

To Return to *Wild Olives*: Interview with William Graves

Robert Graves Oral History Project

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Carl: William, this oral history concerns your father Robert Graves, but, as his son, your life experiences and opinions are very valuable and if you have anything personal you'd like to interject, please feel free to do so, it would be most welcome. But let's get right to it. How did you address Robert: was he 'father' or 'dad'?

William: Always 'father'.

Carl: Can you elaborate a little bit on your first remembrances about the family, moving from England to Deyá? Is any of that in your memory, or is it not present?

William: The trouble with that is I wrote about it, and I now don't know how much of it is my own childhood memory, or what I actually know happened. I do have memories of arriving in Deyá. I was five and a half. That's quite a few years ago, in May 1946. We left from Croydon airport, of which little exists anymore, in London, and flew to France. We stopped in Rennes where there were some people from Mallorca Robert knew from before the war. They put us up and gave us our first good meal, (Father said) since the start of the War. Again, I don't remember this. We overnighted in Rennes and then flew on down to Toulouse, where we stopped to refuel and to get

permission to fly into Spain. We had no problem at all getting permission to fly into Spain, but we had a lot of trouble finding fuel for the aircraft. It was the next day, I think, that we flew from Toulouse to Barcelona and got permission pretty quickly to come across to Mallorca. In all it was a three-day journey. There was just Robert, Beryl, myself, Lucia, and Juan; five of us Graveses and some luggage in the in the airplane, plus the two pilots.

The interesting thing about that flight, which was not recorded until recently, is that the pilot was specially picked. Robert had a friend called 'Crab' Searl¹ who was in the RAF in North Africa, and, when the war ended, he became a director of a company called Hunting Airways,² using war surplus Dragon Rapide aircraft as air taxis.

When Robert wanted to come back to Mallorca, Crab told him, 'You can't just drive down to Mallorca or take a bus or take the train. There's nothing like that in France, in 1946, so I suggest we fly you down'. Crab added, 'I've got just the pilot for you'. This part I knew. However, I found out afterwards that, in fact, the chief pilot, Captain Bebb (possibly ex-MI5), was the same pilot who had flown Franco from the Canary Islands (where he was exiled) to Tetuan (in North Africa) in 1936. Which is where the Spanish Civil War started.³

William: So, we had absolutely no problem getting into Spain. [laughter]. I really have very few early memories.

Carl: Do you have any memory at all of how Robert felt about the move back to Spain? Was it a happy moment for him?

William: I'm sure it was. No, I have no memory of that sort of thing. I do vaguely remember during the war, we were in Galmpton, and I guess it must have been '44, just before D-Day, because Father used to take me for walk and ... somehow this is mixed up in my memory with *Wife to Mr. Milton*, I don't know why, I don't know whether Father was talking about it to me, or something. But we walked through this massive number of tents, with soldiers everywhere. I found out later that these were American soldiers getting ready for

D-Day, because we were very close to Dartmouth, and the River Dart. And of course, that's where D-Day all started.

Carl: In your *Wild Olives*, introducing your life with Elena,⁴ you mentioned that you never told your parents what you did during the day: 'I went to Palma' was as long a statement as you made. What age were you about that time?

William: I was twenty-four. There's one letter from Robert that says, 'William left without even saying goodbye'. And that's when I went off to the States! It wasn't a very intimate relationship between my parents, there wasn't any kissing and hugging and things like that. I don't know why, but that's just the way it was.

Carl: Were dinner conversations along the same lines when you were growing up? Did Robert dominate conversation, was he silent or....

William: Robert tended to talk about whatever he was working on. At table with the family, he might start off on a theme of the Virgin Mary and his historical interpretation when he was working on *The Nazarene Gospel Restored*, or ideas in *The White Goddess*, things like that. Eventually Beryl would say, 'Robert, shut up', or 'Leave it alone', or simply 'Come on, Robert'. But he needed to talk to someone. Beryl was the only adult there, usually, and we listened in.⁵

Carl: You write that Robert was emotionally inaccessible. Do you recall specific incidents that tended to reinforce that feeling or that thought?

William: Well, when we got Mallorca, he was already fifty years old. So, there was a tremendous age gap; it was even more like having a grandfather than a father. So, we never sort of cuddled or anything. He used to bathe us at night. He continued doing a lot of the housework and he did the washing up. He liked washing up

and he bathed us in the bathroom in the evening and so dried us off with a towel, or things like that, and told us stories, and sang us songs. And that was nice; but you know when he was in work mode, he was just in work mode – and that was it. You didn't go anywhere near him, and you didn't make any noise.

Carl: That was forbidden territory, while he was working?

William: Absolutely. I think I tell this in *Wild Olives*. We had a wind-up gramophone that had been Laura's gramophone before the war, and it was just one of the wind-up ones, obviously, with 78 rpm discs, with a steel needle.⁶ And when we wanted to listen to the music, we would put in a rose thorn in place of the needle, so it muted it down. We had to put our ear very close to it, so there was no way Robert could hear.

Carl: Well, that's one of the things – I'm sort of diverging from my script a bit, but the idea of Robert Graves ... I think he treated writing as sort of a job; he did work virtually every day. He treated it as a very serious thing and not something that he took up and put down, and you know it was a matter of long periods of concentration, I'm thinking.

William: Absolutely. You know he started working at 8:30 or 9:00 and worked through to lunch time. When he was in a study, you just didn't go anywhere near that. And when mother sent me or whomever to call him, the door of his study had a particular squeak; and it was really rather frightening opening it and saying, 'Father, you know lunch is ready'. This is what makes me quite a good literary executor because I'm very third party about it. [laughter]

Carl: You say, when you were in the *Clinica Adriano*, there was only one time when you could count on your father's undivided attention.⁷ Were you always aware that he was composing poems or thinking about poetic problems?

William: Well, it was undivided to a certain extent because that's where he started writing *Seven Days in New Crete*. So, he started writing that in the hospital because he didn't have any papers or research material with him so that was a novel he could write. Even then ... I guess I was given something to draw or something.

Carl: In terms of your parents' relationship: was he the Master of the House type, or was Beryl running the household, basically?

William: She was running the household in terms of making sure that the food came in and all the rest of it, but she would send him down to buy whatever was needed – to the village shop. He didn't mind: he could think things through. We had a couple of girls working for us. But no, when he was working, Beryl was just organizing the housework and looking after us children. And then when he was working, and the three of us children were at the village school, that's when she started learning Spanish and translating. On her own in Spain and not speaking the language, she learned Spanish reading *Don Quixote* with a dictionary. Well, it was about four years later, I suppose, when she started translating. But she'd type things out for Robert even when his secretary Karl came back.⁸ So, there was always work going on in the house.

Carl: Your father had rituals and superstitions, for example, bowing to the new moon seven times. Were there any others that stand out in your memory?

William: No, he bowed to the moon three times, and he turned a silver coin three times. He did that when he was bowing or just afterwards. Those were the two things he had to do every new moon; and it was a bit of a fretful.... There were superstitions: if the new moon was ever seen through glass that was supposed to bring bad luck. Like breaking a mirror. And if we had to come to the house because we had forgotten something, we had to sit on a chair and count to ten, or three, I don't remember. It's one of those things one did.

Carl: I remember one evening when I was at Deyá, Beryl stood up and said she was going to go outside and say goodnight to Mercury or Venus and Mars. Was that something she picked up from Robert?

William: She must have. I never heard that one. Maybe it was just an excuse to get out. [laughter]

Carl: You recount a drought in Deyá and Bill Waldren performing an American Indian rain dance while your father stood astride an irrigation ditch and tinkled his West African rain bell.⁹ Were there other times, Robert or Bill and other people performed makeshift rituals?

William: Well, that was a year when there really was a bad drought, and Robert had this bell from his niece, Sally Chilver, who was his half-brother Philip Graves's daughter. She was an anthropologist and worked with Phyllis Kaberry in Cameroon; and she brought him back objects like that: there was ... a Queen's stool, which is still in the house; and the rain bell was another one of those things that came.¹⁰

Yes, and the way it worked: The drought was serious. So, this priest took some saint out (and I don't know what saint it was) around the church, and Bill Waldren did his Indian dance (I don't know what tribe he was from [laughter]), and Robert stood over ... straddled the little irrigation ditch with his West African bell.

And it pelted with rain that night. It absolutely [poured]. I don't know whether it was the saint, if it was the West Indian dance or if it was the West African bell.

Carl: Well, sometimes it just takes a nudge, doesn't it?

William: Yes.

Carl: You describe Robert telling you stories and making up rhymes when you were in the hospital. You emphasize a story about Deyá

in Roman times, how young village boys were given a sling when they were your age and had to hit a target before they were allowed to have their breakfast.

William: Oh, this is the Balearic slingers we're talking about. It is said that in the old days the locals used to hang something up on a tree; and the children would have to knock it off with a slingshot before they could have their breakfast. But of course, the Balearic slingers were very important. There were actually slingers throughout the Mediterranean, but the Balearic Slingers were the most famous. My brother Juan used to do slingshots and won a championship once.

Carl: Let me step back a bit to your stepbrother David who died when you were quite young. Do you recall, if Robert ever made an effort to let you know what had happened, or was it not a topic of conversation?¹¹

William: It certainly wasn't something that I was aware of. I have a photograph with him, and I must be about two and a half years old; that was just before he left for Burma, that was in early 1943. I'm there with David's officer's cap on. Robert's behind me holding me, and my brother-in-law Cliff Dalton is in the picture as well. So, but no, I don't remember anything. At least I wasn't sensitive enough to realize anything's going on. There are letters, you know. Obviously, Robert was very concerned about the whole thing.

Carl: Did your father follow politics, English or Spanish carefully? I know he said that he had no religion, and no politics, but I wondered if that was entirely accurate.

William: He was perfectly aware of what was going on, both in England and in Spain. But ... not really. I think about when he was made – I've just seen these letters recently – when he was made Professor of Poetry at Oxford, he actually tried to get leverage with the future Nobel Laureate for Literature, Cela,¹² to help him to see if he could protect Deyá from the tourist hordes.

So, in terms of local politics he was active; and when you read his Pre-War diaries, he was a lot more interested [in politics] because Laura Riding was obviously more interested. But basically, he always said he was in Deyá, he was a guest there, and he was not interested in politics, and that was it.¹³

Carl: I suppose he had to be very careful about village politics as well.

William: Well, village politics were a lot easier. The village policy was simply whether someone stole your water or took your girlfriend [laughter] or used your path, or whatever; you know that's what I thought village politics was all about.

Carl: Robert writes often about money. You mentioned in *Wild Olives* that he wrote *I, Claudius* to settle the mortgage on Canellun, and that he got involved in deals to adapt his works into film. Do you remember money being an ongoing worry or topic of conversation?

William: The first time I got it – felt actually personal about it, let's put it that way – was in 1956 (I was already in school in England) and he was planning to send Lucia and Juan to Switzerland, or somewhere, to school (they went to Switzerland eventually), and he thought well, maybe he'd better sell the Posada, his guest house, and I pleaded with him not to; and so he didn't. And shortly after that is when he started doing his American lecture trips, which paid well. January '57, I think, was the first foray into America; he did it every year after that until the mid-nineteen-sixties.

Carl: Do you recall your parents' marriage? When they got married? Was there a ceremony?

William: No, we children weren't told. It was too dangerous to tell us they weren't married. Franco's regime was National Catholicism so they couldn't gamble we wouldn't inadvertently let it slip. Because

you know it's bad enough being thought a Protestant; if, on top of that you're a bastard ... [laughter]

Carl: It's a double whammy.

William: That was a double whammy.

William: Beryl – I have the papers – Beryl actually changed her name by deed poll in 1943. She changed it from Hodge to Graves. So, her passport was made out to 'Beryl Graves' when we came to Spain, actually. I don't know who suggested that to them. But he always had some very good friends who, you know, knew the way to do these things without ...

Carl: Finesse!

William: Yes!

Carl: You begin *Wild Olives* with a long description of butterflies and fruit. Did your father teach you or influence you to take an interest in the natural world, or did he ever express an interest himself?

William: I think, that was, that was ... written with hindsight. Obviously, I knew the local plants pretty well, but not, not that ... he taught me. I think that's something that I added to the story. It's difficult to recall what you have added and what you haven't added to a book. [laughter]

Carl: You also mentioned in *Wild Olives* that your father had certain therapies whenever he got stuck with his writing, including bottling fruit, making jam, jellies, chutney, together with gardening and washing up; are there other therapies or rituals perhaps that you can remember that aided him in his work?

William: Mostly it was his strong routine. He got up early, 7:30 or 8 o'clock. He sorted Beryl's breakfast, took it up to her room. Then made his breakfast, or vice versa; I don't know which one was which – can't remember. Ate his breakfast of bread and oil and whatever. And then went into a study and that was the last he was seen until lunchtime. Karl came over around nine o'clock or a quarter to nine with whatever he'd been typing (the clean copy) the day before, and they discussed that.

They discussed everything, anything Karl didn't understand or thought that might be changed or whatever. And then Robert loaded him with another sheaf of manuscripts and away he went. Then Robert just settled down and worked through till lunch.

Okay, so he'd get up every once in a while, and go to check his brazier to make sure that it was still heating or needed tending, that sort of thing, just to move a little. But of course, one of the things ... he refused to use any kind of ballpoint pens or – of course, that was later – or earlier, any fountain pens because he said that using pen and ink made you dip the nib in the ink and actually removed the strain from his arm. So that was a bit of exercise; and then it gave him 'thought time' when he was dipping the ink, he would re-read the last sentence or whatever.

Carl: That's fascinating.

William: That was a thing. But if he wanted to think things through, he went outside to chop wood, dig the garden, or tend his compost, where he knew no one would disturb him.

Carl: Do you have recollections of your grandparents?

William: Not my grandfather on Robert's side, none of A. P. Graves. He died in '32 or '34, something like that. The only time I met my grandmother, who was rather a sort of a black figure, a black hat and black coat, she took us to the zoo. I must have been eight, in 1948, after the war when we came over from Deyá for the first time. And we went to the zoo in London around Primrose Hill. I don't remember

her at all, really. I just have this rather sinister caricature of her; she must have been 90 by that time.

Carl: During your early years, you spent summers in London up until 1952. You talk about how happy you were later just to remain in Mallorca. Did you have any sense, when you were in London, that Robert felt a similar constraint that London life for him was also somewhat uncomfortable or unnatural?

William: No, I don't think so; I think he enjoyed being in London, just to get to see his friends, to see everyone, get a bit of his British culture back. Of course, he was completely away from it. And you know, he did BBC recordings, and he took me once to visit T. S. Eliot when he was publishing *The White Goddess* ... it must have been very early, in '48 or '49. I think I've mentioned this in *Wild Olives*. T. S. Eliot had a little set of kind of transfers you put in water, and you bet on horses. And the horses raced: curiously, I won. It says a lot for T. S. Eliot, I must say. [laughter]

Carl: What were you doing in the summers in London?

William: Well, we had my grandparents, so we went to tea quite often in their house in Hampstead where mother had grown up. They had an enormous lawn there, we used to play around there, and my grandfather had a wonderful car, I don't know what make it was, called the Green Gauge. Beautiful dark green car, you know, open with bucket seats in the back, where the boot would be normally. We went around London every once in a while, Madame Tussauds, the London Zoo, the Tower of London, and then went out of town to see friends of Robert and Beryl, the Eastwoods in Lowestoft (she was a college friend of Beryl), James Reeves's family. Basically, Robert sort of made the most of it, and visited all his old friends, publishers, and agents.

Carl: You tell a wonderful story of Robert's attempts to teach you Latin by making you translate *Fabulae Faciles*. Did you dread this exercise?

William: I don't remember dreading it. I probably wasn't very good, but I got my Ordinary level Latin when I was in school afterwards so that was okay. I didn't take the Advance level. What I learned has always been very useful.

Carl: Was Robert a good teacher?

William: I don't remember him being a good or bad teacher. It's just one of those things that haven't stuck in my memory, somehow. I don't remember him teaching me very much. I think he taught Tomás a lot more.¹⁴ He must have given me a little bit of Latin, but not much. I think I would have remembered it better if it had been a constant thing.

Carl: In *Wild Olives*, you remember Martin Seymour Smith as 'a small wiry and intense young man'. You say Robert found it useful to talk to Martin about whatever he was working on. Can you recall anything about their relationship? Would Martin have been a student of sorts to Robert, or a sounding board?

William: Martin started off as a fan of Robert's, I think, even in the forties, when he was a schoolboy. His father was Frank Seymour Smith, who provided Robert with all his books from W. H. Smiths. He ran the second-hand book section of W. H. Smith's, and whenever Robert needed a book, he would write to Frank, and the book would be sent out to Mallorca. And if it was a dangerous book or the Franco government shouldn't know about it, it came in the diplomatic bag. There was someone – I can't remember his name now, an expert on Mexico – in the consulate in Barcelona and he helped Robert in that sort of way.

But Martin came out as my tutor. My first tutor was W. S. Merwin, Bill Merwin. Bill was much more interested in his own work than

me, so that was no good. Robert actually fired him, which was good. [laughter] But then – I think because Martin had probably just finished college, he said, why don't you come up and tutor William to get his exams to get into a school in England. I suspect it was that; then of course, because Janet had just finished her classics degree at Oxford, he put her to work on *The Greek Myths*. So, Robert made use of people's talents.

Carl: It seems to me that there's this extraordinary thing in Robert's life, where he found the right person at the right time who had the right information.

William: And he would to a certain extent change his work to what the other person could help him with. He was interested in so many things and had such a wide knowledge that, if he found someone that could help him on a particular subject, he made the most of him.

Education was Beryl's greatest concern. The Deyá village school did not work out for us, although I enjoyed it. In 1951 when I was eleven, Lucia eight, and Juan seven, she and Robert decided to move to Palma for our schooling.

We had two flats in Palma, one on the second floor and one on the third floor: the family lived on the second-floor flat, and Martin lived on the third floor. But Robert kept the front room on the third floor for his study. That way he got away from the family flat which was too noisy with kids and all the rest of it; and then our friends used to come in. So that Martin and Jan were upstairs, with Robert in the front room. Jan was helping Robert with his *Greek Myths*, and Martin was teaching me in their dining room – I don't remember anything that Martin told me. I remember Janet teaching me Latin, and that was more successful, but nevertheless Martin managed to get me through my Common Entrance exams so I could get into an English school. So, you know, Robert in his funny way and Beryl in her funny way managed to get me an education. I'm not quite sure how they did it, but it worked.

Carl: Let me switch gears a bit. After Robert broke with Alistair Reid over Margot Callas,¹⁵ did he ever give you a sense he regretted it?

William: No, he wasn't the sort of person who would regret things like that, I don't think. He just found an alternative, and that turned out to be Idries Shah. I think he met Idries through the head of a Witches Coven.¹⁶ He kind of moved over to Idries Shah after Alastair. Of course, Shah was already around anyway. Martin, Alastair, Idries, all acted as sounding boards for Robert when he had new ideas. Alistair remained friends of the family apart from Robert, but Robert was very unforgiving.¹⁷

Carl: In a general, or a specific sense?

William: I think in a specific sense. He sort of built an almost religious relationship with Margot, Muse worship, and Alastair was his best friend. When Margot went off with Alastair, he took the religious parallel a step further. It gets tangled up with the White Goddess. He saw himself as twins with Alastair. Halfway through the year one gets murdered, the other one goes on to reign and then later the other one gets murdered and the first one comes back or – I'm not quite sure how it works, but something like that. That's the way Robert saw it. Alistair perhaps became his evil alter-ego.

Carl: You said your father could become quite irrational when he turned against someone; do you recall any other instances of this? Was it kind of an all-or-nothing arrangement?

William: Well, I can't think of anyone particular, but I remember when this – I suppose it's not really the same thing – but one of these American students who were in Deyá in the nineteen seventies, I guess Robert was already ... seventy-five, and he and this young American were sitting on the sofa in Canellun talking when Elena walked in and Robert said, 'don't you ever get up when a lady comes in?' And this young student looked blankly. 'Well in this house we do', and

Robert got him by the scruff of the neck and the seat of his pants, and literally threw him out of the room. [laughter]

You know so you've got to remember Robert was a pretty strong person. He'd been boxing, he survived the First World War, he survived the Spanish flu and he survived jumping out of a window after Laura.

Carl: You said, your father was 'wonderfully persuasive'. Do you remember a particular conversation or conversations that made you realize this?

William: Not particularly. I don't know what I was writing about when I said that. But yes, the thing was, he had such a vast amount of knowledge that he could persuade you of just about anything, because he knew everything; he just did. All his books are based on research, and they were all on different subjects. Other than about mechanical things, although he knew how to start up a car. The first car we had in Mallorca, when we got the flats, was one of the ones you had to crank – it didn't have a self-starter you needed to have a handle to start it up. He just started it up very quickly. Beryl would drive. He'd never drive. He drove once around the block in Cairo and swore he'd never ever drive again.

Carl: And that tended to be that one time, was it?

William: Yeah, that was the car that Sassoon gave Robert and Nancy to take to Cairo.¹⁸ He gave them, I guess it was a Ford, a little thing, and it was very useful when they were in Cairo. I guess, they must have sold it off when they were in Cairo. And they came out without it.

Carl: You describe bullfighting quite enthusiastically as a connoisseur, and you say Robert was very enthusiastic as well. Can you recall any conversations about bullfighting?

William: Maybe not conversations, but he certainly went to the bullfights before the war and saw some of the really great bullfighters. And he had enough knowledge about bullfighting, and of course he looked at it very much in terms of the sort of the mythological side of things, and then ... Crete and Knossos and bullfights in Greece, and the ladies jumping, the athletes jumping over their horns, I think. But you know he was very much into that sort of thing. And he was very quick on learning the rules about what was permitted and what wasn't; it wasn't just watching a bull being killed; it was the whole ballet of the thing, with rather a dangerous opponent.

Carl: You mentioned that Beryl translated *The Infant with a Globe* by Alarcon, and *The Cross and the Sword*, by Galvan. Robert polished them and published them under his name. Did Beryl contribute to writing in other ways? Are there other works that she deserves credit for?

William: Certainly those two. No, she didn't want any of Robert's limelight. I'm not sure whether she helped with *Winter in Mallorca*. I think that may have been Jan, who spoke French as well: Janet Seymour-Smith. Then Robert translated another book from Spanish, which presumably Beryl must have worked on, which is Ramon Sender's book. I don't know what's it called, now.¹⁹ The manuscript is at St John's. I think there're a couple of copies of the manuscript of the translation to English. It was never published, so it's not in your [Carl's] bibliography!²⁰ Of course, Robert's translations from Latin were all his own.

Carl: 'Christ!' was an expletive your father used all the time, and you quote him as cursing Joan Gelat. Were there other curses or imprecations you omitted from your memoir?

William: [laughter] I was called in by my housemaster at school because I was used to Robert's 'Christ!' and I went on swearing the same way. Remember, I had never really left Spain. I was going to get the slipper. That's what you got. You got the slipper or the cane,

depending on how bad it was. The slipper wasn't so bad. I got the slipper several times. When I went into the dreaded housemaster study, he realized that I had absolutely no idea what the implications of that blasphemy were. Anyway, I learned that. Part of my very useful public-school education.

Carl: Just a couple more before we stop for today. You observed Robert working with Janet Seymour-Smith on *The Greek Myths*; did you form a sense of the extent of her contributions to that work?

William: I suspect it was really very large, because you know, the amount of work in that is just vast. So, she must have done an awful lot of putting things together. I think Robert sort of did the overview, but actually I have no idea. The overall layout was certainly his. I think it would be very interesting to see the actual manuscripts. I don't know where they are. They're probably in Southern Illinois, I would have thought.²¹ It would be really very interesting to see how much she did. Then the first draft went off to Karl, so then you lose track of what's been there, but then she corrected or added more stuff. That is an enormous work; it's just incredible. I believe it was the first edition of the Greek myths to be laid out in a logical way.

Carl: Well, beyond that, let me say it's been in print for seventy years.

William: Absolutely. And it's still one of the best-selling books. And it sells in Greece as well.

Carl: Well, I did see a Greek translation of *The Greek Myths* into Greek. [laughter]

Carl: You write that Robert insisted that everyone who came to the house came as someone special. His proclivity for believing everybody around him or with whom he had friendly relations was the best and the greatest. Did he really have no irony when he expressed these opinions? He surely was let down by enough people to realize that first impressions may not always be accurate.

William: Well, possibly. If you didn't hear of them again that's probably what happened. When you first met them, they were the best and the greatest: the greatest archaeologist, the best ironsmith, or whatever, whatever it was, you know.

Carl: In *Wild Olives*, you tell a story of Pep Fontdevilla or 'Pep the Widow', and his relationship to the painter Leman. You mentioned to us that Robert and Laura kept apart from the German community in Deyá; do you see any sense of animosity between them, because of the war, perhaps?²²

William: I guess it's because the whole of Nazism was starting and I think there was already some animosity between the German group and Robert or Laura and whoever else the British group was, but I don't really know enough about that. I know the only big fight he had was with a painter, but he was a Swedish painter, not German. Robert considered the painter had been rude to Laura. They had a scuffle in front of the café, and then there was an article written in the local English paper saying something about Graves being a dictator. The press cutting is on display in the House in Deyá.²³

Carl: That was the 1934 incident in the *Palma Daily Post*?

William: That's right.

Carl: You mentioned in *Wild Olives* that Laura's presence pervaded Canellun; can you recall why you thought that?

William: Well, again, this is probably a hindsight thing, but certainly when we arrived, you know Beryl didn't even change the curtains, the drapes. Everything remained as it was when Robert had left.²⁴ So, there was no change at all in the house. All the furniture, decorations all that was in the house remained as Laura had left it.

It wasn't until later, I think, that we got some China dogs that had to come over on an airplane, or something. And Beryl inherited a

table and chest. But that was later. But generally, the whole decoration was very much as Laura had it.

Carl: Robert's international reputation seems to have followed his trips to America, beginning in 1957, and the numbers of visitors to Deyá began to swell. Ironically, Robert had retreated to Deyá to avoid mobs and here he was attracting them. Do you see that it put a strain on him?

William: I don't think so because his work ethic was still very much the same. He didn't change his routine at all. Obviously, he had a lot of fun in the States and then the Margot times came and he used to go to Madrid every once in a while to see her, or Alistair was there. So, there was a lot more travel, but then there were a lot more flights; the moving was a lot easier. But even in 1954 I was flying to England to school, so there were flights from London, two or three a week. But it was still not easy to get to the island. It wasn't really until the sixties that package tours started in earnest.

Carl: Do you sense that Deyá changed from a small Mallorcan village to an international literary empire presided over by your father?

William: No, because I don't think there were very many international writers there. There were a bunch of hippies.

Carl: We're going to get to the hippies, shortly.

William: You know, we had friends over, people like James Reeves and John Aldrich, but they had been coming all the time and it didn't really change too much, and I don't get a feeling that anything really changed.²⁵

I suppose when Huw Wheldon came with *The Monitor* film crew to do the show, it obviously upped his profile.²⁶ But Mallorca wasn't an easy place to get to; and there weren't very many hotels in Deyá, in fact just the pre-war Hotel Costa D'Or and a couple of little pensions. Again, it wasn't easy.

Carl: You note that you have the letters Robert wrote to you when you were in Oundle, and you excerpt one in your memoir. Was he pleased when you graduated? You indicate that Beryl was rather indifferent when you told her.

William: No, I remember when I failed my English literature exam. And that was a cause for celebration. [laughter] I'm not quite sure why. I failed my English literature and Robert went around boasting about it. I passed my English Language after only two years more recognition.

Carl: William, you mentioned the Deyá syndrome in *Wild Olives*, or the sense that life in Deyá was more real than life elsewhere. Richard [R. P. Graves] once mentioned to Michael in passing that while Robert was present, Deyá was magical; how much did the Deyá syndrome owe to Robert's influence?

William: Well, he had this incredible personality, obviously, you know it was hard to ignore the fact that he was there. He was just a bit larger than life. You know we were all, I think all of us children, just a little bit scared of him.

And you certainly didn't make any noise, you know. But then, of course, after I got married, things were different. Again, you grow up with these things and you don't think they're different. I suppose they were different; they would have been different for anyone looking in from the outside.

Carl: Or living somewhere else, perhaps.

William: And then, of course, in the summers well, I was pretty wild, I suppose. You know, I used to take off with the Land Rover to Palma and come back late at night. But that didn't seem to bother him too much either.

One time I remember him getting worried, and obviously Beryl had gotten worried. I was with some friends down in Lluchalcari, which is about three or four clicks down the road, and I'd walked

down there, I think. I was probably twelve that summer. And it must have been about eleven o'clock at night, and Beryl must have been getting worried, and Robert came down on his bicycle to fetch me and sort of dragged me back by my ear kind of thing. But that's the only time I have that sort of memory.

Carl: On a related topic, you note in several places in *Wild Olives* that Robert was known as *Senyor de Canellun* or simply *Senor* and you tell the story about how he stopped the Cala project by getting don Manuel Fraga, the Minister of Tourism to intervene.²⁷ You also note that he loved fixing things. Was there a sense among the villagers and *estrangers* that Robert had a big influence over the affairs of the village?

William: They didn't particularly like him going against the Cala project. But they appreciated it when, again with Fraga's help, he managed to get the main electricity to Deyá. It was held up by a lady, a countess or something, in Valldemossa who refused to have the one big pylon on her land which was required to get the electric lines over to Deyá. Until then all we had for the whole village was a little one-kilowatt generator. You could just about see the filaments of the light bulbs. [laughter] It was pathetic. And in 1963 the countess was overruled by Fraga who laid down the law, being a minister. I've just been looking at a letter of that period from Robert to Camilo Cela, in which he says, 'look I'm frightened because there are talks of people wanting to build a hotel down on the Cala, build a big road and all sorts of things like that, and I'd like to make it, Deyá, into a sort of historical monument'.

Carl: So, Robert's pulling strings with Cela?

William: Cela asked Robert, in 1959, to attend a week-long conference on 'Poetic Conversations to Formentor', which Cela organized in the middle of the Franco dictatorship. Many famous Spanish poets were present. But it was politically dangerous and in case there was trouble Cela wanted international names present. Robert was not

happy but having asked Cala a favour.... So, he went, and Alistair Reid, too, was there, together with French poet Vicente Aleixandre, and Tony Kerrigan, an Irish writer of Cela's. All in case there were political implications.²⁸

Anyway, so Robert had been over to Formentor, which is a hell of a trip from Deyá, across the Formentor, with Keith Baines driving our Land Rover. Keith Baines was the person who wrote *Le Morte d'Arthur*, to which Robert wrote the introduction.²⁹ Robert was just there one session and then he wrote his poem 'The Person from Porlock' about losing his concentration after one person knocked on his door collecting a small debt. And that was obviously against Cela. [laughter]

But anyway, in 1961 when he was made Professor of Poetry, he wrote to Cela and said, 'you know, you're a big name and I'm now a big name because I'm Professor of Poetry at Oxford. Can we do anything like Dali did, and get Deyá made into a historical monument, or a monumental city or something to protect it from overbuilding?' So, Robert was also working at that level.

There's so much about Robert people don't know. These are the sorts of things that haven't got into the biographies yet. The letters are full of them.

Carl: Robert Graves's interactions with the Shahs and their bogus Rubaiyat is well known, and it marks one of the few genuine defeats in Robert's life. Sorry about that. Can you recall Robert saying anything to you, or signalling some frustration or disappointment over this affair?

William: Well, the first thing is that I wasn't there. I think he was working in Ca'n Torrent. Karl had left by then. I think it took about two or three weeks to translate or put into verse the so-called translation of *The Rubaiyat*. Because of course he didn't translate anything himself. The original was in Persian. He was given a translation to basically put into verse. That was all.

I think he already confessed to Selwyn Jepson, because I have a little note here in one of my first editions – Selwyn left me all his

Graves books, all his first editions, and in *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* there's a little note saying that Robert sort of confessed to Selwyn that he had been duped.³⁰ That kind of thing. I can't remember the exact words, but I could look it up very easily.

Carl: You and I have had some fairly recent discussions about Jenny Nicholson and let me ask you, Jenny's death came as a terrible blow to you and Lucia and Robert; you note that Robert refused to attend Jenny's funeral and promised to write the real story of Solomon and Sheba as a memorial to Jenny. You say, ten years earlier, he would have done so.³¹

William: Well, that was '64. His mind was slipping. We had a puppet show at one stage for the birthday party and we had some wonderful puppets, and his hair was made out of the dog's hair, they shaved a bit of the dog's hair off and used that as Robert's hair. I remember that. And the puppet kept going around 'where are my bloody glasses, where are my bloody glasses?' That was the puppet's main theme. So that shows that he was beginning to lose his memory, then. I think he was certainly losing it even earlier. Certainly by 1966. I have a houseman's report from a hospital indicating he was already diagnosed with a memory problem.

Carl: Robert was involved with Cindy / Aemelia.³² He debouched to Mexico, from where he fired Karl, his loyal secretary, which you call 'unforgivable'. By the mid-sixties, Robert had become a distinctly unlikable father and yet, in some ways, perhaps a tragic figure.

William: And then you say 'comment'. [laughter] Well, yes. It was really because this was 1965 and he was very sick in Mexico, no one to look after him. He was still Professor of Poetry at Oxford. He had already been hospitalized, in 1959, at St Thomas's in London for a prostrate operation, and there were problems requiring blood transfusions and things. He was never really well after that. In Mexico, Cindy was, I guess, on drugs, and with some other man – I don't know who that was – called Howard. I was in Mallorca when Elena and I

decided to get married. It was the excuse for him to come back. In a way, that kind of saved his life because he might never have made it otherwise. We had moved into the Posada, Robert's guest house which was empty. And that winter, after we were married, he had a gall-bladder operation and we looked after the main house. Elena was pregnant. But Cindy was still the Muse, and she came over after a while. Things became very tense; Robert went with her to marijuana parties. Those were not easy times for Elena and me.

Carl: You say that your confrontation with Robert over the idea of the Posada was the first confrontation you ever had with him. As it happened in 1965, you would have been about twenty-seven years old. Usually, sons and fathers fall out considerably earlier.

William: I was twenty-five. But the real confrontation was early '66. It was pouring rain. Basically, he wanted Cindy to move in with us. I said, 'No bloody way'. Elena said, 'I'm leaving if she does', and then he said, 'that table over there is Cindy's'. So, I just put it outside and said, 'you can come take it'; and it was just pouring. Poor table. I feel very sorry for the table. Still, there you go. But we never got that table back either. So anyway, things remained tense.

Carl: During the whole brouhaha over the Posada, did it distress you to consider that Robert wasn't really Robert anymore, or that the Robert you knew was slipping away?

William: I guess it happened so slowly. You don't really realize it that way, but and again, you don't know whether that is his reaction to his son's marriage, or if there's some other reason. Certainly, you know we got on famously with Margot and didn't – I didn't – get on at all with Cindy. So that certainly didn't help.

Carl: Here we go with the hippies. Your story of Robert conniving with hippies to plant a packet of illegal marijuana on the premises of Can Quiet would be pretty depressing for anyone who loves your

father's writing. I wonder if you could elaborate on how this sorry state of affairs came to be.

William: Well, you know he was surrounded by a whole bunch of hippies. And you know, we rented the premises of a pension, a guest house, and had a bar and restaurant as well as guests. We sort of started to represent a sort of authoritarianism, fascism, whatever else you want to call it, I suppose. And Robert and his friends thought it would be funny if the Guardia Civil, the *carabinieri*, who used to come around to Can Quet to check that we weren't selling smuggled cigarettes, would find a stash of marijuana. We used to treat them to a little swig of brandy when they visited. We had a good friend named Mac Prain who sort of kept me in the picture on what was happening in the village. And you know he told me what was planned. We found the marijuana and we burned it in the kitchen stove.

Carl: The cessation of hostilities followed your return to work from an oil rig in 1967 and perhaps, culminated in Robert's letters remarking how you impressed him with Philip and then how fond he was of Elena. Did you wonder, perhaps if Robert was capable of a full recovery or coming back all the way to how he had been?

William: No, it was obviously not the case. In fact, Elena was staying with him in Canellun, Beryl was in London, I think, Tomas was there, so Elena had to move in with him to look after him, so you know he couldn't look after himself anymore. And that's where he got to know Philip when they moved down; and I was working in Libya that winter. That was his first proper contact, you know real contact, with Elena.

Beryl didn't like driving at night, nor did she like any public events that Robert got roped into. I don't know what it was, but he was being given a medal for something or other. So, Elena had to drive him down to Palma, and stay there with him, and then drive back up, while Beryl looked after Philip. I think that's when the petrol ran out and they had to walk some eight kilometres to Valldemossa to

get petrol. That's where they got to know each other a little bit better. But these things happen.

Carl: Did you hold your father responsible for Juan's failure to thrive?³³

William: Perhaps ... not his, obviously that wasn't his problem. Juan, I think, must have had a problem from the word go; he was always a difficult child, he had a lot of tantrums; Beryl couldn't really cope with him. You know, he'd take off his glasses, fling them across the room and break them, or break plates. He once set fire to the radio. He was a problem child. I don't think it was any more Robert's fault than Beryl's fault or anyone's fault.

But when he then had his real mental breakdown problem, and we were in Can Quet, we had to take care of him, and Robert wasn't even aware – this was 1967 – that this was happening. Whether it was an overdose of the treatment he was on, or whether he had been given LSD or something similar, I don't know. We had a very nice young English nurse staying in our hotel and she travelled with him when we airlifted him back to England, and he ended up in Dr Will Sargent's hands who had been treating him and had been prescribing the drug. Sargent was the author of *Battle for the Mind*. And I don't think he was much good either. So, anyway, it's just a tragedy that started there and more or less sorted itself out.

Carl: You conclude *Wild Olives* with the news that Robert had made you executor of his will. The reader gets the sense that there was an unexpected emotional bond being revealed as well as an acknowledgement of respect and trust.

William: Maybe, maybe not. I sort of took it that way, if you like. I was just back from – I wasn't expecting this at all, obviously it just came out of the blue. I was just back from working in Tunisia, I think. I got back to Deyá, then Elena and I went down to the house to see Robert.

He had nurses looking after him and things, but only Beryl was in the house with him. Robert was sitting in his chair and after a blank look from him I went out of the room with my mother to make some coffee, leaving Elena with him, and that was when he gave his last breath. I don't actually put it that way in the book, because I wasn't actually present. (But one has to add a little bit to the book! Kind of a show!) Elena called me. And I called Beryl who was still in the kitchen making coffee. I called the doctor. Anyway, I organized the whole funeral and all the rest of it.

But it was only the next day, when we read the will, that I found out that he had made me his joint executor with Beryl's nephew Michael; so, we were co-executors. But then there were funds abroad, valuation of royalties, and this and that, complicated by the fact that we were in Spain, and Michael was perhaps just a bit out of his comfort area. So, he bowed out and left me as the sole executor of the will with everything involved in getting probate. So, I finally got that sorted and then thought, okay well, the literary agents will look after this, because that's what it says in the will. Beryl should be consulted for any unpublished manuscripts, and the royalties divided between Beryl and father's surviving children from both marriages. That's all it said.

But being executor, I began to realize that, you know ... where's the money going to be paid to? We can't expect the literary agents to pay six different people every so often. Someone's got to keep some sort of control. And that's when I started the copyright trust, so they could take over doing that part, so A. P. Watt didn't have to do it. And then eventually I realized that everyone was asking me 'what do we do, what do we do'; so, I became *de facto* literary executor. And look where it's led me: being interviewed on Zoom. [laughter]

Carl: Sort of a pinnacle for you, I suppose. [laughter] I'm going to ask you a question and you may not wish to answer it. For reasons that will become obvious. Most professional biographers are able to research and report factual material. Not all are able to capture the persona and spirit of the subject of their biography. Which

biographer or biographers best understood and conveyed the real essence of Robert Graves?

William: Ah. None so far as I can tell. Richard was great on detail. He got it down right. Miranda, she sort of came in on the wrong foot, somehow. Martin, I don't know what to believe. So, there you go.³⁴

I think, until we get Robert's letters, or a greater percentage, available to biographers, it's going to be very hard to get the true enough picture. Each letter is an experience and presumably the reason so many letters have been kept and are in libraries. Because the breadth of knowledge, which is obvious when you read his letters, never really comes through in the biographies, as far as I can tell. His incredible memory and working out of events are often developed in his correspondence. The letters reflect the amount of research he undertook when writing his historical novels or his book on how to write English or his studies of mythology, and poetry and his suggestions to other poets. Of course, he had a large library of reference books, now at St John's College, Oxford.

And when he didn't have any reference books available, as in Deyá when we got back after the war, he was resourceful. He borrowed my school-master's Spanish encyclopaedia and wrote *The Isles of Unwisdom*, about the Spanish she-admiral in the Pacific. Or when I was in hospital, he wrote his utopian *Seven Days in New Crete*.

Carl: One other question. Did Robert ever try to steer you towards a career in writing or literature or poetry?

William: [laughing] Not at all! He gave me Latin lessons. I had Martin Seymour-Smith as my tutor. And you can tell how confident Martin was of his tutoring of me: he didn't even believe I'd written *Wild Olives*. [laughter] He said, 'someone must have ghosted it for him!'

Carl: That's certainly a critique.

William: ... 'and published [it] too'. That was in the paper. I think Martin's review of *Wild Olives* said that.

Carl: I have my final question. Do you think that there are some questions, we should have asked you, but failed to do so?

William: Can't remember. [laughter]

Carl: Michael do you want to come back in?

Michael: Yes, thank you. I guess we also wanted to ask whether there was something you left out of *Wild Olives* that you would like to put in if you were going to do a second edition.

William: I haven't read it for years, and a lot of this is new to me. Obviously, I have another book in me. But when I'll ever have time to write it, I'll never know.

Michael: At the beginning of *Wild Olives*, in addition to talking about butterflies and plants, you spend a lot of time talking about food; and I was wondering whether you remember the kinds of food you ate.

William: I think I mentioned in *Wild Olives*, that, in fact, I found the school food a lot better than the Canellun food.

Michael: But what kind of food did you get in Canellun?

William: There was very little to give. There was mutton maybe once a week, and perhaps a little beef. And some chicken, but there wasn't anything very much and you'd just have stews and stews and stews, because the meat was so tough. The best present anyone ever made Beryl was a pressure cooker from the States. Cicely Gittes sent it.³⁵ The Gittes were in Deyá during the war, and they left in 1948 via the Canaries to the States. And one of the presents she sent was a pressure cooker. And that pressure cooker is still in Canellun, and I still keep it there as a memento for people to realize what 1949 pressure cookers looked like. Of course, *the great day* in Canellun was when Beryl got the Aga. That was the most important day.

But of course, what we haven't mentioned is the importance of Robert's lecture tours. Because he used to come back and say, 'You know I'm going to raid the' – I don't know how he put it – but he went to the States to bring back money. His poetry lectures were all about getting enough money basically to pay for our schooling; but it also paid to get the two fireplaces, the bedroom, sorry, his study fireplace and the dining room fireplace rebuilt, so they didn't smoke. That was a tremendous thing. And then they got this Aga from Switzerland. The Aga is a cooking stove which has two ovens at different temperatures, and it's on day and night. And Robert used to say Beryl makes the best hot cross buns in these. [laughter]

The Aga was probably the most important thing of my childhood, if you like; that was in 1957. Not of my childhood – my growing-up-hood. Food really improved.

And the thing, of course, was that Robert was no one to me; he was just my father. And it was only when I went to Oundle to school that one day the housemaster called me and to listen to a BBC program where Robert was talking about, whatever it was *The Iliad*, or whatever, probably *They Hanged My Saintly Billy*. It's one of his strangest books.³⁶ I'm not quite sure why he wrote that. Any idea Carl?

Carl: I don't know, but I will tell you, the publishers for the United States edition went to great lengths to stage these things with these protests to clear his name, and all this, you know street drama.

William: Anyway, we're now diverging, Michael.

Michael: Oh no, no. Maybe I should turn the recording off now and....

William: No, it's okay.

Michael: Okay. No, I was just interested in the kinds of food that you grew up eating, and the kinds of food that Robert liked.

William: Well, we had great salads: you had lettuce and tomatoes and you had all the aubergines and marrows. Oh, that year the cucumbers came in. We had cucumber soup, cucumber salads, cucumber – they made cucumber every which way; it became a real nightmare. It became the year of the cucumber.

But you know when you've just got a garden and that's the only way you can get food – actually you know, the village stores were very limited in what they had, just a few things, so we went to Palma every once a week and bought things; but, even then, by the end of the week we were dying to get back to Palma.

Michael: You must have had a lot of olives and almonds as well.

William: Well, yes, you had olives, and then he ... he pickled ... we had apricots. The oranges were wrapped up in *The Times Air Edition*, which was made of very thin paper. You've probably seen those. I think *The Herald Tribune* and papers like that had their airfare editions on the same paper, so we wrapped the oranges up in those, in crates.

If there were too many apricots, he got the village shop to come and pick them and sell them. He just gave it to them, so they weren't apricots all over the place. But you know I used to walk around the garden and just eat fruit all the time: anything that was in season, I'd go for it.

Michael: I think that's an interesting answer. I know nutritionists would have follow up questions that I can't think of myself. They'd probably be interested in protein and since you lived on an island, obviously you must have eaten fish.

William: We had fish. And the fisher woman used to stop by the house on her the way up to the village and leave us fish. But Beryl didn't really have much idea about it. Beryl was a city girl; she wasn't much good at cooking; she learned it a bit, but ... she was not the greatest cook in the world.

Michael: She had a lot on her hands.

William: Absolutely! No, no, well considering she came from Hampstead. Her father was a president of The Law Society. She'd been to Oxford, you know, she was an educated person, very educated.

Michael: And brilliant, of course.

William: And it was really, she really came into her own when Dunstan started working on the poems with her.

Michael: Oh, is that so?

William: Yeah. Because then she was on her own; then she could do what she wanted. She didn't have to ... there was no Robert behind....

Michael: He was really in charge?

William: Yes.

William Graves MBE was born in Devon England, 1940. He is the oldest son of Robert Graves and Beryl Graves. As well as being Robert Graves's literary executor, he is the honorary president of the Robert Graves Society, a founding member and unpaid elected director of the *Fundació Robert Graves* (a public entity), and the author of *Wild Olives: Life in Mallorca with Robert Graves* (1995). He has translated / edited Graves's *The White Goddess* into Spanish. Among many other projects aimed at perpetuating the legacy of his father, he is currently organizing transcriptions of his voluminous and wide-ranging correspondence, comprising over 9,000 separate letters.

NOTES

¹ 'Crab' Searl or Group Captain F. H. L. (Francis Henry Louis) 'Crab' Searl was with No 211 Group or No. 211 (Medium Bomber) Group of the Royal Air Force (RAF) formed on 10 December 1941. 'Crab' was so named because of his habit of flying sideways.

² Hunting-Clan Air Transport.

³ The pilot was Captain Charles William Henry ‘Cecil’ Bebb.

⁴ Elena Lambea is the wife of William Graves. William Graves, *Wild Olives: Life in Mallorca with Robert Graves* (London: Random House, 1995), pp. 199-205.

⁵ Beryl Graves (1915-1988) was Robert Graves’s second wife, and William’s mother, and co-editor of *The Complete Poems*, vol. 1.

⁶ Laura (Riding) Jackson (1901-1991) was a poet and writer, and Robert Graves’s companion from 1929 to 1940. She and Graves collaborated on several literary projects, published and unpublished.

⁷ The *Clinica Adriano* was a hospital in Barcelona. William was riding his bicycle when he was hit by a car and badly hurt his leg. When it didn’t heal quickly, Robert brought him the Clinico Adriano where a skin graft saved his foot. *Wild Olives*, pp. 42-46.

⁸ Karl Goldschmidt ([1912?]-1995) was Graves’s ‘secretary and invaluable friend and collaborator’. He eventually changed his name to Kenneth Gay and became the curator of the Poetry Collection of the State University at Buffalo. ‘Obituaries’, *New York Times* (3 April 1995), p. B10. <<https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1995/04/03/issue.html>> [accessed 15 May 2022]

⁹ William H. Waldren (1924-2003) was an artist turned archaeologist. He arrived in Deyá in 1953 and established an archaeological museum in Deyá. Richard Perceval Graves, *Robert Graves and The White Goddess* (London: Orion Books, 1998), p. 239; *Wild Olives*, p. 138.

¹⁰ Phyllis Kaberry (1910-1977) was a social anthropologist who worked in Africa and Australia in the study of women in various societies.

¹¹ John David Graves (1920-1943) was the son of Robert Graves and his first wife Nancy Nicholson. David died in Burma in World War II.

¹² Camilo José Cela y Trulock, 1st Marquis of Iria Flavia was a Spanish novelist, poet, story writer and essayist associated with the Generation of ‘36 movement. Awarded the Nobel Prize in 1989. Cela called on Robert to attend the poets week-long conference he organized in Formentor (Mallorca). Robert was very busy at the time, went, but lost a whole day’s work (‘hence the poem “The Person from Porlock”). ‘Robert called in his “debt” trying to get Deyá protected from Tourist hotels’. Email from William Graves to transcriber 2/12/21 4:57 4:57 AM EST.

¹³ ‘Robert kept a diary from Feb. 1935 to May 1939 (at University of Victoria) and he got involved in village politics with his friend Gelat who became socialist Mayor of Deyá. Gelat was removed at the beginning of

the Civil War when the island sided with Franco. Robert stayed non-political on his return to Deyá immediately after WWII and Beryl who was staunchly socialist must have felt uncomfortable. Our having the pilot who had flown Franco, fly us down from England helped keep the authorities off his back. But just in case, he never talked politics. Before the war, Laura Riding had been vociferous and wrote political manifestos.’ Email from William Graves to transcriber 2/12/21 4:57 AM EST. The diary is available online <https://graves.uvic.ca/index.html>.

¹⁴ Tomás Graves (born 1953) is the youngest child of Robert and Beryl Graves.

¹⁵ Margot Callas was married to the film director, comedian, actor, Mike Nichols from 1963 to 1974. The story of her relationships with Alistair Reid and Robert Graves is recounted in several biographies of Graves and in Simon Gough, *The White Goddess: An Encounter* (Norwich: Gallery Beggar Press, 2012). Alistair Reid (1926-2014) was a Scottish poet, scholar, translator of Jorge Luis Borges and Pablo Neruda, and writer for *The New Yorker*.

¹⁶ Gerald Gardner (1884-1964). Gardner and Idries Shah met Graves in Deyá in 1961. Shah previously wrote to Graves and arranged a meeting with him on 17 January. *Robert Graves and The White Goddess*, p. 326.

¹⁷ Idries Shah (1924-1966) wrote over three dozen books. For an account of the *Rubaiyat* controversy see *Robert Graves and The White Goddess*, pp. 446-447, 468-472.

¹⁸ Siegfried Sassoon (1886-1967) was a poet and writer.

¹⁹ A typescript heavily corrected in Graves’s hand of *La Luna de Los Perros [Dogs Watch the Moon]* is preserved at the University of Victoria. See University of Victoria Libraries. Special Collections and University Archives. Robert Graves Collection (SC050) Subseries 11, file 3.13, Prose worksheets Gr-11-1 to Gr-11-132. <<https://uvic2.coppul.archivematica.org/prose-worksheets-gr-11-1-to-gr-11-132-dogs-watch-the-moon-la-luna-de-los-perros-by-ramon-sender-translated-into-english-by-robert-graves-n-y-1962-typescript-heavily-corrected-in-graves-autograph-131pp-fcap-gr-11-20-is-a-4-line-stanza-o>> [accessed 23 October 20022]

²⁰ Carl Hahn is doing a definitive revision of Fred Higginson’s *A Bibliography of the Writings of Robert Graves* (2nd ed.) previously revised by William Proctor Williams (1987).

²¹ The Robert Graves Collection at Southern Illinois University contains about 150 pages of *The Greek Myths*, some of which are typescripts corrected by Graves and some in Graves’s handwriting. Almost all are on the verso

pages of other manuscripts, so these pieces are scattered among the collection. Email from John Presley to transcriber 16/05/22 2:00 PM EST.

²² Ulrich Leman was a German painter who first traveled to Mallorca in the twenties and settled in Deyá in or about 1930. Joseph Fontedevilla, also called ‘Pep Pelat’, active in Deyá in the nineteen eighties, was a painter who specialized in flowers and landscapes. Miriam Frank, ‘Deyá’s Early Days’, *Gravesiana*, 4 (2020), 729, 748.

²³ *La Casa de Robert Graves* is a historic house museum operated by the *Fundació Robert Graves*. It opened in 2006. It was formerly Robert Graves’s home, Canellun, or ‘The House Farther On’, where he first lived with Laura (Riding) Jackson (1932-1937) and later with Beryl and their children, William, Lucia, Juan and Tomás (1946-1985). The house remained Canellun, or Canelluñ, throughout Robert’s working life, but latterly it was renamed Ca N’Alluny, ‘the correct Mallorquin for “the far house”’. R. P. Graves, *Robert Graves: The Years with Laura, 1926-1940* (New York: Viking, 1990), pp. 107, 350.

²⁴ Graves left Mallorca, along with Laura Riding, Alan Hodge, and Karl Goldschmidt, on 2 August 1936. See, *The Years with Laura*, p. 240-41.

²⁵ James Reeves (1909-1978) was a poet, playwright, literary critic, remembered especially for his children’s poetry. John Arthur Malcolm Aldrich (1905-1983) was a painter, principally of landscapes, book illustrator, designer of wallpapers and textiles. His portrait of Robert Graves hangs in the National Portrait Gallery.

²⁶ Sir Huw Pyrs Wheldon (1916-1986) was a Welsh broadcaster and BBC executive. He interviewed Graves in Deyá. See *Conversations with Robert Graves*, ed. by Frank L. Kersnowski (Jackson, MI: University Press of Mississippi, 1989), pp. 49-56.

²⁷ Manuel Fraga Iribarne (1922-2012) was a Spanish professor and politician in Francoist Spain. Fraga was Minister of Information and Tourism between 1962 and 1969.

²⁸ Vicente Aleixandre (1898-1984) was a Spanish poet who received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1977. Anthony Kerrigan (d. 1991) was a poet and Spanish-to-English translator, including works by Borges and Unamuno.

²⁹ Keith Baines, *Le Morte d’Arthur: King Arthur and the Legends of the Round Table*; with introduction by Robert Graves (New York: New American Library, 1962).

³⁰ Selwyn Jepson (1899-1989) was a writer of mysteries, detective novels and screenplays. For more on *The Rubaiyyat of Omar Khayyam* by

Robert Graves and Omar Ali-Shah, see Sara Greaves's essay 'Robert Graves's Mythopoetic Hospitality' in this issue.

³¹ Jenny Prydie Nicholson (1919-1964) was the daughter of Graves and his first wife, Nancy Nicholson.

³² Aemilia Laracuen (1925-2007), also known as Cindy Lee, was an American artist, and illustrator of Graves's book of poems *Love Respelt* (London: Cassell, 1965). Her relationship with Graves is recounted in several of Graves's biographies.

³³ Juan Graves (1944-2015) was the son of Robert and Beryl Graves, and brother to William.

³⁴ The biographers to whom William refers are Richard Perceval Graves, Miranda Seymour, and Martin Seymour-Smith.

³⁵ Cicely Foster Gittes (1903-2002) was a composer and her husband Archie Gittes (1903-1991) a painter.

³⁶ Oundle School, located in Northamptonshire, England, is a public school for pupils ages 11-18.