

ROBERT GRAVES AMONG THE SHEAVES

by William A. Dolid

The Robert Graves Manuscripts and Letters/at Southern Illinois University:/  
an Inventory/by/John W. Presley/The Whitston Publishing Company/Troy, New  
York/1976

Collation: [1-6]<sup>16</sup> [7]<sup>12</sup> [8-9]<sup>16</sup>; 140 leaves.

p.[a] The Robert Graves Manuscripts and Letters at Southern Illinois Univer-  
sity; p.[b] blank; p.[c] title-page, p.[d] copyright notice; p.i TABLE OF  
CONTENTS; pp.ii-vi INTRODUCTION; p.vii KEY TO SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS;  
p.[viii] blank; pp. 1-252 text; p.[unnumbered] APPENDICES; p.[unnumbered]  
blank; pp.253-262 INDEX; pp.[263-266] blank.

23.5 x 16 cm. Bulk 2.2/2.3 cm. White paper all edges trimmed, white end-  
papers. Bound in light blue cloth. Front stamped in gold:/The Robert  
Graves Manuscripts and Letters/at Southern Illinois University:/an Inventory/  
by/John W. Presley/. Spine stamped in gold border and letters, within a solid  
black box, from top to bottom:/The Robert Graves Manuscripts and Letters/; [then  
horizontally in gold:]/Presley/Whitston/.  
Price \$18.00

Contents: I Introduction-II Key to Symbols and Abbreviations-III Poetry:  
Individual Poems and Collections written or edited by Graves-IV Prose Fiction:  
Novels, Translations, Stories written or revised by Graves-V Critical Prose:

Essays, Reviews, Introductions and Collections-VI Unpublished Manuscripts: Poetry and Prose-VII Letters to Graves-VIII Letters from Graves-IX Other Letters-X Manuscripts by Others-XI Miscellaneous Items and Ephemera-XII Appendices.

In 1965 and 1966, by two separate accessions, Southern Illinois University acquired a remarkable manuscript collection from Robert Graves. The first was correspondence received by Graves, mainly from 1919-1930. The second was a large collection of prose manuscripts, but owing to Graves's parsimony or literary habits, the verso sides of the Prose manuscripts contain many drafts of poetry and prose, much of it in scrambled order. Graves himself put the prose manuscripts and the letters in order before delivery to Southern Illinois University. By a curious geographical irony, this collection of works by an English poet living on Majorca, housed in Illinois, has now been cataloged by a scholar from Augusta College in Georgia and published by a scholarly house in Troy, New York.

The problems for the cataloger in this collection are singular, and have been reported extensively by Professor Presley.<sup>1</sup> When Graves put the rectos in order, he often substantially disordered the versos, even to the point of separating sheets of the same manuscript into several of the 28 boxes which contain the collection. To facilitate location within the collection, the boxes, as well as the folders in each box, are numbered. Thus, a locator number "20/11" means the material is located in folder 11 of box 20.

The form for each descriptive entry is as follows:

Index number:	Published title. Type of item, number of pages, medium, Locator number.
Title:	the title as it appears in the manuscript, if a title appears
First line:	the first line of the item, as it appears in the manuscript
Collation:	description of the pagination, number of sheets, composites, etc.
Date:	a date is given when one appears on the manuscript.
Contents:	description of the manuscript, identification as early or late draft, notes, outline, worksheet, etc. Identification of handwriting and medium in which revisions are made. Any other information necessary for an understanding of the manuscript's content or precedence.

The entries for verso manuscripts are noted by the word Verso appearing before the locator number and by expansion of the collation line to include multiple locator numbers. Since nearly all the verso material is in non-sequential order, and extends throughout several folders or boxes, a typical verso collation line looks like this:

Collation: 21/01: 12pp. (1-7, 8, 11, 14, 17, 21)  
21/02: 3pp. (9, 12-13).

This line means that twelve pages of the verso material are on the verso sides of whatever manuscript is in folder 1 of box 21, and three pages are on the verso of the manuscript in folder 2 of box 21.

Here are two actual entries in the catalog, one recto and one verso.

727. Chapter 10, Untitled Novel. AMs, 6pp., ink. 14/11  
Title: Chapter X  
First line: Herbert was rather silent and distant at supper. Lollia explained to Marion: 'He gets  
Collation: 6 full sheets numbered 1-6 consecutively.  
Content: first draft of the chapter, with Graves's corrections (ink).

134. "What Will Be, Is," All13<sup>2</sup> TMs, 2pp. carbon. Verso  
25/07-26/04.  
Title: PAID IN BLOOD  
First line: He and she, against all manifest reason,  
Collation: 25/07: 1p. (unnumbered)  
26/04: 1p. (unnumbered)  
Content: early carbon typescript, with Graves's  
corrections (ink).

A perusal of the catalog should make any Graves collector (certainly this one) or scholar pant for at least two weeks of free access to the collection. Professor Presley has divided the collection into the nine broad categories listed in the Contents, above. There are jewels throughout. The manuscripts of published poetry, though clearly not as extensive as the collection at SUNY Buffalo, nevertheless document Graves's poetic output of the 1960s, especially for the publications Man Does, Woman Is, Love Respelt, and Poems 1965-1968. Such poems as "Double Bass", "She is No Liar", "The Oleaster" (all favorites of this writer) are here in various states of composition, giving further insight into Graves's unique poetic method; initial inspiration, then the perfecting through many revisions. Also included here are forwards, with revisions, to various poetry collections, tables of contents, printer's copies, and the first proof copy of Poems 1914-1947. When the Muse descends, Graves seems to grab the nearest scrap of paper to write on, as shown by the following entry:

101. "A Shift of Scene," All14<sup>3</sup> AMs, 5pp., ink. 26/01  
Collation: 3 sheets of stationery, the verso of an  
envelope addressed to Graves at Oxford (Nov. 19,  
1964), and the verso of a tablet backing board.

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The manuscripts of published prose are very extensive, including one or more manuscripts or revised typed versions of The Anger of Achilles, Antigua, Penny, Puce, The Golden Fleece, the two Sargeant Lamb novels, They Hanged My Sainly Billy, and Wife to Mr. Milton, as well as Private Richards's Old Soldier Sahib. The material on Antigua, Penny, Puce, including a complete early autograph manuscript along with correspondence from W.A. Fuller, a London barrister, whom Graves consulted on the legal matters in the novel, looks particularly interesting. This novel has been treated least kindly of all of Graves's novels by reviewers and critics, but here is evidence that Graves was as careful to provide verisimilitude for it as he was for his more highly regarded historical novels. Actually, Antigua, Penny, Puce, is very good of its kind, a pot-boiler to be sure, but a pleasant, amusing, well constructed story of which Graves certainly need not be ashamed. Oliver Price is one of the most thoroughly repulsive "normal" men in popular fiction, and Jane has the potential for becoming an underground fictional feminist heroine.

Among the critical prose are versions in various states of Another Future of Poetry, The Crowning Privilege, Occupation: Writer, and The Reader Over Your Shoulder with large portions of But It Still Goes On, The Greek Myths, and The Nazarene Gospel Restored. There are a few items of unpublished poetry and prose including the most interesting item in the collection, an unpublished novel in 100 pages. It would be interesting if, the terms of Southern Illinois University's ownership permitting, this substantial novel fragment could be published. Perhaps geographical anomaly will again come to our aid and the work be taken up by the University of Ulan-Bator Press.

Of great interest to collectors and scholars are the letters written to Graves over a considerable period of years by such people as Arnold Bennett, Edmund Blunden (a long correspondence, 1919-1927), T.S. Eliot, Geoffrey Faber and F.V. Morley of Faber and Faber, E.M. Forster, Sir William Nicholson,

Siegfried Sassoon, Edith Sitwell, and Virginia Woolf, dealing with every aspect of the literary life of that period. There are letters concerning family matters, literary production and the publication of some of Graves's books and periodicals, notably the Owl. Paul Nash writes concerning the artwork for Welchman's Hose, and Ralph Vaughan Williams writes advice on the production of songs in John Kemp's Wager.

Finally, there is what appears to be an important Laura Riding item--three versions of her play Greeks and Trojans, including one early manuscript, with corrections in Graves's hand, and two later typescripts.

This partial summary of the collection shows somewhat inadequately the great riches to be found here. So far as one who has not seen the collection can tell, Professor Presley has done a fine job of cataloging, taking what must have been an immense amount of time and painstaking work. Inevitably, mistakes, mostly typographical, will creep into a venture of this kind. Item 92 has "8/05" in the description, but "3/05" in the collation. Item 500 lists a published title Another Future of English Poetry, but a search of Higginson reveals no such title. In the content for item 750 Edmund Blunden's wife's name is printed "Mary Blunder". There appears to be a problem with the dates for items 834 and 835, but only a look at the collection could clarify them. Item 1111 misspells "cirticizes". The only apparent error of fact is that Professor Presley seems to think that Alan Hodge is named "Alan Hodges". This spelling appears throughout the catalog as well as in his article in The American Archivist, and in view of the connection of Hodge with Graves is a matter of some seriousness.

The catalog has an excellent and very useful index including the names of all writers and recipients of letters. There is an organization chart for the collection showing the box/folder number for the main categories (prose, poetry, correspondence). The book itself is a neat-but-not-gaudy volume, photo-offset from typed copy and generally attractive. Most pleasantly, in an age of perfect binding, this one is bound imperfectly but very well, sewn in signatures, which will withstand the severest wear that a devotee of Graves's literature can give it.

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#### FOOTNOTES

1. John Woodrow Presley, "A Method of Verso Description", American Archivist Vol. 39, no. 1, January 1976, pp. 21-23.
2. Higginson A113: Love Respelt.
3. Higginson A114: Collected Poems 1965.

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