



Ted Hughes, Class and Violence (Continuum Literary Studies)

Paul Bentley

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Ted Hughes is now widely regarded as a major figure in twentieth-century poetry. Critical literature has often characterized him primarily as a mythologizer of nature but the impact of Hughes's class background on his poems has received relatively little attention. *Ted Hughes, Class and Violence* is the first full length study to take the measure of the importance of class in Hughes.

Paul Bentley here revisits such crucial topics as the controversy over 'natural' violence in Hughes's early poems, Hughes's relationship with Philip Larkin and with Seamus Heaney, the Laureateship, and Hughes's revisiting of his relationship with Sylvia Plath in *Birthday Letters* (1998), through the lens of Hughes's cultural background and class bearings. Drawing on discussions of violence by such cultural theorists as Slavoj Žižek and Terry Eagleton, the book presents new political readings of familiar Hughes poems, alongside consideration of posthumously collected poems and letters, to reveal a picture of a complex, fraught, and deeply ambivalent poet.

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