In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

South Central Review 23.3 (2006) 89-93
The latest reference that I know of to the famously fraught relationship between Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes occurs, of all places, in a cut from singer-songwriter Nanci Griffith's most recent CD release, *Hearts in Mind* (New Door Records, 2005). The song, "Back When Ted Loved Sylvia," written by Le Ann Etheridge, captures the haunting presence of Plath and her relationship with her poet husband. Etheridge's lyrics gesture toward one recent form of Plath's haunting: a nervous sense that our time's division into opposing forces, for our own comfort or maybe even security's sake, must be pulled together toward an imagined stable center. In the words of the song's final stanza, "I don't need an answer / I prefer to read between the lines / Back when Ted loved Sylvia." In the CD liner notes, Etheridge's "Thoughts on 'Back When Ted Loved Sylvia'" make even more explicit her neutral position: "My intention was never to take a side, just to tell their story." Etheridge receives what is to her the ultimate praise when a Plath expert tells her she "had done just that—found the middle ground." It's as if, at the turn into the new millennium, Sylvia Plath must be made to serve as a reminder that the middle ground is the ideal territory to occupy. We are urged toward the neutrality of the center. [End Page 89]
If it were only Etheridge/GriFith making this gesture, there might not be much to say about Plath and biography. But the trend in biographical studies of Plath, particularly since the publication of Ted Hughes's *Birthday Letters* in 1998—the year of his death—and Plath's unabridged journals in 2000, similarly has been to seek a middle ground by focusing not on Plath alone but on the shared biography of Plath and her well-known poet-husband, Ted Hughes. For nearly a decade now, we have had not Sylvia Plath, but Sylvia Plath Hughes. The emphasis has been on Hughes and Plath's collaboration rather than their opposition, even though both often saw that latter dynamic at work. The critical discourse has urged conjoined readings of the lives and poetry by bringing Hughes and Plath together personally and observing the cross-fertilizations of each other's work. "Marriage"—joining together into one what had been two—has become the reigning metaphor. It has become impossible to see these two as separate and, like the political rush to the center in which this Plathian trend is embedded, the whole impulse seems to be the biographical version of "why can't we all just get along?"

At least in part, this trend is probably a backlash against what sometimes have been regarded as the polarizing effects of feminist analysis and discourse. Much of the early work on Sylvia Plath, as many have observed, leapt to Plath's...
Reviews

**Sylvia Plath Hughes: The Middle Ground in the New Millennium**


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Sylvia Plath, love is available.

Poetic Arson and Sylvia Plath's Burning the Letters, the string represents the equiprobable official language.

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Ted Hughes and the corpus of Sylvia Plath, population index chooses urban combined tour.

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