

Symposium

Ted Hughes's Expressionism: Visionary Subjectivity

British Library, 96 Euston Rd, London NW1 2DB

Friday, 15th September, 2023

Room: Pigott Theatre, Knowledge Centre

Organisers: Steve Ely, Director of the Ted Hughes Network, University of Huddersfield and Helen Melody, Lead Curator for Contemporary Literary and Creative Archives, the British Library, funded by the Arts & Humanities Research Council.

Ted Hughes (1930-1998) is one of the most important English language poets of the twentieth century, the author of dozens of acclaimed works, including *Lupercal* (1960), *Crow* (1970) and *Birthday Letters* (1998). Hughes was a prolific poet, publishing 46 UK trade publications of his work (poetry, short stories, plays, translations, anthologies, criticism and works for children) and at least 88 limited or small press editions. The scale of Hughes's literary production is mirrored by the number of different genres he writes in, the different modes and registers he adopts, and the variety of content he draws upon. The encyclopaedic heterogeneity of Hughes's oeuvre presents a significant challenge for researchers seeking to present comprehensive, inclusive and discriminating accounts of his art.

This symposium is designed to explore and investigate the claim that Hughes's most characteristic, distinctive, and innovative work—wherein lies the weight of his claim to be regarded as a major poet and an internationally significant artist—is essentially *Expressionist*, characterised by a rejection of objectivity in representation in favour of a *Visionary Subjectivity* that draws on inner life and imagination to transform and distort content, deploying abstraction, typologies and symbols to shape presentations in an essentially didactic manner. Hughes's Expressionist mode manifests throughout his oeuvre and includes many of his most celebrated poems and books, including 'Wind', 'Mayday on Holderness', 'Pike', *Wodwo*, *Crow*, *Cave Birds*, *Gaudete*, *Remains of Elmet* and *Capriccio*. Many of his plays and stories—'Difficulties of a Bridegroom', 'The Wound', 'The Head'—are similarly Expressionist, having particular affinities with German Expressionism. Of course, not all Hughes's work is Expressionist by any means, and across his career he produced celebrated poetry that seems to represent a more objective—Naturalist, Realist—response to experience, in works including *Season Songs*, *Moortown Diaries*, *River* and *Birthday Letters*, for example.

Focusing on Hughes's art, method and technique in this way invites approaches to his work that go beyond the Anglophone literary-historical tradition and discuss his work in the context of European and international artists and movements in the arts—visual, dramatic and musical as well as literary—looking at affinity, influence and collaboration: one thinks immediately of Hughes's work with, and advocacy of, innovative, experimental and avant-garde artists in the Expressionist tradition, including the Eastern European poets Herbert, Holub, Pilinsky and Popa; the American artist Leonard Baskin; the dramatist, director and impresario Peter Brook and the photographer Fay Godwin.

The symposium is hosted by the British Library, which is a major centre for Hughes study with substantial collections relating to the poet that include archival, printed and audio-visual material. Researchers can learn more about all aspects of Hughes' work by exploring his large personal archive (Add MS 88918), which was acquired in 2008 and a number of smaller related collections including Hughes' correspondence with Olwyn Hughes, Leonard Baskin and Keith Sagar. Please see the [British Library website](#) for more information about its Hughes holdings.

Schedule

09.30-10.00	Coffee & Registration
10.00-10.10	Welcome, introduction, housekeeping; Steve Ely, University of Huddersfield & Helen Melody, British Library
10.10-10.50	Keynote Steve Ely, 'Ted Hughes's Expressionism: Visionary Subjectivity'
10.55-12.10	Panel One: Hughes & Expressionism - Visual Art & Music Sophia Garnett: 'Ted Hughes's Capriccio and the Therapeutic Promise of Absolute Music' David Hackbridge Johnson: 'Ted Hughes & Expressionistic Masks' Mark Wormald: Hughes & Barrie Cooke: 'Ted Hughes, Barrie Cooke & empathic looking'
12.10-01.10	Lunch (speakers only)
01.10-02.45	Panel Two: Hughes & Expressionism - Drama Kieran Cashell: 'Linguistic Carnality: Visionary Aspects in the Poetry of Ted Hughes' Peter Fydlar: 'The Cabinet of Dr. Edward James Hughes' Simon Jenner: 'Ted Hughes, Peter Brook, Orghast and Bulorgha' Adam Strickson: 'Crow and the Little Red Fish'
02.45-03.15	Break
03.15-04.30	Panel Three: Hughes & Expressionism – Poetry Tara Bergin: 'Ted Hughes, János Pilinszky and <i>Modern Poetry in Translation</i> ' James Keery: 'Ted Hughes's 'Mayday on Holderness' and Sylvia Plath's 'Poem for a Birthday': the emergence of Expressionism at Yaddo' Ann Skea: 'An Alchemy': Ted Hughes and Shakespeare'
04.30-4.40	Comfort Break
4.40-5.00	Plenary

Abstracts & Speaker Biographies

Keynote: Steve Ely, 'Ted Hughes's Expressionism: Visionary Subjectivity'

Over a fifty-year (1946-1998) writing career, Ted Hughes wrote in a diversity of genres (poems, plays, stories, libretti) and within that range adopted a variety of styles, modes and registers that have been variously taxonomised as mythic, elegiac, narrative, autobiographical, confessional, devotional, formal and so on. The range of content Hughes drew on and the themes he addressed embody a similar catholicity. The encyclopaedic heterogeneity of Hughes's outputs has provoked scholarly responses as varied as the work itself, but within that richness and plurality there is sometimes a sense that the essential Hughes is missing—what is it that is truly distinctive about Hughes's work, which marks him out as an internationally significant poet and artist? Where does his main achievement lie? This paper attempts to answer those questions by identifying Hughes's dominant mode as Expressionist and arguing that his best, most characteristic and most important work is characterised by the visionary subjectivity typical of Expressionism. The paper draws on artistic production and relevant criticism from painting, sculpture, drama, music and architecture—as well as literature—to develop an cross-disciplinary anatomy of the key elements of Expressionism to inform a general working definition of the term, which will be used, alongside an application of Raymond Williams' categories emergent, dominant and residual (*Marxism & Literature*, 1977) to track the development of the Expressionist mode across Hughes's oeuvre, exemplifying the argument with references to 'Wind', 'Thrushes', 'The Howling of Wolves', 'Snow' and 'Anniversary'. In doing so, the paper not only identifies Expressionism as Hughes's dominant mode, but enables a more precise identification of his secondary modes, in the process challenging the mythic/elegiac binary that has recently emerged in Hughes studies and providing a new understanding of the nature of some of Hughes's more 'difficult' poems and sequences of the 1970s.

Steve Ely teaches Creative Writing at the University of Huddersfield, where he is Director of the Ted Hughes Network. He has written several articles and book chapters on Hughes, and a monograph giving an account of Hughes's poetic formation, *Ted Hughes's South Yorkshire: Made in Mexborough* (Palgrave, 2023). He's also written a novel and ten books or pamphlets of poetry, most recently *Lives of British Shrews* (Broken Sleep, 2023), *The European Eel* (Longbarrow Press, 2021) and *Lectio Violant* (Shearsman, 2021). Two further books, *Eely* (Longbarrow Press) and *Orasaigh* (Broken Sleep) are forthcoming later this year and in late 2024, respectively. He is the co-organiser of this conference, which is part of an AHRC-funded research project the main output of which will be a monograph, *Ted Hughes's Expressionism: Visionary Subjectivity*, currently scheduled to be published in late 2025 by Shearsman Books.

Panel One: Hughes & Expressionism - Visual Art & Music

Sophia Garnett: 'Ted Hughes's *Capriccio* and the Therapeutic Promise of Absolute Music'

This paper explores *Capriccio* (1990), Ted Hughes' and Leonard Baskin's luxury folio book. I propose that the concept of 'absolute music,' theorised by Richard Wagner in an 1870 essay on Beethoven's late sonatas, is a key blueprint underlying *Capriccio*. Wagner, an important precursor to the expressionist innovators of the Second Viennese School, defines absolute music as a uniquely self-referential form that offers access to pure emotion unmediated by individual will. By enabling in a suffering subject an 'apprehension of the universal,' absolute music can lift him out of his particular experience, providing cathartic release. The form is exemplified for Wagner in Beethoven's *Opus 131 in C# Minor*—the title of a crucial *Capriccio* poem in which the central female character vainly hopes that listening to *Opus 131* will offer 'consolation, prayer, transcendence,' and disconnect her from her 'pain centre.' Principally, I explore how the affective illustrations and materiality of *Capriccio*'s luxury edition monumentalise and mythologise the grief of the central poet-character, ostensibly raising it from the personal to the universal, in an effort to emulate the healing effect of 'absolute music.' Hughes' expressionist subjectivity in *Capriccio*, then, might in fact be understood as an unconsummated attempt at objectivity—to reach transcendence by elevating the concerns of the individual to the archetypal. With a musical lens, I conclude, we can identify an earnest attempt on the part of the poet to seek emotional relief that is often overlooked in scholarship in lieu of a focus on his cynical self-exculpatory efforts.

Sophia Garnett obtained her Master's degree in English from the University of Oxford. She is interested in authors' representations of, and struggles with, their artistic processes, especially in twentieth-century poetry and contemporary autofiction.

David Hackbridge Johnson: 'Ted Hughes & Expressionistic Masks'

Taking cues from the expressive imagery of animals drawn from individual poems by Ted Hughes, and the bifurcation of personality seen in his *Gaudete*, this paper will examine the work of the poet through the lens of both German *Expressionismus* as evinced by the paintings of Franz Marc, and the idea of alienated selves stemming from the *Doppelgänger* concept as laid out in the work of Jean Paul and its French counterpart in Gérard de Nerval. Looking at the imagery of birds as avatars of malevolence in the paintings of Max Beckmann the paper posits an 'anti-ornithology' where birds leave an Edenic world and enter the world of Ted Hughes' *Crow*. Precursors of *Crow* are found in both Edgar Allan Poe and the *Lieder* of Franz Schubert where bird-agency touches of the Romantic split between man and nature where the former is isolated from a sense of belonging to the latter. How does this examination lead to a view about Hughes as a wearer of masks, both animal and human, as being a highly expressive motor in the context of his poetics?

David Hackbridge Johnson was born in Carshalton, England. Among his musical works there are 15 Symphonies, 10 String Quartets, 19 Piano Sonatas, 4 Violin and Piano Sonatas, and many vocal works. His music has been recorded by the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and the Royal Scottish National Orchestra. He has written three operas, the second of which, *Blaze of Glory!* was recently performed by Welsh National Opera. As a writer he has had essays and poems published in *The Guardian*, *The Fortnightly Review*, *Shearsman Magazine*, *The High Window*, *PN Review* and the *Haverqal Brian Society Newsletter*. He lives in Tooting, Southwest London.

Mark Wormald: 'Ted Hughes, Barrie Cooke & empathic looking'

In an interview for 2007 television documentary on the landscape tradition in Irish painting, the British-born artist and fisherman Barrie Cooke (2031-2014), hailed on his death as Ireland's leading abstract expressionist, and for his deep friendship with poets Ted Hughes, John Montague and Seamus Heaney, recounted an anecdote that he attributed to Stephen Spender about two men who go up the same mountain and return, having seen exactly the same thing, but one horrified and alienated by the thunder storm, the other inspired. Cooke commented: 'Inspiration does exist, and you've got to be on the top of the mountain to be ready for it, when it happens. And empathy for me is the essence of it, and romanticism is not a dirty word: it is the purest sort of empathy.' I will explore the sites of Cooke's romanticism, the roots of his commitment to empathic looking, which he learned at Oskar Kokoschka's *School of Seeing* in the mid-1950s, and his application of what he learned there in pursuit of those rare moments when seeing became so intense that the artist forgets he is painting, and the sites and moments of such seeing that he shared with Ted Hughes. Friends since 1958, Cooke and Hughes are best known, and rightly, as fishing friends, but they shared an intensity of seeing and of subjective response to the natural world, and in particular to the world of water, that is truly expressionist, if only occasionally abstract.

Mark Wormald has been a Fellow and College Lecturer in English at Pembroke College Cambridge since 1992. He is the author of *The Catch: Fishing for Ted Hughes* (Bloomsbury, 2022), has co-edited two collections of essays on Ted Hughes, and is Chair of the Ted Hughes Society. Mark is now writing *Casting and Gathering: a painter and some poets*, for publication in 2025.

Panel Two: Hughes & Expressionism – Drama

Kieran Cashell: 'Linguistic Carnality: Visionary Aspects in the Poetry of Ted Hughes'

In his epic *Jerusalem* (2017) Alan Moore describes English as a 'visionary language.' Indicating a counter-current that extends from Wycliffe's Biblical translations and runs, through John Bunyan and John Clare, against the literary mainstream, to achieve a kind of apotheosis in the synaesthetic books of William Blake, this visionary heritage, for Moore, constitutes 'part of a great insurrectionary tradition, a burning stream of words ... an apocalyptic narrative.' In this paper, I seek to situate the work of Ted Hughes in this visionary countertradition. Rather than focusing on his more well-known poetic catalogue for this study, however, I examine what may be regarded as a peripheral contribution: his translation of Seneca's *Oedipus* (1968). Siphoned off Seneca's Latin with the assistance of his 'Victorian crib,' Hughes's English in *Oedipus* is wrung and wrought, like Moore's burning stream, into an incantatory and oracular flux of sibylline syntax, the unpunctuated violence of which becomes, at times, nauseating in its visceral physicality. Hughes's 'adaptation' was commissioned by experimental dramaturge Peter Brook (then visiting director at the National Theatre Company) who engaged the poet in 1967 to rework the original rendering by David Turner into something more conducive to his theatrical vision. Hughes was in complete support of Brook's concept for Seneca's tragedy: that the restrained, austere performance would provide framing conditions for the play's 'ritual possibilities' to be realised linguistically. With John Gielgud and Irene Worth taking the lead roles in Brook's production and with the 30-plus chorus (distributed around the auditorium), voice was to be the living medium of ritualistic revelation – the chthonic riddling of Hughes's polyphonic text 'exorcising the plague' directly through the players' orphic mouths.

Kieran Cashell lectures in the Limerick School of Art and Design: Technological University of the Shannon (TUS) in Ireland. He is the author of *Photographic Realism: The Art of Richard Billingham* (Bloomsbury, 2020) and *Aftershock: The Ethics of Contemporary Transgressive Art* (I.B. Tauris, 2009).

Peter Fydler: 'The Cabinet of Dr. Edward James Hughes'

This paper will explore the links between German Expressionist Cinema and Theatre (particularly *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* (1920) and plays directed by Max Reinhardt in Berlin up to 1930) and Ted Hughes' plays of the early 1960s, all of which seem to share the Expressionist movement's key preoccupations: a focus on setting and atmosphere; a preference for "images of the mind"; an apparently Germanic obsession with death; an overriding interest in dualism; a desire to "eliminate nature"; a drive away from objective realism to subjective abstraction; and a dramatic portrayal of "becoming" rather than just "being". The paper will pay particular attention to Ted Hughes' unpublished play "Difficulties of a Bridegroom" which exists as a BBC Typescript in the Al Alvarez Collection at the British Library, "Eat Crow" which was only ever published as a rare, privately printed, Limited Edition (also in the British Library), "House of Aries", which is only available via fragments published in hard-to-find American Literary Magazines, and the original version of *The Wound*, broadcast by the BBC in 1962 (and archived at the British Library) and then subsequently updated to fit the narrative of *Wodwo* in 1967. It will also take a look at Ted Hughes' screenplay from 1964 which became the main narrative of *Gaudete* (1977) and which seemed to move away from the conventions of German Expressionism to the more familiar tropes of English Folk Horror, and the four sections of dialogue that he added to his translation of Seneca's *Oedipus* in 1969.

Peter Fydler is a retired Media Executive whose interest in film stems from 12 years at the British Film Institute (2005-17) and whose interest in Ted Hughes stems from the actions of an errant English Teacher in the early 1980s.

Simon Jenner: 'Ted Hughes, Peter Brook, Orghast and Bulorgha'

Orghast, Ted Hughes' dramatic collaboration with Peter Brook for the 1971 Shiraz-Persepolis Festival, provided him with conceptual liberation and a further vehicle to continue his career-long engagement with myth. Drawing on A.C. Smith's account of the performance under the extraordinary conditions Shah-era Iran, Helfer and Loney's *Peter Brook: Oxford to Orghast* this paper treats of both traces and legacy of this extraordinary project.

Brook's international reputation, prestige and leadership of the International Centre for Theatre Research necessarily made him the dominant partner in the Hughes/Brook relationship. Through Brook, Hughes was exposed to ideas originating with the European avant garde, including Brecht's 'Epic Theatre' and Antonin Artaud's 'Theatre of Cruelty'. In collaboration with Brook and his international team of actors, Hughes developed, via Aeschylus, Seneca and Calderon, the Prometheus myth 'from Zeus to Jupiter'. The paper explores the influence of Brook on Hughes: Hughes states in 1971, 'The idea was to build up a small range of sounds which we could then organize rhythmically. I was interested in the possibilities of a language of tones and sounds, without specific conceptual or perceptual meaning.' This is close to Brook's, 'A word does not start as a word—it is an end product which begins as an impulse, stimulated by attitude and behaviour which dictate the need for expression.'

For *Orghast*, Hughes created a new language with a 2,000-word lexicon. The hieratic drama was performed by an international cast and in the spectacular, UNESCO-listed setting of Persepolis.

'Orghast aims', Tom Stoppard asserted, 'to be a leveller of audiences by appealing not to semantic athleticism but to the instinctive recognition of a 'mental state' within a sound. Hughes asserts that he tried to create a language 'purged of the haphazard associations of English'. Smith writes: 'Brook described Hughes's structure for Orghast as 'the most labyrinthine work since Ulysses'- which should give readers some insight into as to what an unusual piece this was (if Brook says something is labyrinthine ...)' For Hughes too this was vital. Not just a poem but language sited on that verge of subconscious modes he deemed necessary for creation. Smith asserts it took music critic Andrew Porter, to understand 'what was going on better than many of the drama critics...' The paper reveals one of the unintended consequences of manufacturing a lexicon in the meaning of his coinage 'Bulorgha' - and why the African members of the ensemble laughed.

Simon Jenner's poetry collections include *About Bloody Time* (2006), *Wrong Evenings* (2011), *Two for Joy* (2013) and *Winstanley* (2021). Other achievements and publications include: three monologues included in *The Other 1%* (2019); won London Playwrights Workshop mentorships twice (2022, 2023); won London Playwrights Workshop playwriting competition with *Methods of Killing Your Leader* (2020) and *Charity* (2023); Poet in the City Residency, Hackney, 2014; commended National Poetry Competition, 2016. Reviews in *Tears in the Fence* (poetry) and (drama reviews/related books) on *FringeReview* and *Plays International* and *Europe*; a biography of Lionel Johnson is forthcoming.

Adam Strickson: 'Crow and the Little Red Fish'

Little red fish
Little fish red
With a triple edged knife I'll cut you dead...

From, 'Little Red Fish', Oskar Kokoschka.

This paper will be an investigation of the connections between the early vocal and physical language of Expressionist theatre (1909-1919) and the use of language and forms of address in Hughes' *Crow* (1972). Particular reference will be made to Oskar Kokoschka's work often called the first Expressionist play, *Murder, the Women's Hope* (1909) prompted by personal trauma, a searing indictment of the relationship between men and women that expresses his view of gender relations as a battle. The paper will look at the connection between Hughes' trauma of grief and pain in aftermath of Sylvia Plath's suicide that partly led to the formation of the language and content of *Crow* and the ideas around language and non-realist performance pursued in early Expressionism before and during World War I, the horror of which Hughes' also drew on in his work through the experience of his family. The staccato words, cries, screams and sometimes rhapsodic diction of *Crow* will be examined in the light of early Expressionist precursors, exploring the links between personal trauma and the poetic, often dramatic, language that can emerge. The live presentation of the paper will integrate performances of texts from early Expressionism and *Crow*, exploring the relationship between dynamics, breath, timbre, pace and volume in the performance of these texts, attempting to capture something of their ritualistic power.

Dr Adam Strickson is a theatre director, poet, librettist and Senior Teaching Fellow in Theatre and Writing at the University of Leeds. He has spent over 30 years working in theatre and visual arts. Adam was the artistic director of the intercultural Chol Theatre for 13 years, and was lead artist for the *imove* Olympic cultural project Wingbeats. He has published 3 poetry collections and contributed articles to journals on subjects ranging from Japanese cinema to Greek tragedy. He completed his PhD, 'The librettist's adaptation of source in collaboration

with the composer', in June 2014, a collaboration between the University of Leeds and Opera North. He is currently working as an artist with Balbir Singh Dance Company on 'Unmasking Pain' and 6 million+ Charitable Trust, facilitating creative arts using writing, visual arts and music.

Panel Three: Hughes & Expressionism – Poetry

Tara Bergin: 'The Good Actor: Ted Hughes, János Pilinszky and Modern Poetry in Translation'

'Remember, you will not be putting it into the third person: you will have to say I was beaten; my child was taken away from me.' These words were spoken at a seminar on interpreting for victims of torture that I attended many years ago as a PhD student. I wrote them down in my notebook, not quite knowing how I might come to apply them to my research, but aware of their power. It was only later that I came to understand their significance, which lay both in the interpreter's use of the first person, and the urgent nature of the exchange. I saw here a connection with Hughes's reaction to the post-war poetry coming out of Eastern and Central Europe, which he described as being 'purged of rhetoric', and there was also a connection with Hughes's preference, as translator and editor, for 'literalness as a first principle'. Like the interpreter's, the translator's role was not to mediate or refine, but rather to convey the speaker's testimony with total accuracy and directness. In this talk I will look at Hughes's translations of the Hungarian post-Holocaust poet János Pilinszky, focusing on Hughes's attraction to the 'simple helpless accuracy' of the literal crib. I will reflect on the ways in which considering this aspect of Hughes's work in the context of Expressionism provides a useful route into understanding his translation method, and suggest that the effect of translation resulted in Hughes's recognition of a new mode of poetic expression.

Tara Bergin wrote her PhD thesis on the topic of Ted Hughes's translations of János Pilinszky and has since spoken and published widely on the subject of poetic translation and creativity, including papers delivered at universities in Poland, Hungary and Russia; collaborative articles with Judit Mudriczki (*Modern Poetry in Translation*) and Marina Tsvetkova (*Translation and Literature*), and chapters in *Ted Hughes in Context* (CUP) and *Translating Holocaust Literature* (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht). Tara teaches in the creative writing department at Newcastle University. She is the author of three collections of poetry published by Carcanet Press, the most recent of which is *Savage Tales* (2022).

James Keery: 'Ted Hughes's 'Mayday on Holderness' and Sylvia Plath's 'Poem for a Birthday': the emergence of Expressionism at Yaddo'

My theme is the simultaneous emergence of an Expressionist style in 'Mayday on Holderness' by Ted Hughes and 'Poem for a Birthday' by Sylvia Plath, at Yaddo in the autumn of 1959. It is only recently that 'Mayday', usually considered an early poem, has been assigned to Yaddo, alongside 'Things Present'. The influence of Roethke on both poets at this point is not in question, but the deeper influence of Dylan Thomas has been overlooked. Plath's often-quoted phrase – 'Roethke's but my own' – refers to the first of the poems of *Poem for a Birthday*. The sequence as a whole is named after Thomas's 'Poem for His Birthday' (the title of Plath's poem in draft was 'Poem for Her Birthday'), both of which fell on October 27 – a key date at Yaddo. Hughes's 'Urn Burial' and 'Fire-Eater', published together in the *Sewanee Review* in the spring of 1960, and possibly also assignable to Yaddo, complete a quartet by Hughes in which the influence of Thomas is transmuted into an Expressionist

style as proleptic of Plath's later work as his own. The reciprocity between their Yaddo poems extends even to interchangeable lines: 'Flowerlike, I loved nothing' sounds more like Plath than Hughes; 'I must swallow it all' more like Hughes than Plath. Her favourite poem in *Lupercal*, 'Fire-Eater' could be inserted straight into her sequence, and would not be out of place in *Ariel*. It also foreshadows the 'blood-jet autobiographical truth' and the shamanistic vision 'as apocalyptic as Blake's' of *Shakespeare and the Goddess of Complete Being*.

Jim Keery lives in Culcheth with his wife Julie and teaches English in Wigan. He has published a collection of poems, *That Stranger, The Blues* (Carcanet: 1996). He edited the game-changing *Apocalypse* (Carcanet: 2020) an anthology of mid-century visionary modernist poetry, and the *Collected Poems* (Carcanet: 2011) of the Scottish poet Burns Singer.

Ann Skea: "An Alchemy": Ted Hughes and Shakespeare'

In 1972/3 Ted Hughes was invited to contribute to an anthology of poems which would be published by The Globe Theater Trust as a limited edition for Shakespeare's birthday on April 23rd, 1973. 'An Alchemy' was the poem Hughes wrote for this, knowing that it was likely to be read mostly by people familiar with Shakespeare's work. The structure of the poem, the allusive naming of Shakespeare's characters, the unpunctuated linkages of lines, and the often inexplicable connection between characters from different plays, all leave the reader to interpret the poem's meaning. The link with Alchemy is never explained. All of this has the characteristic pattern of expressionism. Alchemy, too, is an expressionist art. Whether used for turning lead into gold, or, as Hughes used it in *Cave Birds: An Alchemical Cave Drama*, for progressively purifying the 'gross matter' of human nature to achieve Spiritual 'gold', its secrets are never objectively revealed. Its active agents are disguised in symbols, it processes hidden in poetry, story or drama. 'An Alchemy', takes the form of an alchemical process. In it Hughes seeks to demonstrate what he believed to be the alchemical nature of Shakespeare's work. Almost twenty years later he would explain this in detail in *Shakespeare and the Goddess of Complete Being*. In this paper, I explore just one part of 'An Alchemy' to show the alchemical nature of the poem, and how, in its structure, form and imagery, Hughes sought to convey the alchemical nature of Shakespeare's works.

Dr Ann Skea is an independent scholar, author of *Ted Hughes: The Poetic Quest* (UNE Press, 1994). Her Ted Hughes webpages, at: <http://ann.skea.com/THHome.htm> are archived by the British Library and her extensive writing about Hughes's work is internationally published. She first met Ted Hughes in 1992; and in 1995 he invited her to stay at Moortown Farm to help him collate his archive of manuscripts, a task he ultimately completed himself, having found things he thought lost and things he "wanted no-one else to see". She and Hughes remained friends and met and corresponded until his death in 1998. In 2016 she was elected as an Associate Scholar of Pembroke College, Cambridge University.