'The release of atomic energy has so changed everything that our former ways of thinking have been rendered obsolete. We therefore face catastrophe unheard of in former times. If mankind is to survive, then we need a completely new way of thinking.'[9]

However, there was also a pervasive doubt that such a change in mentality would come about. According to Ian Welsh, the tensions of Cold War culture were such that 'In this climate of universal suspicion hopes for a new mentality and revolution in political thinking were stillborn'.[10] It is in such a climate that Hughes as a shamanic mythmaker works tirelessly to transfigure human consciousness out of the error in which he perceives it to be trapped.

The inception of the nuclear age had a profound impact upon Hughes's poetic and personal life. In a 1986 letter to Anne Stevenson, he recalls the difficulties he and Sylvia Plath faced in determining where they should live in the years following 1961: 'What decided us', Hughes writes, 'was that in 1961 the world seemed closer to nuclear war than ever since'. He continues:

> [T]he panic was greater because the threat was really coming up for the first time. Nuclear business preoccupied us a good deal. [...] Fall-out was a preoccupation. With all this in the air, we thought that if we were going to move we might as well be upwind of likely accidents – which brought us to Devon. (*LTH* 519)

The source of Hughes's anxiety is twofold, with reference to both the possibility of nuclear war and the fallout of the UK's nuclear power industry, both of which he draws under the banner of 'Nuclear business'. The effect of radiation and nuclear activity forms the keystone to Hughes's environmentalism, as he perceives these to be the ultimate product of a mass humanitarian neurosis, manifesting as an anthropocentric mentality. Timothy Clark has defined anthropocentrism as a way of seeing the natural world 'entirely in relation to the human, for instance as a resource for economic use', and is therefore fittingly the prevailing attitude of the Anthropocene.[11] Hughes

---

[8] Anonymous, 'HEARD ROUND THE WORLD', *New York Times*, 7 August 1945, p. 22.

[9] Originally quoted by Georg Picht and Wolfgang Huber in *Was heist Friedensforschung?* [*What is Peace Research?*] (Stuttgart: Ernst Klett Verlag; Munich: Kösel-Verlag, 1971), p. 32, quoted here by the ABHN Committee, p. xxxix.

[10] Ian Welsh, *Mobilizing Modernity* (London: Routledge, 2000) p. 39.

[11] Timothy Clark, *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and the Environment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 3.

famously displays his scorn for this mentality in his oft-quoted review of Max Nicholson's *The Environmental Revolution*:

> The subtly apotheosized misogyny of Reformed Christianity is proportionate to the fanatic rejection of Nature, and the result has been to exile man from Mother Nature – from both her inner and outer nature. The story of the mind exiled from Nature is the story of Western Man. It is the story of his progressively more desperate search for mechanical and rational and symbolic securities, which will substitute for the spirit-confidence of the Nature he has lost. The basic myth for the ideal Westerner's life is the Quest. The quest for a marriage in the soul or a physical reconquest. The lost life must be captured somehow. It is the story of spiritual romanticism and heroic technological progress. It is a story of decline. When something abandons Nature, or is abandoned by Nature, it has lost touch with its creator, and is called an evolutionary dead-end. According to this, our Civilization is an evolutionary error. (*WP* 129)

This passage has stimulated a fount of critical analysis and has proven invaluable for reconciling the ideas in Hughes's poetry with his worldview. Susanna Lidström has explained the association Hughes makes between Christianity and the separation of humanity from the natural world by proposing that *Crow* 'is a contemporary poetic expression of [Lynn White's] thesis', which argues that 'Christianity is the most anthropocentric religion the world has ever seen'.[12] Her assessment is supported by the fact that White's argument appeared in 1967, three years prior to the publication of *Crow*. For both Hughes and White, the anthropocentric mentality endorsed by the Christian faith has conditioned humanity to believe in a false myth: that its needs are superior to the needs of the natural world. Atomic weaponry therefore constitutes the ultimate product of the anthropocentric consciousness: it not only plunders the Earth for the raw components required to build the bomb, but the consequences of detonation poison the environment with radioactive matter.

Such an act disrupts the symbiosis of humanity and the natural world, a balance essential to sustainability. In Hughes's ecopoetics, there is a symbiosis between humanity and the environment, a bond catalysed by a symbiotic relationship between landscape and storytelling. As Lidström and Garrard have observed, 'In both prose and poetry, Hughes has described a link between creation in the natural world, i.e. the creation of organic life, and the creativity of the poet, i.e. artistic creation'.[13] The natural world is a source of inspiration for poets, writers, and storytellers, who in turn create art and narratives that condition humanity with an environmentally-friendly

---

[12] Susanna Lidström, 'Different Shades of Green: A Dark Green Counterculture in Ted Hughes's Crow', *European Journal of Literature, Culture and Environment* 4:1 (2013), p. 13; Lynn White, 'The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis', *Science* 155:3767 (1967), p. 1205.

[13] Susanna Lidström and Greg Garrard, '"Images adequate to our predicament": Ecology, Environment and Ecopoetics', *Environmental Humanities* 5 (2014), p. 41.

mindset. Such an idea is certainly grounded in anthropological analyses of storytelling and the origins of fiction. Smith et al.'s study on 'Cooperation and the evolution of hunter-gatherer storytelling' concludes that 'narratives are known to serve other adaptive functions, such as disseminating information on survival, foraging and the environment'.[14] Storytelling is an evolutionary survival technique that promotes cooperation not only within the community but between the community and the land. For Hughes, then, humanity's environmentally-damaging habits are the result of an 'evolutionary error'. According to Sam Solnick, 'Hughes argues that the ideologies and behaviours of the twentieth century, and the myths and images which both describe and condition them, are no longer conducive to the health of the biosphere'.[15] In other words, our human stories have failed to direct us towards a productive and sustainable harmony with the natural world. Hughes's writings constitute new forms of eco-mythic storytelling that seek to condition the mind of the reader towards 'new, ecologically sounder ways of being'.[16] It is worth observing that his children's writing, stories including *The Iron Man* and *The Iron Woman*, can be understood as an attempt to instil this kind of thinking early on in order to prepare future generations.

Hughes's poetic quest is to stimulate mankind out of the evolutionary trap that it has sprung upon itself, and navigate humanity towards a biocentric mentality that will avert the crisis of a nuclear apocalypse. He intends to accomplish this through extolling the restorative and regenerative effect of the imagination, which, according to Keith Sagar, 'seeks to respiritualize Nature, to heal the split in the human psyche, replacing the anthropocentric with biocentric consciousness, to provide the only viable religion for the new millennium'.[17] The success of such action requires Hughes to position himself as a shaman for the nuclear age, healing humanity by intercepting the destructive tendencies of a mass nuclear neurosis and instilling it instead with new ways of thinking. Hughes's chosen tool is the character of Crow, a trickster adhering closely to the Jungian archetypal profile. As a being of unconsciousness who experiences 'a gradual development into a saviour', Crow becomes the evolutionary tool by which Hughes hopes to rescue humanity from the brink of catastrophe.[18] The trickster's eventual transformation into a saviour is stimulated in response to 'some calamity or other', since 'Only out of disaster can the longing for the saviour arise'.[19]

---

[14] Daniel Smith et al., 'Cooperation and the evolution of hunter-gatherer storytelling', *Nature Communications* 8:1 (2017), p. 4.

[15] Sam Solnick, *Poetry and the Anthropocene: Ecology, Biology and Technology in Contemporary British and Irish poetry* (London: Routledge, 2017), p. 71.

[16] Solnick, p. 94.

[17] Keith Sagar, *The Laughter of Foxes* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), p. 5.

[18] C.G. Jung, 'On the Psychology of the Trickster Figure', in *The Trickster: A Study in American Indian Mythology with Commentaries by Karl Kerényi and C.G. Jung*, ed. Paul Radin (New York: Schocken, 1972), p. 195.

[19] Jung, p. 211.

Jung implies that the trickster therefore emerges when a culture is under threat, or has experienced some calamity or disaster that places its existence in jeopardy. If the trickster arises in times of dire societal need and in the face of ultimate destruction, it is only right that he does so here, at this most crucial juncture of history. Crow's quest must be to seek a way out of the deadlock, to trick humanity out of the trap into which it has fallen.

In Hughes's 1979 essay 'A Reply to My Critics', he outlines his own interpretation of the trickster profile. The essay was drafted in response to readers who had cautiously taken *Crow*'s darkly comic overtones to mean it belonged to the label of 'Black Comedy'. However, Hughes counters that although similar in many ways, black comedy and trickster literature are fundamentally opposites, existing at the poles of an anthropological scale. He writes that

> Black Comedy is the end of a cultural process. Trickster Literature is the beginning. [...] It is the difference between two laughters: one, bitter and destructive; the other zestful and creative, attending what seems to be the same calamity.[20]

Critics could be forgiven for their misapplication of these terms, because at different points of the narrative, *Crow* deliberately experiments with the duality of the laughter motif, if only to define the one type using its opposite. In poems where Crow himself laughs, such as in 'A Childish Prank', it is the gleeful mirth of a trickster playfully subverting the Christian God's authority by chaotically creating human sexuality. In contrast, the un-Crow-like giggling of 'In Laughter' arises from the hysteria of witnessing moments of horrific violence and destruction by an individual (or society) that is beyond the ability to empathise. These echoes of 'destructive laughter' imply that the text operates across the boundary that distinguishes these anthropological polarities. In this case, the 'calamity' that facilitates the change is the apocalyptic event of a nuclear disaster, causing one cultural process to disintegrate and another to simultaneously begin.

The cultural process Hughes seeks to eliminate is anthropocentrism: the prevailing ideology of the twentieth century leading to the use of the atomic bomb. The anthropocentric mentality further manifests itself in the tensions of the post-nuclear Cold War period. If the atomic bomb constitutes the ultimate product of twentieth-century anthropocentrism, then the Cold War which followed is a prime example of the culture that such an event engenders. Cold War tension can be most clearly pictured as two global superpowers, each attempting to subdue the other in an attempt to control the world. The desire to subdue the competing nation is connected to the

---

[20] Ted Hughes, 'A Reply to My Critics', in *Three Contemporary Poets: Thom Gunn, Ted Hughes & R. S. Thomas: A Casebook*, ed. A. E. Dyson (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990), pp. 109–10.

anthropocentric mentality: as Murray Bookchin states, 'the very idea of dominating [...] nature has its origins in the domination of human by human'.[21] If Hughes perceives a cause of the anthropocentric mentality to be the repression of the unconscious by the rational conscious mind, then Cold War culture enacts this psychic split on a global scale. The split between psychic states manifests as an intense anxiety over the rigidity of geographical, political, personal, and microscopic boundaries, and a resolute intolerance for their slightest permeability. In explaining Cold War culture, Joanne Sharp states that:

> The essence of identity is not somewhere deep within the territory – at its 'heart' – but is constantly being recreated at its boundaries to mark off the identity of that territory from what it is not, from what lies beyond the boundary.[22]

Sharp argues that an anxiety over personal and national identity was a significant factor in the perpetuation of Cold War tension, and that such identities are not defined by who they 'are' but by who they 'are not'. Identities are thus constructed through the othering of foreign identities; a perceived need to enforce the boundaries of one's own national identity by enforcing the geopolitical boundaries of the world. The Berlin Wall, the blockade of the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, and other such cases can thus be understood as examples of national and psychological identity anxiety.

The clearest depiction of this segregated Cold War mentality in Hughes's poetic work is 'Crow's Account of St George'. In this poem, the medieval hero figure is reimagined as a nuclear physicist, occupying an exaggeration of the rational mindset that Hughes recognized in the story's original.[23] However, the man's rational scientific mindset sinks him into a paranoid neurosis: he fights off a series of demonic hallucinations only to run 'dumb-faced' from the house where, in the final line, 'his wife and children lie in their blood' (*C* 26–7). 'Crow's Account of St George' is a warning against the violence that emerges from the efforts of the logical rational mind to repress the natural primality of the subjective unconscious. When repressed to the point of viciousness, the animal unconscious manifests itself in other ways, whether this be through the murder of a wife and family, or through the design and detonation of a nuclear weapon. In Hughes's view, the repression of the ancient primal predator identity is what drives the scientific consciousness to design weapons of ultimate destruction and to hysterically defend itself in the face of its hallucinatory Cold War enemies. It is amid this frantic scrambling to rigidize and enforce micro- and

---

[21] Murray Bookchin, *The Ecology of Freedom: The Emergence and Dissolution of Hierarchy* (Edinburgh: AK Press, 2005), p. 34.
[22] Joanne Sharp, *Condensing the Cold War: Reader's Digest and American Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), p. 27.
[23] Ted Hughes, 'Myth and Education', *Children's Literature in Education* 1:1 (1970), p. 65.

macroscopic boundaries, and to enforce the separation of conscious and unconscious, that gives rise to Hughes's iconic trickster-being. According to Lewis Hyde, the trickster is a force that governs 'spaces of heightened uncertainty [...] a boundary-crosser [...] the god of the threshold in all its forms'.[24] The subversive and transgressive behaviour of the trickster makes it the perfect antagonist to the Cold War's deadly ideology.

However, the superpowers' anxiety about the trickster's subversion of boundaries is also equivalent to their fear of radioactive reprisal. A significant factor in the thermonuclear stalemate was the fear of the weapon's fallout somehow affecting the nation which unleashed it, travelling in the wind or borne by invisible currents. As Jeremi Suri states, 'Radioactive fallout knew no boundaries'.[25] This idea has a number of implications. The first is that it highlights a level of complicity which Crow possesses in nuclear events. The shadow of nuclear fallout dominates the *Crow* poems, and Crow himself actually becomes complicit in its environmental effects. When a battle takes place between Crow and Stone, Stone implicitly symbolizes the uranium matter used in the construction of an atomic bomb, the fission of which results in its becoming a radioactive 'dust – flying in vain' (*C* 70). The dust to which stone is reduced eerily resembles the cloud of radioactive particles thrown into the atmosphere at the moment of nuclear detonation: the vapours that would be dubbed 'the ashes of death'.[26] Crow, on the other hand, 'has become a monster – his mere eyeblink / Holding the very globe in terror', indicating that he is in some way complicit in the nuclear disaster (*C* 70).

There is therefore a common method in the behaviour of tricksters and radioactivity, a similarity that Hughes himself condenses into a shared genetic model. He perceives the trickster, who 'appears to have had his debut in the embryonic stage of human culture', as following a genetic model that is both metaphorical and literal.[27] In an edited version of 'A Reply to My Critics', included in *Winter Pollen*, Hughes explains that the trickster's quest is 'founded on the immortal enterprise of the sperm [...] still battling zestfully along after 150 million years' (*WP* 240). He continues that 'The sperm is looking for the egg – to combine with every human thing that is not itself, and to create a new self, with multiplied genetic potential, in a renewed world' (*WP* 241). According to the genetic model which Hughes constructs, the trickster's narrative parallels the sperm's quest to adjoin with the egg of the feminine natural world: the egg of Robert Graves's 'White Goddess' herself. By adjoining with the egg in a symbolic union with the feminine principle of Nature, humanity endures through the continued

---

[24] Lewis Hyde, *Trickster Makes this World* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2008), pp. 6–8.
[25] Jeremi Suri, *Power and Protest: Global Revolution and the Rise of Détente* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), p. 9.
[26] ABHN Committee, p. 74.
[27] Leonard M. Scigaj, *The Poetry of Ted Hughes: Form and Imagination* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1986), p. 144.

symbiosis of myth and landscape, of trickster and White Goddess. However, the trickster's quest is compounded by the threat that nuclear activity poses at the level of the genes. The ABHN Committee's study on the effects of Hiroshima concluded that:

> Genetic effects on offspring following irradiation are manifested by injury to the parental germ cells (sperm, ova, and their precursor cells) in the gonads. The degree of injury varies according to radiation dose. With high radiation doses, the germ cells die and lose their ability to produce gametes (either sperm or ovum), and thus bring about sterility.[28]

Radiation endangers the future of both Nature Goddess and trickster by jeopardizing the gene's capacity for renewal and regeneration. All the possibilities remaining involve the replication of an error, leading to either sterility or an evolutionary maladaptation. The failure of symbiosis between humanity and the natural world instead turns to what we may call a synnecrosis, a mutually destructive relationship resulting in the destruction and downfall of both.

This shared behaviour is further expounded upon by Hughes's vision of the behaviour of myths themselves. In some of the unpublished notes written parallel to *Crow*, Hughes writes:

> I wanted to free my image from the intellectual entanglement with my reader's response to specific meanings. I wanted to liberate it into imaginative freedom behind the reader's defences, where the real meaning could operate at leisure, in the nature of radiation.[29]

Sam Solnick has interpreted this statement to mean the following:

> Radiation here refers to a kind of mutative power, the operation of the charged symbol on the reader's psyche. The relationship between life, mutation and form underpins Hughes's idea of what the *Crow* project does [...]. *Crow*/Crow develops inside us, breeding us with our own myths and changing them, crow-ifying our consciousness as it were through its symbols' 'radiation'.[30]

Hughes intended *Crow* to be in some way a radioactive myth. This understanding carries more weight when considering how he envisions the landscape that unleashed his poetic sensibilities. In his memoir, 'The Rock', Hughes writes that he discovered his poetic calling while walking on the Yorkshire moors, recalling how 'the light, at once both gloomily purplish and incredibly clear, unnaturally clear, as if objects there had less protection than elsewhere, were more exposed to the radioactive dangers of

---

[28] ABHN Committee, p. 320

[29] Hughes, 'Untitled Crow Notes [MS]', Box 106, Folder 13, Ted Hughes papers, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

[30] Solnick, pp. 92–4.

space'.[31] If the landscape that inspired Hughes's creativity is charged with nuclear activity, it follows that the myths and stories he creates operate in the nature of radiation, and have radioactive properties. Such behaviour would mean that a radioactive landscape, inspiring radioactive myths, restores the symbiosis of humanity and the natural world through its mythologies and storytelling capabilities, thereby breaking out of the anthropocentric deadlock. If radiation charges Hughes's landscapes, and allows him to discover his vocation as a poet, then it also goes that his poetry and its myths are in some way intended to infect the minds and bodies of readers, inoculating them against the urge to segregate the conscious from the unconscious mind.

Hughes's understanding of the genetic intersection between radiation, storytelling and the trickster was implied by Seamus Heaney in his address at Hughes's memorial service in Westminster Abbey, where he stated that as DNA is the genetic code for the human body, so myth is the poetic code for the human spirit.[32] Ultimately, Crow's quest is to restore the mythmaking capacities of humanity. If Crow is in some way complicit in the nuclear event, then he must also be responsible for the moments of creation that simultaneously occur. For Hughes, humanity's imagination and its ability to respond to and challenge its myths are the only defence against the repressed and segregated mentality which results in the Cold War culture. Trickster literature in particular, he says, is 'a deep biological imprint, and one of our most useful pieces of kit. We use it all the time, spontaneously, like a tool, at every stage of psychological recovery or growth' (*WP* 241). The fallout of the blast mutates the genes of the human psyche, relinquishing from their double-helix prison the primal strands of unconscious animality that the conscious ego has repressed. With newly mutated chromosomes, humankind ceases to be the 'evolutionary dead end' it has become and can start once more to evolve into a harmonious unity with its environment.

If Crow unwittingly unleashes the radioactivity of 'Stone's' nuclear dust, then he is also symbolically responsible for these 'mutations' that signify the realignment of mankind's genetic code, a realignment crucial to rediscovering the connection to the natural world that has been lost. However, *Crow*'s effectiveness lies not in recreating the blast, but in its visualization. Hughes intends to use the bomb, and its radioactivity, as a symbol. The title of 'Notes for a Little Play' indicates that there is some level of performativity to the event: what we are witnessing here is not film footage of a nuclear explosion, but a visualization of its impending detonation. It is in the vision of this event, the sudden realization of how close it is to becoming a reality, that we experience a psychogenetic explosion and breakthrough. Hughes once stated that in the work of

---

[31] Ted Hughes, 'The Rock', The Listener, 19 September 1963, pp. 421–3.
[32] Sagar, p. 1.

János Pilinszky, 'The moment closest to extinction turns out to be *the* creative moment' (*WP* 235). Such an idea also holds true for his own shamanic quest to transfigure the human psyche through the representation of impending apocalypse in *Crow*. The mythmaking genes are mutated by proximity to the flames and are galvanised into activity. The 'strange dance' of the genetic mutations following the blast of radiation becomes the focal imagery of 'Lovesong', which Piette observes to be an interweaving of bodies, psychic levels and chromosomes: 'Sex is genetic exchange, a crossing-over of these dual energies, which in terms of unconscious dreamwork pans out as a quite literal exchange of limbs and brains' (*C* 72).[33] The lover's union in this is therefore really an exchange of genetic traits: the line 'Her vows put his eyes in formalin at the back of her secret drawer' demonstrates the male's eye-colour being incorporated into the genome of an embryo, their voices getting 'stuck in the wall' of the uterus; the entwining sleep of 'arms and legs' enacts the crossing over of the limbs of their chromosomes (*C* 74–5). What starts as a rigid binary of male and female, conscious and unconscious, eventually gives way to a mutual entanglement, the same entanglement that occurs at the chromosomal level in the meiosis, fusion, and mitosis stages of sexual reproduction of a new, mutated psychological genome.

There is no way of stopping the virus once it is out. Poetry and myth, its great immunisers, will have failed to protect the world against it. The trick, so to speak, is not to give in to the paranoia of boundaries, but to accept their blurring and transgression as necessary. Humanity survives through its myths, supported by the cultural memory preserved in the unconscious, and in the wake of the symbol of the bomb new myths arise, irradiated out of the old. When Crow is blasted by proximity to the detonation, he is exploded back into his archetypal state, and re-emerges in the final poem in a newly evolved form. The final poem is a summoning of 'Littleblood', the post-apocalyptic, post-nuclear evolution of the trickster's archetype. Littleblood, though wounded by the radioactive energy of the stars, draws spiritual nourishment from 'the medical earth' and can make tools from the bones of its deceased predecessors, 'ploughing with a linnet's carcase'. Littleblood is seen 'reaping the wind' harnessing it as a sustainable energy source preferable to the dangers of the nuclear industry (*C* 80). The poem ends with an invocation for Littleblood to 'Sit on my finger, sing in my ear' so that humanity can learn from its example and rediscover a connection to the natural world. *Crow*'s narrative essentially constitutes Hughes's shamanic attempt to keep the Cold War 'cold', avoiding the devastation of an apocalyptic nuclear winter and inspiring a post-nuclear environmental revolution, thereby generating the possibility of survival.

---

[33] Piette, p. 126.

Mapping Elmet: The Duality of Hughes's Calder Valley

Ruth Crossley

In his later years my father, Donald Crossley, extensively researched the geographical and historical detail found within some of Hughes's poems, particularly those in *Remains of Elmet*. Donald recorded many of his memories of Hughes and wrote about Mytholmroyd in the 1930s where the two spent their early childhood on Aspinall Street. He identified many of these memories and the locations within the poems and began to map them. Donald also corresponded regularly with Gerald Hughes, Ted's older brother who, in his letters, re-enacted some of the poems through his own written memories and sketches of places where he and Ted walked and camped together, and where Gerald was instrumental in helping Ted to create a mythical, North American-inspired world. Building on my late father's work, my aim here is to show how a closer look at the geography of Hughes's Calder Valley both reveals and explains a number of dualistic structures behind his *Remains of Elmet* and *Elmet* poems.

The *Remains of Elmet* collection took seed in 1970 when Hughes told Fay Godwin he felt the need for a visual trigger to help him write poems about the Calder Valley. He suggested it would be an interesting area for her to photograph, which she subsequently did. Hughes's initial idea for *Remains of Elmet* was 'to produce an episodic autobiography of childhood memories anchored in particular events and things', as he informed her in 1976 (*LTH* 378). However, this idea of producing a childhood autobiography did not last long. In a letter to Anne-Lorraine Bujon written in 1992, Hughes explains

> I was suddenly struck, you see, by the embarrassing egotism of my plan to convert the whole region into my childhood stage. So I abandoned my project. After that, I aimed for a blurred focus, generalised mood-evocation in each piece – something that would harmonise with Fay Godwin's photographs, but would avoid that painful collision of sharp visual image and sharp specific verbal image, in which the verbal image, after a moment of psychological distress, always loses. (*LTH* 633)

In the later stages of editing, Hughes wanted his poems printed large because he was afraid they would be swamped by the photographs, but the result is that *Remains of*

Elmet does not fit on the poetry shelves as well as it does on the photography shelves. Jonathan Bate states that Godwin's photographs received more praise than Hughes's poems and most initial reviews of the book were lukewarm.[1] Hughes also tries to reassure Godwin in May 1979, saying 'Don't let any remarks disturb you. Everybody wants to remake things their own way – everybody wants to be an editor. A success upsets 99%' (*LTH* 420).

But where did Hughes's reluctance to write autobiographically stem from? In the words of Keith Sagar:

> Looking back on the book a few years later, [Hughes] came to feel that the prominence, even pre-eminence of the striking and evocative photographs, together with what he called 'that diabolical fear of subjectivity', had pulled the poems in the direction of landscape and 'impersonal mood pieces', and away from the historical and family concerns which had been pressing for freer expression.[2]

Hughes also told Bujon that 'In retrospect I missed the real opportunity: I should have written portraits, sharp and detailed, of the people I know there: populated the photographs without challenging their images' (*LTH* 633). When Glyn Hughes's *Best of Neighbours: New and Selected Poems* was published in 1979 (the same year as *Remains of Elmet*), Ted Hughes wrote to praise the book for getting closer to a real representation of the Upper Calder Valley's harshness and brutality, which made him realise how much he had left out of his own collection: 'Your book says much more about what I feel about it [the Calder Valley] than mine does – mine says what my mother felt about it when I was about 5' (*LTH* 430). Another possible explanation for Hughes's fear of subjectivity could be a reluctance to confront or confess the surprisingly negative emotions that were unearthed as he began to write these poems. In a letter to Ben Sonnenberg in 1981, Hughes wrote:

> I had always regarded my early life as a Paradise, from which I was wrenched at age eight. But digging down through the strata with verse – following the goblin – I found dislike, dread, even hatred. What a surprise that was. And difficult to handle. And not at all what I wanted for the book of atmospheric photographs [...]. So I skidded off, after one or two encounters, and borrowed my mother's feelings. (*LTH* 447)

Despite all this, Hughes stood firm in the belief that the photographs remained pivotal to the success of the book. In his letter to Godwin in May 1979, Hughes assures her that there is no question of the poems and photographs having any existence apart, commenting on the diminished impact and power of the Rainbow Press edition, which

---

[1] Jonathan Bate, *Ted Hughes: The Unauthorised Life* (London: William Collins, 2015), p. 373.

[2] Keith Sagar, *Ted Hughes and Nature: 'Terror and Exultation'* (Peterborough: Fastprint Publishing, 2009), p. 234.

contained only a few photographs. Consequently, Hughes pushed for a second edition until, in 1994 – despite Faber's great reluctance – a new edition simply titled *Elmet* was published with approximately one-third of the book comprising new or re-worked poems and pictures. I agree with Terry Gifford's assessment that '*Elmet* is a much more peopled publication, a celebration of his family's strong connections to place'.[3] Hughes repeated on a number of occasions that *Elmet* was his definitive collection of Calder Valley poems, and in his last communication with Godwin in March 1998, wrote of *Elmet*: 'that's our classic so we'll keep it in print'.[4]

Elmet is the name given to the rugged and lawless ancient Celtic kingdom historically stretching from the Pennines over the Vale of York, with its heart in the old East Riding of Yorkshire, where settlement names such as Sherburn-in-Elmet remain today. In his introduction to *Elmet*, Hughes is more specific about his own interpretation of its location, placing it within a rough circle linking Halifax, Keighley, Colne and Littleborough, and describing it as 'an island straddling the Yorks-Lancs border, though mainly in Yorkshire, and centred, in my mind, on the village of Heptonstall' (*E* 9). Hughes was possibly inspired by imagining a harsh Celtic existence, enabling him to reimagine the Calder Valley as Elmet with its wild and weather-beaten landscape, its untamed people seemingly hewn out of the rock itself. Interestingly, Godwin has plotted the locations of all her *Remains of Elmet* photographs and, when examining the Calder Valley area of her map, it appears that Heptonstall lies right at the heart of the area she roamed and photographed, echoing Hughes's suggestion of Heptonstall as the focal point of *Elmet*.[5] Godwin's map is very much at odds with a similar map produced by Donald Crossley, which plots what he interpreted to be the actual physical locations of the *Remains of Elmet* poems, and which clearly shows Hughes's natal town of Mytholmroyd at the core.[6] We are therefore presented with a dual-centred map of *Elmet* with a Heptonstall centre, according to Hughes and Godwin, and a Mytholmroyd centre, according to Crossley.

Hughes lived at Number 1 Aspinall Street in Mytholmroyd until he was eight years old, and Donald Crossley calculated that 'there are twenty-seven poems written about places within a mile and a half of 1 Aspinall Street and another seven poems set within the house itself'.[7] In *Remains of Elmet* and *Elmet*, twenty-two poems are set in

---

[3] Terry Gifford, 'Hughes's social ecology', in *The Cambridge Companion to Ted Hughes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 82.

[4] Fay Godwin, 'Ted Hughes and Elmet', in *The Epic Poise: A Celebration of Ted Hughes* (London: Faber and Faber, 1999), p. 106.

[5] 'Map marked by Fay Godwin, indicating the sites at which she took photographs for Remains of Elmet', British Library, at https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/map-marked-by-fay-godwin (accessed 30 March 2018).

[6] Donald Crossley's map of Elmet poem locations, private collection.

[7] Quoted in Steve Ely, *Ted Hughes's South Yorkshire: Made in Mexborough* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p. 30.

Mytholmroyd – double the number of those set in the Heptonstall area. Given that Hughes initially intended to write an autobiographical work, this is certainly enough evidence to agree with Crossley's suggestion that Mytholmroyd is the locus of that childhood autobiography and the capital of Hughes's imaginative world of Elmet. What, then, makes Heptonstall the focal point for both Hughes and Godwin? For the photographer, the pull of Heptonstall is possibly much stronger, with its narrow cobbled streets, atmospheric old church ruins, its dominant perched position and panoramic vistas of the surrounding moors and valleys. But for Hughes, however, the importance of Heptonstall may be part of a more complex blend of forces. In later life he returned to the Calder Valley many times, but not to Mytholmroyd. By the 1950s his parents had retired from Mexborough and purchased a house called the Beacon at Heptonstall Slack, very close to Heptonstall. Migration up the hillside to somewhere like Heptonstall would be seen as a symbol of upward social mobility, and was something that Hughes, along with other family members, aspired to: some moved there in later life and Hughes himself had a desire to live near Heptonstall, purchasing Lumb Bank in 1969. Hughes once recalled that as a boy, 'all my more exciting notions gravitated upwards'.[8] Simon Armitage suggests that in Hughes's memory the valley was a place to be avoided or escaped, and the only escape route is up: 'Above the confines of the valley lie illumination and reprieve – a fleeting but nonetheless worthwhile sense of enlightenment and hope'.[9] This desire to escape upwards, combined with its striking geographical position and the influence of Hughes's later family history, helps to underpin the promotion of Heptonstall as his visual and mythical capital of Elmet.

Having identified the duality of place within Elmet, I want to further examine Hughes's relationship with the hills and valleys around Mytholmroyd and the enormous importance of his relationship with his brother Gerald. His poem 'Two' helps to substantiate the focus on Mytholmroyd as Hughes's autobiographical capital. 'Two' represents Hughes's relation to place on several levels, plotting a literal journey through the Mytholmroyd landscape as well as Hughes's psycho-geographical responses to it. It is a journey through time, reflecting on the passage from childhood into adulthood, combined with shifts between reality and fantasy, and also a journey from heaven to hell. In both books, *Remains of Elmet* and *Elmet*, the poem has no specific location, paired with an allegorical image of steps down a steep bank through woodland, symbolic of a journey through place and time, stepping down through Hughes's mythopoeic imagination, or alternatively Hughes's metaphorical ladder of

---

[8] Quoted in Simon Armitage, 'The Ascent of Ted Hughes: Conquering the Calder Valley', in *Ted Hughes: From Cambridge to Collected*, eds. Mark Wormald, Neil Roberts, and Terry Gifford (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 9.

[9] Armitage, p. 9.

escape upwards out of the confines of the dark valley trap. However, in his correspondence with Donald Crossley, Gerald Hughes confirmed that Donald's interpretation of 'Two' was accurate: this is a poem about the two brothers walking back home to Mytholmroyd from the Heights Road after their early morning hunting trips.[10] They descend from Midgley Moor over Sugar Loaf, the hill in the poem of that name in *Wodwo*. The hill is actually called Hill House Brink, but Gerald and Ted renamed it Sugar Loaf, which is how it appears when snow-capped in winter. In *Ted and I*, Gerald explains how '[Ted] would trot alongside me, very nimble and quite silent, pretending to be a Red Indian hunter, absorbing everything'.[11] As will be seen, the poem is subtly re-worked in *Elmet* with poignant differences, creating a more mature and personal reflection the second time around.

'Two step down from the morning star' is the beginning of the journey for Gerald and Ted walking down over Sugar Loaf at dawn (*RE* 80; *E* 71). The use of 'morning star' here may be two-fold: it certainly relates to sunrise, but could also symbolise their descent or fall from heaven (the sky). Angels are described as morning stars in *Job* (38: 6-7), singing for joy when God creates the heavens and the earth. They carry prizes from their hunting trip: grouse poached from the moor, rabbits and stolen jewels (birds' eggs). They look down into the valley bottom and see 'a cupped hand brimmed with cock crows'. In *Ted and I*, Gerald describes how, as they reached the lower fields, they would be greeted by the chorus of cock-crowing from the hen pens along the top of Banksfields. In the 1930s most of the slopes around Mytholmroyd were divided into allotments for the breeding of poultry. In his biography of Hughes, Bate also refers to Thornber Chicks, a large poultry farm on the opposite side of the valley to Banksfields. The cupped hand image is derived directly from the topography, symbolising the shape of the valley bottom with Mytholmroyd nestled in the base, edged with hen pens all around it. Ann Skea discusses the symbolism of joining the words 'cock' and 'crows' (in reference to the poem 'Cock-Crows', but also valid here), suggesting that the linkage of the symbolic bird of dawn with the bird of darkness and death creates a powerful connection between the opposites darkness and light, birth and death, emanating change and renewal.[12] Hughes's use of the term 'cock crows' in 'Two' is clearly a direct memory of that actual noise, but applying Skea's theory, cock crows could also be suggestive of the significant changes about to happen in the young Ted's life.

---

[10] Gerald Hughes to Donald Crossley, personal letter, 24 March 2003, University of Huddersfield archive.

[11] Gerald Hughes, *Ted and I: A Brother's Memoir* (London: Robson Press, 2012), p. 24.

[12] Ann Skea, 'Regeneration in Remains of Elmet', in *The Challenge of Ted Hughes*, ed. Keith Sagar (London: St. Martin's Press, 1994), p. 125.

After descending from Sugar Loaf towards Hill House Farm, the brothers would follow the stream through Clough Hole. In the *Remains of Elmet* version, Ted uses the word 'abundance', alluding to the wealth and beauty surrounding them out in that idyllic natural world that was their heaven. However, in *Elmet*, Hughes has replaced 'abundance' with 'unending', perhaps after re-thinking and deciding this was not the best word to depict life in the valley at that time. 1937 certainly was not a time of abundance; in fact, with the imposition of mill workers placed on the three-day week, times were hard. The change of the word to 'unending' instead hints at Hughes's desire to make this time with his brother last forever. Gerald recalled that being up on the hills was like flying: they knew they had to return to the valley for work and school, but would put off the return journey as long as possible.[13] 'Unending', then, recalls these stirred childhood memories within Ted, remembering that they did not want the dawn to end and did not want to leave the tranquillity of the hillside.

As they progress on their way, the 'two dropped from the woods that hung in the sky', or from their heaven of Redacre Wood into the valley below. In one of Gerald's letters to Donald Crossley, he says they would sit up there for hours listening to the distant rumble of the mills down at Hawksclough, before descending back into the top of the woods and valley, where noise and life replaced the special music of the hills above Redacre.[14] The next line, 'bringing the scorched talons of crows', is re-worked in *Elmet*, changing 'talons' to 'feet', and the birds becoming 'carrion crows'. The use of 'feet' instead of 'talons' may reflect Hughes's desire to be technically more precise (crows are not birds of prey, and so do not have talons, but instead have feet with claws), to anthropomorphise the crow, and to ease pronunciation ('scorched feet' being far easier to say than 'scorched talons'). Hughes's inclusion of the words 'scorched', and in *Elmet* 'carrion', is also thought-provoking. Could the crow's feet be scorched as they descend into Ted and Gerald's personal hell in the valley bottom? In Hughes's short story 'Sunday', the valley bottom (Mytholmroyd) is described as resembling 'a volcanic pit, bottomless in places, a jagged fissure into a sulphurous underworld, the smoke dragging off the chimneys of the mills and houserows like a tearing fleece' (*W* 57). Hughes could also be alluding to the post-war demise of the Calder Valley, creating a scene of post-apocalyptic no man's land, with crows pecking at the charred remains of the dead, the rotting farms and dying factories, in reference to Hughes's memory of living in the shadow of the war, where 'you were living among the survivors, in the remains' (*E* 11). In the next two lines, Ted and Gerald trigger choruses of birds as they descend, mingled with the noises of trains, mills, traffic, and people shouting, all rising up from the valley bottom. The reference to war also

---

[13] Gerald Hughes, Ted and I, p. 25.
[14] Gerald Hughes to Donald Crossley, 24 March 2003, University of Huddersfield archive.

symbolises the imminent end of the brothers' world together in this paradise. As the 'guide' flies away, Gerald leaves young Ted behind, without his childhood mentor and, in *Remains of Elmet*, 'the other [young Ted] stood still'. However, in *Elmet* this has changed to 'the other swayed'. The poem is looking back at a time around 1937 when Gerald was seventeen and Ted was seven, so Gerald has not actually left yet; but in retrospect, Hughes remembers the unease and unbalance he would feel when his brother did leave, albeit in two years' time. Ted wavered, initially wishing to remain in Eden with his brother, a dream he would hold close for many years to come, but eventually took a different path to Gerald: poetry swayed his path.

The next two lines mark the termination of Ted's childhood in Mytholmroyd. Their mythologised world of Red Indian clan chiefs and warriors was over. The feather headdresses would no longer be worn and the tom-tom drum Gerald hid in the top of the woods for Ted would be silenced forever.[15] Everything was changing with the knowledge that they would soon be departing for Mexborough. Revisiting this memory may have stirred up the emotions of Gerald's imminent departure for war. In the final line Ted is left mute as the drum-beat across the woods dies and he is left alone. The war cry is silenced, and could be interpreted as a reference to the silence of his father after the horrors of the First World War, and even the fear as a young boy that Gerald, too, could also be silenced if he left for war. Or, is this simply Ted being silenced by fear of what lay ahead after the irrefutable end of his boyhood days in Mytholmroyd?

'Mount Zion' also appears in both *Remains of Elmet* and *Elmet*, and is a poem I would describe as a psycho-geographical depiction of the memories of the world immediately outside Ted's childhood window on Aspinall Street, and his recollections of the impact of Methodism on the Calder Valley. Fay Godwin's photograph, although of a different Methodist chapel (since Mount Zion was no longer there) unfortunately does not fully capture the imposing scale of Mount Zion itself. In his book on psycho-geography, Colin Ellard explains how the design of our surroundings exerts an influence on how we think and what we do. Using a courthouse for exemplification, he demonstrates how being confronted with high ceilings, ornate design and heavy columns, helps to create a feeling of smallness in the presence of the weight of authority.[16] Studies have also suggested that the form of such spaces affects not only how we feel, but our attitudes and behaviour, making us more compliant and ready to conform to the greater and more powerful will. Old photographs of Mount Zion show us the scale and dominance of this building, which was indeed a colossal edifice that cast a vast shadow over all the houses at the bottom of Banksfields, blocking the moon in the first two lines of the poem. Hughes found the building a depressive force field.

---

[15] Gerald Hughes mentions this drum in a letter, 24 March 2003, University of Huddersfield archive.

[16] Colin Ellard, *Places of the Heart: The Psychogeography of Everyday Life* (New York: Bellevue Literary Press, 2015), p. 16.

In the fourth line – 'Mount Zion's gravestone slab' – Hughes depicts this colossal structure as a deadfall: a giant slab of rock threatening to fall and trap him, or sinners, underneath, like the fox caught in his short story 'The Deadfall'. The chapel obstructs any real understanding of the world with its threat of dogma and conformity. Hughes views the Methodist church as an influential institution that drives the local community to conform to its teaching. In his introductory notes to *Elmet*, Hughes talks about how its chapel-builders 'perfected the art of perching their towering, massive, stone, prison-like structures on drop-offs where now you would only just graze sheep' (*E* 11). He refers to the influence of Parson Grimshaw, the late-eighteenth-century hell-fire preacher of nearby Haworth:

> [H]e struck the whole region 'like a planet' [...]. To a degree, he changed the very landscape. His heavenly fire, straight out of Blake's Prophetic Books, shattered the terrain into biblical landmarks: quarries burst open like craters, and chapels – the bedrock transfigured – materialized standing in them. The crumpled map of horizons became a mirage of the Holy Land. Grimshaw imposed this vision (which was not a little neurotic), then herded the people into it.
> (*E* 10–11)

Hughes was taken to Mount Zion as a young boy, and like any other boy of his age (my father included), he probably did not want to go to chapel and sit through the dour services listening to the preacher deliver sobering messages of terror, death, and conviction. His story 'Sunday' begins by recreating a 'scrubbed Sunday morning' in Mytholmroyd, where Michael is marched to chapel in his detestable blue blazer, sitting through the organ-like modulations of the sermon, and is worked into a torment of impatience and stupefaction (*W* 57). In 'Mount Zion', Hughes remembers this as a terrifying experience, as he is 'Marched in under, gripped by elders / Like a jibbing calf'. This memory is captured in a 1990 letter to Moelwyn Merchant, Anglican priest, academic, poet, and sculptor, where Hughes writes that as a child he had 'always dreaded Sunday as a day of psychological torment', and that 'the whole business of Sunday in the Calder Valley (Fanatic blend of Methodism and Chartism) had always seemed to me a performance <u>at the expense of the real thing</u>' (*LTH* 579). Hughes describes this frightening atmosphere in the poem: 'The convicting holy eyes, the convulsed Moses mouthings'. In the next lines – 'They were terrified too. A mesmerized commissariat' – Hughes illustrates the menacing power the preacher had over his predominantly working-class congregation, and the enforced conformity of the Methodist religion. In his analysis of this section of the poem, Sagar observes that

'the purpose of the chapel seemed to be simply to eradicate the joy of life, even if that meant eradicating life itself'.[17]

In the next stanza Hughes goes on to create the picture of an unpleasant congregation which Simon Armitage describes as 'a rather scary-sounding congregation [...] [who] seem to have little to do with spiritual fulfilment of any kind'.[18] In fact, there is an almost comedic element to their description, the women 'crumpling to puff-pastry, and cobwebbed with deaths'; such imagery calls to mind some of Roald Dahl's characters, such as the wizened, bony Aunt Spiker and fat, piggy-eyed Aunt Sponge from *James and the Giant Peach*. Women did wear their Sunday finery, with hats pinned to their heads, while the men wore ill-fitting mothballed suits, looking overly-severe and uncomfortable out of their everyday work wear, while they listened intently to the hell-fire messages being hammered home. 'As the bottomless cry / beat itself numb against Wesley's foundation stone' could also be a reference to the proximity of the octagonal Methodist chapel in Heptonstall, which has a foundation stone laid by John Wesley and is regarded as the cradle of eighteenth-century West Yorkshire Methodism.

In the final stanza of the poem, Hughes juxtaposes the enforced conformity of Methodism with the natural energies of a small insect, a cricket, living in a small crack in the walls of Mount Zion. Hughes's true religion comes to the fore as the cricket rives at the religious stonework with its screwdrivers and chisels, a tiny symbol of nature attempting to conquer Wesley's foundation stone. As the young Hughes lies wrapped up in bed, cut-off from the natural world, the cricket strikes up a warning cry, alerting us to the war between religion (man) and nature being fought outside. In Hughes's world nature is his religion. Sagar points to this in his discussion of D.H. Lawrence's influence on the poet, writing: 'Each recognised very early the interdependence of all living things, and the frailty of man in the cosmos. Each became, from direct experience, the enemy of everything which had conspired to enslave people and degrade nature'.[19] Sagar also states that 'Hughes's divinity is the Great Goddess, and she is nature, incarnate life on earth'.[20]

In his letter to Moelwyn Merchant, Hughes writes about his spiritual beliefs, explaining that animals live in a state of perpetual 'Samadhi' or 'bliss' in a divine world and have never fallen from it into ego-consciousness, unlike humans. He goes on to explain how humans have a

---

[17] Sagar (ed. and introd.), *The Achievement of Ted Hughes* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983), p. 5.
[18] Armitage, p. 11.
[19] Sagar, *Ted Hughes and Nature*, p. 64.
[20] Sagar, *Ted Hughes and Nature*, p. 55.

> strange new sense of alienation from the world into which we are
> born, & the strange new sense of alienation from the 'divine'
> experience of our animal/spiritual nature [...]. Once, by ego-
> consciousness i.e. free intelligence, the ability to manipulate abstract
> ideas & direct our behaviour against instinct, we had lost the divine
> world, and internal identity with the divine self, culture appeared, as
> I say, as a substitute for what we had lost – religion appeared as a
> technology to regain it. (*LTH* 580–1)

Thus, as the cricket gradually rives away at the religious stonework and undermines the foundations of this robust religious doctrine, Mount Zion becomes a representation of the failure of man's use of religion to regain our animal samadhi/spiritual divinity, and in the words of Simon Armitage, illustrates how 'the church is a physical manifestation of man's desire to impose order on the world, and the sound of the cricket is the heretical erosion of that order'.[21] Sagar suggests that since the dawn of civilisation, man's primary enemy has been nature, both wild inhuman nature and human nature. He uses an extract of T.H. Huxley's book *Evolution and Ethics*, written in 1894, to illustrate this ongoing conflict and ultimately, the conquest of nature over man, which can be explicitly linked with the final lines of 'Mount Zion':

> That which lies before the human race is a constant struggle to
> maintain and improve, in opposition to the State of Nature, the State
> of Art of an organised polity; in which, and by which, man may
> develop a worthy civilisation [an industrial society based on the
> biblical premise that nature existed for man's use and profit], capable
> of maintaining and constantly improving itself, until the evolution of
> our globe shall have entered so far upon its downward course that the
> cosmic process resumes its sway; and, once more, the State of Nature
> prevails over the surface of our planet.[22]

By mapping and reading 'Two' and 'Mount Zion', key poems in both *Remains of Elmet* and *Elmet*, we can see how significant Hughes's boyhood experiences and the influence of landscapes in and around Mytholmroyd were in shaping his memories of the area. They are two of several poems that patently illustrate Hughes's deep and lasting connections with the Calder Valley, but, more importantly, they reveal that Hughes's world of Elmet is fundamentally dual-centred. The geographical distinction between Heptonstall and Mytholmroyd enables Hughes to juxtapose and contrast the Edenic setting of the hilltops with the hellish valley floor below. Paradoxically, the dominant religious presence of Mount Zion chapel in Mytholmroyd reinforces rather than challenges this duality, because religion is placed in contrast with the Edenic 'State of Nature' that Hughes associates with the hilltops. Unsurprisingly, it is the

---

[21] Armitage, p. 11.
[22] Quoted in Sagar, *Ted Hughes and Nature*, p. 3.

Mytholmroyd setting that grounds the most clearly autobiographical aspects of the *Elmet* poems, whereas the hilltop settings are generally more mythical in tone and content. Thus, there are a number of dualisms to Hughes's Elmet project: its twofold nature as a book of both poems and photographs; its two iterations in 1979 and 1994; and fundamentally, although more easily overlooked, the bipartite nature of its geography with its two centres. A close reading of the poems alongside the mapping of their physical locations reveals that Hughes's Elmet is not so much his reconstruction of a lost world as it is his reuniting two of them.

From *Remains* to *Elmet*: A Lexical Study of Hughes's West Yorkshire Texts

Kyra Piperides

In 1994 Ted Hughes published a revised edition of his 1979 collection *Remains of Elmet*, this time simply titled *Elmet*. The poet prefaces the revised collection with a description of the West Yorkshire context: 'Elmet is still the name on maps for a part of West Yorkshire that includes the deep valley of the upper Calder and its watershed of Pennine moorland' (*E* 9). Before even encountering the poems the reader is transported into Hughes's rural, early childhood home. This process is, of course, aided by Fay Godwin's immersive photographic record of the Calder Valley and its surrounding areas which interacts with Hughes's poetry throughout the collection. This author's note that prefaces the second collection is greatly expanded from the original paragraph that introduced *Remains of Elmet* and featured after the (at that time untitled) poem, 'The Dark River'.[1] In his revised and expanded introduction, Hughes provides his reader with a brief overview of the extensive history of the area: the reader of *Elmet* is treated to a greater glimpse into histories of the Calder Valley, the 'Archaeology of the mouth' that, alongside Godwin's photographs, aids the understanding and interpretation of the poems (*E* 13). In his introduction, Hughes reports that 'Elmet was the last independent Celtic kingdom in England and originally stretched out over the vale of York. I imagine that it shrank back into the gorge of the upper Calder under historic pressures, before the Celtic survivors were politically absorbed into England' (*E* 9). The verbs that Hughes uses here to describe the processes affecting Elmet's history are fascinating: by publishing these collections, then, Hughes is effectively dragging the legends of Elmet back out from the gorge within which they were forced, meanwhile digging below the surface of local histories and folklores, as it were, allowing them to (re)emerge into national, and even international consciousness.

---

[1] This new note is first used in the 1993 compilation *Three Books* – in which the collection is still titled *Remains of Elmet* – however it is here included as a note at the end of the book, so featuring (for the linear reader, at least) after the sequence of *Remains of Elmet*, *Cave Birds*, and *River*. For this reason, it can be concluded that *Elmet* is the first occurrence of this author's note actually introducing the collection.

As the collections negotiate generations of Calder history, geography, and folklore, *Elmet* and its predecessor (along with the additional publication of the text in *Three Books*) become their own linear history. By observing and understanding Hughes's revisions in the fifteen years between the publication of *Remains of Elmet* and *Elmet* we can observe his process. There are, of course, many ways of tracking, interpreting, and discussing Hughes's authorial and editorial revisions to his collection. The use of a computer-aided textual analysis, however, seems particularly beneficial if we wish to identify and compare key patterns within the two texts. By using software to generate word lists from the two texts, we are able to quickly create a concordance for both, and then sort it by frequency. The comparison between these two lists is interesting, and immediately highlights some of the key changes that Hughes made when revising *Remains of Elmet*. A close consideration of the poet's language choices may have obvious limitations when it comes to the interpretation of poetic technique, but the magnified view of the ways in which Hughes constructed, then reconstructed his texts allows a valuable level of insight into the key features and differences between these works.

*

What new light can a lexical analysis shed on the texts? A good place to start is determining the frequency of specific words in the texts (and, more importantly, how these differ between the two). By simply taking a look at the 100 most frequent words in *Remains of Elmet* and *Elmet* we can immediately see some key linguistic differences between the two texts. (A table comparing the 100 most frequent words of each text is reproduced at the end of this article as Appendix 1.)[2] Whilst a comparison of only the 100 most frequent words does not provide a totally comprehensive overview of Hughes's linguistic choices, it is sufficient to gain insight into the grammatical constructions, and more importantly their differences between the two texts. The 100 most common words, after all, amount to 2,975 words in *Remains of Elmet* and 4,809 in *Elmet*: in number they are highly significant.[3] The numerical frequencies are

---

[2] The word frequencies were determined by feeding the full text into Simple Concordance Program 4.09 (build 88) (Alan Reed, 1997–2016) and generating word lists. The inputted text included the poems in their entirety, headings, and the poet's textual notes. Contents pages, page numbers, the index of photographs, and both books' front matter were excluded in order to retain focus solely on Hughes's chosen words. Hyphens [-] were programmed to be recognised as letters within the text, so words that Hughes compounded for poetic effect are distinguished from their component words. Apostrophes ['] however were not included – so words appearing within the text with a possessive 's', for example, are included within the frequency count of their main component. The software does not differentiate between upper- and lower-case; the word lists generated are entirely in lower-case.

[3] As before, these totals were calculated by including the poems in their entirety (as published), as well as titles, headings, and the author's note/preface. Percentage frequencies were calculated as the percentage of the total word count (6,267 words in *Remains of Elmet* and 10,089 words in *Elmet*), and

interesting in themselves, but it is through the comparison of a word's frequency percentage that we can truly see Hughes's adaptations between the two texts. Whilst the word 'hills', for example, initially seems to have been used more frequently by Hughes in *Elmet* (26 times, as opposed to 21 times in *Remains of Elmet*), statistically the word is used more frequently in the earlier text: the word 'hills' represents 0.34% of the words in *Remains of Elmet*, a higher percentage than the 0.26% usage in *Elmet*. Comparisons such as this allow further understanding of Hughes's revision process and, perhaps, his differing intentions between the texts.

Initial differences that are obvious between the texts include a significant number of words that are present in the 100 most frequent words of one collection, but not the other. In *Remains of Elmet* these are 'rock', 'dead', 'heaven', 'dark', 'wild', 'sun', 'far', 'last', 'left', 'old', 'walls', 'each', 'god', 'high', 'huge', 'soft', 'these', 'two', 'valleys' and 'who'. For *Elmet*, on the other hand, these are 'you', 'your', 'still', 'so', 'there', 'when', 'blue', 'came', 'between', 'have', 'off', 'even', 'first', 'Heptonstall', 'just', 'only', 'sheep', 'than', 'went', 'after' and 'away'. This is not to say that these words do not feature in the other text, merely that they are less frequent (very significantly so, in some cases). It is particularly interesting that many of the 100 most frequent words in *Remains of Elmet* that do not feature in the top 100 of *Elmet* are so-called 'content' words, whereas those featuring in the top 100 of *Elmet* and missing from its predecessor's list are more comprised of 'function' words.[4] Is there, then, more of a focus on grammatical structures in the later text? Of course, it could equally be possible that the poet's lengthier introductory note is responsible, at least in part, for this.

An effective approach to interpreting the word lists, then, is to divide them by word class, as illustrated by the pie charts in Figure 1.

---

rounded to two decimal places; where words appeared the same number of times within the text, they have been ranked alphabetically.

4 'Content' words include nouns, verbs, adverbs, and adjectives, and provide meaning within a sentence. 'Function' words, including pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, determiners and auxiliaries, give the sentence its grammatical structure.
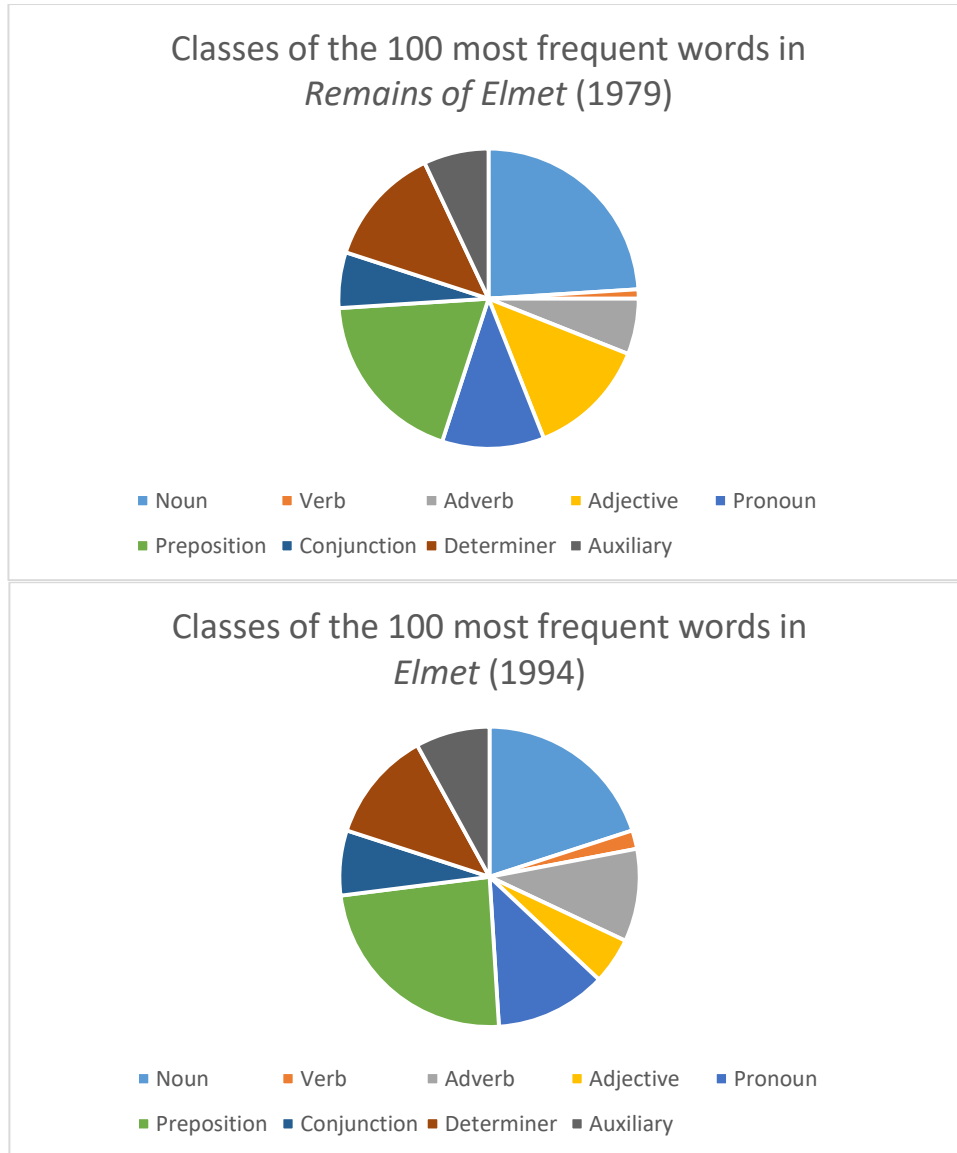
Figure 1

It is only natural that a high number of the 100 most frequent words are 'functional' words from closed word classes (pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, determiners and auxiliary verbs). However, when we see the top 100 words from each text divided into their individual word classes it becomes even clearer that *Remains of Elmet* contains a much higher frequency of 'content' words than *Elmet* (this is most clearly exemplified when these are divided further, into the two categories of functional and content words). For the purposes of this analysis, words that could fall into multiple word classes ('light', for example, could be a noun or an adjective) were grouped contextually, within the function which Hughes used most frequently in the specific text. The concordances invite many fascinating areas of interpretation; for the purpose

of this article, however, the two key areas for discussion will be Hughes's use of nouns and pronouns.

Narrowing down the word frequency lists into their constituent nouns is a great place to start when considering a lexical analysis of the two collections. In *Remains of Elmet*, 23 of the 100 most frequent words are nouns; in *Elmet* this number reduces slightly to 20. As Figure 2 shows, removing all word classes except for nouns reduces the lists considerably; the words that are left behind are very recognisable as the subject matter of these collections.

Remains of Elmet (1979)				*Elmet* (1994)			
Rank	**Word**	**Frequency**		**Rank**	**Word**	**Frequency**	
		#	**%**			**#**	**%**
28	hills	21	0.34	**39**	valley	28	0.28
32	light	20	0.32	**42**	hills	26	0.26
39	wind	17	0.27	**58**	stone	20	0.2
45	rock	14	0.22	**59**	water	19	0.19
46	stone	14	0.22	**61**	wind	19	0.19
47	stones	14	0.22	**63**	light	18	0.18
48	valley	14	0.22	**64**	men	18	0.18
49	water	14	0.22	**65**	earth	16	0.16
52	earth	13	0.21	**68**	eyes	15	0.15
54	heaven	13	0.21	**69**	heather	15	0.15
55	men	13	0.21	**70**	here	15	0.15
60	eyes	12	0.19	**71**	rain	15	0.15
62	rain	12	0.19	**76**	air	13	0.13
65	heather	11	0.18	**83**	stones	13	0.13
68	world	11	0.18	**87**	heptonstall	12	0.12
74	silence	10	0.16	**89**	mills	12	0.12
75	sun	10	0.16	**92**	sheep	12	0.12
77	air	9	0.14	**93**	silence	12	0.12
78	ball	9	0.14	**96**	world	12	0.12
86	walls	9	0.14	**100**	ball	11	0.11
88	god	8	0.13				
92	mills	8	0.13				
98	valleys	8	0.13				

Figure 2

As we have already established, and as becomes quite clear from the table above, several of the nouns that rank within the top 100 of *Remains of Elmet* are no longer so statistically frequent in *Elmet*: 'rock', 'heaven', 'sun', 'walls', 'god', and 'valleys' no longer feature within the most frequent words. This simple observation implies that religion is of lesser importance in *Elmet*. For some of the words that appear lower on this list it is likely that their demotion from the 100 most frequent words is merely an unavoidable consequence of the much higher frequency of functional words in the revised text. However, in the case of 'rock' and 'heaven', their use in the second collection has significantly declined. It is interesting to note that the nouns 'Heptonstall' and 'sheep' rise into the most frequent 100 words in *Elmet*, due to Hughes's revisions.

What is immediately striking when studying Figure 2 is the enormous presence of the geology of the Calder Valley region in Hughes's 'Elmet' collections. 'Hills', 'rock', 'stone(s)' and 'valley(s)' directly reference the Calderdale landscape that Hughes was surrounded by during his childhood, recreating it for the reader. From the list of nouns we can begin to see these layers within the poems. The geology is complemented by other geographical and elemental nouns: the high frequency of 'light', 'wind', 'water', 'earth', 'rain', 'heather', 'world', 'sun' and 'air' ensure a tight focus on nature within the Calder Valley, as Hughes writes of his ancestral home. The high number of these references to the natural world within the most common nouns, then, is logical: the area is built on over 310 million years of geology. From the initial settlers who were attracted by the safety and protection of the valleys, to the rivers that facilitated the woollen and worsted industries, Upper Calderdale's geology ultimately shaped its human histories too.[5] The first period of known human habitation in the Upper Calder Valley was during the Stone Age: researchers have located Stone Age tools in the area, as well as a Bronze Age burial ground near Mytholmroyd. The titles of the collections, of course, originate from the Celtic activity in West Yorkshire during the Iron Age: Elmet was 'the last Celtic kingdom in England, whose main stronghold was Heptonstall'.[6] The steep upland settlements, with their harsh climate, allowed protection from the Vikings and the Saxons. Even in more recent history, this has been a place of protection: in 'the seventeenth century this narrow cleft and its side-ginnels,

---

[5] Herbert Heaton, *The Yorkshire Worsted and Woollen Industries from the Earliest Times up to the Industrial Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1920), p. 93.
[6] 'Mytholmroyd Conservation Area Appraisal', Calderdale Council, at www.calderdale.gov.uk/environment/conservation/conservation-areas/mytholmroyd.pdf, p. 3 (accessed 12 April 2017); Elaine Feinstein, *Ted Hughes: The Life of a Poet* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 2001), p. 11.

under the glaciated moors, were still a "badlands", a sanctuary for refugees from the war. Defoe hid in Halifax to escape his creditors' (*E* 9).[7]

The geography of the Upper Calder Valley is equally responsible for its more recent histories, as acknowledged in Hughes's poems. The area's significance in the woollen and worsted industries accounts for the high frequency of several words, particularly 'mills', which has a frequency of 0.13% in *Remains of Elmet* and 0.12% in *Elmet*, and 'water', with frequencies of 0.22% and 0.19% respectively. Water was important to the industrial revolution in this area: the appropriateness of the land for the rearing of sheep, with its 'short, coarse grass [with] innumerable springs of fresh water', was the first of two factors that facilitated the weaving industry within the Upper Calder Valley.[8] The second was the proximity to rivers, including the River Calder. Once the industry had moved from cottages into factory systems, the area's rivers and streams drove the water-powered mills as well as enabling transportation of goods. Even after advancements in technology moved on from water power the towns were prepared, with 'iron and coal [...] at the very door'.[9] Ultimately, however, cheaper Eastern production caused the decline of industry in the area. Keith Sagar notes that by the time Hughes was writing *Remains of Elmet* 'the collapse was complete. All that remained were derelict mills and memories'.[10] In his preface to *Remains of Elmet* Hughes writes: 'Throughout my lifetime, since 1930, I have watched the mills of the region and their attendant chapels die. Within the last fifteen years the end has come. They are now virtually dead' (*RE* 8). This demise of industrialism is afforded greater resonance by Godwin's brooding black and white photographs of abandoned buildings, juxtaposed with images of the wild countryside.[11] It is interesting that there are only two nouns in the top 100 words that could not be considered 'natural' parts of the landscape. The first of these is 'mills'; the second is 'ball'. In 'Football at Slack' and 'Sunstruck', at their most literal levels we are reminded of the pervasiveness of the human spirit, 'The freedom of Saturday afternoons', even within the harsh landscape and even harsher historical contexts that were, of course, realities for Hughes's ancestors.

The historical significance of the Calder landscape and the safety it provided, then, account for the high frequency of geological and geographical nouns in both collections. Given the thematic importance, it seems surprising that 'rock', and to a

---

[7] Tomas Remiarx, *Discovering Elmet* (Echoes of Elmet Steering Group, 2004), at https://web.archive.org/web/20120204065426 / http://www.lhi.org.uk/docs/Elmet_Article1.doc (accessed 12 April 2017); Feinstein, p. 11.

[8] Lettice Cooper, *Yorkshire: West Riding* (London: Robert Hale, 1950), p. 13.

[9] Heaton, p. 259.

[10] Keith Sagar, *Ted Hughes and Nature: 'Terror and Exultation'* (Lancashire: Keith Sagar, 2009), p. 227.

[11] This is particularly evident in 'Lumb Valley' and 'Jumble Hole Clough' (E 43, 96).

lesser extent 'stone(s)', are used less frequently in *Elmet*. The distinction between the pair is interesting: the *OED* defines 'rock' as 'a large rugged mass of hard mineral material or stone forming a cliff, crag or other natural feature on land or in the sea; the solid mineral material forming much of the substance of the earth [...] whether exposed on the surface or overlain by soil, sand, mud, etc; in a figurative context, chiefly alluding to qualities of hardness, durability, or immobility'.[12] 'Stone', meanwhile, is 'a piece of rock or hard mineral substance (other than metal) of a small or moderate size; a rock, cliff, crag; a mass of rock; rocky ground'.[13] Whilst these terms seem relatively interchangeable, in *Remains of Elmet* the key distinction seems to be their size. 'Rock' seems conceptually large, referring to the area's geology en masse, or in general terms: 'And the children / Of rock and water and a draughty absence'; 'Wild Rock / Tamed rock'; 'Its song drew men out of rock'. It is rugged, its shape non-specific: 'The Big Animal Of Rock'; 'That cut rock lumps for words'. Rock, it seems, is a relatively unimpressionable mass: 'Rock Has Not Learned / Valleys are not aware' (*RE* 38; *E* 32, 85). 'Stone', on the other hand, is regularly used to represent singularity – 'A lonely stone' – and the relative insignificance of the singular being among the greater body of nature – 'Like a stone inside surf'. Even in the case of 'Wesley's foundation stone', the stone is a singular starting point upon which the Methodist church was built (*E* 56, 103, 73). Unlike the mass effect of rock, stone is changeable: the 'stone inside surf' is surely being worn, influenced, smoothed; 'stone' here represents the individual in society. In 'Hill-Stone Was Content', Hughes uses the local stone as a poignant metaphor: the poem 'conflated the Great War with the industrial revolution that made it possible, not only technologically, but in terms of the disciplining of men'.[14] As 'Hill-stone was content / To be cut, to be carted / And fixed in its new place', the men of the Calder community become resources: they are recruited, used and, perhaps, abused, just like the natural resources that are quarried locally for use nearby (*E* 25). In the war, however, the men are depersonalised, de-localised and deployed elsewhere.

The frequency of 'stone' in *Elmet*, of course, is higher because of its occasional use as an adjective: 'Their draped stone manes', 'The stone horns' (*E* 101, 48). This use only reinforces the sense that the poet, and the reader by extension, really is surrounded by the distinct Calder geology. With the increased occurrences of 'stone' in *Elmet*, the emphasis is slightly altered: in his author's note Hughes recites an old

---

[12] 'Rock.', *Oxford English Dictionary*, at http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/166697?rskey=c261QU&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid (accessed 27 January 2018).
[13] 'Stone.', *Oxford English Dictionary*, at http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/190787?rskey=K30axX&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid (accessed 27 January 2018).
[14] Neil Roberts, *Ted Hughes: A Literary Life* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 132.

rhyme, 'Halifax is made of wax / Heptonstall of stone' (*E* 9). Whilst this acknowledges a truth – the buildings largely were constructed from the local stone – it also implies a certain enduring stoniness of the society.[15] A similar metaphor is cited in 1875 by William Stubbs: 'John's heart was of millstone, Henry's of wax'.[16] We are reminded in both texts, of course, of the ways in which man has utilized stone: 'Millstone-grit – a soul-grinding sandstone'. In its purpose within industry, millstone is used to 'grind corn', but metaphorically millstone refers to 'a heavy and inescapable burden or responsibility'; a grinding or crushing instrument; an oppressive or destructive force' or used to 'denote hard heartedness'.[17] However, in *Remains of Elmet*, 'Stone softens' (*RE* 73). Are we to interpret this literally, as the process of stones milling grain into much softer flour, or alternatively the process by which stone can be worn smooth? Or is this, alternatively, an acknowledgement that a hard exterior does not necessarily indicate a similarly hard interior? Glyn Hughes certainly agrees with the latter theory: 'Rough, truculent and dour they might appear, but this, as with their stone, is only a forbidding exterior; break it open, and, just as the millstone grit itself is gold inside, so these people sparkle with humour, courage, and kindness.'[18] The landscape may have been harsh, but it was equally protective: 'Everything but the stones. / The stones are safe, being stone'; 'Hidden beneath stone'; 'He survives among hills, nourished by stone and height'; 'The trout under the stone so light-hearted!' (*E* 19, 78, 117). Stone, here, is a sign of safety; for Hughes, perhaps, it is a symbol of home. Given the higher frequency of 'stone' and lower frequency of 'rock' in *Elmet* when compared to its predecessor, it seems that the later collection has a subtle but distinct focus on the individuals within Upper Calderdale, in comparison to *Remains of Elmet*'s wider focus on the society as a whole.

Like the local stone, sheep also become a metaphor for the Calder society. Sheep have long been farmed in the Calder Valley, their suitability to the Pennine landscape allowing for the provision of the wool that was woven on the early cottage looms. Sheep appear in both collections, albeit significantly more frequently in *Elmet*; the animals have become as much a part of the local, natural landscape as the older, geological features. The distinction, though, is important: the rocks and stones (however used and adapted by humans) were in the area long before people; the sheep's existence in the area is largely a result of human activity. Their significantly higher frequency in *Elmet* reinforces this more human emphasis within the latter collection. As 'Startled

---

[15] 'Mytholmroyd Conservation Area Appraisal', p. 4.

[16] William Stubbs, *The Constitutional History of England in its Origin and Development*, Volume II, 1st ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1875), p. 99.

[17] 'Millstone.', *Oxford English Dictionary*, at http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/118596?redirectedFrom=millstone#eid/ (accessed 27 January 2018).

[18] Glyn Hughes, *Millstone Grit* (London: Gollancz, 1975), p. 8.

people look up / With sheep's heads / Then go on eating', we are reminded of the phrase 'like a lamb to the slaughter' (*E* 21). Hughes is critical of the way in which the people of Upper Calderdale, like millions of others across the country, were collectively shepherded into the mills by industrialisation, before being sent away in their flocks to the First World War battlefields. Rather than being complicit in their destruction because of their lack of objection, the people are metaphorically presented as helpless. It is of course interesting that 'sheep' represents both the singular and plural: without close consideration of their determiners, here the individual and society as a whole are indistinguishable; the implied link to men 'carted off' to war is poignant. The clear singularity of 'a scraggy sheep at the moor-edge / Like a boulder tipped from the quarry / Took on the wild look of a hope / Returning from no man's land' acknowledges the significant number of men who did not return to the Calder Valley (*E* 116).

Hughes's father, of course, was one of the few men who did return, 'one of only seventeen survivors of an entire battalion of a thousand men massacred by Turkish artillery'.[19] In a letter to Fay Godwin dated 4 July 1976, the poet explains that he 'grew up with the feeling that all those buildings were monuments to a great age and a great generation which was somehow in the past, and the people round me [...] were just survivors, toiling on [...] stupefied by what happened' (*LTH* 379). For the generation that fought or lost loved ones in the war, history seems to have frozen here. This is reflected in the relatively high frequency of 'silence' within the collections (a 0.16% frequency in *Remains of Elmet* and 0.12% in *Elmet*). After the war, it is suggested in 'First, Mills', 'Everything became very quiet' (*E* 22). Neil Roberts suggests that 'a native of Hughes's generation is attuned to sounds beneath the silence of the famous beauty-spot, which rob it of its pastoral innocence [...] and these are sounds both of industry and war': the narrator is struck by the violence in nature that would ordinarily go unnoticed.[20] The silence marks an emptiness, an echo. It is only natural, then, as Jeffrey Meyers claims, that in his 'war poems Hughes conducted his own fierce campaign against hypocrisy, oppression, and the waste of human life'.[21] Not only is the 'silence' in both collections an acknowledgement of the silenced mills and the lack of industrial noise, it is the lack of noise from the generation of men who were missing. Rather than just the single moment's silence that traditionally remembers the dead, the silence of remembrance here is constant.

It must be remembered, then, that while *Remains of Elmet* and *Elmet* resurrect histories of the Upper Calder Valley in general, this is balanced with the personal

---

[19] Jeffrey Meyers, 'Ted Hughes: War Poet', *The Antioch Review* 71:1 (2013), p. 30.
[20] Neil Roberts, 'Class, war and the Laureateship', in *The Cambridge Companion to Ted Hughes*, ed. Terry Gifford (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 158.
[21] Meyers, p. 38.

histories of Hughes's ancestors. The area known as Elmet is, after all, the place that most strongly connects Hughes to his roots, his family. This is demonstrated to the reader in 'Heptonstall Cemetery': 'And Thomas and Walter and Edith / Are living feathers // Esther and Sylvia / Living feathers' (*E* 122). In 'The Dark River', the poet listens to his elderly uncle's recollections of Calder Valley history, which reconnects him with his late mother and his ancestry. This process of (re)connection could, incidentally, be an explanation for the remarkably high frequency of hyphens in the collection: compounded words and sentences here become a metaphor for this. Jonathan Bate remarks that 'the poem was written in 1975; the retention of the present tense for [the uncle's] voice when publishing it after his death the following year gives it added poignancy'.[22] In the letter to Godwin, Hughes says of his uncle: '[he was] a living archive of the Calder Valley [...]. His whole life at the end – in his eighties – was recounting the life of the whole region. And I thought I really must get what I can of what I grew up in there – because it is over now, with that generation' (*LTH* 378). Similarly, when describing the process of writing *Remains of Elmet*, Hughes recalled how he 'borrowed [his] mother's feelings [...]. She had the right tribal allegiance to the Holy Ground and the magical dead (the last-ditch farms, the slave mills, the massacres of the first world war, and the glamour of the genetic peculiarities of the valley as Badlands' (*LTH* 447–8). With the death of his parents' generation, then, the poet fears the loss of his connection to the area's history: in *Remains of Elmet* and *Elmet* the place's long, deep, folkloric history appears under threat of death too. This personal connection is particularly interesting when considering Hughes's pronoun use in both texts, particularly when these are narrowed down to personal pronouns. Whilst both texts contain eight personal pronouns in their most frequent 100 words, there are interesting distinctions between the two, as seen in Figure 3.

---

[22] Jonathan Bate, *Ted Hughes: The Unauthorised Life* (London: William Collins, 2015), p. 391.

Remains of Elmet (1979)				Elmet (1994)			
Rank	**Personal Pronoun**	**Frequency**		**Rank**	**Personal Pronoun**	**Frequency**	
		#	**%**			**#**	**%**
7	it	44	0.7	**12**	you	68	0.67
20	they	31	0.49	**13**	it	67	0.66
37	i	17	0.27	**15**	he	63	0.62
53	he	13	0.21	**16**	i	63	0.62
57	them	13	0.21	**23**	they	47	0.47
61	me	12	0.19	**51**	him	22	0.22
71	itself	10	0.16	**57**	me	20	0.2
81	him	9	0.14	**72**	them	15	0.15

Figure 3

Whilst the frequency of 'me' stays fairly steady between the texts (12 occurrences, with a frequency of 0.19% of the total words in *Remains of Elmet*; 20 occurrences, with a frequency of 0.2% in *Elmet*), and 'him' shows a slight increase between the first and the second text (occurring 9 times, or 0.14% of the text in *Remains of Elmet*; and 22 times, or 0.22% in *Elmet*), for the other personal pronouns the results are more significant. Through this side-by-side comparison of the most frequent personal pronouns in the two texts, we can see a significant fall in the average use of the neutral and plural third-person pronouns. It is particularly interesting that no feminine pronouns rank within the top 100 words in either text. Whilst the number of times Hughes uses 'it' increases during his revisions (44 times in *Remains of Elmet* and 67 times in *Elmet*), this represents a proportional decrease between the texts (0.7% of the words are 'it' in the 1979 text; this falls slightly to 0.66% in 1994). The third-person subjective plural (or third-person neutral) pronoun 'they' shows a similar pattern, with a numerical increase from 31 to 47 but a percentage decrease from 0.49% to 0.47%. The third-person objective plural 'them' is even more exaggerated, with only a very slight numerical increase from 13 in *Remains of Elmet* to 15 in *Elmet*; this is a proportional decrease from 0.21% to 0.15% relative to the total number of words in the texts. The third-person reflexive pronoun 'itself' falls out of the 100 most frequent words after Hughes's revisions.

For the first-person pronoun 'I', and the masculine third-person 'he', however, the opposite is true. In *Remains of Elmet,* Hughes uses 'I' 17 times (a 0.27% frequency within the text) and 'he' 13 times (0.21% of the text). Once the text has undergone the author's revisions, however, in *Elmet* both pronouns are used 63 times, with a

frequency of 0.62% relative to the word count of the text in its entirety. When describing the adoption of his 'mother's feelings' towards the Calder Valley, Hughes wrote of a desire to explore his own experiences of the place: 'my own life there, I saw, resisted surgery. I would like to try seriously, before time overtakes, but I shan't promise any results' (*LTH* 448). The significant increase in the frequency of 'I' suggests that his attempts were ultimately successful. Just as striking is the fact that 'you', the most frequent personal pronoun in *Elmet*, is not included in the 100 most frequent words in *Remains of Elmet*. In both collections, 'you' is used in its plural form to show both singular and collective experience – 'You claw the door'; 'You take the coins out of the hollow in the top of it' – in *Elmet* this seems to take a more personal note: 'Now, you are strong as the earth you have entered'. 'Familiar' and 'For the Duration' account for a large part of the increase in the frequency of 'you', with their biographically personal contexts: 'I had to hear from others / What you survived and what you did' (*E* 84, 128). This dramatic increase in frequency is key to reinforcing the more personal tone of the second collection. In 1992 (two years before the publication of *Elmet*), Hughes described the process of writing poems 'that would harmonise with Fay Godwin's photographs', adding that 'In retrospect, I missed the real opportunity: I should have written portraits, sharp and detailed, of the people I knew there: populated the photographs without challenging their images' (*LTH* 633). This new focus seems to have been adopted in the second text, and is immediately apparent from Hughes's revised introduction: 'Gradually, it dawned on you that you were living among the survivors, in the remains' (*E* 11). As the relative frequency of many of the contextual terms – including the nouns we studied above – falls, this second person pronoun increases considerably: during the re-writing process, then, the collection becomes increasingly focused on the personal relationships that the place has borne and facilitated, as well as about the Calder Valley itself.

<p style="text-align:center">*</p>

As a result of his process of revision, Ted Hughes's *Elmet* is a history in itself. The 'Archaeology of the mouth' in 'The Dark River' frames the poet and the reader as historians, rediscovering elements of the Calder Valley's past. It is interesting, with this in mind, that when Hughes redrafts 'The Dark River', 'And the smoky valley opens' is subtly changed to 'And the smoky valley never closes' (*RE* 7; *E* 13). What might be a simple attempt to improve the poem works to relieve the sense of anxiety that, if not repeated by his uncle and recorded by the poet in this way, Calderdale's history will be lost to Hughes and to others forever.[23] To Godwin, Hughes wrote 'I realise now I was

---

[23] Bate, p. 391.

living in the last days of a Pompeii' (*LTH* 379). The area now 'Admits tourists // To pick among crumbling, loose molars / And empty sockets' (*RE* 53). Rather than visiting a contemporary society, they are observing (and, perhaps, destroying) the *remains* of an ancient one. As Elaine Feinstein writes, Godwin's 'black and white images suggest a bleakness that an innocent hiker, passing through the same area on a sunny day, might well miss. [...] The valley is haunted by those who served the oppressive looms [...] and by conscripts who once marched away to die in the First World War'.[24] The photographs and poems, then, work together to jointly portray the Calder Valley with a resonance that neither could achieve alone; the comparisons between the texts of the two collections suggest that, in the fifteen years between the two, Hughes's priorities in emphasis became slightly altered.

His editorial changes are considerable, significant, and fascinating: whilst the original text, *Remains of Elmet*, contains detailed portrayals of and allusions to the area's various histories and geographies, in *Elmet* this prioritisation gives way to the more personal aspects of his ancestors' lives in the Upper Calder Valley. Poems such as 'Hardcastle Crags', which included allusions to numerous, important points in Calder history, are adapted and rewritten. In *Elmet* Hughes uses a lengthier introduction to give the reader a more explicit overview of the history, geography, and folklore of his childhood home. As the frequency of some of the content words decreases in *Elmet*, Hughes's average use of functional, grammatical words increases considerably, suggesting a conscious effort to aid the reader's understanding and interpretation of the poems. The place's histories are, of course, still prevalent and relevant, but, as the poet is increasingly and temporally removed from the place and influence of his parents' generation, the personal histories become just as desperate for poetic preservation as the more general and distant ones. If the quantity of personal pronouns in the latter text indicates this increasing focus, the most frequent nouns make the other focus of the texts quite clear. Hughes recreates the geology of Elmet with such a high frequency of related nouns that, if the tales Hughes hears from his uncle are an 'archaeology of the mouth', both *Remains of Elmet* and *Elmet* are a 'geology of the pen'.

---

[24] Feinstein, p. 208.

Appendix 1

Remains of Elmet (1979)		Frequency		*Elmet* (1994)		Frequency	
Rank	**Word**	**#**	**%**	**Rank**	**Word**	**#**	**%**
1	the	498	7.94	**1**	the	853	8.45
2	of	249	3.97	**2**	and	343	3.4
3	and	237	3.78	**3**	of	333	3.3
4	a	178	2.84	**4**	a	261	2.59
5	in	134	2.14	**5**	in	201	1.99
6	to	93	1.48	**6**	to	142	1.41
7	it	44	0.7	**7**	his	85	0.84
8	their	44	0.7	**8**	their	80	0.79
9	with	44	0.7	**9**	that	76	0.75
10	on	39	0.62	**10**	on	73	0.72
11	for	38	0.61	**11**	with	69	0.68
12	from	38	0.61	**12**	you	68	0.67
13	that	38	0.61	**13**	it	67	0.66
14	its	37	0.59	**14**	at	64	0.63
15	at	36	0.57	**15**	he	63	0.62
16	into	36	0.57	**16**	i	63	0.62
17	like	35	0.56	**17**	from	60	0.59
18	her	34	0.54	**18**	for	57	0.56
19	out	32	0.51	**19**	as	54	0.54
20	they	31	0.49	**20**	into	50	0.5
21	was	29	0.46	**21**	was	50	0.5
22	over	27	0.43	**22**	out	49	0.49
23	under	26	0.41	**23**	they	47	0.47
24	is	25	0.4	**24**	this	47	0.47
25	this	23	0.37	**25**	its	41	0.41
26	all	21	0.34	**26**	by	40	0.4
27	by	21	0.34	**27**	her	40	0.4
28	hills	21	0.34	**28**	like	40	0.4
29	his	21	0.34	**29**	up	40	0.4
30	long	21	0.34	**30**	but	38	0.38
31	through	21	0.34	**31**	all	37	0.37
32	light	20	0.32	**32**	your	37	0.37

33	up	20	0.32	**33**	my	36	0.36
34	are	19	0.3	**34**	under	35	0.35
35	but	18	0.29	**35**	over	33	0.33
36	then	18	0.29	**36**	is	28	0.28
37	i	17	0.27	**37**	or	28	0.28
38	my	17	0.27	**38**	through	28	0.28
39	wind	17	0.27	**39**	valley	28	0.28
40	as	16	0.26	**40**	one	27	0.27
41	black	15	0.24	**41**	were	27	0.27
42	has	15	0.24	**42**	hills	26	0.26
43	now	15	0.24	**43**	then	26	0.26
44	down	14	0.22	**44**	now	25	0.25
45	rock	14	0.22	**45**	still	25	0.25
46	stone	14	0.22	**46**	where	25	0.25
47	stones	14	0.22	**47**	an	24	0.24
48	valley	14	0.22	**48**	are	24	0.24
49	water	14	0.22	**49**	down	23	0.23
50	an	13	0.21	**50**	so	23	0.23
51	dead	13	0.21	**51**	him	22	0.22
52	earth	13	0.21	**52**	there	22	0.22
53	he	13	0.21	**53**	had	21	0.21
54	heaven	13	0.21	**54**	no	21	0.21
55	men	13	0.21	**55**	not	21	0.21
56	not	13	0.21	**56**	back	20	0.2
57	them	13	0.21	**57**	me	20	0.2
58	where	13	0.21	**58**	stone	20	0.2
59	back	12	0.19	**59**	water	19	0.19
60	eyes	12	0.19	**60**	when	19	0.19
61	me	12	0.19	**61**	wind	19	0.19
62	rain	12	0.19	**62**	black	18	0.18
63	what	12	0.19	**63**	light	18	0.18
64	dark	11	0.18	**64**	men	18	0.18
65	heather	11	0.18	**65**	earth	16	0.16
66	were	11	0.18	**66**	has	16	0.16
67	wild	11	0.18	**67**	long	16	0.16
68	world	11	0.18	**68**	eyes	15	0.15
69	among	10	0.16	**69**	heather	15	0.15

70	be	10	0.16	70	here	15	0.15
71	itself	10	0.16	71	rain	15	0.15
72	or	10	0.16	72	them	15	0.15
73	other	10	0.16	73	what	15	0.15
74	silence	10	0.16	74	blue	14	0.14
75	sun	10	0.16	75	came	14	0.14
76	again	9	0.14	76	air	13	0.13
77	air	9	0.14	77	among	13	0.13
78	ball	9	0.14	78	be	13	0.13
79	far	9	0.14	79	between	13	0.13
80	here	9	0.14	80	have	13	0.13
81	him	9	0.14	81	off	13	0.13
82	last	9	0.14	82	other	13	0.13
83	left	9	0.14	83	stones	13	0.13
84	no	9	0.14	84	which	13	0.13
85	old	9	0.14	85	even	12	0.12
86	walls	9	0.14	86	first	12	0.12
87	each	8	0.13	87	heptonstall	12	0.12
88	god	8	0.13	88	just	12	0.12
89	had	8	0.13	89	mills	12	0.12
90	high	8	0.13	90	nothing	12	0.12
91	huge	8	0.13	91	only	12	0.12
92	mills	8	0.13	92	sheep	12	0.12
93	nothing	8	0.13	93	silence	12	0.12
94	one	8	0.13	94	than	12	0.12
95	soft	8	0.13	95	went	12	0.12
96	these	8	0.13	96	world	12	0.12
97	two	8	0.13	97	after	11	0.11
98	valleys	8	0.13	98	again	11	0.11
99	which	8	0.13	99	away	11	0.11
100	who	8	0.13	100	ball	11	0.11

The Lyre of Orpheus: Ted Hughes and Nick Cave

Peter Fydler

In the autumn of 1980 two apparently disparate things happened that changed my life: first, I heard a band called The Birthday Party (featuring a singer called Nick Cave) on the *John Peel Show*, and second, a teacher at school read out some extracts from a book called *Gaudete* by an author called Ted Hughes. The only things they had in common at the time, it seemed, were that they were both aural experiences (listening to the radio and to my English teacher) and that they were both very contemporary (the John Peel session was probably days old, the book had been released in 1977).[1] In a perverse way they did have another obtuse affinity: the elegiac, lyrical poetry of Ted Hughes seemed to be almost divine and the self-deprecatory, primal chanting of Nick Cave seemed to be *almost* evil.

By December 1984, the disparities between the middle-aged poet and the burgeoning rock star had reached quite epic proportions: Ted Hughes had been awarded the ultimate establishment accolade with the Poet Laureateship, and Nick Cave and his band, now morphed into The Bad Seeds, had just recorded their second LP, *The First Born is Dead*, which would kickstart a blazing row with the music press (or parts of it) about Cave's suitability as a role model, in light of his now legendary proclivity for consuming vast amounts of stuff, not all legal, that can kill. Artistically, too, this period marked the point at which Ted Hughes 'saw the light' with the publication of his most life-affirming collection *River*, and Nick Cave, living in squalor in Berlin, released two of his darkest (even by his standards) records to date, *The Bad Seed* and *Mutiny!*

Fast-forward to 2014 and Nick Cave, against all the odds, is still alive, living in Brighton, happily married, and now off everything but coffee and tea. He is also the subject of a documentary called *20,000 Days on Earth* for which a poster has been produced using a striking image of Cave surrounded by books and artefacts which, one assumes, were carefully chosen to illustrate his particular knot of obsessions 20,000 days (just under 55 years) into his febrile and fragile tenure on the planet. Among the dozens, perhaps hundreds, of books can be seen works by Martin Amis, John

---

[1] Although Hughes had started work on *Gaudete* as early as the 1960s.

Berryman, Vladimir Nabokov, Robert Graves, Bob Dylan, Sigmund Freud, Karl Jung, Ian McEwan, W. H. Auden, Antonin Artaud, and, to the left and just behind the anglepoise lamp, Ted Hughes's *Collected Poems*.

In an instant, it became plausible that these two worlds, apparently so disparate for so long, might be somehow linked by this material piece of evidence. I had always known that Cave was obsessed with poetry (even in his extreme 'rock 'n' roll' days he apparently carried around small volumes in his pocket), but Ted Hughes? In conversation he often cites Auden, and in his lyrics, sometimes consciously, sometimes not, he has quoted Auden, Nabokov, Wallace Stevens, Poe, and Milton, to name just five. He has also name-checked Walt Whitman, John Wilmot, Dylan Thomas, and Philip Larkin. All Google had to offer was a quote from an interview in 2009:

> [T]he scholarly bard suddenly perks up when recollecting cherished literary idols such as Melville, Auden, Nabokov, Thomas Hardy, Dostoyevsky, and Ted Hughes. 'They totally affect the writing of the songs, as everything does, including the worst music, because you know you don't want to do music like that'.[2]

Cave here makes the claim that these authors – Ted Hughes included – *totally* affect his writing. Immediately, a number of artistic and stylistic connections began to present themselves to me: not least the accusations of unnecessary violence that both artists had to deal with early in their careers (Nick Cave once turned up in Munich to find that The Birthday Party had been billed as 'The Most Violent Band in The World'). They are also both what Joseph Campbell would call 'Secondary Heroes' in that they utilise, with great relish, myths, including the Bible, in their poems and lyrics to great effect, essentially updating them for a contemporary audience. Connected to this, especially in performance, they are both clearly storytellers of the highest order; both had a very modern shamanistic sensibility (not prayer sticks and dreamcatchers but an ability to take an audience to places it might not normally volunteer to go); both are as likely to be influenced by philosophers and film-makers as by fellow poets and singers; and both have written in a multitude of styles (from nonsense exegesis to extremely left-field theatrical experiments). Having met both, I can also attest to the fact that they were both very, very tall, and both experimented disastrously with moustaches.

Re-reading Ian Johnston's excellent biography of Nick Cave, I was amused to notice some other biographical synergies.[3] Nicholas Edward Cave was born the day after Edward James Hughes's prize-winning first book *The Hawk In The Rain* came

---

[2] Quoted in John Fortunato, 'Nick Cave Combats "Abattoir Blues" with "The Lyre of Orpheus"', *Beermelodies*, at http://www.beermelodies.com/nick-cave-combats-'abattoir-blues'-with-'the-lyre-of-orpheus'/ (accessed 10 April 2018).

[3] Ian Johnston, *Bad Seed: The Biography of Nick Cave* (London: Little, Brown, 1996).

out in the USA. Cave and Hughes were both the third child of parents who lived in the countryside but moved to more urban environments early in their respective childhoods. They both, whilst trying to build careers in which their art could sustain them financially, resorted to working part-time at London Zoo, and both, after monumentally turbulent private lives that featured overlapping failed relationships, left London to embrace family life (with second wives) away from the temptations of the big city: Cave to Brighton, and Hughes to Devon. They both released their stripped down, unassailable masterpieces at the age of forty: Cave's *Boatman's Call* in 1997, and Hughes's *Crow* in 1970, to which I will return later in my discussion of Hughes's more direct textual influences on Cave.

Crow's Afterlife in Popular Music

When Ted Hughes and Leonard Baskin sat in a coffee bar on London's Upper Brook Street in May 1962 and dreamt up their masterplan for a joint artistic venture around the life and songs of the 'Crow', little could they have predicted the shadow their nihilistic origination myth would cast on the nooks and crannies of the alternative music scene decades after its publication in October 1970. It is interesting to note how powerful their vision was, even in Hughes's introduction to the Baskin exhibition catalogue published eight years before *Crow*:

> Every feather of the crow is there and perfect, and the crow is dead,
> yet this bird again is the immortal Angel of Life. In the aspect of the
> Angel of Death. [...] These are emissaries from the sole source.[4]

This is powerful stuff, but also problematic. Where do we draw the line between these omnipresent 'emissaries' and the specific artistic vision of Baskin and Hughes (and its apparent influence on modern singer/songwriters)? This problem is greatly exacerbated by the fact that whilst Hughes's *Crow* is 'just' poetry (albeit in a multitude of different styles and including various recorded versions), Baskin's crow is to be found in the book's illustrations, the Faber covers, various woodcuts and wood-engravings, and at least two very powerful anthropomorphic 'standing' sculptures (one in bronze, another in pine) from as early as 1960. Does the 'black rainbow' of *Crow* equate to a dastardly artistic covenant between our heroes and a whole generation of black-clad artists and performers from the 1960s onwards, or is it just a literary side note to a much bigger corvid conspiracy (*CP* 217)? Is Crow not only 'stronger than death', but actually bigger and stronger, at least as a cypher or totem, than its authors (*CP* 218–9)?

---

[4] Ted Hughes, 'Introduction', *Leonard Baskin: Woodcuts and Wood-Engravings*, exhibition catalogue (London: RWS Galleries, 1962).

Bob Dylan's 'Black Crow Blues' came out on the LP *Another Side of Bob Dylan* in 1964 (featuring Dylan's first recorded performance on the piano), and whilst it is certainly in the spirit of our *Crow* (the usual blues trope of a man by a highway lamenting the loss of a woman), it also illustrates the ease with which this very American symbol can be appropriated into popular music. And since this is Bob Dylan, it seems necessary to ask whether Cave might not have been more affected by him than by Hughes when he wrote songs such as 'Black Crow King' in 1984. Cave in fact got permission from Dylan to add his own lyrics to a cover of 'Wanted Man' he recorded a year later (the record's release was delayed while they waited), so clearly there is a link – if evidence were needed – between Dylan and Cave. Certain lyrics, however, seem to suggest Hughes over Dylan: 'I just made a simple gesture / They jumped up and nailed it to my shadow' is very close to Hughes's 'There he nailed himself with nails of nothing' (*CP* 267), and the autobiographical contention that 'I'm still here rolling after everybody's gone' from the same song hints at the indestructible nature of Hughes's Crow (and, of course, Cave, whose lifestyle at the time was not exactly conducive to longevity).[5] Both the poem and the song also relate to Crow as a quasi-Christ with their use of nail imagery, something well beyond the scope of the Dylan song, but central to Cave's idea of the performer-as-preacher.

The autobiographical appropriation of the 'Crow' figure can also be seen in Captain Beefheart's *Ice Cream for Crow,* Graham Coxon's *Crow Sit on Blood Tree*, and even in the Human League's 'Crow and a Baby' (from *Travelogue*). But the same problems apply here: is this the shadow of Hughes's *Crow*, or Dylan's Crow, or just Crow as an easily assimilated universal symbol common to most cultures around the world? Are we reading too much into plain old song lyrics, albeit ones that are often published in the style of poetry (on record sleeves and sometimes even in book form)? Of all these examples, Captain Beefheart's *Ice Cream for Crow* is the most interesting. Surely this, of all these relatively contemporaneous uses, must relate directly to one of the most enduring images in Hughes's book?

Captain Beefheart (whose real name is Don Van Vliet) actually gave up popular music after he released this album in 1982 to concentrate on poetry and painting. Like Leonard Cohen, Bob Dylan, Neil Young, David Bowie, Van Morrison and, indeed, Nick Cave, 'the good captain' is regarded as being a cut above the average rocker in terms of literacy, so it is not too much of a stretch to think he might have read Hughes's book, and/or engaged with Baskin's art. Trying to decipher Captain Beefheart lyrics, however, is no mean feat:

> cut the cake
> we'll all get well

---

[5] Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds, 'Black Crow King', *The Firstborn is Dead* (Mute Records, 1985).

> turn up the speakers
> hop flop squawk
> it's a keeper
> ice cream for show
> ice cream for crow
> now now that's it
> now you can go[6]

Linguistically and in spirit, Beefheart's Crow is very different to Hughes's in 'Crow and the Birds', where the protagonist is neither 'hopping' nor 'flopping' but 'spraddled head-down in the beach garbage, guzzling a dropped ice-cream' (*CP* 210). If this is autobiographical, then the Captain's Crow is eating ice cream not as rejected garbage but as a sought-after luxury. Don Van Vliet, himself at that magical age of forty, is (I think) saying *I'm giving up this rock 'n' roll lark and I'm going to do something a bit more colourful instead. So that's it, I'm off.* The video that was made for the song concludes with Beefheart figuratively drawing the blinds on his old career. It also includes a glimpse of the future as it showcases some of his artwork, including pieces not a million miles from Leonard Baskin in a style that would morph into one of his best known works *Cross Poked a Shadow of a Crow* (1990).

The Human League's 'Crow and a Baby' is interesting because it equates the crow figure with an alienated father, which tallies with my own feeling that Hughes's Crow is somehow related to Otto Plath (*Crow* was released on the thirtieth anniversary of Otto Plath's terminal surgery, which was also the eighth anniversary of Sylvia Plath's composition of 'Daddy'). The composers of the song are indeed from South Yorkshire, but this is not necessarily sufficient to prove their proximity to the author of *Crow*, except in terms of geography.

Graham Coxon's difficult third solo album, *Crow Sit on Blood Tree*, uses, like Hughes's book, multiple perspectives and styles to explore a single unifying and nihilistic theme, though with much less subtlety and scope: 'Love is such an empty word / And life is hollow and absurd'.[7] More striking than the lyrics (if not the music) is the cover which Coxon, who studied Fine Art at Goldsmiths and was a contemporary of Damien Hirst, designed himself. It is a line drawing of a bird sitting on a sparse blood-red tree against a light brown background. It is difficult to believe he did not, at least, have Baskin in mind when designing this, if not Hughes when writing the lyrics and deciding the overarching theme of the album. It is probably worth pointing out that *Crow Sit on Blood Tree* is the least rock 'n' roll of Graham Coxon's LPs; it could almost be defined, in parts at least, as a folk record, and one does not have to dig too deep to unearth the folk tales behind many of *Crow's* adventures. But to get closer to

---

[6] Captain Beefheart and the Magic Band, 'Ice Cream for Crow', *Ice Cream for Crow* (Virgin, 1982).

[7] Graham Coxon, 'Empty Word', *Crow Sit on Blood Tree* (Transcopic Records, 2001).

a more definitive link between *Crow* and modern music, we must return to Nick Cave, and in particular two songs on two albums from a difficult period in which he transitioned from a poster boy for the disillusioned and disaffected to a cultural commentator and troubadour for the middle classes.

The Dark Shadow of Crow: *Boatman's Call* and *The Lyre of Orpheus*

Hughes's 'Two Legends' and Cave's 'Black Hair' both begin with arresting metaphors that highlight the strength and weakness of each artist's uncompromising output and reputation in their 'later' (i.e. post-forty) periods: 'Black was the without eye / Black the within tongue' and 'Last night my kisses were banked in black hair' (*CP* 217).[8] In a poem of twenty-three lines, Hughes goes on to use the word 'black' sixteen times. Cave's song, which is a mere twenty-two lines, contains the word 'black' eighteen times. The bleakness and bloody-minded daring of Cave is highlighted by the fact that the recording of the song features only an accordion as accompaniment – perhaps the most un-rock 'n' roll instrument there is, especially when used on its own. Hughes's bravado is demonstrated in the placement of the poem at the start of the book and, indeed, at the start of *Crow*'s publication history (the poem surfaced as part of *Three Legends* in the summer of 1967, when the rest of the world was preaching psychedelia and free love). Both artists, then, are essentially rebooting their careers by going back to a more basic, monochrome, stripped-down style and vision. As such it can be equally lauded and mocked (and, particularly in the case of Hughes, still is, especially in *Private Eye*), which is where the strengths and weaknesses lie.

Like Crow, Cave is also playing the trickster at this point in his career, particularly in his on/off relationship with the God of the Old Testament. Where *Crow* is playing with the many anachronisms of the Bible story (insisting, for example, that 'Mary [...] begat God'), Cave is constantly questioning the logic of God's grace ('Is Heaven just for victims?') (*CP* 218).[9] The dynamics of both visions, and indeed the wonderful paradoxes at the heart of both arguments with God, come in the startlingly powerful fusion of the sacred with the profane. In *Crow* we have an Origination Myth which involves a worm, 'God's only son', being split in two in order to create male and female genitalia, and in Cave's 'Brompton Oratory', for example, we have a protagonist battling with the undefinable nature of beauty, with 'the smell of you still on my hands' (*CP* 215–16).[10] In both worlds we seem to have arrived at a place where the loser is predisposed to beat or, at least, get the better of the Old Testament God on the battleground of poetry and song lyrics.

---

[8] Cave, 'Black Hair', *The Boatman's Call* (Mute Records, 1997).
[9] Cave, 'Idiot Prayer', *The Boatman's Call.*
[10] Cave, 'Brompton Oratory', *The Boatman's Call.*

Despite the profound nature of many of these often hilarious, cartoon-like encounters between the sacred text and profane experience, both works have a simplicity of language and argument that would end up appealing to an audience well outside the usual circle of poetry readers and alternative music aficionados. But with simplicity and a back-to-basics approach comes a certain vulnerability. Putting aside the well-publicised personal demons that both artists grappled with in middle age, we are still left with a bold, uncompromising, and in many ways uncomplicated reboot of their artistic lives that both struggled to overcome. For both it took seven years of false starts and lengthy fallow periods before they really found their feet again: Cave with the glorious and spontaneous outpourings of his first double album *Abattoir Blues/The Lyre of Orpheus*, with its euphoric opening call to arms 'Get Ready for Love!'; and Hughes with his enchanting 'Photostomias', in which he sees 'A decalogue / A rainbow' in the 'Bottomless zero' of the legendary black swallower of the ocean's deep (*CP* 549).

The intervening years for Hughes (1970–77) were described by Stuart Hirschberg as his scapegoat phase, during which his extreme vulnerability and search for a new identity included a sense that he was, as an artist, going through the painful, cathartic process of voluntary suffering for and on behalf of his audience, particularly in *Prometheus on his Crag* and *Cave Birds*. This phase was seen by Hirschberg as coming at the end of a cycle that saw him adopt the persona of the shaman in his early work (particularly through his 'Primordial Animal Totems') and the antics of the trickster in *Crow*.[11] Instead of looking at Cave's output as split down the middle between Old and New Testament obsessions that had their turn around the end of the millennium, it is actually more enlightening, and more productive, to trace the same 'journey' onto his work (although it took him twenty-five years, rather than twenty, to come out alive and kicking at the other end). For 'Primordial Animal Totems', substitute Cave as a no-holds-barred performer and channeller of life's more unsavoury characters up to and including 'The Mercy Seat' from *Tender Prey*, in which he imagines the frenzied thoughts of a man about to die on the electric chair. Echoes of the trickster Cave, who questions the authority of a distinctly unmerciful Old Testament God, can be heard in this song and throughout his work from *The Good Son* to *The Boatman's Call*. The self-doubt and suffering of the newly sober 'scapegoat' Cave is very pronounced in *No More Shall We Part* and *Nocturama*. Like the Hughes of *Prometheus* and *Cave Birds*, here we have man as a 'poor, bare, forked animal', desperately seeking a new identity and any kind of meaning.[12] Cave reaches his most

---

[11] Stuart Hirschberg, *Myth in the Poetry of Ted Hughes: A Guide to the Poems* (Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 1981), p. 11.

[12] William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, III:iv.

naked, exposed, and vulnerable self when he is trapped (metaphorically, of course) under 'Fifteen Feet of Pure White Snow':

> Doctor, Doctor
> I'm going mad
> This is the worst day
> I've ever had
> I can't remember
> Ever feeling this bad
> Under fifteen feet of pure white snow[13]

We can also see something of Joseph Campbell's 'monomyth' concept in the journeys taken by our two heroes up until the age of forty-seven. For the shaman-trickster-scapegoat psychological story arc, we can trace onto it the separation-initiation-return model that Campbell sees as the beating heart of every great story.[14] The shaman is separated from his society because he has a special, and very painful task, namely communing with the underworld in order to help with the spiritual healing of his cohort; the trickster unwittingly (and often hilariously) acts as teacher and undergoes a series of initiation challenges and tests which serve as a learning tool for the same community; finally, the scapegoat returns, humbled and stripped naked, embodying the ultimate lesson in humility and self-knowledge for his fellow men.

To return to the specifics of Nick Cave and *Crow*: two pieces that work as a 'smoking gun' for this argument are 'Song for a Phallus' and 'The Lyre of Orpheus'. So similar are these two works that I cannot actually read 'Song for a Phallus' now without humming the tune from 'The Lyre of Orpheus'. They are both very puckish and modern subversions of well-known myths, written in four-line verses with alternate four- and three-stress lines (which means, unlike the other six songs in *Crow* which were meant as replies to questions posed to Crow as he crossed the river, you can actually sing this one!). Both have a refrain after each verse which serves as a sort of chorus, 'O Mamma O Mamma' in the Cave song, and 'Mamma Mamma' in the Hughes poem (*CP* 248–50).[15] In the Cave 'version', Orpheus produces an instrument that creates such a hellish din it wakes God, who throws Orpheus down a well. Despite Eurydice's pleading, and fully aware of the racket he is making, Orpheus decides to stay in the well and start a family of 'screaming brats' whilst playing for his Mamma (Calliope, the muse of eloquence and epic poetry, a joke probably lost on many listeners). In Hughes's poem, Oedipus is a 'howling brat' whose father ties his legs and throws him 'to the cat', but he bounces back and kills him. He fears that the Sphinx will castrate him so, instead of answering his riddle, simply kills him with an axe. This releases 'ten thousand

---

[13] Cave, 'Fifteen Feet of Pure White Snow', *No More Shall We Part* (Warner Records, 2001).

[14] Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1949).

[15] Cave, 'The Lyre of Orpheus', *The Lyre of Orpheus* (Epitaph, 2004).

ghosts', one of which is Oedipus's father, who kills Oedipus's mother only to find that he is still unborn inside her womb, 'As if he had never been bore'. Oedipus's mother is, of course, destined to be his wife as well, and so the joke behind the refrain is more obvious.

Both versions contain some of the most audacious rhyming ever committed to paper, including Cave's rhyming of 'Orpheus' with 'orifice' and Hughes's rhyming of 'Oedipus' with 'bollocks off'. There can be absolutely no doubt in my mind that Cave had read 'Song for a Phallus' and, either consciously or unconsciously, decided to produce his own version either as a parody of a parody or as homage.

Gaudete, *And the Ass Saw the Angel*, **and** *The Death of Bunny Munro*

Turning to the less well-known prose work of Nick Cave and to *Gaudete* by Ted Hughes, there are also some startling thematic and stylistic similarities. Between them, these three works almost act as a dismembered trilogy of warped behaviour and misguided faith. As with *Crow*, *Gaudete* – Hughes's massively underrated and misunderstood masterpiece published in May 1977 – seems to permeate the ideas and intentions of Cave's two equally underrated novels *And The Ass Saw The Angel* (1989) and *The Death of Bunny Munro* (2009). Cave's novels could not be more different from each other in their styles, settings, and subject matter (which says a lot about Cave's abilities as a writer), but they both, in very different ways, seem to have *Gaudete* constantly in the corners of their eyes (although I have no evidence that Cave has read, or even heard of Hughes's book).

Cave's earlier work is a Gothic tale of a deaf mute and his struggle to survive in a fundamentalist swampland inhabited by a series of grotesque characters (not least his mother and father), who eventually demand his death because they think he has murdered the girl who represents their one chance of salvation. Like *Gaudete*, it is Gothic in its use of 'found' fragments and the excesses of its narrative. Both books were originally written as film scripts, and so have a very immediate and dramatic feel, and often use the present tense. They both also make very bold use of a split or double personality: *Gaudete* with its two clergymen, one made of oak and one of flesh; *And the Ass Saw the Angel* with its twins, one of whom dies at birth but still communes with his deaf and mute surviving twin. At the centre of both stories is a cult of women, with names like Janet Estridge (*Gaudete*) and Wilma Eldridge (*And the Ass Saw the Angel*), who are intent on engineering the birth of a new messiah. Cave was dealing with ideas of death and redemption whilst living in Berlin in the 1980s and, similarly, Hughes was covering similar ground the year after the death of his first wife Sylvia Plath in 1963 (the main narrative of *Gaudete* was written in 1964).

Elements of *Gaudete*'s style and subject matter also creep into Cave's other novel, *The Death of Bunny Munro*, not least through its protagonist (one of three Bunny Munros in the book) who, like Nicholas Lumb, the antihero of *Gaudete*, manages to procreate his way through a bizarre menagerie of women in the space of about 200 pages: Lumb because he is intent on fathering a new messiah, and Munro because he just cannot stop himself. Both books boast heightened poetic narrative styles: compare, for example, '[he] blows two furious tusks of smoke from his nostrils' with 'Giant wheels of light ride into the chestnuts' (*G* 23).[16]. Both books are also haunted by ghosts, wraiths, suicides, and remarkably unheroic clapped-out old motor cars.

The murderous, outrageous denouement of *Gaudete* is precipitated by the not-so-very Reverend Lumb recruiting three women too many (when he seduces Mrs Dunworth, he is caught; when he seduces Mrs Evans, somebody takes a photograph; and when he declares his love for Felicity, the other women become jealous and turn on him). At the end of *Bunny Munro* our hero is confronted by three women in his local café: 'One is a blonde and one is a brunette and one is a redhead'.[17] His son senses there is something wrong and tries to make him leave, but Bunny – drunk, tired, and very emotional – starts to go berserk and, in a final act of desperation, screams 'Will somebody please fuck me?!' before spilling out into the path of an oncoming cement mixer bearing the legend 'DUDMAN'.[18] Clearly worshipping women is only okay up to a point. Like the Reverend Lumb, Bunny Munro reappears in a very different guise in a dreamlike epilogue (as does Euchrid Eucrow in *And the Ass Saw The Angel*) where, in a sequence not unlike something from a David Lynch film, he confronts his past and gets the chance of a redemption of sorts from the colourful catalogue of women he has abused. There is nothing to match the eloquence and force of *Gaudete*'s Epilogue poems, but Bunny does obtain some self-awareness, and we get the sense that his son Bunny Junior, who 'standing, stands up above' at the end of the novel, will at least not be doomed to repeat the sins of his identically-named father and grandfather.[19]

<p style="text-align:center">*</p>

Whilst writing this paper I re-read various contemporary novels and social commentaries, partly for light relief, and partly to help me get a sense of what people were thinking and feeling in the late-twentieth century. One of these books was *White Teeth* by Zadie Smith, which contains the observation: '"Either everything is sacred, or

---

[16] Cave, *The Death of Bunny Munro* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2009), p. 4
[17] Cave, *Bunny Munro*, p. 250.
[18] Cave, *Bunny Munro*, p. 251.
[19] Cave, *Bunny Munro*, p. 278.

nothing is'".[20] In the unlikeliest of places, I suddenly realised I had stumbled upon something that, perhaps more than anything above, gets to the core of what unites these two great artists: for with Nick Cave and Ted Hughes, sometimes beautifully, often painfully, and always utterly convincingly, absolutely everything, living or dead, is sacred. I think it is this that I recognised all those years ago when I discovered these two uncompromising, and apparently unrelated, writers; for with the belief that everything is sacred comes a certain intensity of delivery and pitch that is instantly recognisable and instantly, and continually appealing.

---

[20] Zadie Smith, *White Teeth* (London: Penguin, 2001), p. 237.

'A Buried Land and a Blazing Source': Ted Hughes and William Golding

Nicola Presley

This article will explore the neglected literary relationship between Ted Hughes and William Golding, and trace the connections in both authors' works. This particular topic suggested itself while visiting Golding's library archive, which contains a first edition of Hughes's *The Hawk in the Rain*; Golding wrote to Faber and Faber editor Charles Monteith in January 1958 that he had just finished reading *The Hawk in the Rain*, and admired it greatly.[1] The correspondence between Hughes and Golding, and relevant information found in Golding's unpublished journals, will form a major part of this article.

Both men were Faber authors, and two of the best-known writers of the twentieth century. They were, however, from different generations: Golding was born in 1911, and Hughes somewhat later in 1930. Their formative years share something, though, that would become hugely important in their later writings: their experiences in the British class system. Golding, like Hughes, attended a grammar school, and was offered a place at Brasenose College, Oxford, albeit without a scholarship. Golding summed up his years at Oxford as 'unbearable' and wrote that he could 'never pretend to be happy'.[2] Of seventy-one undergraduates who entered Brasenose in 1930, Golding was the only student from a grammar school, the rest having attended public schools. Similarly, Hughes won a scholarship to Cambridge after grammar school, and although Roberts dismisses some of Hughes's 'self-mythologising' claims about his alienation at Cambridge, he 'was part of a substantial minority' of northern, working-class students.[3] Like Hughes, who switched from English Literature to Archaeology and Anthropology, Golding also changed his course, from Natural Sciences to English. Golding's final reminder from Oxford about his lack of social standing came from the University's Appointments Committee, which advised undergraduates on their

---

[1] John Carey, *William Golding: The Man Who Wrote* Lord of the Flies (London: Faber and Faber, 2009), p. 213.

[2] Carey, *William Golding*, p. 42.

[3] Neil Roberts, 'Ted Hughes and Cambridge', in *Ted Hughes: From Cambridge to Collected*, eds. Mark Wormald, Neil Roberts and Terry Gifford (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p.20.

employment options. On Golding's index card, one of the interviewers wrote 'NTS' – meaning 'Not Top Shelf', and not fit to be a public school master. Golding's humiliation at Oxford stayed with him, and his novel *The Pyramid* (1967) exposes the harsh realities of the British social system. The death of Reverend Colley in *Rites of Passage* (1980) – literally of shame – recalls Golding's own shame at Oxford, which was tempered in later life by his knighthood from the Queen – acceptance, perhaps, at last. As Roberts has argued, Hughes's work also shows concern over the inequalities of the class system, and his poetry often expressed 'his hostility to the voice of the "English gentleman"'.[4]

In different ways, both Golding and Hughes were influenced by the wars of the twentieth century. Golding fought in the Second World War in the Navy, and the horrors of war stayed with him throughout his life. His famous quotation, 'Man produces evil as a bee produces honey' from his essay 'Fable', is a direct response to the evils of totalitarianism.[5] Tim Kendall has argued for the importance of the First World War to Hughes's poetry, due to the experience of Hughes's father in that conflict, and Hughes himself wrote about the 'peculiar effect' twentieth-century conflict had on his generation: 'One who was born of the First World War, who spent his first nine years dreaming of the Second, having lived through the Second went on well into his thirties expecting the nuclear Third and the chaos after' (*CP* 1220).[6]

It is not impossible that Hughes and Golding met, as both attended literary parties at Faber, but as yet no evidence has been found to confirm any meeting. We do know, however, that both read each other's work: as already stated, Golding read *The Hawk in the Rain* in 1958, and Hughes's library contained the following Golding books: *The Double Tongue* (published posthumously in 1995); *Lord of the Flies* (1954); *The Inheritors* (1955); *The Hot Gates* (1965); *Pincher Martin* (1956); *The Spire* (1964); *Close Quarters* (1987); *Rites of Passage* (1980); *The Scorpion God* (1971). In Golding's unpublished journals, he writes on 21 April 1986, 'Ted Hughes has come out with a full-page poem in the *Times* which is full of language. On the whole I like it'.[7] This poem is likely to be 'The Crown of the Kingdom', written for the Queen's sixtieth birthday and published by the *Times* on 21 April (*LTH* 514). A year later, on 27 December 1987, Golding states, 'I've been reading Ted Hughes's *Season Songs*. There [*sic*] seem wholly individual and perhaps a bit on the minimalist side. Their sensibility

---

[4] Neil Roberts, 'Class, war and the Laureateship', in *The Cambridge Companion to Ted Hughes*, ed. Terry Gifford (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 153.

[5] William Golding, 'Fable', in *The Hot Gates and Other Occasional Pieces* (London: Faber and Faber, 1965), p. 87

[6] Tim Kendall, *Modern English War Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 197.

[7] William Golding, unpublished journals, 1986 © William Golding Limited. All rights reserved. Most grateful thanks to William Golding Limited for allowing me to quote from Golding's journals and 'Mr Pope', and for giving me access to the Golding archive.

and intelligence is ampler than the richness of language, even'.[8] In 1989, Golding referred to Hughes as the greatest living English-language poet.[9]

For Golding's seventy-fifth birthday tribute book, published by Faber and edited by John Carey, Hughes wrote an essay 'Baboons and Neanderthals: A Rereading of *The Inheritors*', an appreciative examination of Golding's depiction of the struggle between Homo sapiens and Neanderthals. In a letter to Nick Gammage (15 December 1992) about the essay, Hughes demonstrates his typical reluctance to inhabit the 'place' of literary criticism: '[the essay] was my way of writing an essay remotely connected with the world without touching Lit Crit' (*LTH* 618). Golding wrote in his journal on 16 May 1985: 'Charles' amended write-up for the birthday book seems good to me. It describes the inadequacy of the book without making me blush for myself. Apparently they have five thousand words from John Bailey [*sic*] and "a contribution from Ted Hughes which sounds fascinating." I am all agog'.[10]

In addition, Hughes was invited to read a section of *The Inheritors* at Golding's memorial service at Salisbury Cathedral in 1993. As John Carey recalls:

> At about the midpoint of the memorial service in Salisbury Ted Hughes read, unforgettably, from *The Inheritors*. As a preface, he said that, though Golding wrote in prose, he was a poet with a 'tragic imagination' who sensed the presence of another life, a 'mythic life', behind our personalities. Then he read a long passage about Lok, bewildered and alone, and as he read his voice seemed to grow gigantic, and the raw, colossal syllables boomed and echoed around the cathedral's freezing columns.[11]

Hughes's assertion of Golding as a poet supports Barbara Everett's claim that 'Golding himself might have chosen rather to distinguish himself in verse […]. What gets called, and to some degree rightly, an effect or fable or myth in Golding's novels may be merely the result of a structuring of feeling presented at extremity as in a poem'.[12]

In the Golding archive there are several letters from Hughes to Golding. Whilst they do not suggest a personal friendship, they demonstrate the way these two writers inhabited the place of twentieth-century British literary culture. The first letter from Hughes, in 1986, asks Golding if he will lend his name to the Arvon Foundation for fundraising purposes. In addition to Golding, Hughes notes that he has also requested support from John Fowles, Doris Lessing, Iris Murdoch, Graham Greene, Salman Rushdie and Tom Stoppard. Hughes ends the letter with a note about his contribution

---

[8] Golding, unpublished journals, 1987.
[9] Golding, unpublished journals, 1989.
[10] Golding, unpublished journals, 1985.
[11] Carey, *William Golding*, p. 514.
[12] Barbara Everett, 'Golding's Pity', in *William Golding: The Man and his Books: A Tribute on his 75th Birthday*, ed. John Carey (London: Faber, 1986), p. 113.

to Golding's 'birthday book', which he hopes Golding will find entertaining, and his best wishes for the award of the Nobel Prize.[13]

The letters from Golding to Hughes are not held in the Golding archive, but it is clear that there is some undocumented correspondence from Hughes. In November 1987, Hughes writes to Golding to thank him for sending 'Mr Pope', one of Golding's poems from his 1934 book *Poems*, long out of print and difficult to find. Following Golding's success as a novelist, he had become embarrassed by this early publication, and had effectively disowned it. It is therefore a surprise that Golding sent Hughes one of these poems, particularly as, from the context of the letter, it appears that it was possibly going to be featured in a publication edited by Hughes.[14] Carey argues that *Poems* does not contain 'any trace of William Golding', and indeed, Golding's *Poems* were clearly inspired by older poets, rather than his modernist contemporaries.[15] That is not to say, however, that the poems are without merit, and they provide an intriguing glimpse into Golding's early understanding of poetic conventions as an undergraduate at Oxford, and his own ambitions as a writer:

> Mr. Pope walked into the park –
> Trim rows of flowers
> Embroider'd the well-order'd dark
> Where marched the marshalled hours.
>
> The trees stood silent, two by two
> Pagodas lifted up their heads
> From neatly-weeded laurel-groves
> And well-spaced flower-beds.
>
> Then down a quiet gravel path –
> For Mr. Pope eschewed the sod –
> The gentleman pursued his way
> To raise his hat to Mr. God.
>
> 'Dear Sir,' he said, 'I must confess
> This is a chastely ordered land
> But one thing mars its loveliness,
> The stars are rather out of hand' –
>
> 'If they would dance a minuet
> Instead of roaming wild and free
> Or stand in rows all trim and neat
> How exquisite the sky would be!'[16]

---

[13] Ted Hughes, letter to William Golding, 30 January 1986.

[14] I have not been able to establish what this publication was, and it seems unlikely that it was published. Judy Carver (Golding) believes this was likely to be for the Arvon Foundation.

[15] Carey, *William Golding*, p. 61.

[16] Reproduced by kind permission of William Golding Limited.

Hughes wrote to Golding that he particularly liked the line 'For Mr. Pope eschewed the sod' and admired the poem's rhythm.[17] He also asked Golding for a drawing to accompany the poem, although there is no record if Golding obliged. Golding was clearly pleased with Hughes's thoughts on the poem, as he subsequently wrote in his journal on 12 December 1987: 'It sometimes occurs to me that I might write some verses, since I'm supposed to be a poet-novelist: and Ted Hughes likes my own "Mr Pope." What am I waiting for?'[18] It seemed, though, that Golding continued to wait, as there are no poems from this period in the archive. Golding was certainly interested in poetry however, as his comments on Hughes in his journals have shown. Golding also read Anne Stevenson's biography of Sylvia Plath, *Bitter Fame*, in 1990, but his comments show that he still felt ignorant about contemporary poetry: 'Poetry to me is still a mystery in the wrong sense'.[19]

There is certainly a great deal of intertextuality in the work of Golding and Hughes, much of which falls beyond the scope of this present work. The most pertinent topic to be elucidated here is the relationship between *The Inheritors* and a selection of Hughes's poetry which explores similar themes to Golding's novel: the human/animal dichotomy, including extinction events; the goddess; and the simplicity of the evolution of language and its parallel with the evolution of the human. It is important to mention that Philip Redpath has also produced some work on this literary relationship, and his reading focuses on Golding's *Darkness Visible* and *Rites of Passage*, and Hughes's *Gaudete* and *Cave Birds*. Redpath argues that 'Both writers are concerned with man's success and failure to introduce a spiritual dimension to his existence', and that 'Golding and Hughes are trying to speak about something that falls outside the usual limits of our normal rational understanding'.[20] Gifford and Roberts also briefly compare Hughes's 'Ghost Crabs' to Golding's third novel *Pincher Martin*: 'The crabs emerge from the gap between day and night, sea and land, known and unknown, conscious and unconscious. The poetry is narrative in that it dramatizes perception, as a novelist dramatizes the changing perceptions of a character – in *Pincher Martin*, for example'.[21] This is a particularly interesting comparison as *Pincher Martin* is a novel full of mystery and misconceptions. The eponymous character is stranded on a rock in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, struggling to survive, and haunted by memories of his past. Like the crabs in Hughes's poem, which

---

[17] Hughes, letter to William Golding, November 1987. By kind permission of William Golding Limited.
[18] Golding, unpublished journals, 1987.
[19] Golding, unpublished journals, 1990.
[20] Philip Redpath, *William Golding: A Structural Reading of his Fiction* (London: Vision Press, 1986), p. 161
[21] Terry Gifford and Neil Roberts, *Ted Hughes: A Critical Study* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), p. 48.

first appear as 'rocks', the truth is revealed by the waves, figured in the novel through the gaps of the narrative (*CP* 149–50).

We know for sure, of course, that Hughes read *The Inheritors*, and can even date this first reading to some extent as he writes to Gammage that he read it after *Lord of the Flies* and *Pincher Martin*, when he was in his mid-thirties, which makes the time period sometime in the 1960s (*LTH* 618). In 'Baboons and Neanderthals: A Rereading of *The Inheritors*', Hughes demonstrates his admiration for Golding's 'authentic tragedy', writing that the 'total effect is beautiful, powerful, objective'.[22] In the essay, Hughes explores the theories of Eugene Marais, who posited that humans were prematurely-born Neanderthals, who were physically under-developed, which had the effect of increasing their intelligence. Marais's theories have been widely discredited, of course, but Neil Corcoran argues that 'its view of human nature as animal perversion, and of art's compensatory necessity, account for a great deal in Ted Hughes'.[23] Corcoran's view on the importance of this essay is shared by Neil Roberts and Danny O'Connor, although in Virginia Tiger's review of Carey's book, she writes that Hughes's contribution is the 'crankiest'.[24] However, Hughes's essay is a real highlight in this excellent volume, and praises Golding's creation of this other, alternative Eden: 'It is both a buried land and a blazing source, supplying the radiance that squeezes into even the details of syntax. In spite of their brutish fate, Lok and Fa live – like saintly defectives – in that other kingdom of our duality'.[25] This cannot be read as 'cranky' – it is a celebration of Golding's work, while avoiding, in Hughes's own words quoted earlier, literary criticism.

One of the most striking parallels between *The Inheritors* and Hughes's poetry can be found in 'Wodwo'. As Hughes writes:

> The wodwo is some sort of goblin creature [...] just discovering that it is alive in the world. It does not know what it is and is full of questions. It is quite bewildered to know what is going on. It has a whole string of thoughts, but at the centre of them [...] is this creature and its bewilderment [...]. A wodwo is a sort of half-man half-animal spirit of the forests. (*PM* 62)

This half-man, half-animal creature is similar to the people in *The Inheritors*. For most of the novel, we experience their world through Lok's eyes – a world in which they do

---

[22] Hughes, 'Baboons and Neanderthals: A Rereading of *The Inheritors*', in *William Golding: The Man and his Books*, p. 162.

[23] Neil Corcoran, 'Hughes and Prose', in *The Cambridge Companion to Ted Hughes*, ed. Terry Gifford (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 129.

[24] Danny O'Connor, *Ted Hughes and Trauma: Burning the Foxes* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2016); Neil Roberts, 'Hughes's Myth: The Classics in *Gaudete* and *Cave Birds*', in *Ted Hughes and the Classics*, ed. Roger Rees (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Virginia Tiger, 'Review: Canonical Evasions and William Golding', *Contemporary Literature* 29:2 (Summer 1988), p. 302.

[25] Hughes, 'Baboons and Neanderthals', p. 168.

not consider themselves, or have any notion of selfhood. It is only when the New People arrive, the Homo sapiens, that they can begin to appreciate difference, or 'otherness'. Lok discovers the concept of 'like' – something or someone being like another – and realises that he has used it 'all his life without being aware of it'.[26] This causes confusion 'in his head', and he runs through a series of images before finally becoming, as he thinks, 'Lok again' (p. 185). The questions of the wodwo that run through the poem, and the breakdown of syntax as it approaches the climax, mirrors Lok's bewilderment at his place in the world: 'What am I' asks the wodwo, 'I seem / separate from the ground and not rooted but dropped / out of nothing' (*CP* 183). As Hong argues, the wodwo 'knows nothing about itself, and the whole poem becomes a series of poignant questions. The extreme uncertainty of the creature is reflected in the halting lines running on through the increasingly unpunctuated poem'.[27]

Gifford argues that Hughes's poetry portrays grief for the loss of human life alongside grief for the anticipated loss of a species and the position of responsibility that comes from being human. In 'The Jaguar', Hong suggests that the visiting humans are 'inferior to the jaguar in terms of energy and completeness of being': 'At a cage where the crowd stands, stares, mesmerised, / As a child at a dream' (*CP* 19).[28] Hughes infantilises the jaguar's captors, who perhaps think of themselves as the jaguar's protectors, and there is a sense that even through this imprisonment, they cannot defeat the jaguar's spirit. In 'The Black Rhino', 'The Black Rhino / Is vanishing / Into a soft / Human Laugh' (*CP* 767). Here, Hughes exposes the horror of rhino poaching for folk medicine: 'That opiate beast / Worshipped by / The humbly addicted / Bodily ills / And misery / Of the whole East' (*CP* 764). 'October Dawn' features a new ice age which will use 'tons of chain and massive lock / to hold rivers'. This will lead to the re-emergence of extinct creatures: 'Will mammoth and Sabre-tooth celebrate / Reunion while a fist of cold / Squeezes the fire at the core of the world' (*CP* 37). The line and stanza break between 'celebrate' and 'reunion' is key here: are they celebrating the demise of the world and their return, or their chance to meet again?

The sabre-toothed tiger also makes an appearance in *The Inheritors* when the people find a deer carcass. The subtlety with which Golding creates this world is deployed here, as the cat has 'drained all the blood', and it is only later, in a passing moment, that Golding narrates the cat may have 'sunk its sabres in the neck of another victim' (p. 44). Golding is scientifically sound here, and rather ahead of his time, as recent evidence suggests that some version of man lived alongside these extinct

---

[26] Golding, *The Inheritors* (London: Faber, 1956; repr. 2011), p. 184. Further references will be given parenthetically in the text.
[27] Chen Hong, 'Hughes and animals', in *The Cambridge Companion to Ted Hughes*, ed. Terry Gifford (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 49.
[28] Hong, p. 41.

animals.[29] The main story of extinction here is of course that of the Neanderthals themselves, and their terrifying battle to survive against the new humans. The people are fascinated and appalled by the intruders, and cannot understand the humans' desire to annihilate them. As most of the novel is told through the eyes of Lok, he feels to the reader as a fully realised human. I therefore disagree with Redpath when he suggests that in feeling sympathy for Lok, 'It's not the sympathy of one human being for another, it's human sympathy for the suffering of an animal'.[30] I would also contend that the reader's sympathy for the rhino and for the jaguar in Hughes's poetry is also not quite that of sympathy for an animal, such is the success of Hughes's personification of the creatures, as with Golding's depiction of the Neanderthals.

Towards the end of *The Inheritors*, the narrative perspective shifts, and the reader has an opportunity to truly 'see' Lok: a 'strange creature, smallish and bowed' (p. 209). Lok's features are described in some detail, and ends with 'the brow was a straight line fledged with hair; and above that there was nothing' (p. 209). The abruptness of this change of perspective, and the painstaking detail that Golding uses to construct the Neanderthal, causes discomfort in the reader, who begins to understand that their position in the narrative is aligned with the violent Homo sapiens, rather than the innocent Neanderthals. Redpath supports this idea, and argues that 'point of view in the novel makes us aware that we are the inheritors'.[31]

One of the only redeeming features of the New People is their ability to create art, a pastime that the Neanderthals do not undertake. Tuami, the leader of the Homo sapiens, contemplates his dagger and muses on the endless struggle for survival against the disparate groups and the futility of war: 'What was the use of sharpening it against a man? Who would sharpen a point against the darkness of the world?' (p. 221). However, Tuami is also carving a handle for his dagger out of ivory, and the significance of this is explained by Golding: 'the rough ivory of the knife-haft that was so much more important than the blade' (p. 223). The fact that the decorated handle is more significant than the instrument of death hints at a possible redemption for man through art, and the ability to create. There is a similar idea in Hughes's 'Thrushes', which contrasts the 'single-minded' thrushes with the man who is 'carving at a tiny ivory ornament' (*CP* 83).

Sagar identifies the wodwo as 'a creature of the unfallen world, before the human, animal and spirit worlds become separated in Western consciousness', and

---

[29] See, for example, Jordi Serangeli, Thijs Van Kolfschoten, Britt M Starkovich, and Ivo Verheijen, 'The European sabre-toothed cat found in the Spear Horizon (Germany) at Schöningen', *Journal of Human Evolution* 89 (December 2015), pp. 172–80.

[30] Philip Redpath, '"Dogs Would Find an Arid Space Around My Feet": A Humanist Reading of *The Inheritors*', in *Critical Essays On William Golding*, ed. James R. Baker (Boston: G. K. Hall & Co., 1988), p. 33.

[31] Redpath, p. 27.

Kinkead-Weekes and Gregor argue that *The Inheritors* 'seems no longer essentially about Neanderthal Man at all, but merely uses him as a way of analysing the nature of the Fall'.[32] Golding explained to an audience that his Neanderthals are unfallen because, though they can imagine, they cannot think: 'The Fall is thought'.[33] Although the Neanderthals are unfallen, this does not mean that they do not subscribe to a system of beliefs which enable them to choose what they believe is right or wrong. For instance, they do not hunt, as killing an animal would be an affront to their Goddess, Oa. However, they will eat scavenged meat as shown when they find the butchered deer, guarded by hyenas. Lok talks constantly while gathering up the meat to apologise to it: 'Oa brought the doe out of her belly' […]. "This is bad. But a cat killed you so there is no blame"' (p. 44).

The end of the novel brings devastation to the people, but there is perhaps a shred of hope. The New People steal the Neanderthal baby, known as 'the New One', and carry him away over the sea, to replace a child lost by Tuami's partner Vivian. Once again, Golding is eerily accurate in this, as it has recently been proved that Neanderthal people and Homo sapiens did breed at some point in history.[34] The survival of the baby puts me in mind of Hughes's idea that 'Every new child is nature's chance to correct culture's error' (*WP* 149). Despite Tuami's initial view of the baby as the 'devil brat', his people begin to soften as they watch the baby play (p. 223). Perhaps the New One's role in Golding's allegory is to ensure the survival, in some form, of his people; a chance to correct the error of the destructive humans.

Hughes's obsession with the figure of the goddess is evident across his poetry, prose and non-fiction, most notably, perhaps, in *Shakespeare and the Goddess of Complete Being* and in *Gaudete* and *Cave Birds*. Golding shares Hughes's preoccupation with the goddess, and in particular the mystery and terror which surrounds her. In *The Inheritors*, the Neanderthal group worship Oa, a matriarchal goddess and the creator of their world: 'There was the great Oa. She brought forth the earth from her belly. She gave suck. The earth brought forth woman and the woman brought forth the first man out of her belly' (p. 25). The women in *The Inheritors* are the only people who can visit the cave where the ice women 'live' – a representation of Oa on earth. Fa says that it is a 'woman for Oa and a man for pictures in his head', although we see the latter turned on its head as the novel progresses (p. 60). After the arrival of the New People, Fa has to take Lok to the ice cave, and Lok sees the 'awful light' emanating from the ice women: 'It is too much Oa for a man' (p. 75). Here Lok

[32] Keith Sagar, *Ted Hughes and Nature: Terror and Exultation* (Peterborough: Upfront, 2010), p. 72; Mark Kinkead-Weekes and Ian Gregor, 'Approaches to *The Inheritors*', in *William Golding: Novels, 1954–67*, ed. Norman Page (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1985), p. 124.

[33] Golding, quoted in Carey, p. 520.

[34] Kay Prufer, Fernando Racimo, Nick Patterson et al, 'The complete genome sequence of a Neanderthal from the Altai Mountains', *Nature* 505 (January 2014), pp. 43–9.

desires the protection of the mother goddess, but is forced to crawl on the floor, out of their view, away from their overwhelming power.

Just like Lok, the speaker of the Epilogue poems of *Gaudete* features a male speaker who has been unable to understand, or fully grasp, his female creator: 'Who is this? She reveals herself, and is veiled' (*CP* 364). Even in the act of revelation, her identity, her self, is still hidden from the speaker. Gifford suggests that 'For Hughes the poet she is elusive: her ultimate mystery is, he senses, embedded in the material world – in the mystery and materiality of a river, for example'.[35] Dickie writes that the speaker has a 'despairing feeling that she is always the tantalizing other, his desire for the safety of the womb and his terror of its engulfing power'.[36]

The Epilogue poems of *Gaudete* also share imagery of human evolution with *The Inheritors*, and here the shocking reveal of Lok's brow with nothing above it becomes in the poem 'the bossed Neanderthal brow-ridge' (*CP* 357). This leads into the 'Java-Man's bone grinders', and Michael Silk cites this opening as an example of Hughes's 'preoccupation' with language and 'its capacity for elemental simplicity, and its perceived limitations' and its intrinsic link with human evolution.[37] *The Inheritors* is, as Everett suggests, 'an essentially silent book', with words and conversation mostly replaced by telepathically shared images – the refrain of 'I have a picture' reverberates throughout.[38] In fact, Lok's frequent chattering is evidence of his lack of intelligence; as Fa notes: 'Lok has a mouthful of words and no pictures' (p. 28). Golding's challenge here is to represent the lives and emotions of these mainly wordless creatures; a challenge shared by Hughes in many of his animal poems. Laura Webb suggests with reference to 'Song of a Rat' and 'The Howling of Wolves' that 'the poems "translate" the "other" sounds of the animals into human language', just as Golding translates the communication between the Neanderthals into something which we can understand.[39] Hughes writes in 'Baboons and Neanderthals' that 'Golding tunes the evolutionary gap between his two groups till it resonates at the most anguished pitch' – an interesting allusion on this most silent of novels.[40]

The final aspect of the literary association between Hughes and Golding to be explored here is the difficult relationship both men had with literary biographers and literary criticism. Hughes's personal life has been subjected to intense scrutiny since the suicide of Sylvia Plath and the subsequent publication of her work, and there have

---

[35] Terry Gifford, 'Introduction', in *The Cambridge Companion to Ted Hughes*, p. 8.
[36] Margaret Dickie, 'Ted Hughes: The Double Voice', *Contemporary Literature* 24:1 (Spring 1983), pp. 63–4.
[37] Michael Silk, 'Ted Hughes, Allusion and Poetic Language', in *Ted Hughes and the Classics*, p. 233.
[38] Everett, p. 115.
[39] Laura Webb, 'Animal and Human Endurance in Hughes' Poetry', in *Ted Hughes: From Cambridge to Collected*, p. 36.
[40] Hughes, 'Baboons and Neanderthals', p. 162.

been numerous studies of the multiple biographies, perhaps most notably Janet Malcolm's *The Silent Woman* (1994). This troubled relationship between Hughes and biographers has been much debated elsewhere, and I do not intend to re-tread this ground, although it is worth noting that Hughes wrote to Graham Ackroyd that biographers are 'common burglars who creep into your life, defile everything, steal what they can lift, sell it with lies'.[41] Similarly, Golding struggled with the attention of literary critics, which was one of the catalysts for his move from Wiltshire to a more secluded residence in Cornwall. After reading Stevenson's biography of Plath, Golding wrote in his journal: 'I am even more set against a biography [...] than I was before I read hers. I must get on as fast as I can with at least some gestures towards "Scenes from a Life"'.[42] Golding's 1984 comic novel *The Paper Men* features a cat-and-mouse chase between a writer, Wilf Barclay, and his biographer, Rick Tucker (a desperate English Literature lecturer), and demonstrates the impossibility of any sense of a 'true' biography. Barclay tells Tucker when he begs for the writer's archive, 'You don't know about my life. You aren't going to either'.[43] John Fowles notes that 'I think Golding himself once described how absurd he found it when he realised that more books had been written about him than he had actually written himself. The contempt in *The Paper Men* for both persecuted and persecutor speaks for itself'.[44]

Although this article has focused on the parallels between *The Inheritors* and selected Hughes poems, there are a number of other avenues to explore between these two writers. These opportunities include an examination of Golding's posthumous *The Double Tongue* – his only novel to have a solely female protagonist, Arieka – which features an exploration of Arieka's role as a Priestess in the dying days of Ancient Greece. For me, this book is Golding's attempt to solve the problem of the goddess as 'other' to the male writer, and this is figured through Arieka's realisation of womanhood as she reaches puberty: 'I understood a little more of what a girl was'.[45] Tracy Brain has undertaken a sensitive reading of Hughes and feminism and her ideas will make a useful contribution to a comparison between *The Double Tongue* and Hughes's work.[46] In addition, Gifford and Roberts's brief mention of *Pincher Martin* opens up the possibility of a much larger reading of its relationship to Hughes's poetry, and particularly the presence of the sea and associated imagery. Golding and Hughes

---

[41] Quoted in Joanny Moulin, 'The Problem of Biography', in *The Cambridge Companion to Ted Hughes*, p. 24.

[42] Golding, unpublished journals, 1990.

[43] Golding, *The Paper Men* (London: Faber and Faber, 1984; repr. 2013), p. 53.

[44] John Fowles, 'Golding and "Golding"', in *William Golding: The Man and his Books*, p. 149.

[45] Golding, *The Double Tongue* (London: Faber and Faber, 1995; repr. 2013), p. 11.

[46] Tracy Brain, 'Hughes and Feminism', in *The Cambridge Companion to Ted Hughes*, pp. 94–106.

loom large in the history of twentieth-century literature, and their combined influence resonates in the twenty-first.

Two Contemporary Poets and the Ted Hughes Bestiary

Daniel Weston

Who was the first poet to write about birds having observed them with the aid of binoculars? The question is posed by naturalist Tim Dee in his foreword to *The Poetry of Birds* (2009), the anthology he co-edited with Simon Armitage. His tentative offering in response is that Edward Thomas 'may have slung a rudimentary pair around his neck', but with some more certainty, 'it is possible to detect binocular-assisted poetry in some of Ted Hughes's work'.[1] This speculation, verified or not, is useful because it is based on noticing the observational qualities that can be discerned clearly in Hughes's animal poems. It is this same documentary closeness to the animals observed that Dee and Armitage value most highly in the contemporary poems they select for inclusion in their trans-historical anthology. The best bird poems written recently, Dee notes in praise of work by Michael Longley, Kathleen Jamie, and Peter Reading, are 'open-eyed meetings that are crammed with ornithological acuity and capture the direct experience of looking at birds today, giving us a comparable quickening to that which leaps up around any encounter we have with the real things'.[2] In this alignment of what both Hughes and contemporary poets bring to the fore, we can begin to see one of the chief ways in which Hughes's legacy is felt in poetry today.

Of contemporary A-list poets, Armitage is perhaps the most obviously influenced by Ted Hughes's legacy. As long ago as 2000, he made a selection of Hughes's poems for Faber's 'Poet to Poet' series (in which 'a contemporary poet selects and introduces another poet of a different generation whom they have particularly admired').[3] Since then, he has spoken numerous times about the older poet's impact on his own work. This article does not deal with Hughes's particular influence on Armitage, but his thoughts do sound a keynote for the ways in which Hughes's legacy is felt by a wide range of poets writing now. In his introductory essay for Mark Wormald, Neil Roberts, and Terry Gifford's edited volume *Ted Hughes: From Cambridge to Collected*, Armitage provides a revealing overview of why Hughes

---

[1] Tim Dee, 'Foreword', *The Poetry of Birds*, eds. Simon Armitage and Tim Dee (London: Penguin, 2011), p. xix.

[2] Dee, p. xxii.

[3] Ted Hughes, *Poems Selected by Simon Armitage* (London: Faber & Faber, 2000), back cover.

remains a compelling figure for him. Singling out *Remains of Elmet* as Hughes's signature collection – a 'concordance' to the whole oeuvre – Armitage argues that 'as well as responding to his environment, Hughes demonstrated an equal capacity for imposing his views upon it too, moulding and mythologizing what lay in front of him to suit his needs. It works both ways'.[4] Hughes's poetry, he continues, is 'the poetry of conflict': 'Whether writing about animal, vegetable or mineral, rival and opposing energies are always felt to be at work in a Hughes poem'.[5] These are, in a way, simple observations but the two elements that make up the tension Armitage describes – recording experiences of the world ('responding') and making metaphors out of them ('moulding') – have not always received equal attention in Hughes scholarship. Particularly with regard to Hughes's animal poems, critical accounts have often emphasised their metaphoric potential as accounts of *human* life, sometimes at the expense of giving credit to their observational attention to encounters with real animals. This is perhaps due in part to important precedents set at the very beginning of critical consideration of Hughes's poetry. If Hughes's legacy for contemporary poetry is to be more fully understood, it is necessary for scholars to follow where Armitage and many others lead.

Considering the body of work as a whole, Hughes's animal poetry seems, at first, to oscillate back and forward between two poles: creatures recorded in lyric, observational mode (*The Hawk in the Rain*, *Remains of Elmet*, *Moortown Diary*) and sometimes-mythical beasts carrying the heavy metaphorical burden of the spirit world and creation myth (*Wodwo*, *Crow*, *Adam and the Sacred Nine*). This article examines contemporary poets' debt to both of these aspects; it finds that those who work with Hughes's legacy often combine the two. As a full appraisal of Hughes's presence in the work of contemporary poets would need to be a book-length undertaking, for this article poems by Alice Oswald and John Burnside provide the sample material to test this case. Oswald has selected the poems for Faber's publication of *A Ted Hughes Bestiary* (2014) and her introduction to that volume provides a key document of her engagement with Hughes's animals. Her poetry from this period also bears the mark of his influence. John Burnside is, in many ways, the heir to Hughes's depiction of animals and human animality across a long period. Both poets write half-observational, half-imaginative poems that, following Hughes, embody rather than only describe animals. From noticing a combinatory approach in the work of these two contemporary poets, the article then turns back to the Hughes oeuvre and argues that even the most subjective renderings of animals there have their basis in objective

---

[4] Simon Armitage, 'The Ascent of Ted Hughes: Conquering the Calder Valley', in *Ted Hughes: From Cambridge to Collected*, eds. Mark Wormald, Neil Roberts, and Terry Gifford (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 7–8.

[5] Armitage, pp. 8–9.

reference to experience. Thus, charting Hughes's place in contemporary writing returns attention anew to his own poetry and refocuses his place in literary history more broadly conceived. The Hughes that is of most interest today might not be quite the same Hughes as before.

As a prelude to this study, it is perhaps helpful to give a brief account of how certain aspects of Hughes's animal poems have tended to be read and where certain assumptions about them have come from. Al Alvarez was the critic who shaped Hughes's critical reception most forcefully from the outset of his career onwards, and it is his mode of reading the animal poems that has become pervasive. In the late 1950s, Alvarez was poetry editor at the *Observer* and the most influential reviewer of new collections. Jonathan Bate notes that Alvarez's 1957 review of Hughes's debut collection, *The Hawk in the Rain*, identified him as 'a real poet', particularly praising a number of animal poems (the title poem, 'Jaguar', 'The Thought-Fox', 'The Horses').[6] This review signifies the beginning of defining Hughes's place in the poetry world: Alvarez went on to formulate the terms on which a group of young poets came to be thought of as a new generation, distinct and tonally very different to their forebears. As William Wootten has shown,

> Alvarez was one of the first to identify the promise of Gunn, Hill, Hughes, Plath and Porter, and, more than the academic critics who followed him, Alvarez it was who helped establish their reputations, Plath's and Hughes's in particular. Whether as commentator, populariser, or provocateur, Alvarez not only helped create the taste by which these poets were enjoyed, his prose affected how they would regard their own and each other's work.[7]

Alvarez's influence was felt most forcefully, at the time and since, in his editorship of *The New Poetry* (1962, expanded edition 1966), which Wootten calls 'the key document' around or against which almost all subsequent accounts of British poetry have oriented themselves.[8]

Alvarez's introduction to *The New Poetry*, championing Hughes as the poster-boy for a necessary 'new seriousness' in poetry, and comparing him favourably with the supposed gentility of the Movement and Philip Larkin in particular, establishes a powerful and influential mode of reading Hughes that has perhaps insufficiently examined repercussions for the animal poems.[9] This has to do with metaphor and anthropomorphism. Alvarez wanted to present Hughes as being at the forefront of a

---

[6] Alvarez, cited in Jonathan Bate, *Ted Hughes: The Unauthorised Life* (London: William Collins, 2015), pp. 136–7.

[7] William Wootten, The Alvarez Generation: Thom Gunn, Geoffrey Hill, Ted Hughes, Sylvia Plath and Peter Porter (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015), p. xii.

[8] Wootten, p. xii.

[9] Al Alvarez, ed., *The New Poetry*, revised edition (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965), p. 27.

newly engaged and worldly generation of poets who, coming of age in the wake of the Second World War, confront the twin problems of evil in the post-holocaust world and libido in a modern perception of self, informed by recent psychoanalytic thinking. The extent to which the poems are said to be analogically 'about' these things implicitly diminishes the extent to which they are about the things (often, the creatures) they ostensibly appear to be about. The poems that Alvarez selects for the introduction's comparison with Larkin are, interestingly, animal poems: Larkin's 'At Grass' and Hughes's 'A Dream of Horses'. The title of the latter – not horses, but dreams of horses – indicates that Alvarez has a point, but his conclusions elide the creatures to a large degree. He finds the poem to be 'a serious attempt to recreate and so clarify, unfalsified and in the strongest imaginative terms possible, a powerful complex of emotions and sensations'. Observation of creatures is present, but only as a means to an end: 'through the sharp details which bring them [the horses] so threateningly to life, they reach back, as in a dream, into an nexus of fear and sensation'.[10]

In light of this introduction, it is more difficult to read the Hughes poems that Alvarez selects for inclusion in *The New Poetry* without an anthropomorphising tendency (and one, I argue, that only tells part of the story). Thus, 'Pike', describing 'killers from the egg' with 'malevolent aged grin[s]' becomes less about fish and more about human brutality in a disintegrated post-war world (*CP* 84). To suggest otherwise would, for Alvarez, likely be absurd, notwithstanding the fact that the poem is lyric in voice, draws on personal experience and a passion for angling now well-established in Hughes biography and criticism, and culminates in an eerie reversal of human perspective with the fish, and not the angler, possessing the verb 'watching' with which the poem concludes. Alvarez's selections confer attention on the animal poems, presumably as they lend themselves to this kind of interpretation: of the twenty-one Hughes poems chosen in 1962, eleven are certainly animal poems whilst almost all of the rest involve animals in some way; in the 1966 edition, the proportion is eight out of eighteen. Alvarez's near-allegorical reading practice, integral as it is to the first attempt to establish Hughes's importance as a genuinely new voice in modern poetry, has been a paradigm that many have followed. And yet, it tends to (over)emphasise one undeniable part of Hughes's animal poetry at the expense of another. The poise between 'responding' and 'moulding' that Armitage so admires in Hughes's poetry is not present here.

Two points might authorise the degree to which Alvarez elects to read Hughes's animals as metaphors. First, Hughes has lent weight to this approach in his discussions of the animal poems. Second, Hughes's early animal poems – those that Alvarez is considering when he is writing in the early 1960s – are perhaps more

---

[10] Alvarez, p. 31.

metaphoric than later, more observational work. In a well-known *Paris Review* interview, Hughes gives a typical account of his animal poems:

> Since I spent my first seventeen or eighteen years constantly thinking about them [animals] more or less, they became a language – a symbolic language which is also the language of my whole life. It was [...] part of the machinery of my mind from the beginning [...]. So when I look for, or get hold of a feeling [...] it tends to bring up the image of an animal or animals simply because that's the deepest, earliest language that my imagination learned.[11]

This has most often been read as an uncomplicated signifier/signified relationship whereby animals provide the means to address the real subject matter, which lies behind or beneath. Nonetheless, a more modern approach, in light of poststructuralist ideas of textuality, might question this whole linguistic economy, preferring the words on the page to the contextually derived subtext. In any case, what is clear is that Hughes associates this mode of thinking with his youth. He leaves open the possibility that he would move away from this mode of composition towards a different way of looking at animals. Indeed, the very next sentence following the passage I have just quoted sees Hughes revising the idea that animals are the *only* language of the imagination – now they become '*one of* the deepest, earliest languages' (my italics).[12] Elsewhere, Hughes has also made the counterargument himself: asked by Ekbert Faas about charges that his two jaguar poems celebrate violence, he responds 'I prefer to think of them as first, descriptions of a jaguar' and only after that as 'invocations of a jaguar-like body of elemental force, demonic force.'[13]

Alvarez's perceptions and mode of reading the poems inform and colour a broad swath of responses to Hughes (popular and scholarly). They can be felt in the titans of Hughes scholarship – Keith Sagar affirming plainly that 'Hughes's imaginative world was deeply mythic' – and in Hughes's contemporaries – Seamus Heaney, at Hughes's memorial service in Westminster Abbey, declaring that 'myth is the poetic code for the human spirit'.[14] Sean O'Brien repeats the interpretive lines that Alvarez runs along even more closely: 'a set of associations grew up around [Hughes's] work: nature–violence–the Holocaust–psychic crisis'.[15] Neil Corcoran's chapter on Hughes and Geoffrey Hill in his *English Poetry since 1940*, a common entry point into critical accounts of Hughes for many an undergraduate, is astoundingly similar to Alvarez in situating these poets (and in the language used to do so):

---

[11] Drue Heinz, 'Ted Hughes: The Art of Poetry LXXI', *Paris Review* 134 (1995), p. 81.
[12] Heinz, p. 81.
[13] Ekbert Faas, Ted Hughes: The Unaccommodated Universe; With Selected Critical Writings by Ted Hughes & Two Interviews (Santa Barbara, CA: Black Sparrow Press, 1980), p. 199.
[14] Keith Sagar, *The Laughter of Foxes: A Study of Ted Hughes* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), p. ix; Heaney, cited in Sagar, p. 1.
[15] Sean O'Brien, *The Deregulated Muse* (Newcastle: Bloodaxe, 1998), p. 35.

> they came to maturity during the immediately post-war period when Europeans were faced with the two realities which have been most signally formative of the modern historical consciousness and conscience: the Nazi concentration camps and the atomic bomb. [...] This involvement in modern European history may be read as the originating impulse behind much in the poetries of Hughes and Hill.[16]

The implications of this context for the animal poems are the same: Hughes 'revises a tradition of English "nature" poetry, and specifically animal poetry, towards a discovery within the natural world of forces, energies which always implicitly, and sometimes explicitly, criticize the rational human intellect'.[17] In summary, 'the anthropomorphisms suggest, of course, that Hughes's animal poems are also human allegories'.[18]

To be clear, though my argument might appear to be an attack on Alvarez's mode of reading, it is not. The point I am making is not that he is wrong but rather to acknowledge that his judgements are of a particular historical moment. In the 1960s, it was the case that Hughes's importance was in his articulations of the human psyche in a post-war, nuclear, Jungian world. After all, *The New Poetry* was first published in the same year as Eichmann's execution and the Cuban missile crisis. That Alvarez's opinions held such sway is testament to their continued relevance for years, decades even. But these historical determinants are not the same ones today. In the Anthropocene era, environmental concerns are the most pressing issue for poets writing of nature and animals. Alvarez's anthropocentric Hughes is being replaced in the critical and creative imagination with a biocentric Hughes, whose poems express a perspective of mutuality between human and animal and evoke a network of ecological connections. Another way to put this is to suggest that Hughes was well ahead of his time in terms of environmental awareness and the articulation of a poetics to reflect this. Scholars are only now catching up with him. Two recent examples: Yvonne Reddick's work on Hughes as an ecopoet brings to focus his longstanding engagement with ideas of 'ecopsychology'; and Steve Ely's case for the importance of South Yorkshire to Hughes's development tracks his honing of 'observational skills' in relation to animals at Old Denaby.[19]

Writing much more recently than Alvarez, after Hughes's death and therefore with the whole of his poetry in sight, Laura Webb has traced a trajectory of Hughes's writing on animals. She suggests a development can be discerned 'from discursive animal subjects, located "outside" of time, towards empirical animal subjects, located

---

[16] Neil Corcoran, *English Poetry since 1940* (Harlow: Longman, 1993), p. 115.

[17] Corcoran, p. 116.

[18] Corcoran, p. 117.

[19] Yvonne Reddick, *Ted Hughes: Environmentalist and Ecopoet* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), pp. 89–91; Steve Ely, *Ted Hughes's South Yorkshire: Made in Mexborough* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp. 59–75.

within the present moment'.[20] If, as Webb argues, 'Hughes has shed mythological, omnipotent narrative in favour of a real-time record of events' over the course of his career, then the repercussion for animal poems is a shift away from the animals as icons towards being 'taken as subjects in their own right'.[21] I concur with Webb's suggestion that this happens most forcefully in *Moortown Diary*, but would note that even very different poems written in other phases of Hughes's development take inspiration from an individual and empirical experience of a particular creature, and that they consistently retain the mark of this engagement in their linguistic fabric, even where they mythologise via metaphor. Even in *Crow*, the description of the avian protagonist 'spraddled head-down in the beach-garbage, guzzling a dropped ice-cream' feels ornithologically correct, especially given that Hughes would have had opportunity to observe this characteristic behaviour of the American crow (distinct from the Carrion crow in Europe) on the eastern seaboard of the US during his time in Boston (*CP* 210).

Keith Sagar's work on the composition process for 'The Dove Came' might provide a further case in point. This poem from *Adam and the Sacred Nine* – thought of as one of the collections most concerned with myth and departing from recorded experience – begins with, and retains, observed ornithological details though its concerns move far beyond description: 'All the drafts, though they play many variations with the phrasing, begin with the dove's breast, its bulbous shape and its distinctive colouring'.[22] Though the dove is a bird freighted with symbolism from at least as far back as the book of Genesis, Sagar's comments on Hughes's redraftings show how observed detail is the poem's essential element surviving through a process of scaling back on early drafts: 'it was a matter of throwing out all that could be thrown out, leaving only that which imperiously proves itself, the simplicity on the far side of complexity, the essential'.[23] In Hughes then, detailed observation is always the anchor of metaphor no matter how much else is going on around it. In this poem, and almost everywhere else in his poetry, Hughes is attentive to the process of making metaphor and retaining creaturely experience in poetic language.[24] It is this, I suggest, that contemporary poets – writing with the whole oeuvre available to them – take from his animal poems.

---

[20] Laura Webb, 'Mythology, Mortality and Memorialization: Animal and Human Endurance in Hughes' Poetry', in *Ted Hughes: From Cambridge to Collected*, eds. Mark Wormald, Neil Roberts, and Terry Gifford (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 34.

[21] Webb, p. 43, p. 39.

[22] Sagar, p. 95. For 'The Dove Came', see *CP* 449.

[23] Sagar, p. 103.

[24] For a more detailed treatment of the 'creaturely' in Hughes, see Danny O'Connor, *Ted Hughes and Trauma: Burning the Foxes* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), esp. chapter two, 'Hughes's Creaturely Creatures', pp. 23–40.

Alice Oswald's short introduction to her selection for *A Ted Hughes Bestiary* draws attention to the multifaceted nature of Hughes's engagement with animals, initially through an exploration of the bestiary as a genre or type of book. She characterises the medieval Christian tradition of the bestiary as 'a book of animals sketchily recorded and then reduced to emblems', which is 'inimical' to Hughes's version of the same, where 'animals are so radiantly themselves'.[25] The observational qualities of his poems are clearly central to her conception of his importance, but there is no tension here with their potential to also tell us something about ourselves, to carry the weight of analogy. She quotes Hughes on these two sides of his writing, first from his notes to *Moortown Diary* where he advocates 'getting close to what is going on, and staying close, and [...] excluding everything else that might be pressing to interfere with the watching eye'; but also his desire to do more than simply watch when he writes to his brother Gerald that 'when a man becomes simply a mirror, he just ceases to be interesting to men'.[26] Oswald writes that 'from one collection to the next, he oscillates between these extremes' and the variety of her selections testify that she is equally compelled by both of these aspects. They are, in her selection of poems, variously emphasised characteristics present in almost all of the poems rather than mutually exclusive features. It is fitting, then, that the first of the four short prose excerpts that Oswald includes in the *Bestiary* is Hughes's configuration of these elements from the 'Capturing Animals' chapter of *Poetry in the Making*. Here, he describes how he 'think[s] of poems as a sort of animal. They have their own life, like animals by which I mean that they seem quite separate from any person, even from their author'. He expands: 'Maybe my concern has been to capture not animals particularly and not poems, but simply things which have a vivid life of their own outside mine'.[27] The gesture here is not one of moving away from the grammatical lyricism of the poem (first-person narration is, of course, often Hughes's *modus operandi*), but rather to play down the subjective, interpretive involvement of that 'I', instead observing to give voice to something true about the animal.

Hughes's influence can be clearly traced in particular poems by Oswald from a period contemporary to her work on the *Bestiary*. 'Fox', from her collection *Falling Awake* (2016), writes back to Hughes's 'The Thought-Fox'. At a recent event at the London Review Bookshop in which Oswald introduced and discussed recordings of Hughes reading his work, she noted that Hughes's own introduction to this poem describes a half-man half-fox entering his bedroom. She draws attention to this detail, she explains, because it demonstrates that he was a 'preternatural' poet rather than

---

[25] Alice Oswald, 'Introduction', *A Ted Hughes Bestiary: Poems Selected by Alice Oswald* (London: Faber, 2014), p. xiii.

[26] Oswald, *Ted Hughes Bestiary*, p. xiii. For originals, see *CP* 1205, *LTH* 18.

[27] Oswald, *Ted Hughes Bestiary*, p. xvii. For original, see *PM* 15.

simply a nature poet (and 'that is so much more interesting').[28] She is echoing Hughes's own sense of the poem's ambiguity: in *Poetry in the Making*, he describes the creature in quick succession as 'both a fox and not a fox', 'a fox and a spirit', and 'a real fox'. His conclusion on its status maintains this suppleness rather than resolving the tension: 'the words have made a body for it and given it somewhere to walk' (*PM* 20). The poem bears this out with its attentive descriptive focus on the fox's tentative, careful and concentrated movement that is also an analogy for writing poetry – the fox's steps placed 'again now, and now, and now' are echoed in the line's iambic metre and its 'neat prints' mimicked by the printed page in the final line (*CP* 21). The poem is an act of conjuring and poetry is an instinctual behaviour.

Oswald's poem retains and yet dismantles these energies. It is more simply titled, emphasising the animal in the world (without a definite or indefinite pronoun) and not the composite one half-created in the mind (i.e. 'Fox' rather than 'The Thought-Fox'). It tells of a nocturnal encounter with a vixen, whose bark wakens the narrator. It imagines possibilities for interpreting this bark without ever straying far from description – any abstraction is carefully measured. The poem opens with the moment of the encounter and sensory perception in the plainest lyric terms – 'I heard a cough' – before slightly complicating things with a simile – 'as if a thief was there / outside my sleep' (though this last clause assures us the scenario is really heard not dreamed).[29] The vixen, 'stepping' (like Hughes's fox) into the poem in the second stanza, is 'abrupt and odd' but at the same time there is kinship as she goes about her night 'hungrily asking' – looking for food it is perhaps to be assumed, but looking for something that the poem does not encroach to name. Her bark is delivered in 'the heart's thick accent', but this accent could be that of animal, human, and/or poet. The poem certainly imagines possibilities for the vixen's symbolic significance but ends tentatively with a surmise as to how her bark might be interpreted:

> as if to say: it's midnight
> and my life
> is laid beneath my children
> like gold leaf[30]

This final stanza opens by repeating the earlier qualification of uncertainty ('as if') before emphasising a characteristic – care for offspring – broadly shared across species.

The encounter is presented in terms that undoubtedly signal Hughes's poem in both content and form: not least in the pointed midnight timing of the encounter, but

---

[28] 'Alice Oswald on Ted Hughes', London Review Bookshop, 7 March 2017.
[29] Alice Oswald, *Falling Awake* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2016), p. 5.
[30] Oswald, *Falling Awake*, p. 5.

also in the similar, seemingly prosaic, unrhymed quatrains that it deploys. Here, the poet's encroachment on her animal subject matter is presented in more tentative terms. It is telling, in this regard, that though Oswald uses the same quatrain form, her lines are shorter and the poem is made up of five stanzas to Hughes's six – when symbolism is paired back, fewer words are used. In summary, then, Oswald follows Hughes in looking to connect animal and human experience and develops the poetic rendering of this act of translation. Where metaphor is present, her aesthetic builds more hesitancy into the transformation.

I have found only one brief statement of Hughes's influence on the part of John Burnside but nonetheless the kinship between the two poets' writing is perhaps closer still than that between Hughes and Oswald. The period of time during which Hughes overlaps with Burnside as a practising poet is longer: his first collection *The Hoop* appeared in 1988 and he published a further five collections before Hughes's death, whilst Oswald's debut *The Thing in the Stone-Gap Stile* came out in 1996 and her next book-length publication, *Dart*, was not until 2002. On the announcement in 2010 that Hughes was to be commemorated with a memorial in Poets' Corner, Westminster Abbey, Burnside wrote a piece for the *Guardian* commending this decision. He opens with a recollection of the formative experience of first hearing a Hughes poem read aloud by a college tutor and 'thinking, even then, that everything would be different from that moment on'.[31] What is important in Hughes's work, he continues, is philosophical more than formal:

> What mattered, more than formal skill, more than clever effects or knowingness, more even than the all too frequently sociological 'meaning' of the work, was how keenly and completely a poet reimagined language and the world and, by extension, how that vision revivified the language and experiences of others.[32]

It is by this quality that 'Hughes's poetry enriched (and continues to enrich) our mental and spiritual habitat', and for which he has 'won a lasting place in the collective imagination'.[33] More than confirming that Hughes is an influence on Burnside, this statement indicates something about the nature of that influence. First, Burnside's *weltanschauung* shares characteristics with that of Hughes. Second, in part because of this first, intertextualities in Burnside's writing are likely to be pervasive – philosophical stances or positions – more often than specific – direct allusions. This

[31] John Burnside, 'Ted Hughes's poetry enriches us spiritually and mentally', *The Guardian*, 23 March 2010, at https://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2010/mar/23/ted-hughes-poets-corner (accessed 9 January 2018).
[32] Burnside, 'Ted Hughes's poetry'.
[33] Burnside, 'Ted Hughes's poetry'.

is certainly the case in the poem I have selected to illustrate the dialogue (though I will also draw attention to a couple more precise points of comparison).

Burnside's writing about animals is as vast and diverse as Hughes's, a similarity that undermines the sense of attempting to give anything like a comprehensive statement on what they share and how they differ in the limited space here. I propose instead then, as with Oswald, to look at a paradigmatic single poem. From an embarrassment of riches, I have selected Burnside's 'Animals', from *The Light Trap* (2002), as its broad title seems to gesture towards a definitive statement on the topic (though one that is actually extremely tentative), and because it bears certain resemblances – in scenario, in voice and form, in philosophy – to 'The Thought-Fox'. It takes its genesis, like the Hughes and Oswald poems discussed, from nocturnal encounters with wild creatures (plural rather than singular here, with an eye to offering a synthesis of this kind of moment drawn from numerous actual events):

> There are nights when we cannot name
> the animals that flit across our headlights
>
> [...]
>
> they cross our path, unnameable and bright
> as any in the sudden heat of Eden.
>
> Mostly, it's rabbit, or fox, though we've sometimes caught
> a glimpse of powder blue, or Chinese white,
>
> or chanced upon a mystery of eyes
> and passed the last few miles in wonderment.[34]

Here, 'a glimpse' of colour or part anatomy of the 'unnameable' prompts 'wonderment'. These fleeting observations are, at this point in the poem, pointedly not expanded upon – there is no attempt to complete a narrative, filling in the gaps with speculation, but rather, to allow a partial sighting to register tonally. Though concrete, these observations are nonetheless strongly evocative, perhaps because they are (initially at least) not elaborated on.

The second half of the poem turns attention to an unoccupied house, empty since a neighbour's death, in which similarly unnameable creatures move or live: 'In time, we came to think that house contained / a presence'. From here, observation is reversed: it is the 'presence', 'more animal than ghost', in the dilapidating, isolated house rather than the narrating 'we' that does the watching. This is a tactic reminiscent of several Hughes poems: the pike 'watching', the otter whose 'self under the eye lies, / Attendant and withdrawn', both in eponymous poems, or the trout that 'forces a final

---

[34] John Burnside, *The Light Trap* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2002), p. 18.

curve wide, getting / a long look at me' in 'Stealing Trout on a May Morning' (*CP* 86, 79, 140). In Burnside's poem, the animal presence in the house is 'a kindred shape' but it is so because the direction of travel here is not to anthropomorphise the creature (it explicitly refuses to make the dream of an animal into 'the self', an idea that is questioned by its enclosing quotation marks) but rather to recognise the creaturely in the human:

> though what I sense in this, and cannot tell
> is not the continuity we understand
>
> as self, but life, beyond the life we live
> on purpose: one broad presence that proceeds
>
> by craft and guesswork,
> shadowing our love.[35]

Dreams and senses have a significant role to play in the relinquishing of a certain idea of rational selfhood that the poem enacts. Instead, at its conclusion it comes to articulate a vision of human animality, termed 'life' rather than 'self'. Crucially, what is offered here is not a metaphor of symbolic order but rather an analogue. To notice that this comes, in part, from Hughes is to be aware that his poetry too does not employ animals in any mechanistic way. For Burnside and for Oswald, as well as for very many others, Hughes offers a model for thinking through, and for complicating, our sense of animals and our own creatureliness.

At a key point in *The Alvarez Generation*, William Wootten takes stock of the critical history he has presented and offers a corrective to what he sees as the oversight involved in a mode of reading Hughes's poems almost as allegories that originated in Alvarez and became pervasive:

> [W]hat gives many of the early poems their considerable power, and a power both to unsettle readers and their human assumptions and to evoke the natural world, is Hughes's ability to both keep up a strong attendance on the specifics of the life before him, to be the empirical observer and nature poet whilst also manifesting considerable psychic energy and disturbance.[36]

Alvarez, 'by viewing only one side of this, misses the whole picture'. These remarks serve not only in relation to the criticism of the past but also provide an indication as to how Hughes's poems are important to those who are writing now. Hughes's poetry provides an important example of the careful balance of experience and metaphor that contemporary poets are searching for. The philosophical principle that underpins this balance, present in Hughes and ever more accentuated in our current climate (in

---

[35] Burnside, *The Light Trap*, p. 19.
[36] Wootten, p. 96.

several senses of the word) is one that places human life on a continuum with animal life and within a common ecological web. In his recent prose text *Havergey* (2017), Burnside articulates the idea of 'interanimation', a key tenet of the inhabitants of the eponymous utopia. Wandering amongst cattle on a foggy evening, 'you cannot help wondering how they see the world, and what, if anything, such mysteries as a foggy evening [...] could possibly mean to them, in their seemingly separate world, a world that, for you, seems stolid and patient and, for the most part, near silent'. In response, 'you try to imagine yourself as them, in some form of kinship' that is 'something you can experience as a sensation – *not* an idea – but a sensory experience of a common soul, shared, but not divided, between all living things'.[37] Notwithstanding the idealism that is naturally part of writing a utopia, this kind of awareness informs Burnside's poetry, Oswald's, and, I have argued, Hughes's. Via his legacy, we can look back to Hughes's work and notice anew that the process of making metaphor is an intricate one: animal does not stand in as referent for human in any straightforward way. Rather, human creatureliness comes to the fore as the analogue of poems that observe animals.

---

[37] John Burnside, *Havergey* (Toller Fratrum: Little Toller Books, 2017), pp. 50–1.

Reviews

Crow Flight across the Sun by Mike Di Placido, Calder Valley Poetry, 2017, 58pp., £8.00 (paperback), ISBN 978-1-9997062-1-0

Mike Di Placido's second collection, *Crow Flight across the Sun*, returns frequently to the themes and content – autobiographical reflection, animals, Yorkshire, heroes – of his previous pamphlet, *Theatre of Dreams*.[1] However, whereas the earlier work contains references to a number of figures from his personal pantheon, including Amy Winehouse, Bill Gates, Mahalia Jackson, Madonna, and Harry Houdini, *Crow Flight across the Sun* narrows the focus onto the eponymous 'Crow' – Ted Hughes, the abiding passion of Di Placido's life.

Both *Theatre of Dreams* and *Crow Flight across the Sun* are characterised by a gently self-deprecating tone in which the author adopts the persona of an unexceptional everyman figure, doomed to fall short of the unattainable standards of his heroes. *Theatre of Dreams* contains a poem in which a speaker resigned to his quotidian life nevertheless wishes he could be more like Richard Burton and Clint Eastwood. In the title sequence, the speaker compares himself unfavourably with four footballing giants – Sir Matt Busby, Denis Law, Nobby Stiles and George Best (Di Placido was a professional footballer and was briefly on Manchester United's books alongside his heroes). *Theatre of Dreams* also contains a poem entitled 'On Not Being Ted Hughes', in which the author light-heartedly mocks himself ('silly bugger') for the naively un-Hughesian way in which he 'picked up' an apparently dozing bank vole, leading to unspecified, but presumably mildly-embarrassing, rather than disastrous consequences. Di Placido also includes this poem in *Crow Flight across the Sun* and its tone and method are emblematic of a book in which the author writes about, and in the spirit of Hughes – the book is explicitly 'a tribute to a great inspiration' – but consistently places himself and his work emphatically in his shadow, as a 'mere' poetaster, fan and devotee. However, Di Placido's technical and lexical gifts, his lightness of touch, whimsical voice, and an understated artistic seriousness combine to signal that we should not take his self-deprecation at face value – poetic gold glints and flashes from these poems, even from under the shadow of the crow.

[1] Mike Di Placido, *Theatre of Dreams* (Sheffield: Smith/Doorstop, 2009).

The collection's introductory poem, 'Metamorphosis', is an audaciously comic nod to Hughes's translations of Ovid predicated on a gentle self-satirisation – the diminutive Di Placido imagines himself transforming into Hughes in the same way as Marvel Comics' Bruce Banner transforms into another superhero:

> Suddenly I'm six-foot-plus.
> My shoes have burst their laces.
> I stand in tatters like the Incredible Hulk.

The poem becomes a list of distinctive Hughesian characteristics, a checklist of the elements comprising the Ideal Form of the poet: physical size, a deep resonant voice, an obsession with 'vitality' and the natural world, acute observational skills, and Native American-like one-ness with nature, all become necessary pre-conditions for being able to write poetry. Only having transformed into Hughes is the speaker ready to compose:

> I feel immense. Opening
> My jotter I fumble for a pen.
> I start to write.

For all its comic audacity, 'Metamorphosis' is nevertheless a very traditional opening to a collection of poetry – an invocation of the Muse, and the Muse is Hughes. I'm not sure Hughes would have approved of being appropriated in this way. Like Robert Graves, he regarded the Muse as being female. As Graves reminds us in *The White Goddess*, the 'gentle muse' invoked by Milton in *Lycidas* may have been referred to as 'he', but this conceit follows a more conventional invocation of the 'sisters of the sacred well'. But in matters of inspiration, the poetic heart goes where it will – and charisma trumps all.

Di Placido finds more inspiration from Hughes in a sequence of poems that seems to arise from an opportunity he had to see and handle various artefacts once owned by Hughes, now in a private collection – a 'Mont Blanc' fountain pen, a 'Scarf', a ceramic 'Jaguar' crafted by the poet, and a limited-edition Morrigu Press broadside of 'Puma'. Di Placido simultaneously admits and affirms the absurdity of his delight at being able to handle these artefacts in a deft formulation:

> I think mediaeval –
> of saints and relics –
> and don't feel stupid at all
> when I ask you if I can touch it. ('Scarf')

The quasi-devotional nature of his admiration of Hughes is further developed in 'Mont Blanc', when he compares the act of writing with Hughes's pen to the sacrilegious 'Uber-fraud' of 'wearing / Bestie's boots / or Sinatra's hats' – more gods from Di Placido's pantheon. Although Rebecca Watts has recently called into question

'honesty' as a literary-critical criterion, there is something disarming about the open and unguarded adulation of Hughes that Di Placido expresses in these poems – perfectly characterised as 'Blakean innocence' by Ed Reiss in his rear-cover encomium.[2]

Not all the poems in *Crow Flight across the Sun* are directly about Hughes, although his influence and spirit are never far away. Animal poems such as 'Hare', 'Heron', and 'Fox' capture the essence of the encounter and are vividly empathetic:

> Stopped dead in our tracks at the hedge-corner –
> you, still and alert, plugged into danger – me,
> delighted at such a gift […]
>
> So delighted, in fact, that my involuntary clicking
> of fingers and tongue (as though you were a horse
> or the neighbour's dog) shames me absolutely still. ('Fox')
>
> Now he's off again:
> Going like the clappers
> Over the furrows, doing that
> Buckled
> Bicycle wheel number
>
> As though
> Just for the hell of it. ('Hare')

Above all, there is an affirmation of life and vitality underpinning these poems, an instinctive – and perhaps ideological – endorsement of and commitment to the *eros* embodied in the natural world that owes as much to Nietzsche or Lawrence as Hughes. The *Crow*-like 'A Half Baked Theological Fairy Tale' imagines the founders of the (presumably) life-denying religions of Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism annihilated along with their religions in some apocalyptic disaster, from which nature emerges 'in perfection' from the homocidal wreckage of the Anthropocene – 'the singing of birds / the crashing of the oceans, / the smiling of the green man'. This beaming misanthropy shares something of the outlook of John Kinsella, in poems such as 'Passage Through Icebergs (Painted as Voyage to Labrador by Alfred Wallis, 1935–6)' and 'The Sea Is Wild Today And The No Swim Signs Are Up Everywhere', from *Marine*, his recent collaboration with Alan Jenkins, in which he imagines the end of eco-cidal humanity with barely disguised pleasure.[3]

'Shklovsky's Sparrow' – perhaps the best poem in the book – imagines a sparrow transformed into a metallic angel in the 'crackling static' of the moment of his

---

[2] Rebecca Watts, 'The Cult of the Noble Amateur', *PN Review* 239:44 (January–February 2018), at http://www.pnreview.co.uk/cgi-bin/scribe?item_id=10090 (accessed 6 February 2018).
[3] Alan Jenkins and John Kinsella, *Marine* (London: Enitharmon Press, 2015).

death. Although the language contains unmistakeable echoes of Hughes – the 'blue crackling air' of 'Bayonet Charge', the 'chattering static' of *Prometheus on His Crag*, the 'crackle' of 'Thistles' – the poem's most direct source seems to be the Russian theorist Victor Shklovsky's essay, 'Return the Ball into the Game', a reflection on Pasolini's film 'The Hawks and the Sparrows'.⁴ Pasolini's fantasy has the hawks and the sparrows converted to Christianity by idealistic monks. However, despite their conversion to the gospel of love, the hawks remain true to their nature and continue to prey on the sparrows. Di Placido eschews an on-the-nose Marxist interpretation of the parable in favour of one that is distinctly Hughesian. For a sparrow, as for all mortal beings, death is merely the inevitable risk of life. Like the tiger in Hughes's poem 'Tiger Psalm' (originally entitled 'Crow's Table Talk'), the hawk 'blesses' when it kills and in the moment of its death the sparrow is sanctified and becomes 'a chirruping saint' (in a heaven that seems to be the thermonuclear pleroma of a spiritualised Heraclitean universe, 'blazing [with] light'). The sparrow risked life and lost; but the point of life is not to bemoan the fact of death or to seek to avoid the risks of living, but to embrace those risks and live life in its natural fullness. The point of life is also the point of art – in Shklovsky's words, appropriated by Di Placido as the epigraph for his poem, 'art exists that one may recover the sensation of life'. Expressing the sensation of life – exhilaration, danger, excitement, vitality, lust, love, joy, grief – is fundamental to Hughes's utterance and it is this dimension of his work that Di Placido finds so compelling. In this modest and engaging collection he manages to express some of that himself.

Steve Ely
University of Huddersfield
steveely@btinternet.com

---

⁴ Viktor Shklovsky, 'Return the Ball into the Game', in Alexandra Berlina (ed.), *Victor Shklovsky: A Reader* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017).

Ted Hughes and Trauma: Burning the Foxes by Danny O'Connor, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, 204 pp., £55.99 (hardback), ISBN 978-1-137-55791-9

'The spirit within thee hath been so at war, / And thus hath so bestirred thee in thy sleep, / That beads of sweat have stood upon thy brow / Like bubbles in a late-disturbèd stream'. Thus Lady Percy, in *Henry IV Part I*, describes the palpable signs her husband, Hotspur, evinces of what would now be labelled PTSD. Four centuries after Shakespeare's play, the experience and representation of trauma was the subject of two influential cultural studies of the mid-Nineties: Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* and Kali Tal's *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma*. The title of O'Connor's monograph flags it as positioning its reading of Hughes within the ever-expanding field of Trauma Studies, inviting the question as to the applicability of such theory to a deeper understanding of Hughes's writings.

To be sure, Hughes – unlike Hotspur or a poet Hughes admired, David Jones – had no direct experience of the kind of war trauma that his father and uncle had suffered. Yet, as O'Connor argues, while the Great War is 'second hand' for Hughes, 'it is exorcised with a sense of possession'. It is an exorcism conducted repeatedly in Hughes's oeuvre, in poems such as 'Six Young Men' (*The Hawk in the Rain*), 'My Uncle's Wound' (uncollected, 1961, *CP* 100), and 'Dust As We Are' (*Wolfwatching*), to name just three memorable lyric instances, while the shadow of the war falls over well-nigh every page of the sequence *Remains of Elmet*. O'Connor draws our attention to a moment in a letter from Hughes written to Nick Gammage, in which the First World War, as it touched his family, became his 'mythology', commenting: 'The war, then is a national and a personal trauma, a social conflict and an individual one'.

It is also a 'conflict' that speaks to and of a larger trauma of *representation* in Hughes's work. O'Connor adroitly observes that Hughes's famous account of his dream-encounter, as an undergraduate at Cambridge, with the 'Burnt Fox' that gives O'Connor's book its subtitle, echoes that of the speaker's 'Strange Meeting' with the German soldier in Wilfred Owen's late poem. Owen's meeting is hauntingly replayed in the 'underworld' confrontation, in 'A Picture of Otto' from *Birthday Letters*, of Hughes and Plath's father, cast as 'Owen' and 'his German', respectively. In the poem, the Hughesian persona claims that he was 'a whole myth too late to replace' Otto Plath in his daughter's Stygian 'heart's home'. As so often in Hughes, national and personal traumas strangely coalesce in the poem's conclusion. But the presence of two dead poets (Owen and Plath) further connect these lines to the more obviously poetic or creative trauma narrated in the prose piece 'The Burnt Fox'. O'Connor's reading of this key anecdote inevitably introduces the topic of Hughes's reiterated animosity to the

kind of 'lit. crit.' – associated by Hughes with Cambridge – that the scorched animal tells the young Hughes is 'destroying us', although O'Connor rightly cites Neil Roberts's and Neil Corcoran's critiques of Hughes's intemperate dismissal of F. R. Leavis as contradicted by the close reading practised in Hughes's own considerable critical output.

That said, 'The Burnt Fox' does point to a 'trauma' present throughout Hughes's career: 'the problem of language and "truth"'. Hughes's compulsive 'obsession with silence and truth' is intriguingly related by O'Connor to Cathy Caruth's seminal discussion of the 'crying wound' of trauma, which entails that the survivor bear witness to that which might seem unrepresentable in its affects. Hughes's tempered admiration for Laura Riding's renunciation of poetry, owing to its obfuscation, in her eyes, of 'truth', registers Hughes's awareness of this linguistic aporia. In contrast to Riding, of course, Hughes never abjured his artistic medium, instead resorting to writing strategies such as the 'super-ugly' language of *Crow*, using 'private trauma' (Plath's suicide) to explore social and more generally existential 'wounds', an approach, as O'Connor notes, equally central to the addresses to Plath's shade in *Birthday Letters*.

Following Caruth's post-structuralist theoretical premises, O'Connor reads Hughes's asymptotic trajectory to a non-linguistic 'truth' in terms of Lacan's postulation of the 'Real': that limit to the world lying 'beyond' human modes of signification. In Hughes's case, the Real is dubbed 'Nature', the Janus-faced quality of which noun ('inner' and 'outer') Hughes taps in a number of prose writings, such as the essays on 'Myth and Education', his important 1970 review of Max Nicholson's *The Environmental Revolution*, and *Shakespeare and the Goddess of Complete Being*. O'Connor's appropriation of Lacanian psychoanalysis extends work in this direction by Paul Bentley and Joanny Moulin; among his inflections to their ideas is the entirely apposite employment of Eric Santner's notion of 'creatureliness' to categorise Hughes's poetic negotiations with that which exists outside representation: 'an uncanny reaction to the ultimately unknowable unconscious of the other'. Another felicitous theoretical paradigm is introduced in the course of O'Connor's consideration of what must stand as Hughes's oddest exercise in literary criticism: his idiosyncratic reading of William Golding's *The Inheritors* in 'Baboons and Neanderthals'. O'Connor links Hughes's reiterated notion of mankind as exiled from Nature to Henri Lefebvre's interrogation of Romanticism in *Introduction to Modernity*, judging Hughes's account of the natural world to partake of that which Lefebvre identifies as Romanticism's paradoxical view of Nature as simultaneously a 'cultural utopia' and as the 'antithesis of culture'.

In a similar fashion to Paul Bentley's 1998 study, *The Poetry of Ted Hughes*, O'Connor shifts theoretical ground from chapter to chapter, 'introduc[ing] the appropriate theoretical material for the aspect of Hughes's work discussed therein'. As indicated, O'Connor's intellectual flexibility is generally successful in providing fresh and enlivening interpretations through the paradigms it brings to bear on Hughes's work. For example, O'Connor's analysis of Hughes's conception of England's national trauma in *Shakespeare and the Goddess of Complete Being* and elsewhere is brilliantly reinforced by the introduction of Slavoj Žižek's revisionary reading of Freud's concept of the primordial father, in *Totem and Taboo*, as the 'obscene father', who engenders Puritanical frigidness in the son and refigures and casts out femininity as 'the Traumatic Thing'. Likewise, O'Connor's interpretation of *Gaudete*, originally conceived as a film script, is greatly enriched by the nuanced application of cinematic theory and history: the narrative is indeed, in terms of content, a verbal equivalent to 'Folk Horror' films of the late 1960s and early '70s, such as *The Wicker Man*; and, formally, it is perfectly true that '*Gaudete* appropriates the shot as the structure of the poetic line'. The use of Deleuze's notion of the 'movement image', as in the filmic 'action image', is highly applicable to a text in which character is revealed almost exclusively through 'showing' rather than 'telling'.

However, the discussion of *Crow* in the context of existentialism does not move the debate very far from the conclusion reached by Keith Sagar in *The Art of Ted Hughes*, O'Connor rather flatly stating that, 'For [Sartre], responsibility begins with the self; this is true of Hughes's work, but this self also belongs to nature and is responsible for nature'. But such a banality is rare in this theoretically nimble book. More representative is the dexterity of this comment on 'The Thought-Fox': 'For [Hughes], the poet at work and the shy fox of a "poetic self" meet like two asymmetrical creatures on the surface of the strange mirror that is the poem'.

Alex Davis
University College Cork
a.davis@ucc.ie

Contributors

Ruth Crossley is currently the Head of Geography at Stonyhurst College, Lancashire. She is also a Director of the Elmet Trust, a Mytholmroyd charity organisation aimed at promoting the life and work of Ted Hughes in the Upper Calder Valley and beyond. She helps to organise and run the bi-annual Ted Hughes Festival and poetry competition. She is in the second year of her part-time PhD, *Mapping Elmet*, at the University of Huddersfield.

Alex Davis is Professor of English at University College Cork. He is the author of *A Broken Line: Denis Devlin and Irish Poetic Modernism* (2000) and co-editor, with Lee M. Jenkins, of *Locations of Literary Modernism: Region and Nation in British and American Modernist Poetry* (2000), *The Cambridge Companion to Modernist Poetry* (2007), and *A History of Modernist Poetry* (2015).

Steve Ely lectures in Creative Writing at the University of Huddersfield where he is Director of the Ted Hughes Network. He has published several books of poetry, including *Incendium Amoris* and *Bloody, Proud & Murderous Men, Adulterers & Enemies of God* (both 2017). His pamphlets *Zi-Zi Taah Taah Taah: The Song of the Willow Tit* and *Jubilate Messi* were published this year. He is the author of *Ted Hughes's South Yorkshire: Made in Mexborough* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

Peter Fydler recently retired from a career in Film & TV Marketing and hopes to spend more time reading, and writing about, twentieth-century prose and poetry. In addition to a shortened version of the paper in this journal (minus the sections on Captain Beefheart et al and Cave's fiction) he also presented a paper on mid-70s Plath criticism at the recent Letters, Words, and Fragments Conference at the University of Ulster in Belfast. He hopes to present a third paper at the next Ted Hughes Conference in Cardiff on the 'Genesis of Crow', focusing on Leonard Baskin's early 1960s Crow artworks and their undervalued influence on Ted Hughes's project. He graduated from the University of London in 1987 having completed a dissertation on the White Goddess Myth in the Poetry of Ted Hughes from 1967. He also likes to do a bit of cycling and skiing every now and again.

Robert Layton: BSc Anthropology (UCL) 1966, D.Phil (Sussex) 1971. Research interests: the anthropology of art (fieldwork in Australia 1974–1982 and in China 2005–2017), social change (fieldwork in rural France 1969, 1972, 1994), indigenous rights. I am also fascinated by the challenges of the translation of culture, a theme that runs throughout my research, and it was this that attracted me to Ted Hughes's participation in anthropology.

Kyra Piperides is a PhD student studying within the Department of English and Related Literature at the University of York. Her current research explores depictions of Yorkshire in twentieth- and twenty-first-century poetry, with a particular interest in the works of Philip Larkin and Ted Hughes. Kyra's work is funded by the White Rose College of the Arts and Humanities and the Arts and Humanities Research Council.

Felicity Powell is a PhD researcher in English Literature at the University of Sheffield. Her current research examines intersections of science and tricksters in twentieth-century poetry and beyond. Felicity is working in association with the Ted Hughes Network as part of the Ted Hughes Yorkshire Literary & Heritage Trail project.

Nicola Presley is Senior Lecturer in English Literature at Bath Spa University. She is currently completing her PhD on the intertextuality of popular culture in the work of Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton. She has research interests in women's poetry, digital literature, and post-war British and American Fiction. Nicola is the Assistant Editor of *Irish Studies Review* and New Media Manager for William Golding Limited.

James Underwood is Research Fellow in Modern and Contemporary Literature at the University of Huddersfield, where he is responsible for developing the Ted Hughes Network. He co-organised *Ted Hughes and Place*, the Network's first conference, in June 2017. His research interests are in twentieth-century poetry, writers' letters, and literary biography. He is currently completing a monograph on *Early Larkin*. He is a Director of the Elmet Trust, and was the recipient of a British Academy Rising Star Engagement Award for 2017–18.

Daniel Weston is a Senior Lecturer in English Literature at the University of Greenwich. His first monograph is *Contemporary Literary Landscapes: The*

Poetics of Experience (Ashgate, 2016). He has published work on modern and contemporary poetry, prose fiction and non-fiction, with particular emphasis on literary geographies and place writing.