



## Wolfwatching

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Ted Hughes has been publishing poetry for more than thirty years; in that time, he has made his presence known by composing poems that not only see the beauty contained in the natural world but also deal—most passionately—with its violence. His first collection, *THE HAWK IN THE RAIN*, was published in 1957 to critical acclaim. His subject matter has alienated some readers, but no one can dispute his skill as a poet. *WOLFWATCHING* was first published in England in 1989 and now—after nearly two years—makes its way into the American market.

Hughes has always emphasized the animal world. In the title poem of this latest collection, he has written one of his finest poems in that vein. He is never sentimental; through keen observation, Hughes hammers home his painful point of the brutality of making a wolf exist within the London Zoo. The wolf is a predator, but contemporary circumstances have forced it into an unnatural role. In “The Black Rhino,” Hughes speaks of the brutal decimation of the Black Rhinoceros. This poem was written expressly for the purpose of raising funds to help save this endangered creature. Reading *WOLFWATCHING* is a very sobering experience. Hughes is deeply concerned with the struggle between what is alive and vital and the ferocious destructive forces that seem to be determined to have their way.

In *WOLFWATCHING*, Hughes also returns to the Yorkshire area of his childhood. The poems that speak to this time in his life are precise in their rendering of what it was like for him to grow up at a time when England was still recovering from World War I. The coal miners of Yorkshire are also pictured as victims of a cruel fate. For the most part in this collection, Hughes has been true to his strengths. The poems are muscular and unforgiving. *WOLFWATCHING* is a powerful addition to the canon of one of England’s major poets.

## Sources for Further Study

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