

Editor's Introduction

Patrick Quinn

Our third number of *Gravesiana* takes us in to our second year of existence. The response to the journal has been very gratifying, and the editorial staff has been very pleased with the positive comments and suggestions put forth by contributors and subscribers alike. The initial problems of production are being slowly done away with, and the communication snarls between us and the two branches of the Graves Society and the journal appear to be dissolving thanks to the use of e-mail and the decision to hold an annual general meeting in Oxford once a year.

The big news at the moment are the plans for the 50th year anniversary celebrations of the publication of *The White Goddess* by Faber and Faber. A conference is being held in Manchester in September of next year. Further information concerning this conference can be found in the pages of the journal. We hope to get as many members of the Society and other interested scholars and readers of Robert Graves' mythic work together to discuss the implications and impact of his most important critical work.

This number of the journal is once again filled with a collection of articles and reviews which reflect the varied interests of Graves himself. The first article is a rare treat: we are printing some reminiscences of Kingsley Amis when he visited Graves with his wife and three children in Majorca in 1962. The article was supposedly published in *Life Magazine* in the 1960s, but we have been unable to find any record of it appearing, nor can Kingsley's son, Martin Amis. So we publish it here, for Amis' reflections are fascinating for their glimpse of life with Robert Graves in Majorca when he was the Emperor of Deyá.

Simon Brittan's "Graves' Myth of Skelton" is a welcome addition to Graves' scholarship for his close reading of both poets. Brittan demonstrates convincingly that Graves misreads Skelton's poetry and attempts to view it and Skelton himself in a light which mirrors his own beliefs and conceptions. Marisa Favale's original reading of "The Shout" beside Apuleius's *The Golden Ass* (which Graves translated) is thought-provoking and acts a jumping-off point for a number of valuable reflections on Graves' poetic philosophy.

Deborah Tyler-Bennett offers some concrete evidence concerning the similarities of Graves and Edith Sitwell's early work in her article

comparing the two poets. Surprisingly, perhaps, Tyler-Bennett also touches on similarities in their later work as well: Sitwell's self-muse as possibly reminiscent of Graves' White Goddess. The article emphasises how much critical work remains to be done on Graves' relationship to his fellow poets of the twenties such as Sitwell and John Crowe Ransom. John Presley's "Narrative Structure in Graves' Historical Fiction" addresses an interesting question in Graves studies: how did such a novice in writing historical fiction write blockbuster popular novels such as *I Claudius* and *Claudius the God*? What techniques had Graves learned to engage a popular audience so completely. Presley's article dissects some of the novels of the 1930s and 1940s as well as *King Jesus*, which he feels is unsuccessful overall.

In his continuing series of biographical essays on Robert Graves, Michel Pharand examines Graves' Sufi "guru", Idries Shah. This relationship led to Graves embracing the ideals of Sufism which found their way into his poetry and influenced his way of looking at the world during his Black Goddess phase.

There are three Graves-related reviews in this issue. Steve Cloutier's review of the controversial new Everyman Poetry issue of *Wilfred Owen and Rupert Brooke* under one cover uses Graves' comments on both writers as a starting point for criticism. John McLaughlin writes a succinct review of Jay Ansill's "A Lost World: The Poems of Robert Graves Set as Songs". The review places Ansill's compact disc in the folk music tradition out of which much of Graves' own inspiration has sprung. Thom Moore's highly amusing (I use the word reverently here) review of the "The 97 Lunar Calendar" deserves reading simply for its good humour and fun. It also brings us back around to a discussion of *The White Goddess* and the conference in September in Manchester.

We will be sending out a call for papers over the summer, so check up on us on the web (<http://www.nene.ac.uk/graves/graves.html>) and do let us know via email or by mail or phone if you have any queries concerning the conference. Until then, we hope you enjoy this new number. Do let your friends and colleagues know about our existence!