

2011

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This article was originally published as:

Heldsinger, D. (2011). Connecting inwardly: Traces of Ludwig van Beethoven in the work of Ted Hughes. *Ted Hughes Society Journal*, (1).

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Connecting Inwardly: Traces of Ludwig van Beethoven in the work of Ted Hughes

By David Heldinger, MA student at the University of Notre Dame, Australia

In an interview with Ekbert Faas in 1970, Ted Hughes was asked about the main poets cited as influences on his work. The poet's responses are revealing. Hughes says that 'Well, in the way of influences I imagine everything goes into the stew'¹ and 'the influences that really count are most likely not literary at all'.² Hughes says that he connected inwardly to William Blake and Ludwig van Beethoven and adds that 'if I could dig to the bottom of my strata, maybe their names and works would be the deepest traces'.³ From Hughes's own correspondence, it is clear he was drawn to Beethoven while under the influence of John Fisher, his English Teacher at Mexborough Grammar School in South Yorkshire.⁴ There are various references to Beethoven in Hughes's correspondence.⁵ As a student at Pembroke College, Cambridge, in the early 1950s, Hughes kept a copy of Beethoven's death mask on his desk. At Hughes's memorial service in 1999, Alfred Brendel played the Adagio from Beethoven's Sonata No. 17 in D Minor (Op. 31).⁶ By considering three poems of Hughes - 'Pastoral Symphony No. 1', 'Grosse Fuge' and 'Opus 131' - this article explores some of the 'deepest traces' of Beethoven referred to by Hughes. What becomes apparent is that Beethoven's unique visionary imagination exerts a significant influence on Hughes and that, at the aesthetic core of both the composer and the poet in an artistic confluence, are the forces at work in Romanticism.

Great works of art have the capacity to transcend the limits of their historical setting. Notwithstanding the different historical contexts of Beethoven and Hughes, distinct signposts to Beethoven exist in Hughes's poetry and letters. It has been said of Beethoven that 'No composer occupies a more central position in musical life'⁷ and 'More than any previous composer Beethoven contributed to a reversal of the perceived relation between artist and society; instead of supplying commodities for use, like a skilled tradesman, the successful artist could now be regarded as an original genius in the Kantian sense, revealing an unsuspected higher order in nature, and giving voice thereby to the unconditioned, or even paradoxically to the infinite or the inexpressible'.⁸ Carl Gustav Jung believed that art 'is constantly at work educating the spirit of the age, conjuring up the forms the age is most lacking'.⁹ In 1957 while describing the creative process of writing poetry, Hughes explained that he used 'the method of a musical composer':

In each poem, besides the principal subject [...] is the living and individual element in every poet's work. What I mean is the way he brings to peace all the feelings and energies which, from all over the body, heart, and brain, send up their champions onto that battleground of the first subject. The way I do this, as I believe, is by using something like the method of a musical composer. I might say that I turn every combatant into a bit of music, then resolve the whole uproar into as formal and balanced a figure of melody and rhythm as I can. When all the words are hearing each other clearly, and every stress is feeling every other stress, and all are contented - the poem is finished [...] what is unique and precious in it is its heart, that inner figure of stresses.¹⁰

Hughes's comingling of Blake and Beethoven as the artists with the 'deepest traces' at the 'bottom of' his 'strata' is perhaps unsurprising given Hughes's deep understanding of, and fascination for, Romanticism. While Beethoven was trained in the Classical mould, his musical legacy is intimately connected to the Romantic Movement, which swept through Europe during his lifetime. Blake was, of course, a seminal figure in the Romantic Movement for his poetry and visual arts. Blake's artistic motive was to lead the reader into a process of perpetual discovery. For Blake, salvation required a lifetime's journey, as he describes in the address to 'the Christians' in *Jerusalem*:

I give you the end of a golden string,
Only wind it into a ball:
It will lead you to Heaven's gate,
Built in Jerusalem's wall.

Hughes's own poetry has been described 'as a search for a visionary imagination - that telos of the Romantic quest most powerfully personified in Blake's *Universal Men*'.¹¹ While the influence of Blake on Hughes has been well documented, the influence of Beethoven on Hughes remains unexplored.

In their respective artistic quests, both Beethoven and Hughes were captivated by their natural world and sought to develop an understanding of what it is to be human within nature, both believing nature represented a window to the enormous powers that exist in the universe. According to Beethoven 'every thought in music is intimately, indivisibly related to the whole of harmony which is oneness'¹² and 'For surely woods, trees and rocks produce the echo which man desires to hear'.¹³ Hughes's 'divinity is the Great Goddess, and she is Nature, incarnate life on earth'.¹⁴ Wordsworth elegantly captures that key concern of Romanticism, so important to Beethoven and Hughes, when he says he 'learned to look on Nature [...] hearing oftentimes the still, sad music of humanity [...] and I have felt a presence that disturbs me with the joy of elevated thoughts, a sense sublime of something far more deeply interfused, whose dwelling is the light of the setting suns, and the round ocean, and the living air, and the blue sky [...] well pleased to recognize in Nature and the language of my sense the anchor of my purest thoughts'.¹⁵

Prior to the publication of *The Hawk in the Rain*, some of Hughes's earlier poems are collected under the rubric 'Early Poems And Juvenilia', covering¹⁶ the period 1946-1957. One of these early poems is titled 'Pastoral Symphony No. 1' and subtitled 'Two Finger Arrangement'.¹⁷ Hughes uses both title and subtitle to evoke Beethoven's 6th 'Pastoral' Symphony. For Hughes, this is his first symphony ('No 1') and it is a two finger arrangement, suggesting a simple, crude and undeveloped structure. However, in the body of the poem, Hughes immediately introduces the reader to his central thematic concern - that poetry is an interminable 'war between vitality and death'.¹⁸ In the first line, the reader hears the power of the sun as the thunder heralds its arrival. Hughes's elemental forces take on the qualities of animals: winds 'run' and blizzards 'shriek'. The 'hearts' of the Spring winds, once subject to the 'choking claw-down grip' of winter are violently released ('torn'). The blizzards are driven in terror from the forces of the dawn and the arrival of Spring, which Hughes closely associates with the power of the sun and the symbol of fire. It is 'ablaze'. This primordial element, encompassing good and evil, symbolises the duality in nature between creation (birth) and destruction (death). The light is warm and provides energy for the birds 'nurtured in fire' that 'dance' and are 'dizzy with ecstasy'. The songs of the birds, energised by the fire of the sun, have the effect of 'dazing the vales'. However, at this juncture, Hughes introduces a change in the form of a contrapuntal image. Hughes creates a deep sense of foreboding with a simple question - will the singing and dancing birds leave? Immediately, this is followed by a gathering of 'bearded ravens', a dark and menacing image. Ravens, too, represent a duality of sorts. They are known for their remarkable intelligence but they also feed on carrion and are considered to be the harbingers of misfortune, illness and death. In the poem, the ravens' intent is evil as they are 'hung murderous in the wind'. The effect of this gathering of ravens in their 'thongs' is that they close out the daylight and usher in darkness ('night'). For Hughes, however, the sun which is the genesis of the idyllic scene and nurtures the birds is also the creator and nurturer of the ravens. In the first part of the poem, Hughes injects animal qualities in the elements (wind) and human qualities in the birds to create a sense of harmony and balance. The image of the ravens evokes the biblical allusion where Jesus implores his disciples not to worry and to 'Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them'.¹⁹ Hughes strengthens this idyllic environment with his use of measured rhyme and alliteration ('flame of flowers' and 'while the white') in stark contrast to the latter lines in the poem in which the sense of dissonance and disharmony is amplified by the lack of rhythmic ending. The reference to 'bearded ravens' is also a reference to Odin, the god in Norse mythology who is depicted as accompanied by ravens and wolves.

For Hughes, the pastoral setting - its idyllic nature represented by spring, the sun, light and fire - is blotted out by the ravens, the archetypal symbols of darkness, who turn the scene into night. For Beethoven, nature as a source of idyllic and destructive forces is a central theme of his Pastoral Symphony. Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony is 'replete with pastoral signifiers'.²⁰ It contains imitations of natural sounds, shepherd calls, folk instruments and country dancers. Beethoven wrote of his Pastoral Symphony that the work was 'more an expression of feeling than tone painting' ('mehr

Ausdruck der Empfindung als Malerei').²¹ Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony broke from the standard symphonic form in that it has five and not four movements, which were typical of the Classical era. There is also a distinctive programmatic approach to each movement which begins with an 'awakening of cheerful feelings upon arrival in the country' (1st movement), moves to 'scene at the brook' (2nd movement) and then onto a 'happy gathering of country folk' (3rd movement). The music creates a sense of harmony and balance, as the peasants sing and dance in the idyllic pastoral setting. However, the images of a serene and tranquil environment are rent asunder by the 4th movement titled 'Thunderstorm; Storm'. The introduction of the 4th movement allows Beethoven to interrupt 'the merry making of the peasants' with an abrupt deceptive cadence, as the power and violence of the natural elements force their attention on all those present. The realistic effect of the 'storm', with its elemental forces of wind, rain, thunder and lightning, makes a dramatic impact. Hector Berlioz said of this that 'it is no longer just a wind and rain storm: it is a frightful cataclysm, a universal deluge, the end of the world.'²² This is very close to Hughes's dark and menacing image of the ravens that gather and swirl 'darkly and roaring', 'blotting' out the day. In the Pastoral Symphony, Beethoven seeks to achieve a synthesis (closure) by resurrecting the idyllic pastoral scene with his 5th movement titled 'Shepherd's Song; cheerful and thankful feelings after the storm'. It has been said that 'as a set of musical tropes pastoral mirrors an unbounded universe, and it provides copious means of sounding the main themes of a deeply felt existence within that universe'.²³ In a letter to Therese Malfatti in 1810, Beethoven said:

How delighted I shall be to ramble for a while through bushes, woods, under trees, through grass and around rocks. No one can love the country as much as I do. For surely woods, trees and rocks produce the echo which man desires to hear.²⁴

This reflects the Romantic desire 'to achieve a fusion of humanity with nature by deciphering the language of mere matter.'²⁵ According to Novalis, 'If God could become man, He can also become stone, plant, animal, and element, and perhaps there is in this way a progressive redemption in nature.'²⁶ However, this 'fusion' and 'redemption' must be seen in its proper context. 'In the pastoral poetry of the ancient world [...] is a sense that the idyllic state is a precarious one, vulnerable to being lost. From the start, pastoral style has been a global metaphor for an extensive range of effects and images, including burdensome issues and unsettling states of being [...] Ancient pastoral poetry did not shrink from violence and death'.²⁷ Hughes wrote that 'The story of the mind exiled from Nature is the story of Western Man [...] When something abandons Nature, or is abandoned by Nature, it has lost touch with its creator, and is called an evolutionary dead-end'.²⁸ The centrality of nature in Hughes's work is evident from his earliest publication, *The Hawk in the Rain* and his depiction of the natural forces and images in his poem, 'Pastoral Symphony No. 1', captures the essential duality in nature, its creative and destructive energies.

To understand and explain this duality and the inherent complexities in nature, Beethoven and Hughes turn to symbolism, mythology and religious imagery. Beethoven kept an intimate diary (*Tagebuch*) between 1812-1818, which contains numerous quotations from Eastern religious beliefs including Hinduism, Brahmanism and extracts from the Bhagavad-Gita. For the composer, 'a state of illumination is reached only after a transition out of darkness, which is inseparable'²⁹. Beethoven was also influenced by the leading intellectuals of his time and his circle of friends included Freemasons. Similarly, Hughes draws on the Eastern religions and the full panoply of ancient, classical myths. He, unlike the New Lines poets who were 'dead against negotiation with anything outside the coziest arrangement of society' claimed that he 'hadn't had enough' and 'was all for opening negotiations with whatever happened to be out there'³⁰. For Beethoven, the artist had to sacrifice all material things at the altar of his art. He wrote 'every day I approach nearer to the goal; this though I can scarcely describe it. Only through this can your Beethoven live. Don't talk of rest! I know of no other than sleep'³¹. Victor Hugo said that Beethoven had a 'crippled body, flying soul' and that the composer produced music like a 'deep mirror in a cloud' and in it 'the dreamer will recognize his dream, the sailor his storm [...] and the wolf his forests'³². Beethoven's 9th Symphony has been described as 'an implied cosmogonic narrative [...] saturated with imagery drawn from Greek and Roman mythology and featuring an oration evocative of the classical rhetorical tradition as well as a chorus of Aeschylean purposes and proportions'³³. For Hughes, the artist is summoned like the

shaman to embark on a sacred journey and to return with a message of renewal for the reader: 'One of the great problems that poetry works at is to renew life, renew the poet's own life, and, by implication, renew the life of the people, if they respond to the way he has done it for himself'³⁴.

To 'renew life' and connect with the reader and listener in a visceral sense, Beethoven and Hughes make extensive use of metaphor, as illustrated by 'Gross Fuge'. Beethoven originally composed the Grosse Fuge (Great Fugue) as a final movement of his String Quartet No. 13 (Op. 130). A fugue is a musical composition in which one or more themes are repeated or imitated by successively entering voices and contrapuntally developed in a continuous interweaving of the voice parts. However, the Grosse Fuge was so demanding on Beethoven's contemporary performers and unpopular with audiences that his colleague, Karl Holz and publisher, Matthis Artaria, urged him to write a new finale for the String Quartet No. 13, which he did in late 1826. Two months after Beethoven's death in 1827, Artaria published the first edition of String Quartet No. 13 (Op. 130) with the new, replacement finale and then later published Grosse Fuge in its own right (Op. 133). The Grosse Fuge is a multiple movement form contained within a single large movement. It opens with a series of unresolved fragments separated by long pauses. The Grosse Fuge places extreme technical demands on the performers and has an unrelenting introspective nature. It has been described as 'the largest and most difficult of all of Beethoven's quartet movements.'³⁵ Many 19th Century critics dismissed the work. William Kinderman says that the Grosse Fuge 'shows us that more lurks behind the surface of things they might appear [...] the main sections of the Fuge unfold with a sense of progress from the obscure to the coherent'.³⁶ This sentiment is echoed by Maynard Solomon when he says that 'though the overture's primary image is of a chaoticized state of being, order will eventually emerge from the splintered chaos, the fragments coalescing into a gigantic three-part fugue, as a coherent universe is assembled from improbable ingredients. Thus, the Overtura is a return to beginnings, a representation of creation, of fracture and assembly, and thereby an emblem of art's supreme restorative power'.³⁷

In his poetic rendition of Beethoven's Grosse Fuge (from *Earth-Numb*), Hughes uses the potent image of the tiger as a symbol of Beethoven's music. It is the largest and fiercest of all predators and the mysterious creature in Blake's 'The Tyger'. Its energy burns 'bright' and its ferocity is uncontrollable ('what immortal hand or eye could frame thy fearful symmetry?'). In Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*, the earth responds that the moon's rays charm 'the tiger joy' that fills her.

Hughes's poem begins with the image of the tiger awakening in its cave. The cave is a symbol of Platonic epistemological darkness. A cave is also a symbol of depth. Byron says 'thoughts seek refuge in lonely caves' and Shelley refers to 'the dim caves of human thought'. To Blake and Shelley, caves are dormant volcanoes. In Hughes's poem, the cave is a site of primitive mystery representing the dark inner recesses of nature. This image is the subject of examination by Hughes in *Cave Birds* described as 'an apocalyptic world of evolutionary collapse in which the protagonist is put on trial by an assembly of birds'.³⁸ In *Cave Birds*, Hughes's central concerns are 'the insufficiency of humanitarianism when faced with life's basic cruelty, silence and acceptance as the only valid stance towards the world, and the ineluctable guilt of man'.³⁹ In 'Gross Fuge', the music is like flares that 'abrupt' at the edge of the sun and come low out of the glare. It is all embracing. It comes under skylines, seas and liquid corn. The music contains occult and supernatural powers. Its soft arrival presses 'the roof of ghost' and its effect is to make 'old foundations' creak. The eyes of the tiger - the music - are out of this world. It belongs to another universe governed by different dimensions. The weight of the tiger's eyes can be felt on the nape of the neck, the part of the prey most vulnerable to attack. The music is an invading force that works its way through the innermost parts of the listener: the hair, the veins, the blood and the spine. The effect of the tiger opening its mouth allows the music to sink 'its claw' into the listener's skull. The music even penetrates through bone, such is its power. The sublime energy of a single note lifts the listener by the small of the back and, weightless, throws the listener into space. The music is not confined by gravity. It has a devouring, animal quality, which echo's the striking image of T.S Eliot's 'Christ the tiger' in *Gerontion* where Eliot says 'The tiger springs in the new year. Us he devours'. To Hughes, the music 'digests you into its horrible joy' and devours the listener 'leisurely among the litter of stars'. The use of the oxymoron ('horrible joy') captures the essential duality of the music and represents Hughes's vision of nature: possessing both

creative and destructive energies. In 1959, Hughes had written to his sister, Olwyn, that 'an entire vision of life seems to have grown up for me around the notion of God as the devourer-as the mouth & gut, which is brainless & the whole of evil'.⁴⁰ The thematic core of this poem is that the music 'is the tiger of heaven', and here Hughes draws on the rich imagery of Blake. Hughes has said that 'Blake's great poem "Tyger! Tyger!" is an example of a symbol of this potentially dangerous type which arrives with its own control - it is yoked with the Lamb, and both draw the Creator [...] but the symbol itself is unqualified, it is an irruption, from the deeper resources, of enraged energy'.⁴¹ The music, in the form of the tiger, has the effect of violently undressing the listeners. The listeners are stripped naked, returned to a state of primitive being as the music 'leaves its dark track across the octaves'.

Romantic poets have been described as 'symbolists whose practice must be understood in terms of their attempts to give a total mythic interpretation of the world to which the poet holds the key'.⁴² Janne Stigen-Drangsholt acknowledges that this description is 'very similar to Hughes's views on the relationship between myth (as a source of metaphor) and poetry. For Hughes, myth as a poetic ritual is a manifestation of "man's relationship with the creator and the world of spirit"'.⁴³ For the Romantic poets, the imagination is the Holy Grail that opens the window to a sacred world. According to Hughes, imagination 'is the faculty we mean when we talk about the imagination of the great artists. The character of great works is exactly this: that in them the full presence of the inner world combines with and is reconciled to the full presence of the outer world [...] They are the laws, simply, of human nature.'⁴⁴ Hughes's poetry endeavours to tap 'into that depth of imagination where understanding has its roots and stores its X-rays'.⁴⁵ Einstein observed that: 'Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited to all we now know and understand, while imagination embraces the entire world, and all there ever will be to know and understand'. Beethoven also 'revealed an increasing affinity with some of the dominant categories and preoccupations of early Romanticism, an affinity strikingly exemplified in his adoption of certain of Romanticism's imaginative tropes and phenomenological metaphors'.⁴⁶ For Hughes, 'The myths and legends [...] can be seen as large-scale accounts of negotiations between the powers of the inner world and the stubborn conditions of the outer world [...] They are immense and at the same time highly detailed sketches for the possibilities of understanding and reconciling the two'⁴⁷. In describing the symbols at work in 'Hawk Roosting', 'Jaguar' and 'Second Glance at the Jaguar', Hughes says:

It is my belief that symbols of this sort work. And the more concrete and electrically charged and fully operational the symbol, the more powerful it works on any mind that meets it. The way it works depends on the mind [...] on the nature of that mind. I'm not at all sure how much direction, how much of a desirable aim and moral trajectory you can fix onto a symbol by associated paraphernalia. A jaguar after all can be received in different aspects [...] he is a beautiful, powerful nature spirit, he is a homicidal maniac, he is a supercharged piece of cosmic machinery, he is a symbol of man's baser nature [...] Or he is simply a demon [...] a lump of ectoplasm. A lump of astral energy. The symbol opens all these things [...] it is the reader's own nature that selects.⁴⁸

This is an echo of Beethoven when the composer says 'Music is the electric soil in which the spirit thinks, lives and invents [...] All that is electrical stimulates the mind to flowing, surging, musical creation. I am electrical by nature.'⁴⁹ However, invoking the 'elemental power circuit of the Universe'⁵⁰ is fraught with danger. Hughes says 'If you refuse the energy, you are living a kind of death. If you accept the energy, it destroys you.'⁵¹

This capacity for destructive energy is captured in Hughes's poem 'Opus 131' from *Capriccio*. The collection is dedicated to Assia and Shura Wevill, both of whom died in tragic circumstances in 1969. 'Opus 131' is a poem of despair and desolation. The title is a direct reference to Beethoven's 'Opus 131', one of the composer's final string quartets. Beethoven's 'Opus 131' has been described as 'a tragic work'⁵² and 'the most inward and searching of his late works while it is also, in content and form, the most innovative and most integrated of the late quartets. The whole work, but certainly its first and last movements, stands with Beethoven's explorations of dark emotions [...] as his final word on the ways in which the human soul, confronted by an implacable world, comes to terms with fate

and mortality'.⁵³ These comments are an equally accurate description of Hughes's poem, 'Opus 131'. The poem is a reflection on the poet and the poet's lover in their hotel room and begins on an optimistic note. The music opens the 'great door' in the air. What floods through, however, is not transcendental light but 'horror'. Immediately, the reader is forced to engage with a much greater force, one that is dark and destructive. The domestic items in the lovers' hotel room (the door, the curtains and the daylight blocking out the window) are hopelessly ineffective in keeping the 'horror' at bay. They are useless because they are 'in the wrong dimension'. The music takes the form of a pathologist. It pins back the flaps of the body (similar to an autopsy) to leave it naked and faceless, the heart panting like a foetus. The poem's anguished and desperate cry is 'where was the lifeline music?' This is the music that, in the past, contained healing properties. It used to provide consolation, allowed for 'prayer, transcendence' and had the redemptive power to selectively disconnect 'the pain centre'. This disharmony is reinforced by the musicians themselves, who appear as 'dark insects' fighting with their own instruments and scampering through the lifeless body of the poet's lover. Hughes's next statement is stark. He says bluntly 'Beethoven had broken down' and the desperate composer 'Was trying to repair' 'The huge constellations of his silence'. Beethoven composed 'Opus 131' in 1826 (shortly before his death) at which time he was totally deaf and had been since 1818. However, any effort by the composer to 'repair' is too late. The anthropomorphic musical notes, ('with their sharp faces') have already dissected the poet's lover and carried off her different anatomical parts 'into the corners of the Universe'. In 'Opus 131' Hughes presents music as a destructive force, carrying out an autopsy of the poet's lover, stripping her body parts and scattering them to the ends of the cosmos. The philosopher, Arthur Schopenhauer, said that:

a symphony of Beethoven presents us with the greatest confusion which yet has the most perfect order as its foundation; with the most vehement conflict which is transformed the next moment into the most beautiful harmony. It is *rerum concordia discors* [the discordant concord of the world], a true and complete picture of the nature of the world, which rolls on in the boundless confusion of innumerable forms, and maintains itself by constant destruction.⁵⁴

This 'constant destruction' is at work in 'Opus 131' for both poet and composer. In an interview with Eliat Negev in 1996, Hughes said:

Every work of art stems from a wound in the soul of an artist. When a person is hurt, his immune system comes into operation and the self-healing process takes place, mental and physical. Art is a psychological component of the auto-immune system that gives expression to the healing process. That is why great works of art make us feel good.⁵⁵

In *Winter Pollen*, Hughes writes that:

The balm of great art [...] seems to be drawn from the depths of an elemental grisliness, a ground of echoless cosmic horror. The mystery of music opens this horror as often as we properly hear it. Perhaps music holds the key to it. If, as we are told, mathematical law is the tree of the original gulf, rooted outside the psychological sphere, outside the human event-horizon, and if music is a sort of nest, the consoling-shaped soul-nest, that we feathery and hairy ones weave out of the twigs of that tree (audial nerve sunk in the mingling chorales of the body's chemistry), then the horror which wells up out of music is also the sap of mathematical law, a secretion of the gulf itself – the organizing and creative energy itself.⁵⁶

In his poem 'Opus 131', Hughes bemoans the inability of Beethoven's music to heal. The poem explores the chthonic realm of life: those dark, instinctual elements within the psyche. The poet's *cri de Coeur* is that, in this instance, the music lacks any quality of transcendence, consolation or prayer. It cannot disconnect the pain centre or 'repair' the failed relationship of the lovers. Yet, by confronting the 'horror', the dark emotions, Hughes opens a pathway to understanding the emotional detritus of the failed relationship. The poem begins the healing process. As Jung wrote:

Let a work of art act upon us as it acted upon the artist. To grasp its meaning we must allow it to shape us as it shaped him. Then we also understand the nature of his primordial

experience. He has plunged into the healing and redeeming depths of the collective psyche, where man is not lost in the isolation of consciousness and its errors and suffering, but where all men are caught in common rhythm which allows the individual to communicate his feelings and strivings to mankind as a whole.⁵⁷

By referring to Beethoven in these three poems and providing distinct signposts to Beethoven's music, Hughes invites the reader into his own unique poetic space, a musical domain replete with rich symbols and metaphors. While these three poems serve to open 'the great door in the air' and shed some light on the influence of Beethoven on Hughes, the relationship between composer and poet is a complex dynamic that operates on many levels. We are reminded that 'While Hughes's poetry incorporates the epistemology, symbolism and myth of the Romantic movement, it does so in a highly dynamic manner'.⁵⁸ Maynard Solomon writes that 'Beethoven is not to be regarded as the sum of his intellectual influences: his sources are themselves fluid, constantly evolving, reciprocally open to influence. He himself generates ideas and is a wellspring of creative imagery, an essential source of Romanticism itself'.⁵⁹ That Beethoven's influence on Hughes never waned during the poet's life is evident in a letter Hughes wrote to Keith Sagar in 1998, 28 years after the Faas interview and a few months before Hughes's death. While reflecting on the influence upon him of his former teacher, John Fisher, Hughes said:

John F. had only to exclaim the unearthly mightiness of Beethoven-whom I had never knowingly listened to-for me to become such a sotted addict of Beethoven that his music dominated my life till I left University & lost my gramophone & radio. Even so, ever since, it has preoccupied me at some level. I still listen to it in preference to anything else.⁶⁰

Notes

- ¹ Ekbert Faas, *Ted Hughes: The Unaccommodated Universe*, Black Sparrow Press, Santa Barbara. 1980, p. 202.
- ² Faas, *The Unaccommodated Universe*, p. 203.
- ³ Faas, *The Unaccommodated Universe*, p. 202.
- ⁴ *Letters of Ted Hughes*, edited by Christopher Reid, faber and faber, 2007, pp. 436 and 671.
- ⁵ Hughes, *Letters*, pp. 14, 15, 50-51, 92, 436 and 671.
- ⁶ Ann Skea, *Ted Hughes' Memorial Service. A personal record of the memorial service held in Westminster Abbey on 13 May, 1999* at <http://ann.skea.com/>
- ⁷ William Kinderman, *Beethoven*, Oxford University Press, 2ed, 2009, p. 3.
- ⁸ Kinderman, *Beethoven*, p. 8.
- ⁹ Carl Gustav Jung, *The Spirit in Man, Art, and Literature*, Bollingen Series XX, Princeton, N.J. Princeton University Press, 1972, p. 82.
- ¹⁰ 'Ted Hughes Writes', *Poetry Book Society Bulletin*, 15 (September 1957) (qtd. in Faas, *The Unaccommodated Universe*, p. 163).
- ¹¹ Alexander Davis, *Romanticism, Existentialism, Patriarchy: Hughes and the Visionary Imagination from The Challenge of Ted Hughes*, ed by Keith Sagar, palgrave, St. Martin's Press, 1994, p. 70.
- ¹² Wilfred Mellers, *Beethoven and the Voice of God*, London, Travis & Emery, 2007, p. 23 (qtd. in an article by Helen Anderson *The Innate Transformational Properties of Beethoven's Passion Music in Music and Psyche Contemporary Psychoanalytic Explorations*, ed. Paul W. Ashton and Stephen Bloch, Spring Journal Books, New Orleans, Louisiana, 2010, p. 56) .
- ¹³ Letter from Beethoven to Therese Malfatti, May 1810, *Briefe*, vol. 2, p. 122 (no. 442), *Letters*, vol. 1, p. 273 (no. 258) (qtd. in Maynard Solomon, *Late Beethoven Music, Thought, Imagination*, University of California Press, 2003, p.
- ¹⁴ Keith Sagar, *Ted Hughes and Nature: 'Terror and Exultation'*, Fastprint Publishing, Peterborough, England, 2009, p.55.
- ¹⁵ William Wordsworth, *Tintern Abbey* from *The Penguin Book of Romantic Poetry*, edited by Jonathan and Jessica Wordsworth, Penguin Books, 2001, p. 266.
- ¹⁶ Ted Hughes *Collected Poems*, ed. Paul Keegan, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 2003, pp. 3-16.
- ¹⁷ Hughes, *Collected Poems*, p. 8.
- ¹⁸ Faas, *The Unaccommodated Universe*, p. 197.
- ¹⁹ Luke 12:24-34 from *The King James Bible*.
- ²⁰ Maynard Solomon, *Late Beethoven Music, Thought, Imagination*, University of California Press, 2003, p. 75.
- ²¹ Qtd. in Kinderman, *Beethoven*, p. 8.

- ²² Hector Berlioz, *A trevers chants*, Paris: Michel Levy Frers (Libraires Editeurs), 1862, Guichard, 1971, English translation, 1913-18, p.45 (qtd. in Kinderman, *Beethoven*, p. 147).
- ²³ Solomon, *Late Beethoven*, p. 72.
- ²⁴ Letter from Beethoven to Malfatti, *Briefe*, p. 273 (no. 258) (qtd. in Solomon, *Late Beethoven*, p. 43).
- ²⁵ Solomon, *Late Beethoven*, p. 45.
- ²⁶ Novalis, *Schriften: Die Werke Friedrich von Hardenbergs*, ed. Paul Kluckuhn, Richard Samuel et al., 4 vols Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1960-75, vol. 3, p. 664 (qtd. in Solomon, *Late Beethoven*, p. 45).
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- ²⁸ Ted Hughes, *Winter Pollen*, edited by William Scammell, faber and faber, 1994, p. 129.
- ²⁹ Solomon, *Late Beethoven*, p. 167.
- ³⁰ Faas, *The Unaccommodated Universe*, p. 201.
- ³¹ Letter from Beethoven to Franz Gerhard Wegeler, 16 November 1801, in *Beethoven's Letters*, with Explanatory Notes by Dr A. C. Kalisher, trans. By J. S. Shedlock, Dover Publications, New York, 1972, p. 24.
- ³² Victor Hugo, *William Shakespeare*, cited in Schrade, *Beethoven in France*, 57, 257, n. 15 (qtd. in *The Cambridge Companion to Beethoven*, ed. By Glenn Stanley, Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. 296).
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- ³⁵ Kinderman, *Beethoven*, p. 336.
- ³⁶ Kinderman, *Beethoven*, p. 340.
- ³⁷ Solomon, *Late Beethoven* p. 241.
- ³⁸ Faas, *The Unaccommodated Universe*, p. 141.
- ³⁹ Faas, *The Unaccommodated Universe*, p. 141.
- ⁴⁰ Hughes, *Letters*, p. 148.
- ⁴¹ Faas, *The Unaccommodated Universe*, p. 200.
- ⁴² Rene Wellek in his article *The Concept of Romanticism* from Rene Wellek and A Warren, *Theory of Literature*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1949, p. 165 (qtd. in Janne Stigen-Drangsholt, *Ted Hughes & Romanticism A Poetry of Desolation and Difference*, Cercles 12 (2005), p. 109).
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- ⁴⁴ Hughes, *Winter Pollen*, p. 150.
- ⁴⁵ Hughes, *Winter Pollen* p. 226.
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- ⁴⁹ Wilfrid Mellers, *Beethoven and the Voice of God*, London, Travis & Emery, 2007, p. 23 (qtd. in an article by Helen Anderson *The Innate Transformational Properties of Beethoven's Passion Music in Music and Psyche Contemporary Psychoanalytic Explorations*, ed. Paul W. Ashton and Stephen Bloch, Spring Journal Books, New Orleans, Louisiana, 2010, p. 56).
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- ⁵⁹ Solomon, *Late Beethoven*, p. 9.
- ⁶⁰ Hughes, *Letters*, p. 722.