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**Editor's Introduction, with Orthographic Note**

*Michael Joseph*

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The 2023 issue of *The Robert Graves Review* (1.3) consists of four compact sections: Critical Studies, Bibliography, Notes, and Poetry, and concludes with an obituary of Margot Callas, the inspiration for many of Graves's most passionate and anguished poems of the early sixties. Margot is known as Robert's second muse, but we are inclined to think denoting women as muses is an arcane habit and subject to misinterpretation. As scholars, we might usefully abandon it (even while we remember this is a term Robert himself preferred) for more precise definitions.

The Critical Studies section begins with a wonderful essay by Judith Woolf, making her debut appearance in our journal. Her article 'A Hatful of Larks' examines one of Graves's most enduring early poems, 'Love Without Hope', against various backgrounds: the social history of the skylark, the blasted battleground of the Somme, the disreputable trade of bird-catching, and the world of opera – Mozart's beloved *vogelfänger*, Papageno. As Gregory Leadbetter does in his article 'The Reserve of Superstition' (*Gravesiana* 2021), Judith enriches her analysis with an original poem, 'A Hatful of Larks', and she concludes with a *sombre envoi*, glancing at the battlefield by way of Ralph Vaughan Williams's piercing *The Lark Ascending*. Vaughan Williams was inspired to write *The Lark* by a poem by William Meredith, and yet, after reading Woolf's commentary, it will be impossible to hear it without thinking of the lives lost in the War. It will be possible to think of Graves's 'young bird-catcher' as a soldier.

The two following essays by Christopher G. Simon and Anett K. Jessop (two of our 2022 MLA cohort) shift the focus to prose,

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drama and film. Complementing Alicja Bembien's theoretical, historiographical explorations of recent years, Simon's consideration of the *Claudius* novels is a polished narrative that begins in 1929, with research and writing and concludes in 1976, with Graves's appearance on the set of the BBC production. Among the many values of Chris's meticulous synthesis is a discussion of Graves's respect for scholarship, his apprehension that he lacked academic qualifications to write history, and his firm belief that, even in fiction, one must be historically circumspect.

Michael Korda's ill-starred effort to film *I Claudius* appears in Jessop's essay as well, along with Graves's other frustrating attempts to make books into movies. What is most newsworthy in her essay is her discussion of 'Greeks and Trojans' (c. 1937), an adaptation Graves made of Laura Riding's historical novel *A Trojan Ending* (1937). The adaptation was never filmed, but the manuscript survives on the versos of other unrelated manuscripts in the Special Collections Research Center at Southern Illinois University, a page of which prefaces this article.

Turning from *Claudius*, *The Review* heads into less chartered waters with Grevel Lindop's "'Good Luck ... and Blessed Be": Robert Graves and F. A. C. Boothby', an essay about Graves's relationship to various male witches (and the duplicitous Idries Shah). Lindop's masterful discussion greatly extends and complicates the portrait of Boothby presented in the last year's *Review* by Steven Michael Stroud, taking a deeper dive into the Graves-Boothby correspondence, and presenting him as a more roguish figure. If Boothby is roguish (and somewhat seedy), Idries Shah comes off as downright villainous: 'systematically poisoning Graves's mind against [Gerald] Gardner', the founder of Gardenerian Wicca, to manoeuvre Graves's into supporting his book on Sufism. (Boothby, perhaps also out of self-interest, puts in a knife in 'Old Gardner' as well.) Here Lindop expands on his

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essay ‘From Witchcraft to the *Rubaiyyat*: Robert Graves and the Shah Brothers’ (*The Art of Collaboration: Essays on Robert Graves and his Contemporaries*, ed. by Dunstan Ward). One beholds Graves at sixty-five at his most impressionable and trusting, almost credulous, an easy mark for charlatans and obsessives. We should remember, however, as Sara Greaves told us in the last year’s *Review*, in ‘Robert Graves’s Mythopoetic Hospitality’, Graves never abandoned his own interests and ends. His letters appear to show that what preoccupied Graves was mushroom lore and the experience of ingesting psychotropic mushrooms. In ‘Poetry and the Olympic’ (*Robert Graves Review*, 2022), Vivian Holzer Rosenthal demonstrates that Graves’s preoccupation with mushrooms flourished well past the end of the decade.) It is notable that Graves induced Boothby and his coven to experiment with the *psilocybin* mushroom, in the consumption of which by August 1960 he seems to have been an expert

Graves’s influence on witches forms the basis for Steven Michael Stroud’s essay, which follows up his Boothby essay in the last year’s *Review* (and Lindop’s Boothby essay in this year’s) with a report on how various witches, covens, and traditions integrated *The White Goddess* into their rituals and practices. Stroud’s lively and insightful report of his interviews with witches informs us that the Celtic Tree Calendar developed in *TWG* became a mainstay among witches. Stroud touches on reading history here, an area of scholarly research not often treated in Graves scholarship. As Robert A. Gross notes, ‘reading history is women’s history’.<sup>1</sup> Although Professor Gross is referring to the limited context of U. S. historiography, we can draw on his observation to propose that, by recording the reading habits of female witches, Stroud offers us a feminine perspective on reading Robert Graves, if narrowly confined to *TWG*.

Dunstan Ward anchors the critical studies section with an essay on the literary correspondence between Graves and Siegfried

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Sassoon, based on a paper he delivered at the 2022 Graves conference. Ward's crisp and penetrating exegesis of the epistolary poem, 'A Letter from Wales', is uppermost among this essay's considerable charms. His discovery of a continuing impression of Christianity and Christian symbolism in Graves's 1916 poems is also of the essence: we may well have Graves's testimony that he abandoned his faith before then, yet here is evidence that Graves's faith didn't abandon him, at least as a source for poetic imagery and meaning.

In his encore appearance in *The Review* (2023), Ward presents us with two unpublished Graves poems, which turned up in the sale of Margot Callas's Graves archive to St John's, Oxford, completed shortly before her death. In his definitive overview, Ward gives us not only his article and the poems' transcriptions but also images of the manuscripts (one of which appears with the article and one at the end of the journal, eventually to face the obituary William Graves wrote for Margot).

Two notes follow these delicacies. In 'Authorial Error in *Wife to Mr Milton*', the novelist John Leonard (returning to our journal after a twenty-two-year absence) notes that Graves wrote the phrase 'blinding of Lear' when he must have intended Gloster (the quarto spelling). The blinding of Lear is axiomatic but, of course, refers to Lear's refusal to see life as it really is or to register that Regan and Goneril are manipulating him for loveless ends. Of course, Lear's metaphorical blinding corresponds to Gloucester's physical blinding, but Leonard points out that, while she prepares herself to meet the unsavoury 'John Milton' by thinking of all the terrible things she can remember, Marie Powell must be thinking of a literal and not figurative blinding. Thus, it would have been unlikely for her to refer to the blinding of Lear.

The second note, 'A Matter of Interpretation', concerns two lines that appear in the manuscript version of Graves's letter to Sassoon, 'To S. S.': 'This Peter still may win a part | Of David's

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corner in your heart'. These lines have been understood to refer exclusively to Graves's Charterhouse friend, Peter Johnstone, and to David Thomas, a fellow Fusilier and close friend of Graves and Sassoon. But this note suggests a second, implicit meaning that refers to the Sassoon family's claim to be of the Davidic line. 'David's part' may also refer to Sassoon's Jewishness. This reading was proposed by the Jewish Museum (Manhattan) in its signage for the recent exhibition, 'The Sassoons'. It is a common-sense reading made by two accomplished scholars and has considerable merit, instancing once again the complexity of Graves's poetry *qua* poetry.

Reviews were a mainstay of *The Review's* forerunner journal, *Gravesiana*, and we hope to continue this tradition. We are delighted to present three book reviews. Mick Gowar, a widely recognized author and editor of children's books and a scholar of Ted Hughes, sounds the third note in our witch's triplet with 'Pagan Survivals or Surviving Paganism', his review of Ronald Hutton's *Queens of the Wild: Pagan Goddess in Christian Europe: An Investigation*. John Leonard returns with his review of Neil McLennan's *Owen and Sassoon: The Edinburgh Poems*, alerting us to the presence of an intimate selection of familiar poems by Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfrid Owen made more interesting by each other's presence. Poet and scholar Joseph T. Thomas Jr. brings *The Review's* Review section to what I hope you will agree is a rousing conclusion with 'Please Read Carefully', in his review of *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Contemporary American Poetry*, edited by Craig Svonkin and Steven Gould Axelrod. Thomas opines:

The map of American poetry offered by *The Bloomsbury* is a palimpsest of the traditional and the oddball, as if a map highlighting all the expected (and culturally sanctioned) tourist attractions were printed atop a map of offbeat

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freakshows and roadside oddities: The Museum of Jurassic Technology overlaid by the Griffith Observatory; the Watts Towers just visible below The Walt Disney Concert Hall. That is, it is a distinctly American book, an intersection of conservative and radical, somehow both deeply individualistic yet beguilingly faddish and hip.

The ‘intersection of conservative and radical’, seems as apt and concise a description of Graves’s poetry as any I’ve seen.

The Poetry section of the journal includes two unpublished poems by Robert Graves, a poem by Judith Woolf within her critical text, three unpublished poems by Sean O’Brien, and six more poems by the poets O’Brien recommends: Tamar Yoseloff and Peter Armstrong.

The journal concludes this year with William Graves’s obituary of Margot Callas. For an extended discussion of the relationship between Robert Graves and Callas, and her importance to his work, readers should see Richard Perceval Graves’s *Robert Graves and the White Goddess* and, ‘Margot and “Inexorable Need”, 1960-63’. Readers may also be interested to learn that The Robert Graves Correspondence Database will soon include approximately 140 of Graves’s letters to Margot.

### **An Orthographic Note on Deià**

The policy that we inherited in 2017 and which we have followed until now prefers Deyá as the spelling of Graves’s adopted village. In this and in future issues, it will appear as Deià. The world seems to have settled on Deià as the correct spelling. It is the spelling preferred by the redoubtable Library of Congress authority files and the *Fundació* Robert Graves. Changing the spelling in our journal will not hinder word / name searches.

Searches for either Deyá, Deià, or Deya will find all the articles using any of these spellings.

Finally, my personal thanks go to our editorial crew, Alicja Bemben, Lucia Graves, and Patrick J. Villa (Associate Editors), Fran Brearton, Dunstan Ward (Poetry Associate Editors), and Carl Hahn (Bibliography Editor), and to William Graves for advice and wise counsel, and to Philip for technical problem-solving and handholding. Among the many pleasures of editing *The Robert Graves Review* is working with these amazing scholars and writers.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Robert A. Gross, 'Reading Culture, Reading Books', *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 106, 1 (1996), 59-78 (p. 66).

