

**“Poetry in the Making”:
Ted Hughes and the Art of Writing**

Submitted by Carrie Rachael Smith to the University of Exeter
as a thesis for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in English
in April 2013

This thesis is available for Library use on the understanding that it is copyright material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgement.

I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University.

Signature:

Abstract

This study takes as its focus Ted Hughes's composition techniques throughout his career, arguing that his self-conscious experimentation with the processes by which he wrote affected the style and subject matter of his work. Hughes's poetry has lent itself to a number of familiar critical approaches, focusing on his preoccupation with mythology, his interaction with the natural world and his creative partnership with his first wife, Sylvia Plath. Yet no study, until now, has looked systematically at his literary drafts and the extent to which Hughes's method of composition radically altered during his writing career.

Archive material at Emory University, accessible since 2000, and new archive materials held at the British Library and made available for study for the first time in 2010, have opened up possibilities for much greater depth of research into Hughes's writing processes and the birth and evolution of individual poems. By engaging with these materials, my research complements new studies which are tackling under-examined areas of Hughes's work, whilst contributing more broadly to an increased awareness of the central importance of archival work in the study of literature.

Literary manuscript drafts have often been used to study writers whose writing methods consciously foreground the drafting process. Whilst Hughes has not previously been considered in this light, my original investigations into his archival materials reveal a poet for whom the nature of the compositional process was a central concern which defines and redefines his poetry across his career.

Contents

List of Illustrations	4
Transcription of Manuscripts	6
Introduction	9
1. ‘The Ted Hughesness of Ted Hughes’: Composition and Authenticity in Hughes’s Readings and Recordings	42
2. The Professional Poet: The Transition from the Drafts of <i>The Hawk in the Rain</i> to the Process of <i>Lupercal</i>	84
3. The Evolution of ‘Skylarks’: A Case Study	111
4. Searching ‘for the right masks’: Tracing the Compositional Processes of <i>Crow</i>	149
5. Collaborative Composition: Negotiating Word and Image in the Drafts of <i>Cave Birds</i>	192
6. Writing Truth and the Truth of Writing: The Spontaneous Composition of <i>Moortown Diary</i>	226
Conclusion: <i>Birthday Letters</i> : An Archive of Writing	265
Bibliography	287