

HUGHES, TED, 1930-1998.

Letters to Ben Sonnenberg, 1961-2000

Emory University
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Descriptive Summary

Creator: Hughes, Ted, 1930-1998.
Title: Letters to Ben Sonnenberg, 1961-2000
Call Number: Manuscript Collection No. 924
Extent: .25 linear ft. (1 box)
Abstract: Letters from English poet Ted Hughes to writer, publisher and literary adviser Ben Sonnenberg from 1961 to 2000.
Language: Materials entirely in English.

Administrative Information

Restrictions on access

Unrestricted access.

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All requests subject to limitations noted in departmental policies on reproduction. Special restrictions also apply: writings by Ted Hughes (letters and literary works) may not be reproduced without the written permission of Carol Hughes.

Related Materials in This Repository

Ted Hughes papers

Source

Purchase, 2002.

Citation

[after identification of item(s)], Ted Hughes, Letters to Ben Sonnenberg, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

Processing

Processed by Melissa Maday, September 16, 2002.

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Collection Description

Biographical Note

Ben Sonnenberg (b. 1936) has been a writer, publisher and literary adviser. He met Ted Hughes and Sylvia Plath at the home of W.S. (Bill) and Dido Merwin, and these letters reveal a personal and professional correspondence that continued between Sonnenberg and Hughes from 1961 until Hughes's death in 1998. Sonnenberg was the founder and editor of Grand Street Books from 1981-1990. He has published three books: *A Grand Street Reader* (1986), *Performance and Reality: Essays from Grand Street* (1989), and his autobiography, *Lost Property: Memoirs and Confessions of a Bad Boy* (1991). He resides in New York City, and he is a contributor to the political newsletter *Counterpunch*.

Scope and Content Note

This collection contains 38 letters written to Ben Sonnenberg, including 30 written by Ted Hughes (the other letters are from Olwyn Hughes and Carol Hughes.) The earliest letter is from 1961, shortly after Hughes and Sylvia Plath had purchased their home, Court Green. The 12 letters from the 1960s combine news of family life (particularly of the Hughes children, Frieda and Nicholas) with information about writing and publishing. Hughes comments in detail about Sonnenberg's writing, which Sonnenberg sent to him for input. Also in these letters, Hughes solicits and receives funding from Sonnenberg for the magazine *Modern Poetry in Translation*, which he began with Daniel Weissbort in 1965. The letters from the later 1960s comment obliquely on the personal upheavels in Hughes's personal life, and he also provides some detailed personal insight into the composition of the poems later published in *Crow*.

The three letters from the early 1970s continue Hughes's commentary about *Crow*, and they also describe some of his other writing projects from that time. The 1972 letter also mentions news of his marriage to Carol Orchard in 1970. The five letters from the 1980s have a more businesslike tone. The letters from 1988-89 include a detailed explication of what Hughes calls "Sylvia's Myth" - his understanding of her poetry - including a photocopy of an early draft of "Sheep in Fog" published as an essay in *Winter Pollen* (1994.) The 10 letters from the 1990s include Hughes's personal reminiscences of the beginnings of his friendship with Sonnenberg, prompted by the publication of Sonnenberg's autobiography in 1991. Hughes also comments extensively on the ideas expressed in - and the critical reaction to *Shakespeare and the Goddess of Complete Being*. In the letters from the mid-to-late 1990s, Hughes again offers commentary on Sonnenberg's writing, and he also expresses his own current interest in drama. The three final letters from Ted Hughes, all written in 1998, appear to be in response to Sonnenberg's concern about Hughes's illness, and they also indicate that Hughes was sending Sonnenberg various volumes of his poetry.

Two of the five letters from Olwyn Hughes are business correspondence written to Sonnenberg in 1965. Two of the three later letters express her grief over Hughes's death, and her reaction to his memorial service. The three letters from Carol Hughes are from 1999-2000. They express her thanks for Sonnenberg's expression of sympathy, and they also describe several photographs (not included) of Hughes which she sent to Sonnenberg. The final letter, from April 2000, mentions the opening of the Hughes archive at Emory.

Arrangement Note

Arranged in chronological order.

Container List

Ted Hughes to Ben Sonnenberg

Box	Folder	Content
1	1	Ted Hughes (TH) to Ben Sonnenberg (BS), 10 October 1961, ALS, 2 sheets, 2 pages
1	1	TH to BS, June 1962, ALS, 1 sheet, 2 pages
1	1	TH to BS, 22 June 1962, ALS, 2 sheets, 3 pages
1	1	TH to BS, 2 July 1962, ALS 1 sheet, 2 pages
1	1	TH to BS, n.d. [1964], ALS, 1 sheet, 2 pages
1	1	TH to BS, n.d. [1965-66], ALS, 1 sheet, 1 page
1	1	TH to BS, n.d. [before 1966], ALS, 1 sheet, 2 pages
1	1	TS corrected [in TH's handwriting], n.d., draft of poem [by BS] titled "Maureen is Speech," 1 sheet, 1 page
1	1	TH to BS, 1965, ALS with envelope, 1 sheet, 1 page
1	1	TH to BS, n.d. [ca. 1960s], ALS, 1 sheet, 1 page
1	1	TH to BS, 12 December 1966, ALS, 1 sheet, 2 pages
1	1	TH to BS, 10 August 1967, TLS [ripped in half due to age], 1 sheet, 2 pages
1	1	TH to BS, 13 November 1969, ALS, 1 sheet, 2 pages
1	2	TH to BS, 23 March 1970, ALS, 1 sheet, 2 pages
1	2	TH to BS, 5 November 1970, ALS, 1 sheet, 1 page
1	2	TH to BS, 29 October 1972, TLS, 1 sheet, 1 page
1	3	TH to BS, 23 November 1980 [dated in an unknown hand], ALS, 1 sheet, 1 page
1	3	TH to BS, 17 March 1981, ALS, 1 sheet, 2 pages
1	3	TH to BS, 30 May 1981, TLS, 1 sheet, 2 pages
1	3	TH to BS, 21 July 1981, ALS, 1 sheet, 1 page, includes "The Macaw," TS
1	3	TH to BS, 29 January 1982, ALS, 1 sheet, 1 page
1	3	TH to BS, 20 February 1982, ALS, 1 sheet, 2 pages
1	3	TH to BS, [Spring 1982], AC, 1 sheet, 1 page
1	3	TH to BS, [1984?], ALS, 1 sheet, 2 pages
1	3	TH to BS, 6 March 1986, TLS, 1 sheet, 2 pages, includes four newspaper clippings relating to Hughes' appointment as poet laureate
1	3	TH to BS, 4 August 1986, ALS, 1 sheet, 2 pages
1	3	TH to BS, 22 August 1988, ALS, 1 sheet, 2 pages
1	3	TH to BS, 23 May 1989, TLS, 1 sheet, 1 page
1	3	TH to BS, n.d., ALS, 1 sheet, 1 page
1	3	TH to BS, 28 July 1989, TLS, 1 sheet, 1 page. Also includes TS (photocopy) of "Sheep in Fog" [published in Winter Pollen]
1	4	TH to BS, n.d. [dated "about 1991" in an unknown hand], TLS, 3 sheets, 3 pages
1	4	TH to BS, 17 May 1992, TLS, 2 sheets, 2 pages

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| 1 | 4 | TH to BS, 16 August 1992, ALS, 1 sheet, 2 pages |
| 1 | 4 | TH to BS, 28 August 1992, ALS, 1 sheet, 2 pages |
| 1 | 4 | TH to BS, 19 May 1994, ALS, 1 sheet, 1 page |
| 1 | 4 | TH to BS, 19 May 1994, TLS, 3 sheets, 3 pages |
| 1 | 4 | TH to BS, 3 December 1995, ALS, 1 sheet, 2 pages |
| 1 | 4 | TH to BS, 12 August 1996, ALS, 1 sheet, .5 page |
| 1 | 4 | TH to BS, 6 April 1998, ALS, 1 sheet, 1 page |
| 1 | 4 | TH to BS, 2 September 1998, ALS, 1 sheet, 1 page |
| 1 | 4 | TH to BS, 10 October 1998, ALS, 1 sheet, 1 page |
| 1 | 4 | Photocopy of printed version of "The Prophet" [annotated in TH's handwriting],
n.d. |

Olwyn/Carol Hughes to Ben Sonnenberg

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| 1 | 5 | Olwyn Hughes (OH) to BS, 25 July 1965, TLS, 1 sheet, 1 page |
| 1 | 5 | OH to BS, 29 September 1965, TLS, 1 sheet, 1 page |
| 1 | 5 | Olwyn Hughes to BS, 25 November 1981, TLS, 1 sheet, 1 page; attached
telegram, undated |
| 1 | 5 | Olwyn Hughes to BS, 31 January 1982, TLS, 1 sheet, 1 page |
| 1 | 5 | Olwyn Hughes to BS, 22 February 1982, TLS, 1 sheet, 1 page |
| 1 | 5 | Olwyn Hughes to BS, 10 May 1982, TLS, 1 sheet, 1 page |
| 1 | 5 | Olwyn Hughes to BS, 5 October 1987, TLS, 2 sheets, 2 pages |
| 1 | 5 | Olwyn Hughes to BS, 16 February 1989, TLS, 1 sheet, 1 page |
| 1 | 5 | OH to BS, 5 February 1999, ALS, 1 sheet, 1 page |
| 1 | 5 | OH to BS, 11 March 1999, ALS, a sheet, 1 page |
| 1 | 5 | OH to BS, 24 May 1999, ALS, 1 sheet, 1 page |
| 1 | 5 | Carol Hughes (CH) to BS, 1 February 1999, ALS, 2 sheets, 3 pages |
| 1 | 5 | CH to BS, 9 June 1999, ALS, 1 sheet, 1 page |
| 1 | 5 | CH to BS, 27 April 2000, ALS, 1 sheet, 2 pages |
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