

The Peculiar Taste of Wild Olives*

(i.m. Robert Graves)

Wild olives out of red earth
(Blood of past praise and death)
first tasted in a crooked orchard
that clung on crumbling terraces –
the peculiar taste of wild olives
all the green of the world
in their green smooth skins.

High above that valley
where the roofs of Soller swam
in incalculable light
it was a taste
bitter as Spain's history
yet simple as poetry.

All of our long climb
through the small sierras
we savoured it
the peculiar taste of wild olives.
It was like having tasted
civilisation
for the very first time.

William Oxley

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