

Archives of a Muse Poet: Keith Baines (1924-1984)

Alice Hughes

Keith Baines was in the RAF during World War 2 when he began reading Robert Graves's writing. Baines had grown up in Highgate. He attended the progressive King Alfred's school and then the Regent Street Polytechnic, where he studied oboe. He was born into bohemian London. His mother was dramatic in appearance, the family eccentric committed Pacifists and Food Reformers, vegetarians. Keith Baines was a different kind of bohemian, one who ate white sugar, drank and smoked too much.

Bohemian London was "alive and kicking" in the mid-fifties when he met Janet Boulton, who would be his second wife. She was a young student in London who had left the security of a middle-class English family to be an artist, angering her family. After his divorce from Anna, his first wife, he married Janet Boulton; he would marry a third wife, Jane Mactaggart. There are three children from his first marriage, one from the second. Janet Boulton has become a respected and successful painter of gardens and still life. Her work is well-depicted in *Janet Boulton. Paintings 1985-1990*. Introduction by Jane Brown. In *Conversation. A Painter's Progress into the Garden*. London: Mercury Graphics, 1991.

Keith Baines went to Deya in 1957, living there with the support and encouragement of Robert Graves. He published two books:

Malory's Le Morte d'Arthur. A Prose Rendition by Keith Baines.

Introduction by Robert Graves. New York: New American Library, 1962.

Goldensheep. A Sequence of Poems to Judith. London: Longman's, 1964.

Goldensheep was published with the support of Robert Graves and Michael Hamburger. This sequence of poems was written to a muse and indicates the relationship Baines had with Robert Graves: that of a protege. Neither found the relationship comfortable and productive for more than a few years. Baines became over-dependent and was finally urged to leave Deya by Graves. The role of "muse poet," though appealing to Baines, did not sustain either his life or his writing. His chosen muse was made uncomfortable by his attention; his separation from the support of Graves left him without direction.

I include below a brief summary of his writing, published and unpublished. These are in the possession of Janet Boulton, 64 Spring

Road, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 1AN, England. Tel. 01235 524514. There is a story to be told in these papers of the dangers of writing to the muse, of the problems of being a protegee, of the destruction of lives in the name of poetry, of the impact Robert Graves had on one of the poets of his time.

The writings of Keith Baines were gathered and numbered by him into folders:

1. Family photographs.
2. Missing.
3. Catalogues.
4. Elda. Personal. Drafts, drawings, letter from Elda. Copy of pages 1-32 from *Goldensheep* dated May 1958.
5. Transgressions. Complete journal ms. Copies of letters written by Keith Baines. Ms. copies of poems dated 1978 which proceeded from the journal.
6. Notes for Go, Peni, Go. Other miscellaneous notes. Typescript of first two sections of his autobiography: Childhood, War and Aftermath.
7. Sarah— Personal. Photographs of Sarah. Ms. of poems. Letter date 5 November 1980 about a trip to "Majorca" and visit with Robert Graves. Poems by Sarah.
8. Miscellaneous. "Celeste". Prose.
9. *Morte d'Arthur*. Correspondence with the publisher. Notes concerning the text.
10. Janet. Personal. Letters, notes, cards from Janet.
11. Literary Correspondence. Correspondence with publishers. Largely responses to inquiries.
12. *Art as Design*. Photostat of *Art as Design* (unpublished).
13. Geoffrey Bocking. Correspondence with Bocking. Typescript of poems. Early drafts of *Goldensheep*.
14. Elda. Ms. poems. Typescript of poems.
15. Missing.
16. God of the Vine. Notes. Typescript of poems.
17. Thesis. 1st Drafts. Drafts, notes of "Thesis," Deya 1961.
18. Burning Villages. First drafts of poems.
19. Burning Villages. Typescript of 30 poems.
20. Red leather folder. Drafts of poem "Logos". Receipts.
21. Untitled. Drafts of poems.
22. Sarah's Book. Typescript of 40 poems.
23. *Goldensheep*. Correspondence, drafts, and reviews.

24. Poems 1970. Typescript of 23 poems.
 25. Collected Typescripts from the Fifties.
 26. *Goldensheep*. First and second revisions.
 27. *Goldensheep*. 1 of 22 typescript copies of *Goldensheep*. Dated May 1958. Not final draft.
 28. Leaves Falling. Poems 1983.
 29. Receipts and household matters.
- Separate and unnumbered manilla envelopes:
1. Photographs of Keith Baines.
 2. Photocopies of letters from Keith Baines to Robert Graves.
 3. 27 Letters 1958-1963 Robert Graves to Keith Baines.

Alice Hughes, St. Mary's University, Texas

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