

Dunstan Ward

A RADIANT CERTITUDE

in memory of Anne Mounic

It was Robert Graves who brought us together.
You devoted your thesis to Graves's poetry,
which I was co-editing with his widow;
we shared a reading at the Club des Poètes.

Until death ended our thirty-year friendship,
you gifted me each new poetic opus:
translations and studies of other poets,
your own verse and prose, mythic, philosophic.

You published a poem of mine in your journal
(we almost quarrelled about the French text).
It unlocked a door. I was nearing seventy;
in four years my first collection appeared.

Yours was a Gravesian sense of vocation:
the poet's art as existential quest.
It illumined you with a radiant certitude
others might envy. You gave it your life.

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LASTING

for Nick Carter

Beryl Graves gave me my copy ('He is the best')
when what's 'still the definitive study' arrived
at Deia: D. N. G. Carter's *Robert Graves:
The Lasting Poetic Achievement*, which proved
a constant guide over the ten years ahead
as Beryl and I found our way together,
volume by volume, through some twelve hundred poems.

I finally tracked down the writer in Trieste,
and lured you to Paris to launch my conference
with 'The Great War and Graves's Memory':
during the coach excursion to the Somme,
in the Bazentin cemetery where Graves was hit
('Old Gravy's got it, all right') you picked up
this spent cartridge, encrusted with mud and rust

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SHE SINGS THE POET
for Nick Carter

She sings the poet
beyond his grave
from a high stone stage
in sight of the sea.

She becomes one breath,
his and her own,
one voice that cries
love despite reason.

Words of his poem
incandesce in song,
descant above
Deià cicadas.

She improvises
on its seven lines
freely as flame.
She sets us alight.

Now she falls silent,
like those lost lovers
under the olives ...
We call out delight.
She smiles and bows.