

Change! The world needs it!

Stephen Pike

One of the qualities we most admired in Robert Graves was generosity of spirit. This article about literary piracy gives you an opportunity to be generous and to right an injustice, particularly if you live in the USA or have friends or relatives there. It is about an injustice suffered by very many authors from Charles Dickens onwards - the piracy in America of books originally published in Britain. In its original form, it was a Paineite sheet given out at the Oxford Robert Graves Centenary Conference to some Americans who at least resembled Thomas Jefferson in that they had receptive ears and expressed a determination to improve their country! Only at the Conference, however, did I discover that the campaign issue relating to books by one of his friends also seems to affect Robert Graves' *own* works. This is an issue then, which could directly benefit Robert's own dependents and indirectly affect the potential income and valuable work of the Robert Graves Trust itself. I was further advised that it is a good time to fight this abuse because America has become conscious of the piracy of *American* products abroad. It has to put its own house in order before it can complain of others! This is to be an aspect of GATT. It will be interesting to see how its small print affecting copyright works out in practice. Now read on!

POET VERSUS PIRATE

Invited to the Robert Graves conference but unable to attend because

of his wife being confined to a wheelchair is the distinguished critic and poet, Derek Savage. Readers of Miranda Seymour's *Robert Graves: Life on the Edge* will know of him as a friend of Robert Graves. His description of Graves that she quotes on page 339: "a really admirable human quality of being all in one piece, cut out of the same solid material throughout" applies to D.S. Savage himself. Readers of *Focus on Robert Graves Volume 2 Number 2 Spring 1994* have the additional advantage of the complete Radio Talk, "A Meeting with Robert Graves", from which Miranda Seymour is quoting!

Books originally published before the International Copyright Act of 1957 seem not to have legal protection in America. Authors of such books and their dependents may therefore be defrauded of their rightful fees unless individual pressure is brought to bear on the American pirates. For example, in 1950, in Britain, Eyre and Spottiswoode published *Hamlet and the Pirates* by D.S. Savage. With supreme irony, its brilliantly argued thesis is that Shakespeare incorporated the Pirates into *Hamlet* as a result of his first version being pirated! Certainly it was considered good enough by Haskell House Publishers Ltd. (Box 140, Blythbourne Station, Brooklyn, New York 11219. Tel. 718 435 7828) who reprinted it in 1977. It's No.24 in their series *Studies in Shakespeare*. It seems that they did not consult or tell its author about their reprinting of his article, have paid him nothing and, indeed, not answered his letters. Over the telephone a Mr Halber has confirmed that it's available at \$75 and claimed that a "Mr John Smith" is in charge but not there then. The status of three Graves titles published by Haskell is being investigated by Graves' literary agent.

Two other books by D.S. Savage, "The Personal Principle" and "The Withered Branch", were pirated by Norwood Editions. Their proprietor, Mr Mark Weiman, featured in a *Sunday Times* front-page news story (13:1:80) thus: *Priestly! Who is he? Asks Book Pirate*, as reported in the revised *The Pirates of Philadelphia* by David Machin, reprinted by the Society of Authors (84 Drayton Gardens, London SW10 9SB). It was originally published in *The Bookseller* of 12:1:79 and given American coverage in *Publisher's Weekly*.

An additional problem is caused by the Pirates listing their own editions in the *American Books in Print*. Besides creating the illusion of legitimacy, "they will time and again deprive the British copyright owner of the chance of arranging a new license to a publisher who is prepared to pay royalties."

D.S. Savage's address is 67 Church Street, Mevagissey, St Austell,

Cornwall PL26 6SR Great Britain. He does not have the resources to fight this widespread abuse which includes the life work of hundreds of authors like Muriel Spark, F.R. Leavis and Stephen Spender. Thank you for reading this. I hope that you will want to help, specifically by tackling Haskell House Publishers and Norwood Editions—perhaps also public representatives in Washington. Talking to a friendly lawyer before you start could provide useful information and advice. Your objectives would be to (i) secure some royalties for the author affected (ii) at the very least enable the author to have some copies of his own books (iii) make the authorities and public aware of the situation and thus, ideally and eventually, amend the law.

I would add that D.S. Savage himself exemplifies values at the opposite end of the scale from those of pirates. There can be few of us who would make a deathbed promise to a friend to see that the friend's work was published, come what may, because we believed in its unusual quality. Fewer still, finding that no publisher would take on a visionary Christian philosopher (albeit valued by Gabriel Marcel), would decide to publish "Apocalypse and Other Essay" by E.F.F. Hill ourselves. But this Savage did, setting up the Deucalion Press, but having, sadly, to sell his substantial collection of Graves' letters to fund this idealistic mission. If the reader over your shoulder is a potential pirate he should be warned that this highly original book has been a very slow seller at £6.75, having the sort of "paralysing effect that William Blake's *Jerusalem*, Pascal's *Pensées* or the *Revelations of Divine Love* of Julian of Norwich might have had on some of their original readers". The effect on an enlightened reader like yourself, used to the struggle between language and meaning in middle-to-early poems by Graves, might well be quite different!

Savage's own more recent work can be found in *The New Pelican Guide to English Literature Volume 8 : The Present*. As that Radio Talk reminds us, he goes in for "hard-hitting literary criticism". His considered judgment is worth something. This has been borne out very recently by Robert J. Bertholf, Curator of the Poetry / Rare Books Collection of the State University of New York at Buffalo who, besides offering to be "some kind of agent in the USA in restitution for wrongs that have been done", notes that Savage's letters to Kenneth Rexroth are "some of the most important documents" in the University archive. The archive has also been "over the years a careful and dedicated collector of (his) published works". In this cause against literary piracy here is an opportunity to do some good in the world. I urge you to take it!

-DEVON