

Ted Hughes, Ecology and the Arts

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*“We have no problem in becoming aware that we are destroying our planet and our life on it. Our problem is the very great difficulty of becoming aware in such a way that we do something about it”*¹

In 1992, *The Observer Magazine* published the winning photographs from a United Nations competition entitled ‘Your World’. In a long essay accompanying the photographs, Ted Hughes, who was then Poet Laureate of Great Britain, wrote passionately about the injured earth and the difficulties we have in addressing the problem. He told of his own efforts to alert government bodies to the evidence from extensive, well-researched scientific surveys showing, for example, the dangerous bacterial pollution of estuary waters which were a popular holiday destination. These particular waters had been awarded a Class A classification by the Regional Water Authority, “*meaning perfectly OK and needing no further attention*”². Government guidelines for assessing water quality, he discovered, omitted an assessment of bacterial pollution, thereby suggesting it was irrelevant.

In this essay, Hughes went on to recall a remark made by Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, which in 1986 resulted in the Duke convening a meeting in Assisi of leaders of the world’s religions. The purpose of the meeting was, specifically, to discuss ways in which environmental issues could be incorporated into religious teachings around the world. The Duke had also noted that all our urgent talk about environmental problems seems to get us nowhere. That in spite of all the glossy brochures, political debate and demands for more research, nothing actually changed the way we live, and “*What is needed is a new kind of language that goes straight to the heart and soul and changes things there*”³. Art, the Duke suggested, might be one possible way to achieve this.

In response to Prince Philip’s idea, Arts for Nature was founded. And in 1990, following on from this, Ted Hughes was instrumental in founding the international Sacred Earth Drama Trust “*which simply collects, by any means, new, short, ultra-imaginative dramas*”⁴ - “*plays for people of all ages, based on*

¹ Ted Hughes, ‘Foreword’ in *Sacred Earth Dramas*, Faber, 1993, p. vii.

² Ted Hughes, ‘Your World’, *The Observer Magazine*, 29 November 1992, pp. 23-39.

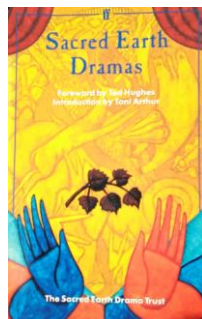
³ Hughes, op.cit., p.39.

⁴ Hughes, op.cit., p.39.

*environmental themes*⁵. These plays were intended to be used in schools and other places of learning, where they would encourage young people to become fully involved in environmental issues.

A competition was organized inviting playwrights to submit plays that “*updated, reshaped and retold an existing religious or mythological story with particular relevance to the natural world today, and how we should live in it*”⁶. In a letter to Matthew Evans, who was at that time Chairman and Managing Director of the publishers, Faber & Faber, Hughes described the genesis of this idea and emphasised “*the strange fact that adults are more affected and moved by children’s drama, which they watch through the eyes of their children, than they are by adult drama, which they watch through their visors*”. He urged Matthew to “*Leap aboard*” and publish the winning plays which “*the whole world will be performing*”, and cheekily suggested “*A penny a copy to me for the idea, maybe*”⁷.

So, in 1993, the first collection of Sacred Earth Dramas was published by Faber & Faber. It included plays written by young people from England, Switzerland, Vanuatu, Thailand and New Zealand. One play came from a Swiss School group and one from a church Youth Group in Scotland. Ted Hughes wrote a Foreword outlining the origin and aims of the Sacred Earth Drama Trust; and Toni Arthur (theatre director, playwright, folk-singer and presenter of children’s TV programmes) wrote the Introduction describing oral-traditions of story-telling, noting the common themes of “*the mystery of being and how to continue that being*”, and ending with the hope that “*If we act together we can save the world*”⁸.



In 2001, at an Arts for Nature function honouring the work of the late Madam Ruhiyih Rabbani, a dignitary of the Baha’i faith and a long-time supporter of Arts for Nature, Prince Philip again spoke of the importance of being emotionally involved in environmental issues. Arts for Nature still exists and is actively supported by the Duke, but the Sacred Earth Drama Trust was removed from the Open Charities Register in August 2009 and marked as no longer operating.

⁵ Hughes, *Sacred Earth Dramas*, p.vii.

⁶ *ibid.*, Hughes, p. ix.

⁷ Reid, C.(ed), *Letters of Ted Hughes*, Faber, 2007, pp. 576-7.

⁸ Hughes, *Sacred Earth Dramas*, pp. ix-xii.

As well as being involved in such projects as the Sacred Earth Drama Trust and the Worldwide Fund for Nature, Ted Hughes worked constantly to alert political and corporate bodies to environmental problems and to change negative policies in regard to them. Most of all, he strove to ensure that all his work - his poetry, prose, drama, art and publishing enterprises, all of which chart his negotiations with the Triple Goddess who is Nature and the Goddess of Complete Being, was healing, not just for himself (as *Birthday Letters* clearly was) but also for his readers and, thus, for the world.

Hughes believed strongly in the power of the imagination to sway our emotions and influence our behaviour. He believed, too, in the power of symbols to channel universal energies (both good and bad) into the world. And he knew that human beings, from the earliest times, had used poetry, music and dance in hunting and in mystical rituals to foster their interactions with nature and the world of the spirit. Introducing a recording of some of his poems in 1978, he said:

*Poetry is traditionally supposed to be magical. This use of the word 'magical' is a technical one. Magic is a system of practical techniques invented spontaneously by Mankind from the earliest ages right down to our own - is one way of making things happen the way you want them to happen...In this respect, poetry has always been held in particular regard as an agent for cursing or blessing, and for manipulating Man's fate.*⁹

He was well aware that in the British Bardic tradition poetry was used in this way and that prohibitions against the use of satires or lampoons existed in Britain until about 600 years ago. The magical power of the Bard as a 'weaver of spells' - one whose words influenced those who heard them - has always been widely acknowledged so, for Hughes, poetry became one way of "*making things happen the way [he] wanted them to happen*" and his constant aim was to influence the way we see the world. He strove to learn how best to use his creative skills to channel the Goddess's energies into our world and change the way we see it and the way we respond to it. To this end, he experimented with many different processes and techniques, some from the long traditions of poetry and drama, and some based on his extensive knowledge of ancient practices in mysticism and occult magic¹⁰.

In his early poetry, Hughes sought to balance the wholly rational, analytical way of viewing the world by setting it against vivid poems which captured the strength and beauty of nature. As in 'Egg-Head' he chose images of "*A leaf's otherness / the whaled monstered sea-bottom, eagled peaks / And stars that hang over hurtling endlessness*" to set against the "*lucid sophistries*", "*staturing 'I am'*" and

⁹ Hughes, *The Critical Forum Series*, Norwich Tapes, 1978. The full transcript of this introduction can be found at <http://ann.skea.com/CriticalForum.htm>.

¹⁰ Skea, A. 'Ted Hughes and the British Bardic Tradition', <http://ann.skea.com/cairo.htm>.

“Braggart-browed complacency” of his egg-head protagonist¹¹. He wrote of nature’s endless cycle of death and renewal; of “*Time and a world / Too old to alter*”¹² and of the way “*Time in the sea eats its tail, thrives*”¹³. In the final poem of *Lupercal*, a collection of poems which embody the Goddess in her triple aspects of lover, wife and crone, he conjured the fecund creative energies of the “*Maker of the world*” to “*Touch this frozen one*”¹⁴. And in ‘Littleblood’, which was the final poem of *Crow*, he creates his own magical charm. Three times¹⁵ he calls “*O littleblood*”. He acknowledges this little elemental creature which is “*Reaping the wind and threshing the stones*”, “*Dancing with a gnat’s feet / With an elephant’s nose with a crocodile’s tail*” and “*Sucking death’s mouldy tits*”, and he begs it to “*Sit on my finger, sing in my ear*”¹⁶.

In *Cave Birds: An Alchemical Cave Drama*, Hughes turned to the ancient belief in the transmuting power of Alchemy in order to take his readers, step-by-step, through a healing, alchemical process. Alchemy was always a spiritual as well as a practical art. At a surface level it seems to deal with an arcane chemical process designed to turn lead into gold by subjecting it to repeated heating, distillation, solution and crystallisation. At a deeper metaphorical level it connects heaven and earth and describes and enacts the spiritual purification of the human individual and the eventual release of the Soul. There is a third level, too, since ancient alchemical texts, which hid their secrets in symbols and images of strange creatures, were often written as poems telling imaginative stories about dragons, pelicans, green lions, basilisks, hermaphrodite humans and all-devouring blacker-than-black crows.

Inspired by *The Conference of the Birds*, a 12th century fable by the Persian Sufi and mystic, Farid-ud-Din Attar, and by some magnificently evocative artworks by Leonard Baskin, Hughes wrote his own alchemical drama. In *Cave Birds*, Baskin’s creatures are half-bird half-human, and Hughes’ poems enact a trial in which a bird-being who displays blindness and arrogance toward the world and his place in it is

¹¹ Hughes, ‘Egg-Head’, *Ted Hughes Collected Poems*, Keegan, P.(ed), Faber, p.33.

¹² *ibid.*, ‘Cat and Mouse’, p.75.

¹³ *ibid.*, ‘Relic’ p.78.

¹⁴ *ibid.*, ‘Lupercalia’, pp.87-9.

¹⁵ Three is an important number in magical rituals as Shakespeare clearly knew. In Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* the three witches circle their cauldron repeating three times “*double, double toil and trouble / fire burn and cauldron bubble*” as they create their evil charm. And, as The Bellman in Lewis Carroll’s “Hunting of the Snark” says: “*What I tell you three times is true*” (<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/43909/the-hunting-of-the-snark>).

¹⁶ *Ted Hughes Collected Poems*, ‘Littleblood’ p. 258.

summoned to account. This “*imbecile innocent*”¹⁷ (who is the alchemical base matter) undergoes trial, condemnation, death, and eventual rebirth in a dramatic sequence which metaphorically re-enacts the Alchemical process of repeated purification until the pure alchemical gold of spiritual renewal is achieved.

This “*stare-boned mule of a man*”¹⁸ who in his “*childhood’s / Nursery picture*” dreamed that he “*rode the wheel of the galaxy*”¹⁹ and, so, has viewed the world’s everyday horrors with impunity, is summoned before a court of grotesque bird-beings, interrogated, judged and condemned. Within him is his soul, his “*protector*”, the softer female half of himself which is hidden behind his hard, unfeeling “*bronze image*”²⁰. He undergoes death and dismemberment, faces new purifying trials and challenges, is reunited with the female half of his self, and finally the “*mummy grain*”, the “*ship of flowers*” the “*egg-stone*” of purified spirit is reborn and “*a staggering thing / Fired with rainbows, raw with cringing heat / Blinks at the source*”²¹. In the final poem, ‘*the risen*’, this ‘*Liberated Soul*’, which is seen in Baskin’s accompanying artwork as a magnificent falcon, is “*filling the doorway / In the shell of earth*” before he “*lifts wings*” to “*slip behind the world’s brow*”. And “*When he soars, his shape // Is a cross, eaten by light / On the Creator’s face*”²².

In the original *Cave Birds* publications (the first of which was a limited edition published by Scolar Press in 1975) Baskin’s stunning black-and-white images accompany Hughes’ poems page-by-page and the reader is imaginatively immersed, step-by-step, in the whole alchemical process. This combination of poetry, drama, and art beautifully illustrates Prince Philip’s contention that the arts are more moving and effective than scientific surveys and ecological argument, although a balance of each is necessary.

Two more illustrated books followed *Cave Birds*, each combining a sequence of Hughes’ poems with artworks by a different artist, Both had an underlying alchemical healing purpose, this time dealing

¹⁷ *ibid.*, ‘In these fading moments...’ p. 423

¹⁸ *ibid.*, ‘The Interrogator’ p. 421.

¹⁹ *ibid.*, ‘The scream’, p. 419.

²⁰ *ibid.*, ‘The Summoner’ p. 420.

²¹ *ibid.*, ‘The Owl Flower’, p. 438.

²² *ibid.*, ‘the risen’, p. 439. ‘The Liberated’ was an early title for this poem, the manuscript draft of which can be seen in the *Cave Birds* archive at Exeter University, England. A list of early titles can be found in Keith Sagar, *The Art of Ted Hughes*, Cambridge University Press, 1978, p.243. A detailed analysis of the alchemical basis of *Cave Birds*, with discussion of each poem, can be read in Ann Skea, *The Poetic Quest*, University of New England Press 1994, pp. 1-117.

not just with the egg-headed, environmentally blind individual, as in *Cave Birds*, but with a dying society and a polluted land. *Remains of Elmet*²³ combined Hughes' poems with beautifully evocative photographs by Fay Godwin. And in *River*²⁴, Hughes, who was a passionate fisherman, collaborated with photographer and fellow fisherman, Peter Keen, to produce a sequence which both describes and re-enacts the life of a river and the creatures which live in it, in particular, the salmon. Because of the common alchemical theme of these three books, Faber published them together, unillustrated, in 1993 as *Three Books*²⁵.

Ecology, in *Remains of Elmet*, is an essential part of Hughes' depiction of a society and landscape which have been drastically changed by industrial progress. Throughout the sequence, the regenerative power of nature is set against the decay and pollution caused by human intervention. "First Mills", writes Hughes, "and steep wet cobbles / Then cenotaphs"²⁶. Yet, "The Canal's Drowning Black / Bred wild leopards": Loach "With little cupid mouths"²⁷ thrived in the polluted canal-waters "between the tyres, and under the tortured axles"²⁸ of lorries carrying industrial loads to and from the local mills. Where Fay Godwin's photograph shows an abandoned factory chimney rising from a tangle of vegetation, Hughes writes that "Brave dreams and their mortgaged walls are let rot in the rain" and "Before these chimneys can flower again / They must fall into the only future, into earth"²⁹.

The old society withers and dies leaving memories and a desecrated land where "Lifelines poured into wage-packets / Had leaked a warm horror", leaving only "vandal plumes" of willowherb to

²³ Hughes, T. *Remains of Elmet*, Faber, 1979. Photographs by Fay Godwin. In a second illustrated edition of this book, published by Faber in 1994 and entitled simply *Elmet*, the poems were re-ordered, and a few new poems and photographs added. A close examination of the variant editions of *Cave Birds*, *River*, *Remains of Elmet*, *Elmet* and *Three Books* was published in *The Ted Hughes Society Journal*, Issue 2, Volume 1, 2012, pp. 17-20 and can be read at <http://ann.skea.com/Variant%20Editions.html>.

²⁴ Hughes, T. *River*, Faber & Faber in association with James & James, 1983. Photographs by Peter Keen. Published with the assistance of British Gas and The Countryside Commission

²⁵ On the 18th of August 1992 Ted Hughes wrote to me: "reading your book galvanized Christopher Reid into publishing *Elmet*, *Cave Birds* and *River* as a single volume". Christopher Reid was then Poetry Editor at Faber & Faber, and my book, *The Poetic Quest*, examines in detail the alchemical basis and the healing purpose of all the poems in *Cave Birds*, *Remains of Elmet* and *River*. The blurb on the back of *Three Books* suggests that "Exploring, in turn, social history, arcane ritual and the natural environment, each can now be read as part of a larger enterprise, with family resemblances and shared concerns accentuated."

²⁶ *Ted Hughes Collected Poems*, op.cit., 'First Mills' p.462.

²⁷ *ibid.*, 'The Canal' Drowning Black' pp. 477-8.

²⁸ *ibid.*, 'The Long Tunnel Ceiling', pp. 478-9.

²⁹ *ibid.*, 'Lumb Chimneys', p. 456.

“Desecrate the mounds”³⁰. But on the windswept moors the “grizzly bear-dark” of heather is “A sea of bees, meanwhile, mapped by the sun”³¹, and curlews “Hang their harps over the misty valleys”³² while “New moons sink into the heather / And full golden moons // Bulge over spent walls”. In the dusk, a Snipe, the ‘witchdoctor’ bird, is “Climbing and diving // Drawing the new / Needle of moon / Down / Gently / Into its eggs”³³

So, Hughes, with nature, weaves into his poems the renewal of this land. At the same time, “*These grasses of light*”, “*These stones of darkness*” and “*This water of light and darkness*” with which both artists (Hughes and Godwin) worked in this book, are not simply “*words in any phrase*”³⁴, as Hughes puts it, or the interplay of light and shadow fixed in a photographic image, they are the alchemical mother elements - air, water, fire and earth - which, in this book will accomplish the regeneration of the land and release the souls of its people. For the reader, too, the vivid imagery and the drama of Hughes’ ‘story’, the photographs, the sadness, the gently humour and the nostalgia for all that has been lost, all are so closely woven into the fabric of each poem and into the sequence as a whole that our emotions are stirred and the deeper alchemical energies can do their subtle and essential healing work.

Ultimately, Hughes links our spiritual welfare with the ecological health of our world and this mystical element runs through his work, being expressed most strongly in his negotiations with Nature as the Goddess of Complete Being.

In *River*, the Goddess is present in her triple aspects of maiden, mother and hag. She is a temptress, a “*juicy bride*”, but at night she becomes the hag, the bringer of death and “*Her talons / Lengthened by moonlight, numb open / The long belly of blood*” making the river “*a gutter of death*”³⁵. And yet, “*From a core-flash, from a thunder silence / In the sun - something has fallen*” and “*Something new-born crawls*”³⁶. In March “*Spring is over there*”, “*Earth is just unsettling / Her first faint scents*”, and whilst every living thing tests its newness “*supposing / Here is a goddess that will stay forever*” “*The river /*

³⁰ ibid., ‘Under the World’s Wide Rims’, pp. 479-10.

³¹ ibid., ‘Heather’ pp.467-8.

³² ibid., ‘Curlews II’ p. 461.

³³ ibid., ‘Spring Dusk’, p. 474.

³⁴ ibid., ‘Stanbury Moor’ p. 458.

³⁵ ibid., ‘Japanes River Tales’ pp. 641-2.

³⁶ ibid., ‘Flesh of Light’, pp. 642-3.

Concentrates its work” and *“The river-epic / Rehearses itself. Embellishes afresh and afresh / Each detail”*³⁷.

In the Goddess’s care, the river and its creatures and plants thrive, grapes ripen, the Earth sings, sea-trout arrive, the Kingfisher flashes from the overhanging branches, salmon arrive, spawn and die, and the fishermen fish. But pollution takes its toll and as winter comes and the seasons change the river *“Fallen from heaven”*, like the rain which created it, *“lies across / The lap of his mother, broken by world”*³⁸. But not all is lost: like an *“Escaping daughter / Her whole glass castle melting about her / In full magic”* the river *“slides towards the sea. An escape / Of the earth-serpent, with all it hoards, casting the land, like an old skin. / Pulling its body from under the eye”*³⁹.

As a fisherman, Hughes was acutely aware of the health of British rivers and the precarious existence of the fish in them. In *River*, he charts the life cycle of the salmon, but he begins with a poem which describes humans aiding nature by milking eggs and sperm from the dying fish - performing ‘Precarious obstetrics’ to ensure that some of the species will survive⁴⁰. In the final poem of the sequence, however, it is Nature he honours, and her *“travail / Of raptures and rendings”*. The river, now, is *“the font”*, where *“Only birth matters”*⁴¹. So, the whole *River* sequence powerfully and beautifully immerses the reader in the natural world and in the unending cycle of birth and death. At the same time, it links us emotionally with those plants, and creatures - fish, birds and (if we pause to think about it) ourselves - who rely on the earth’s water for our survival.

Hughes’ negotiations with the Goddess did not always combine poetry and art, nor did they always invoke her presence through the world of nature or channel her energies through a carefully structured sequence of poems. When in 1973-4 Hughes discovered the songs of the Southern Indian mystic, Basavanna, he was deeply impressed by the direct way in which Basavanna and other Indian poet-saints communicated with their god, Siva⁴². Because they regarded themselves, quite literally, as the true husbands or wives of the god, they dedicated their lives to him and become worldly brides or

³⁷ *ibid.*, ‘Four March Watercolours’, pp. 744-7.

³⁸ *ibid.*, ‘River’ p. 664.

³⁹ *ibid.*, ‘Fairy Flood’ p. 676.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, ‘That Morning before Christmas’ p. 639. This was the first poem in the first British edition of *River*, but not in the first American publication.

⁴¹ *ibid.*, ‘Salmon Eggs’, pp. 680-1.

⁴² Hughes read A.K.Ramanujan’s book, *Speaking of Siva*, London, Penguin Classics, 1973 and was so impressed that he wrote to his friends, Daniel Weissbort and Lucas Myers, exhorting them to buy the book.

bridegrooms struggling to achieve the spiritual perfection which would allow them to become wholly one with him. In their *vacanas*, they expressed their love but also their anger and frustration, chiding him, arguing with him, questioning and berating him in plain colloquial language, as spouses do.

Hughes completely understood their devotion and the joys and frustrations of communicating with the Creative Source. As an extended exercise, he began to copy their style of direct address, working from close parallels of some of Basavanna's *vacanas* until he found his own free and individual style of directly addressing his Goddess, whom he began to call his 'Lady of the Hill'.

The very first of his own *vacana* poems expresses his frustration at living in a polluted world and struggling with its temptations, yet trying to keep some part of himself pure and free enough to be worthy of communicating with the Goddess. Drowning in "a deepening spate", "Fouler drink and more rubbish", he cries out to his Lady to tell him why it should "rope at my throat", and asks. "How can I bring you what I bring you / when it has risen over me"⁴³. Basavanna, similarly, cries out to his Lord from the "world, in a swell of waves" which is beating his face and rising from his heart to his throat. Defining his purpose more specifically than Hughes, he begs: "how can I tell you anything / when it has risen high / over my head"⁴⁴. Worldly ills and sickness figure less in Hughes' *vacanas* than his acknowledgement of his Lady and her presence in every aspect of nature. Unworthy as he is, he continues to beg her to look at him, to listen to him, to be beside him and to use him, "always and everywhere". "Let me be one of your warriors", he pleads, "Pluck me / peel me and shape me / to the necessary form"⁴⁵. At last, in his *vacanas*, Hughes undergoes his own rebirth: his "soul's kernel" has been "chiselled" and "ground" until "blood welled" and, finally, he "Woke. // Stirred". In spite of this, in the final poem in his notebook, Hughes writes despairingly of an earth which is unable to "balance its load" and which "took the wrong turning"⁴⁶.

Most of Hughes' *vacanas* remain unpublished. Some became part of the Epilogue in *Gaudete*; others, he published in the limited Rainbow Press edition *Orts* (the title of which is a dialect word meaning 'leavings'), but to disguise the very personal nature of these songs most of the published

⁴³ This is the first poem in Hughes' *vacana* notebook (Manuscript notebook, Ted Hughes Papers, Box 57 / 16, Rare Book Library, Emory University, Atlanta, USA). All transcripts quoted were originally published in a detailed discussion of Hughes' *vacanas* by Ann Skea in 'Ted Hughes' *Vacanas: The Difficulties of a Bridegroom*', *Ted Hughes: From Cambridge to Collected*, Edited by Mark Wormald, Neil Roberts and Terry Gifford, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

⁴⁴ A.K. Ramanujan, op.cit. Bassavana's Poem 8.

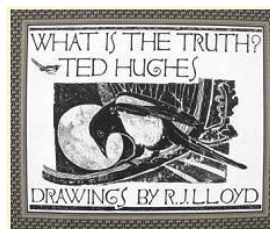
⁴⁵ *Ted Hughes Collected Poems*, 'Epilogue' p. 367.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, 'Gaudete epilogue', p. 367.

versions have been transposed from the first to the third person. Despite the very personal journey Hughes made in these vacanas, he knew they were just one aspect of his efforts to counter the dangers which threaten our world. As he told Ekbert Faas in an interview in 1970: “*You choose a subject because it serves, because you need it*” but there is “*always something missed*” - “*At the end of the ritual up comes a goblin*”⁴⁷. And he chose this last phrase to stand alone on the final page of *Cave Birds*.

Cave Birds, *Remains of Elmet* and *River* are almost unique in Hughes’ work for adults in that each was first published as a sequence of poems which page-by-page told its own story, and in which each poem was accompanied by a work of art. In their original form, each sequence was an Odyssey in the healing shamanic sense which Hughes described to Ekbert Faas in 1970, when he referred to the narrative poetry of Homer, Dante and Goethe and spoke of the poet as “*a medicine man*” - one who, like a shaman, can “*go to the spirit world...to get something badly needed, a cure, an answer, some sort of divine intervention in the community’s affairs*”⁴⁸. In later publications the poems stood alone, the sequence was sometimes re-ordered or added to, and the art was omitted.

One book for children, *What Is The Truth*, had a similar healing purpose. In this book, Hughes collaborated with artist Reg Lloyd to tell a story in poetry and prose which, as he wrote to Nick Gammage in 1984, was “*intended to be a fable about the true divinity of creatures and man’s inability the see that truth*”⁴⁹. The result was a book in which Reg Lloyd’s superb black and white images of animals surround and accompany the words; a partnership of word and image which is serious, humorous and moving and which affectively conveys the Blakean truth that everything that lives is Holy. The book was dedicated to the charity Farms for City Children and won the Guardian Children’s Fiction Award for 1984.



Sadly, in Faber’s later publications, the poems from *What Is The Truth* are published without Reg Lloyd’s art and without the connecting story, so much of the emotional impact of the sequence is lost.

⁴⁷ Ted Hughes, in an interview by Ekbert Faas published in *The Unaccommodated Universe*, Black Sparrow Press, Santa Barbara, 1980. p. 204.

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, p. 206.

⁴⁹ Reid, C.(ed). *Letters of Ted Hughes*, pp. 570-1.

Sadly, too, it is still true that we see the ills of the world yet need to become emotionally involved in finding a way to do something about them. We need poetry, art, photography, drama and all the imaginative creative energies to make us feel responsible for, as Hughes put it, “*the Earth and her life as a half-dark, many breasted, precarious miracle*”⁵⁰.

Ted Hughes Pages: <http://ann.skea.com/THHome.htm>

⁵⁰ Hughes, *Your World* op.cit., p. 39.