

## Lucas Myers: Letter to the Editor of the San Francisco Chronicle

I sent a letter to the editor of the *San Francisco Chronicle Weekly Book Review* commenting on Professor Middlebrook's review of *Crow Steered/Bergs Appeared* by e-mail on 22 May. As far as I know, this letter has not been published. It therefore is appended here:

Date: Tue, 22 May 2001 08:10:50 -0500

Subject: LETTERS TO THE EDITOR: NB BOOK REVIEW

Sender: Lucas Myers,

Editor: In the Book Review of May 20, Professor Diane Middlebrook wittily reviews my memoir of Ted Hughes and Sylvia Plath. She describes *Crow Steered/Bergs Appeared* as a cult book and me as an insider.

But inside what? And what's outside? I met Ted, then Sylvia more than forty-five years ago and remained in contact with them all their lives. I detailed my recollections as well as I could. When I made remarks not based on recollection, I gave references in Ted's *Birthday Letters*, Sylvia's *Journals*, and their unpublished but archived letters to me. The cult is elsewhere. Professor Middlebrook turns reality on its head – the imperialists label the natives of fact »imperialist.«

All this is a pity because it does much to obscure the true character of these important writers and the history of their lives as they lived them. Understandably readers may wish to have done with the subject. For anyone who does want to pursue it and see what I really said, I'll send a copy of *Crow Steered* to the San Francisco Public Library, where I spent many rewarding hours when I lived in the city.

I am not unaware of Professor Middlebrook's achievement as a biographer nor, on the other hand, of her inventive use of the records and tapes of Anne Sexton's psychiatrist. »... Anne herself would have wanted to share this process ...« she has him tell us. Professor Middlebrook is reportedly preparing a book on Ted Hughes. She omits to mention that in her review of my book, but her fairyland account should help clear the path of any inconvenient debris her own theses may encounter when she presents them.

As to the cult of Sylvia and Ted, it is the academics and their innocent pupils, even more than mendacious journalists, who have created and nurtured it.

Lucas Myers

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