**Two legends**

***from ‘Crow: From the life and Songs of the Crow’***

***by Ted Hughes (1930-1998)***

I

Black was the without eye
Black the within tongue
Black was the heart
Black the liver, black the lungs
Unable to suck in light
Black the blood in its loud tunnel
Black the bowels packed in furnace
Black too the muscles
Striving to pull out into the light
Black the nerves, black the brain
With its tombed visions
Black also the soul, the huge stammer
Of the cry that, swelling, could not
Pronounce its sun.

II

Black is the wet otter’s head, lifted.
Black is the rock, plunging in foam.
Black is the gall lying on the bed of the blood.

Black is the earth-globe, one inch under,
An egg of blackness
Where sun and moon alternate their weathers

To hatch a crow, a black rainbow
Bent in emptiness
over emptiness

But flying.

**Examination at the Womb-Door**

***by Ted Hughes (1930-1998)***

Who owns those scrawny little feet? Death.

Who owns this bristly scorched-looking face? Death.

Who owns these still-working lungs? Death.

Who owns this utility coat of muscles? Death.

Who owns these unspeakable guts? Death.

Who owns these questionable brains? Death.

All this messy blood? Death.

These minimum-efficiency eyes? Death.

This wicked little tongue? Death.

This occasional wakefulness? Death.

Given, stolen, or held pending trial?

Held.

Who owns the whole rainy, stony earth? Death.

Who owns all of space? Death.

Who is stronger than hope? Death.

Who is stronger than the will? Death.

Stronger than love? Death.

Stronger than life? Death.

But who is stronger than Death?

 Me, evidently.

Pass, Crow.

**Crow Goes Hunting**

***by Ted Hughes (1930-1998)***

Crow

Decided to try words.

He imagined some words for the job, a lovely pack-

Clear-eyed, resounding, well-trained,

With strong teeth.

You could not find a better bred lot.

He pointed out the hare and away went the words

Resounding.

Crow was Crow without fail, but what is a hare?

It converted itself to a concrete bunker.

The words circled protesting, resounding.

Crow turned the words into bombs-they blasted the bunker.

The bits of bunker flew up-a flock of starlings.

Crow turned the words into shotguns, they shot down the starlings.

The falling starlings turned to a cloudburst.

Crow turned the words into a reservoir, collecting the water.

The water turned into an earthquake, swallowing the reservoir.

The earthquake turned into a hare and leaped for the hill

Having eaten Crow's words.

Crow gazed after the bounding hare

Speechless with admiration.

**Dawn's Rose**

***by Ted Hughes (1930-1998)***

Is melting an old frost moon.

Agony under agony, the quiet of dust,

And a crow talking to stony skylines.

Desolate is the crow's puckered cry

As an old woman's mouth

When the eyelids have finished

And the hills continue.

A cry

Wordless

As the newborn baby's grieving

On the steely scales.

As the dull gunshot and its after-râle

Among conifers, in rainy twilight.

Or the suddenly dropped, heavily dropped

Star of blood on the fat leaf.

**Glimpse**

***by Ted Hughes (1930-1998)***

 'О leaves,' Crow sang, trembling, 'O leaves –'

 The touch of a leaf's edge at his throat

Guillotined further comment.

 Nevertheless

Speechless he continued to stare at the leaves

 Through the god's head instantly substituted.