

Lucas Myers: *Crow Steered / Bergs Appeared.*

Additional Notes and Minor Corrections.

Soon after my memoir of Ted Hughes and Sylvia Plath, *Crow Steered/Bergs Appeared* was published, several friends who were also readers provided me with corrections in some matters of detail. A little later, I compiled a list of these corrections and sent it to the two writers I knew of who were preparing books about Ted Hughes. Elaine Feinstein replied graciously and Diane Middlebrook made the sensible suggestion that I supply the list to the Ted Hughes Website for possible posting.

I agreed that such a proposal to the Ted Hughes Website was a good idea. However, I wanted to avoid distracting possible readers from my central themes (Ted and Sylvia's complementarity; healing and katabolic energies; the Buddhist concept of ego as an analytical tool, etc.) with matters of detail, at least for a few weeks. When Professor Middlebrook's review appeared in the *San Francisco Chronicle Book Review* of 20 May 2001, I concluded that this precaution was no longer useful.

The errors I brought to the attention of Elaine Feinstein and Professor Middlebrook are included in the following list:

p. 6

The White Goddess. I am grateful to Nick Gammage for writing me that he had received a letter from Ted saying that John Fisher, his Grammar School teacher at Mytholmroyd, had presented him with a copy of the book before he went up to Cambridge.

p. 32

»JC« in the TLS of 23 February questions dancing the twist in 1956. This is correct – Chubby Checker introduced it in 1960. I think I must have been dancing a twist-like thing I had called »the hog-wild jitterbug« back at my American college.

p. 38

Ted did not sell his entire archive to Emory in March 1997. Additional papers were obviously created between the time he offered the archive for discussion with Emory and his death. Furthermore there were materials that did not make their way into the Emory archive. Details on this question would be for the estate to provide or not to provide. Thanks to Olwyn Hughes for this clarification.

p. 38

Dan and Helga were married in 1957 as elsewhere stated and not 1958 as appears here. I was best man.

p. 39

Ted's letter of May 1993 refers to Janet Malcolm as »Hungarian.« »That strange lady Janet Malcolm – Hungarian -- has written a book about ›SP's biographers,« ... Janet Malcolm was kind enough to write me, upon my inquiry, that she is Czech and was born in Prague. Of course Ted and I and Olwyn had a great many Hungarian friends, most but not all Jews, and this may be why Ted thought of her as Hungarian. However, he did not know her and wrote that he went into »deeper grass« when she tried to see him, in spite of liking a book of her essays she had sent him.

p. 40

I imply that Alvarez probably didn't sleep with Sylvia in the late autumn of 1962. I had no direct knowledge of this question. My assumption didn't belong in the book and is probably in error. This, however, would not affect my approach one way or the other.

p. 56

Claas Kazzer was kind enough to point out that this would have happened when the family was living in Mytholmroyd. The line, therefore, should read, »when Ted was seven or eight ...« and not »... eight, nine, eleven...« Similarly, on **page 85**, I speak of Ted as nine at the time of the incident related in »The Deadfall.« Ted would have been seven or eight.

p. 82

Carol, not Ted, took legal action upon the appearance of the false bongo drum story. Ted was away. This would not alter my view that legal action was distasteful to Ted, although as I recall he himself was obliged to take it on other occasions. Thanks to Olwyn Hughes for this correction.

p. 84

In addition to Ted's two trips to the continent with Uncle Walt, there was a school trip to Switzerland and a trip to Paris to accompany Gerald's wife Joan. Thanks to Olwyn Hughes for this suggestion.

p. 132-133

Edith Hughes did not die in Devon. Olwyn took her parents in an ambulance to Heptonstall where her mother died. William Hughes

moved definitively to Devon only after he became too infirm to live alone. Thanks to Olwyn Hughes for this suggestion.

pp. 136-137

»Olwyn ... authorizing ...« Lois Ames. This is wrong. Lois, a contemporary of Sylvia's at Smith, wrote Ted proposing the arrangement. He agreed and gave her »exclusivity« for eight years. So it was incorrect to attribute this to Olwyn. It was actually an example of Ted's carelessness in practical affairs. Thanks to Olwyn Hughes for pointing this error out.

p. 137

Olwyn thinks I have it wrong about the heckling of Ted. I am sure it happened once in Australia and thought I had remembered that it happened elsewhere. If it did not, however, it would not change my argument. The tactics of Ted's opponents were like those of the Red Guards and their sponsors, whether it resulted in demonstrations only once or more often.

Olwyn also specified that my memoir was generally unfair to her. She regretted that I had not sent the manuscript to her for review. She sent copies of her letter to me about this to two friends of mine in order to forestall error in the event they should write memoirs.

I wrote Olwyn reiterating my long-standing suggestion that she publish a memoir. I pointed out that she, not I could best express her views. I also said that it was important to get the extensive information that she has but others do not out into the open air. I told her that I had not only wanted my memoir to be independent but to be seen as independent and therefore did not send the manuscript to any of Ted's survivors in the family.

I also told Olwyn that I wanted to publish my memoir before new and fanciful accounts of Ted's life appeared. My memoir would have been delayed if family members reviewed it and wanted me to change it. This was an additional, but not the central reason I did not want to run it by members of the family.

Actually I tried to get a memoir out much earlier. I submitted a 10,000 word memoir to a London daily for publication in March 2000. They rejected it on the grounds of its length. Olwyn had commented helpfully on this earlier memoir. I came to dislike it quite a bit and was glad it was not published. I started again from scratch.

I had adopted the idea of writing a memoir in late 1999 after Dan Huws sent me clippings from the London press of clearly unhistorical or malicious stories about Ted that appeared within a year of his death.

Olwyn wrote that she had been alone in fighting the public battle in defence of Ted. I informed her that I had written an extensive piece challenging Sylvia's biographers a decade ago. *The New Yorker* sent it back without comment; *The New York Review of Books* »lost« it for more than a year, almost two as I recall, and rejected it with an apology; *The Sewanee Review* rejected it; and I gave up. I wrote Olwyn that either because of the Zeitgeist or because of the superior strategy and tactics of those on the other side of the argument, or both, the truth had not prevailed.

Lucas Myers