The Cool Web of Memory: an Initiatory Reading of Robert Graves's Good-bye To All That

by Frederick S. Frank

Even though the title of Robert Graves's autobiography implies a repudiation of unpleasant or unsharable memories, Good-bye To All That is really an act of complex remembrance and sharing. Without nostalgia, bitterness, sentimentalism, or eulogizing, Graves resurrects his pre-War, wartime, and post-War selves and scans each of these former personalities with the dry, objective eye of the professional poet. Meant to be a sort of portrait-of-the-artist-as-a-young-soldier in the Great War, the book is an unflattering and uncompromising recollection of his own full participation in the foolish, yet admirable, idealism of a generation of young Englishmen who stalwartly believed in a safe and controllable British universe and who paid a heavy penalty for their belief in the charnel house of the Western Front. Weaving what he would later call the "cool web of language" around all of his pre-war suppositions, Graves's ingenious narrator in Good-bye To All That assumes a special function as dispassionate spokesman for the once naive and later wiser multitude of Englishmen whose world ended where the trenchline began.

Written during the late twenties when most young writers were candidates for membership in that international fraternity of hopelessness known as the lost generation, Good-bye To All That stands apart from the literature of despair, opposing all of the postures of morose withdrawal which were so fashionable throughout the twenties. Instead, Graves uses the writing of Good-bye To All That to counter such pessimism; his book is imperative biography, an artistic reorganization of his faculties, which enables Graves to make his way through the literary wasteland of the twenties and to resist the impulse to join the ranks of the lost. As a memorial tour-de-force, Good-bye To All That also has the distinction of being the outstanding model of its type, for it is perhaps the best example of a new genre of memoir writing-the anti-romantic retrospective-which flooded the literary marketplace at the close of the decade. Writers who had fought in the Great War were once again trying to recover the light that had failed and this sort of autobiography was one means of retrieving selfhood.

Good-bye To All That had been preceded in 1928 by Edmund Blunden's Undertones of War, an account of identity lost and regained, in a form which anticipated Graves's theme of stoic recovery and self-development. If it were possible for a sensitive man to survive the War in body, Blunden had suggested, it was nevertheless impossible to evade it in mind and memory. Two other leading war memoirists were later to echo the same idea that there really could be no farewell to the psychic bondage of the Western Front in their autobiographies-Siegfried Sassoon in Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man (1931) and Guy Chapman in A Passionate Prodigality (1933). But the crucial artistic task of

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revealing the widely felt notion that there could never be any permanent good-byes fell to Robert Graves.

Good-bye To All That is at once a highly traditional and a highly experimental mode of autobiography. Beginning with the apparent insolence of its title, Graves’s memoir is consciously rooted in irony and paradox. Intellectual tensions, emotional polarities, and a disquieting sense of being trapped between two contradictory notions of self give the book an air of internal conflict to play against the external conflict of the Great War itself. The narrator is a figure of violent opposites whose recollections are almost always ambivalent and sometimes tainted with cynical wit. He detests the boring routine of military service, yet retains a nearly devout affection for regimental customs and regalia and feels the camaraderie of the battalion. He complains about lack of privacy by being constantly in the presence of other men, yet comes to regard the platoon as a kind of family superior to his own. He resents the authoritarian climate of army life, yet responds deeply to the mystique of discipline and enjoys the solidarity afforded by drill. Although his maternal ancestry is German and his own cousin, Wilhelm, is flying a German aircraft, he makes a vigorous effort to become an honorary Welchman.

On a higher level of paradox, he knows that political exile and severance from British culture are the only conditions that can maintain his sanity and integrity after the war, yet pre-War England remains very much alive in his imagination. He distrusts bookish fantasies about heroism and is profoundly suspicious of history and historians, yet he seeks through the writing of autobiography to reclaim a lost sense of the heroic in modern man and to impose an historical meaning upon the events which shaped his consciousness. As a culminating irony, Graves confronts the reader with a laconic title which has a ring of desertion and irresponsibility, but the title’s rejection of the past is countermanded by the whole mood and manner of the autobiography. For Good-bye To All That is never valedictory; it leaves nothing behind and is least of all a farewell in its bold reluctance to forget his generation’s debacle.

Methodical irony is a mark of Graves’s classical preference for firm artistic structure supported by well-defined conflict and resolution. If existence is chaotic and directionless, it does not necessarily follow that art should reflect this confusion. The autobiographer must sort out his memories and edit his past experience to confer a design where none is apparent in the original experience. The autobiographer controls and uses his past by subjecting it to the rigors of artistic form.

Graves’s irony shows in savage vignettes of public school life, in the stark real education that awaited him in the trenches, the propaganda circus on the homefront, and in his ridiculous encounters with the post-War academic world at Oxford and the Cairo University. The book’s cast, a vivid mixture of writers and soldiers, gives the autobiography an atmosphere of shared historical crisis. Witty page-portraits of eccentric pacifists like Lytton Strachey, irate young men like Siegfried Sassoon, charming old men like Thomas Hardy, and the fascinating mystic, T.E. Lawrence, are used to counterbalance the narrator’s solitary moments of self-analysis. Opposing the book’s public theme of loss of self through the War is the private theme of regeneration of self through the consolations of literature.

In studying its form and tone, it should be kept in mind that Good-bye To All That exists in two versions and was literally written twice. Graves revised and enlarged the original 1929 text in 1957 and in doing so he sought to preserve the disintegrative moods of the War years without relapsing into a melodramatic in memoriam. The tone throughout the 1957 version remains consistently anti-poignant as in this epitaph: “At least one in three of my generation at school died; because they all took commissions as soon as they could,
most of them in the infantry and the Royal Flying Corps. The average life expectancy of an infantry subaltern on the Western Front was, at some stages of the War, only about three months." In comparing the two versions, the suffering endured by Graves's generation seems to gain in intensity in the 1957 text as a result of Graves's ironic outlook, for the irony applies not only to statement but also to events, structure, and the tense international circumstances of the post-War world, a world of aggressive fascism succeeded by cold war.

The first conceived not as an autobiography but as a war novel, Good-bye To All That's narrative pattern takes a young man from adolescence to maturity. Its broad chronology follows the guidelines of the initiation saga, one of the oldest plot formats in literature. (It had already been used in the 1920s by Dos Passos and Hemingway to describe the War.) The hero's movement from place to place is accompanied by an expansion of self-understanding and a gradual shedding of illusions. In Graves's narrative scheme four spheres of action and growth are distinguishable in the thirty-two chapters, each corresponding to a heightened phase of self-knowledge in the narrator. Each successive sphere is distinctively colored by its own historical tone, while the general atmosphere of the book is progressively darkened by the lengthening shadow of the War. The four stages of initiation are: Chapters I through IX—the student and sportsman; Chapters X through XIX—the ardent young officer and military novice; Chapters XX through XXVI—the seasoned veteran returned from the dead; Chapters XXVII through XXXII—the professor, husband, and aspiring artist.

The book's first stage takes an ironic backward glance at the pre-War temperament. All of the cultural distortions of high Victorianism, including the myth of social stability, are exposed and exploded in Graves's scathing backward glance at his own misdirections. Along with accounts of school pranks and intellectual friendships, this section of Good-bye To All That contains a final vista of innocence as Graves remembers his English winters and German summers.

Beginning informally with a casual, genealogical prologue in which the autobiographer introduces himself, Graves traces his German heritage through the eminent historian, Leopold Von Ranke, discusses the innate petulance of the Graves family, and begins to establish one of the principal themes of the autobiography: the tension in himself between a life of violent physical exploit and a life of artistic endeavor. A moody young man rapidly takes shape before the reader—acutely self-conscious about his divided heritage, sensitive about his attraction to books and ideas, and recklessly athletic to compensate for a congenital shyness.

Reviewing this young man and his great expectations, Graves can be harshly critical as in this sardonic reminiscence of officer training: "At Wrexham, we second-lieutenants learned Regimental history, drill, musketry, Boer War field-tactics, military law and organization, how to recognize bugle calls, how to work a machine-gun, and how to conduct ourselves on formal occasions." His random observation that "there is a coldness in the Graves' which is antisentimental to the point of insolence" explains the apparent callousness of manner which shows up in the later descriptions of technological horror and mass destruction, where these family traits are called upon to shield the inner self from collapse. But this remoteness is balanced by a passion for the creative life, expressed early in Graves's taste for solitude and his dislike of the stagnant conformity of King's College and Charterhouse Schools. The image of the pre-War Graves is that of a restless consciousness held in check by a static social and academic environment and needing romantic outlets. The coming of the Great War, as Graves openly confesses, furnished a moral alternative for his idle spiritual energies and allowed him to combine idealistic goals with the longed-for life of action. Incited also by "the Germans' cynical
violation of Belgian neutrality," Graves saw his going up to St. John's College, Oxford in the Fall of 1914 as a ridiculously inappropriate gesture.

The impulsive decision to enlist and accept a commission in the Royal Welch Fusiliers in order to evade the dull formalities of Oxford opens the second stage in Graves's pursuit of self. This trial-and-error stage of initiation can best be seen in his miseducation as an officer. As if he were training for the Empire's little wars of the Victorian past, Graves finds himself learning outmoded tactics and mastering the social amenities of the officer caste. As preparation for the new kind of war being fought across the Channel, a term at Oxford might have proved just as useful as the instruction that he and thousands of young officers received. His impatience to get into the War before it ends as he waits to go overseas displays all of the mistaken assumptions about the nature and prolonged duration of that conflict. Chapter eleven, a miniature regimental history of the Royal Welch Fusiliers, shows Graves's fascination and reverence for tradition, dress, and mess-customs. No small portion of his later psychology of endurance will derive from this feeling of regimental identity.

Assigned the task of guarding prisoners, Graves records his first disappointment in the nation's misuse of his military skills. "Guarding prisoners seemed an unheroic part to be playing in the War, which, by October, had reached a critical stage; I wanted to be abroad fighting." In the remark, we can hear the truculence of the boxer and the restiveness of the mountain-climber, two sports at which young Graves had excelled during his schooldays. Writing eleven years after the events themselves it would have been easy to have eliminated all such allusions to his glory-motive, but there is never any attempt to minimize the naive flamboyance of his former self. As Graves matures, he discovers how such energy can be channeled into art.

There is a bemused empathy in the narrator with this romantic young man who now wears the Royal Welch uniform, but Graves maintains an ironic distance between his present and previous selves. In fact, the tone of this section of the book falls somewhere between romantic involvement and classical disengagement with his subject. This is not to say that Graves apologizes or refuses to sympathize with the misconceptions of his generation toward the War; many of his own reasons for rushing to the colors were also those of his generation. Though he had not been a victim of pre-War ennui, Graves can now recognize that his emotional discontents arose from an historically conditioned temperament which required the elements of death and danger to satisfy its imaginative compulsions.

Prior to the outbreak of war, Graves had fulfilled such Byronic longings through the hazards of mountain-climbing with his friend and tutor, George Mallory. Fighting the War will be analogous to climbing the tallest peak; it will be done in the company of other young men, but the victory will be a personal demonstration of strength and the view from the summit will be the imagination's reward. This eager sportsman's view of the War reaches a climax in Graves's satiric portrait of himself as a green lieutenant arriving in the muddy trenches for the first time attired as if for a weekend outing. Standing before his new commanding officer in his preposterous equipage, young Graves is an image of dashing Victorian manhood standing anxiously on the fire-step of the twentieth-century:

I felt tired out by the time I reached company headquarters, sweating under a pack-valise like the men, and with all the usual furnishings hung at my belt—revolver, field-glasses, map-case, compass, whiskey-flask, wire-cutters, a periscope, and a lot more. A "Christmas Tree," that was called. Those were the days in which officers had their swords sharpened.
by the armourer before sailing to France.10

From this caricature of adventuresome youth, Graves passes quickly into the great middle section of the autobiography, the grim reality of the Western Front. Unexpectedly, he finds himself knee-deep in a real war of anti-heroic proportions and unrelenting horrors, a troglodyte's war of boredom, mud, and anonymity. The first dead man Graves sees is not a German but a Munster Fusilier who has shot himself. The ghastly scene is repeated as Graves is about to leave France, suggesting the gruesome cycle of the Western Front: "The chaplain was gabbling the burial service over a corpse lying on the ground covered with a waterproof sheet—the miserable weather and fear of the impending attack were responsible for his death. This, as it turned out, was the last dead man I saw in France and, like the first, had shot himself."11

The material of the third stage is graphic rather than philosophic as Graves intentionally delays all larger reflections about the significance of his experiences on the Western Front until the post-War chapters of the book, when he can survey them with a mature overview. Distinctly novelistic in pace and tone, these portions of Good-bye To All That have the immediacy of a trench diary capturing impressively all the fatigue, disenchantment, and atrophies of hope of a typical soldier exposed to the Western Front for a prolonged period. Among all of the little daily deaths of spirit he suffered, none is more an-quishing than the mutilation of time, the artist's most precious possession. Much more than a symptom of physical fatigue, the desire for sleep becomes a metaphor of the soldier's spiritual weariness and effort to escape the nightmare of the Western Front. Graves, the dreamer, retreats into sleep: "I found it easy now to sleep through bombardments; though vaguely conscious of the noise, I let it go by. . . . I could fall asleep sitting down, standing, marching, lying on a stone floor, or in any other position, at a moment's notice at any time of day or night."12

Though he undergoes temporary lapses of self in the Western Front episodes, Graves never suffers disintegration. On the contrary, this phase of the initiation increases his respect for life and teaches him to thrive upon the disasters which surround him. The Western Front causes Graves psychic damage but never psychic defeat. He retains his identity through "the technique of endurance: a brutal persistence in seeing things through, somehow, anyhow, without finesse, satisfied with the main points of any situation."13 The stress of combat and the strain of boredom convert his fatal innocence into a primal wisdom upon which artistic vision can be founded. Always battling against a growing moral apathy in himself, Graves comes to see that the most insidious enemy in the Great War is the debasement of the value of life and the vulgarization of all human feelings. Restrained, anecdotal, frequently humorous, the Graves of the Western Front is no longer the boxer, mountain-climber, or the pseudo-sophisticated intellectual.

In this stage of the autobiography, Graves functions almost purely as storyteller, plotting his scenes and drawing his characters intensely, never deviating into polemics against the War, as his friend Sassoon would do when he came to write his account of the Western Front. Expurgation of memory in its rarest and least contemplative substance gives him the novelist's freedom of selection and detail throughout the combat sections of Good-bye To All That. The result is a brilliantly depersonalized journal of the self.

Diaristic extracts bolstered by an unfailing wit even in his routine encounters with death in all its forms, are stylistic hallmarks of the third stage of the book. Much of the writing here is directly informational and sensory, though never over-technical. From the memory-photograph of his first platoon to the understated account of his wound and the grotesque comedy of errors which reports him as killed in action on July 22, 1916, Graves makes the reader see, feel, hear, and smell the Western Front during the years of
attrition. To read these pages is to journey through a pictorial record as vivid in its own way as Goya's disasters of war, for Graves assembles an album of ghastly accuracy which universalizes the experience of every soldier on most sectors of the Western Front during those terrible years. Who can forget his verbal photograph of heaped corpses?

Every night we went out to fetch in the dead of the other battalions. The Germans continued indulgent and we had very few casualties. After the first day or two the corpses swelled and stank. I vomited more than once while superintending the carrying. Those we could not get in from the German wire continued to swell until the wall of the stomach collapsed, either naturally or when punctured by a bullet; a disgusting smell would float across. The colour of the dead faces changed from white to yellow-grey, to red, to purple, to green, to black, to slimy.14

There are many almost cursory references to the daily harvest of death. Graves recalls, for example, the indelible memory of a barricade constructed half of sandbags and half of human remains at Cuinchy: "The parapet of a trench which we don't occupy is built up with sandbags, ammunition-boxes and corpses."15 He has the briefly rehumanizing experience of lining up a German bathing on the other side of the line in his rifle sights and is shocked to see not an enemy but a naked fellow creature. The details of his first patrol form as stark a description of the slimy hell of no-man's-land as any in the literature of the Great War. He remembers his disbelief over the political farce of London at war, a superpatriot's wonderland of Germanophobia and absurd rhetoric or "newspaper language"16 as Graves calls it. Yet, he too responds to the grip of war propaganda. Thinking back to the oratory of Lloyd George after the disaster on the Somme, Graves confesses his intoxication with war fever: "Lloyd George was up in the air on one of his 'glory of the Welsh hills' speeches. The power of his rhetoric amazed me. The substance of the speech might be commonplace, idle and false, but I had to fight hard against abandoning myself with the rest of his audience."17 The narrative also contains anecdotes of inconspicuous gallantry which read with the briskness of communiques, such as the unnoticed courage of Lance Corporal Baxter who had gone to the rescue of a wounded man in no-man's-land in broad daylight. There is the broad, farcical vitality of "Dirty Williams," a khaki comrade whose sexual escapades on leave are notorious. Blasting away at roadside crucifixes after the comic command "bloeke on the cross, five rounds, concentrate (consecrate), FIRE!"18 watching rats tussle over a severed hand, getting an introduction to the sullen and brilliant Sassoon through the books scattered about his makeshift dugout library, returning to an England which he finds far more foreign than the society of the trenches, Graves begins to use the brutal absurdities of his War experience as a transformational catastrophe. Out of the adversities of the Western Front, Graves would salvage a better self.

The physically vile phase of Graves's initiation ends when he jokes about his reported death and his obituary. Returning to the front in more practical attire, in marked contrast to the earlier sportsman clad for the hunt, Graves's change in uniform and general appearance symbolizes a new identity. The uniform and kit are those of a wise, old soldier who understands the rules of War and who is determined to survive:

I went back an old soldier as my kit and baggage proved.

I had reduced my original Christmas tree to a pocket-torch with a fourteen-day battery, and a pair of insulated wire-cutters strong enough to cut German wire (the ordinary Army issue would cut only British wire). Instead
of a haversack, I brought a pack like the ones carried by the men, but lighter and waterproof. I had lost my revolver when wounded and had not bought another; a rifle and bayonet could always be got from the battalion.\(^{19}\)

In addition, the kit also contains a small, but select, library which signifies that although Graves had become a physical casualty of the War, he planned to stay off all of the spiritual casualty lists and, as he later announces, to "live by writing."\(^{20}\)

I also took a Shakespeare and a Bible, both printed on India paper, a Catullus and a Lucretius in Latin; and two light-weight folding canvas arm-chairs—one as a present for Yates, the Quartermaster, the other for myself. I wore a very thick, whip-cord tunic, with a neat patch above the second button and another between the shoulders—my only salvage from the last time out, except for the reasonably waterproof pair of ski-ing boots, in which also I had been killed—my breeches had been cut off me in the hospital.\(^{21}\)

This veteran's kit is a composite symbol of the disciplined military self and the emergent poetic self. Its literary contents suggest his renascence of spirit and a psychic reintegration. In the bleak decade of the twenties with all of its dereliction, aimlessness, and despair, Graves will rely upon art and draw strength from the world of letters to produce poetry and to write his initiatory book, Good-bye To All That. The two grand themes of the last section of the book, the rebirth of spirit through art and the sanctuary of literature, are prefigured in this passage.

Graves realized that his warrior-self, firm though it now was, could not sustain him in the gloom-stricken, post-War void. Yet, as he reentered the world of letters in the post-War era, Graves would call upon the tough conditioning and respect for action of his soldier-self to withstand the paralysis of "Prufrockism," the chief poetic malady of the twenties. The fourth segment of Good-bye To All That, with its radical shift from the community of suffering in the trenches to the community of artistic endeavor and domestic bliss at Oxford, shows Graves applying the lessons of the Western Front in a humane environment. Graves could now clearly see that the major peril of the Great War, even more sinister than romanticizing or repressing it, was the temptation to give in to despondency or to accept the pessimistic image of Eliot's "Waste-land," accurate though it was, as inevitable. Graves's ability to reconstruct his fragmented vision and to substitute regeneration for the widespread degeneration of the twenties is the dominant motif of the final seven chapters of Good-bye To All That, as he reasserts his faith in the creative principle.

Free of all hampering illusions, Graves returns to civilian life not as a hollow man but as one too prudent ever again to risk his life and ready to pour all of his energies into writing. His reaction to influenza is typical of his invincibility: "having come through the War, I refused to die of influenza."\(^{22}\)

Memories of the Western Front bring Graves to an ironic realization of the opportunities which the War created for the spiritual and imaginative enlargement of sensitive individualists like himself. In fact, it is no exaggeration to say that the First World War became the great, directive force in his career. Because self-salvation and restoration of vision are old patterns for autobiography, Graves is able to superimpose these designs on his own particular struggle and to reconcile his ideals with harsh realities. Even his being listed as killed in action may be seen as a comic miniature variation of the theme of rebirth.

Near the beginning of Chapter Twenty-Three, Graves says farewell to the myth of innocence in his first large, philosophic comment about his genera-
tion's revised view of the War. The stoic fortitude of Graves the soldier blends with the objective insight of Graves the artist in this summation: "We could no longer see the War as one between trade-rivals: its continuance seemed merely a sacrifice of the idealistic younger generation to the stupidity and self-protective alarm of the elder."23 

In its beautifully controlled clarity, this observation is an *ave atque vale*. It brings into balance the contending selves inside Graves, and more vitally, separates the pre-War Graves who is manipulated by events from Graves the independent artist who has "paid [his] debts"24 and intends to shape his own destiny hereafter as a man of letters. Of the many "all thats" which underlie the title, none looms larger as the book draws to a close than Graves's good-bye to the Victorian fiction of a safe and secure society, which had manipulated his early beliefs.

As Graves awakens from the nightmare of the War, he concentrates his new wisdom on the remaking of vision from within and the search for a society which is not based on misleading political or cultural prejudices but rather on aesthetic freedom. Curiously, Graves's psychological position in the final section of Good-bye To All That strongly resembles the independent stance of the artist-hero on the verge of self-exile in James Joyce's autobiographical novel, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916). Both Stephen Daedalus and Robert Graves rebel against their national past and seek integrity of vision through the aesthetic life, Stephen in Paris and Graves on Majorca. Both rebels, having passed through formative crises, arm themselves against the lies of the old civilization by engaging in what Stephen Daedalus designates "silence, exile, and cunning." While Graves's moral stance in the final section of Good-bye To All That lacks Stephen's anger, his decisive mood of flight finds a nearly exact corollary in Stephen's renunciation at the end of the Portrait:

> I will tell you what I will do and what I will not do. I will not serve that in which I no longer believe, whether it call itself my home, my fatherland, or my church; and I will try to express myself in some mode of life or art as freely as I can and as wholly as I can, using for my defense the only arms I allow myself to use—silence, exile, and cunning.25

Thus, the self can be resanctified through the choice of the artist's life over all other forms of identity. In truly classic fashion, all of the tensions between the gullible and romantic self and the disciplined and reflective self are worked out in the ritual of remembering that provoked the writing of Good-bye To All That. Just as there could be no retreat from what Wilfred Owen called the "old lie" in "Dulce Et Decorum Est,"26 there also could be no forgetting the enormous toll of human hopes that the old lie had exacted. The War and its emotional aftermath had seen to that.

In its four-part structure, Good-bye To All That formalizes such losses and gains in the psychological no-man's-land of the twenties, bringing under the artist's control circumstances which might otherwise lead to madness if merely recalled spontaneously instead of within a highly stylized artistic framework. If we see the book, therefore, not as mere fictionalization of Graves's War adventure, but as a structured recital in the form of an initiation story, we can understand how Graves used the artist's veneration of form to recover a vision of existence beyond chaos. On the aesthetic level, this refusal to accept the chaos of post-War values applies the "technique of endurance" which Graves acquired in the trenches, a concept which lies at the center of Graves's post-War ethics. The sanctity of form is under-stressed with his usual, ironic acuteness in the Epilogue, when Graves writes: "What else can I say except that my best friend is still the wastepaper basket?"27
While the War itself is certainly the main material of Good-bye To All That, an important dimension of the book is missed if the book is read only as a war memoir or as a synopsis of a novel which never got written. Graves raised an established form to uncommon heights in Good-bye To All That and proved anew how a literary genre can advance even during a period of depression and consternation when literature seems hemmed in by conditions which demand new metaphors and new syntax. The perceptive reader of Good-bye To All That sees at last that the ravaging effect of the Great War serves mainly as a vehicle for Graves's validation of the indestructible nobility of the self. Throughout history, War has often been the anvil upon which great literary imaginations were forged. In the case of Robert Graves, looking at his immense poetic success and his gift for life, mankind's greatest war brought forth one of our century's greatest men of letters. Perhaps the higher self that Graves had gained by the writing of Good-bye To All That is most clearly echoed in the 1938 poem "The Reader Over My Shoulder":

"Know me, have done: I am a proud spirit
And you forever clay. Have done."28

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FOOTNOTES.

2. Edmund Blunden, Undertones of War (London: Cobden-Sanderson, 1928).
7. Graves, Good-bye, p. 10.
10. Graves, Good-bye, p. 98.
12. Graves, Good-bye, p. 213.
14. Graves, Good-bye, p. 163.
15. Graves, Good-bye, p. 111.
18. Graves, Good-bye, p. 189.
23. Graves, Good-bye, p. 245.
24. Graves, Good-bye, "Prologue."
27. Graves, Good-bye, p. 345.
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(Bkw 1/75).
Whippergarten. $75 (Currey 5/75); $75 (Cov Gdn 4/74). 
Ransom-Grace After Meat. $175 (Currey 5/74).
Seizin 1. Riding - Love as Love. Death as Death. $95 (Blkw 11/75).
Seizin 2. Stein - Acquaintance with Description. $195 (Phnx 3/74); $165 (Blkw 
12/73).
Seizin 4. Riding - Though Gently. $75 (Wm Yng 2/74).
Seizin 7. Riding - Laura and Francesca. $75 (Wm Yng 2/74).
Sotheby Auction, 16th July 1973.
$148. Lawrence and the Arabs, Count Belisarius, Wife to Mr. Milton, Occu-
389. A Survey of Modernist Poe-
try. $45.
pation Writer. $16.

Sotheby Auction, 3-4 December 1973.
#181. 1 p., ALS to Mr. Wilkinson, 26 February 1958. $45.
#182. 1 p., ALS to Gordon Dyson, 8 June 1967. $60.
#180. Autograph Manuscript Poem, 3 leaves, plus a postcard. $380.

#121. My Head! My Head! $60.
#403. 5 ALS (15 pp) The Vale House Glimpton, Devon, Oct '43 – 10 Feb '44 to Arnold Snodgrass. $480.

Sotheby Auction, 16-17 December 1974.
#187. Lars Porsena. $45.

Sotheby Auction, 14 July 1975.
#33. Over the Brazier. $170.
#34. Goliath and David (inscribed). $300.
#35. Fairies and Fusiliers (signed/inscribed). $50.
#36. More Poems. $28.
#37. Man Does, Woman Is. $32.
#38. Mammon and the Black Goddess. $28.
#39. Beyond Giving. $28.

Sotheby Auction, 15 July 1975.
#125. AM of poem "Limbo", on flyleaf of Sassoon's Recreations, one of 75, 1923, presented and signed to Frank Prewitt. $200.

Sotheby Auction, 4 December 1975.
#11. Fairies and Fusiliers. $60.
#12. Welchman's Hose. $95.
#13. Good-Bye to All That. $145.
#49. The Shout. $70.
#50. Man Does, Woman Is. $45.
#51. Love Respetl. $25.

697. 1 p., ALS to Mr. Palmer, (c. 1926-7.) $215.

InFLAYtion
I. The 5 ALS to Arnold Snodgrass sold at Sothebys on 15 July 1974 for $480 were offered by Frances Edwards on January 1976 at $735.
II. At the Christie sale of Siegfried Sassoon material on 4 June 1975. The
House of El Dieff (Lew Feldman) bought 90% of the items. In El Dieff's catalog entitled: 233 Items from the Library of Siegfried Sassoon, issued in early February 1976, the following inflation occurred. 

CH=Christie.

SA=House of El Dieff.

SA 1. Good-Bye to All That. First issue with 250 pages annotated by Sassoon and Blunden. 

Plus: Copy in Graves's hand, made in 1923, of the Sassoon poem suppressed in the second issue of this book. $15,000. 

CH price= $ 6,500.

SA 87. The Pier-Class. Inscribed presentation to Sassoon by Graves. $ 1,500. 

CH price= $ 690.

SA 88. Welchman's Hose. Inscribed presentation to Sassoon by Graves. $ 1,500. 

CH price= $ 460.

SA 89. Poems (1914-26). Inscribed presentation to Sassoon by Graves, Laid in, a watercolor of Graves by Sassoon; photograph of Graves; 1934 Christmas card from Nancy Nicholson. $ 1,500. 

CH price= $ 550.

$ 500. 

CH price= $ 365.

SA 90. But it Still Goes On (both states). $ 750. 

CH price= $ 300.


CH price= $ 322. 

LDF sale price $ 369.


LDF sale price $15,000.

378. One-hundred and forty Graves letters to Sassoon. 1916 to 1962. 

LDF also reported on the verso of the title page of this catalog the sale, prior to the catalog, of the following:

Christie item:


LDF sale price $ 369.

378. One-hundred and forty Graves letters to Sassoon. 1916 to 1962. $ 8,740. 

LDF sale price $15,000.

III. The House of Books offered in October 1974 a Latin & Greek notebook written by Graves at Copthorne School for $1,350. It was sold at Sotheby's on 5 December 1972 for $325.

Where Have They Gone?

In November 1973, Rota offered the corrected typescript of King Jesus for $1,250, by far the most important Graves manuscript offered for public sale in the past twenty years. Who bought it?

On May 2, 1974, Charles Hamilton sold at auction 9 letters from Graves to Ion Niccola "to order" for $625, the opening and closing bid. Who bought them?

The Riding-Graves Seminar at the MLA
by Robert H. Canary

Poet Laura Riding sent a letter to the leader of the seminar on "Robert Graves and Laura Riding," in which she pinioned Graves for his "appropriative abuses" of her work, listing line-for-line and thought-for-thought what she said Graves (and W.H. Auden to boot) had taken from her and passed off as his own. This time, the scholars in the room took copious notes.
--from "Good-bye, Mr. Chips: Shaking Up the MLA," Ms., 3 (April 1975), 21--
a squib signed by Louise Bernikow.

The item quoted from Ms. above makes one error surprising in a journal normally hypersensitive to sexist slips—the actual title of the 1974 seminar was "Laura Riding and Robert Graves," the order found on all their joint publications. The seminar did, however, have before it some noteworthy material, assembled through the efforts of its chairman, Michael Kirkham, and of Robert Canary, who chaired the actual discussion in Professor Kirkham's absence.

The material distributed to seminar participants in advance included the following: (1) A copy of Laura Riding Jackson's Winter 1974 essay in the Denver Quarterly, "Some Autobiographical Corrections of Literary History." (2) A letter from Mrs. Jackson to Professor Canary, citing her objections to the yoking of her name with Graves in the seminar, and giving some examples of misrepresentations of her circulated by Graves. (3) An essay by Mrs. Jackson, "A View of Robert Graves," mainly devoted to his subsequent use of their joint work on A Survey of Modernist Poetry and his playing down of her contribution to that work. (4) An essay by Joyce Wexler, "Laura Riding's Pursuit of Truth," based on work done for her recent dissertation on Riding. (5) An essay by Mark Jacobs, "An Example of Maltreatment of Laura (Riding) Jackson," attacking some remarks in Anthony Thwaite's Contemporary English Poetry, as well as other examples of "Graves's strategy of combining utmost possible use of Laura Riding's work with utmost appearance of gallantry by patronisation, along with utmost possible effort to cast the subject of her into his shade." (6) An essay by Alan Clark, a longer version of an entry written for the new edition of Contemporary Poets of the English Language. (7) A second essay by Mr. Clark, an addendum to Mr. Jacob's attack on Thwaite with some glancing blows at Seymour-Smith. (8) An essay by Chris Faulkner, "The Tone of Robert Graves, 1927-1938," making the point that "Graves's motives for using whatever he may have borrowed from Laura (Riding) Jackson are different from hers in creating them." (9) A second letter from Mrs. Jackson, characterizing Mrs. Wexler's paper as "malignant drivel."

The seminar discussion did not match the papers in violence or interest, perhaps because only Professor Faulkner and Mrs. Wexler were there to serve on the panel, although the audience included James McKinley, still working on his Graves biography, and Sonia Raiziss, known for her work on Riding. There was general agreement that the joint seminar should not be repeated, since the two poets were linked by accidents of literary and personal history rather than by any ultimate affinity of poetic temperament and character. The point of Michael Kirkham's 1972 paper, that Graves has made extensive use of Riding poems and ideas, would seem to have won very general acceptance by now, but participants at this seminar disagreed on the critical implications of this. Most of those in attendance seemed agreed that treating Laura Riding's work as a footnote of interest to Graves aficionados was unfair and that her poetry and thought deserves more serious attention than it has generally received.

The recent paperback edition of her Selected Poems was applauded, and participants took advantage of Ms. Raiziss's presence to secure copies of the special issue of Chelsea (which she edits) devoted to Riding. A rather tepid air of willed good-fellowship and civilized discourse prevailed; nevertheless, the papers and the seminar presented material that can scarcely be ignored in any future treatment of Graves in the 1930's and later and initiated serious discussion (if that's what the MLA is) at a convention-level of Mrs. Jackson's work.
Sassoon and Blunden's Annotation of Goodbye to All That
by Stephen Sossaman

Perhaps the most interesting item in the recent offering of 233 Siegfried Sassoon books, manuscripts and other materials by the New York rare book dealer, House of El Dieff, is a copy of Goodbye to All That carefully annotated by Siegfried Sassoon and Edmund Blunden so that posterity might have a "corrected" version of many of the events Graves included.

This copy, the featured item in the sale, with a price of $15,000, includes some 5600 words of comment and "correction" on more than half of its 448 pages. One of the letters offered in the sale shows that Blunden, outraged by Graves' versions of several incidents, suggested to Sassoon that they prepare a corrected version for presentation to the British Museum so that Graves' "errors" might not go unchallenged. The book was prepared but was never delivered to the museum, remaining instead in Sassoon's library.

Blunden prepared the volume with his own marginal comments, and remarks by Sassoon carefully placed within quotation marks and identified by the initials "S.S."

The sale catalog includes photographs of four annotated pages, which reveal that Blunden did not restrict himself to matters of historical accuracy, but freely added caustic remarks on Graves' style and attacked Graves' motives as self-seeking in writing the autobiography. Sassoon's remarks on Graves' style are also cited freely.

One of the most interesting remarks involves Graves' account (p.289) of a visit to the house of "a First Battalion friend"—identified by Blunden as Sassoon. Blunden expresses surprise that Graves would make "copy" of Sassoon's mother's distress at the wounding of one son and the loss of another, and cites Sassoon as saying that Graves's visit "impressed my mother only through the fact that he stayed more than a week & never had a bath." Sassoon is further noted as saying that "the incidents described are almost entirely apocryphal."

Many of the other annotations quarrel with Graves' reports of engagements, military life, and the like, and both Blunden and Sassoon demonstrate their feeling that Graves was not an honest writer in dealing with the war. To Graves's suggestion that both he and Sassoon defined the war "by making contrasted definitions of peace" and that Sassoon employed the pastoral (p.289), Sassoon remarks that many of his poems were "strictly non-pastoral" and Blunden argues that "S.S. described the war, the first time a poet did it. R.G. made one or two attempts, but 'spent much of his spare time playing.'"

Clearly Blunden and Sassoon were hostile in this project. On the title page Blunden underlined "That" in the title and added a subtitle: "or, The Welsh-Irish Bull in a China Shop."

Westfield State College, Massachusetts

The Lore of Catalogs.

1. Item 416 — The Owl, No.1. May 1919..."Inscribed on the title page by William Nicholson to John Hayward...and with two autograph notes and a correction in Nicholson's hand attributing authorship of two illustrated fables to himself..." (Rota Catalog 174, issued January, 1972). The fables in The Owl entitled "Fable One" and "Fable Two" are anonymous, but close examination of the illustrations shows the initials "W N" in each, disguised as lines in the drawing.

2. Sitwell, Edith. THE SLEEPING BEAUTY. London 1924. A presentation copy "For Robert Graves and Nancy Nicholson in admiration from Edith Sitwell." And added later "Postscript. I wrote this dedication at a time when Robert Graves was still a tentative English nightingale, and not an unsuccessful American loon or screech-owl. Though poor, I am happy to buy this book (from
the shop to which he sold it) for the sum of 15/s, so that no one can accuse me of being a hoot-fan." (Wm. Dreper Catalog 8. Item 342)

Robert's Corner

1. San Francisco Examiner and Chronicle, Sept. 9, 1973. Sunday Scene, p. 6. "Poet Is 80 and Expecting" (above a photograph of Graves) "In Majorca, poet Robert Graves celebrated his 80th birthday with a party for all the locals. Graves standing proudly beside his pregnant third wife, greeted guests in khaki shorts and his bare chest stretching out. He's entitled." (The only revisions required in this report are (1) Graves was not 80, (2) he has not taken a third wife, (3) she is not pregnant.)

2. "Success as a novelist did not elude Cliff Irving indefinitely. All of us hopeful writers in the Balearic Islands had a benevolent patron in the person of Robert Graves who ruled us in an inspirational sense like Zeus from the mountain fastness of Deya on the neighboring island of Majorca. Exactly as he helped me with my earlier books, Robert took kindly to Cliff Irving, going to such lengths as buying his books and distributing them. I received a copy of Cliff's 'The Losers' from Robert Graves as a Christmas present." -- Tom Crichton, "Isle of Dreams and Schemes," (about Ibiza) San Francisco Examiner and Chronicle, Feb. 6, 1972, Sec. A, p. 3. (from Blanca Barrell, Sea Ranch, Cal.).


Catherine Robina Graves DALTON, Robert's third child by Nancy Nicholson (the widowed of Dr. George Clifford James Dalton, inventor of the Fast-Breeder Nuclear Reactor. This biographical account of international murder, conspiracy, blackmail, persecution and you name it among the powers struggling for atomic control would be totally unbelievable fantasy except for the sheer power and logic of Mrs. Dalton's mind. It contains a co-dedication and a preface by Graves, quotations from two Graves letters to C. D. and one from her to him, one from Graves to Nancy Nicholson (stating that he had come to Australia thinking that Catherine was 'round the bend' and became convinced by participants in the intrigues that she was not only right but remarkable.) The book gives information about the four oldest Graves children and Nancy Nicholson, and the relations between them, and facts relating to Graves, along the way. This is the first available information of any substance about any of Graves's children. A self-portrait of a remarkable woman. She has published the book herself in both bound and paperback editions.

5. On March 27th, 1972 the Irish publisher, Timothy O'Keefe (of Martin Brian & O'Keefe) booked a room at the Museum Tavern, near the British Museum to celebrate republication of Lars Porsena in a swearing match with Brian Behan, brother of Bendan, taking on all comers. (Sunday Times, March 26, 1972, p. 32.)

6. A German translation of I, Cladius was used by Count Von Stauffenberg, a relative of Graves, as a code book in planning the Hitler Bomb Plot. (Dalton, Without Hardware, p. x.)

7. Graves has won "2 Olympic Medals" (Without Hardware, p. 170). He was awarded the only gold medal of the 1968 (Mexico) Olympics for poetry as the only one who turned up "fearless of fire" of those invited to attend during the riots in Mexico.

8. Graves has "set up a poetry prize in Hungary which is unique in the communist world." (Evening Standard, November 6, 1969).

9. In a Checklist of "Titles Which Might Be of Some Real Value to the Practising Poet," and listed under 20 Modern Poetry Books that are "indispen-
sable reading for the practising poet" is:


Portraits
1. A lithograph head of Graves by John Ulbricht (Galilea, Majorca, Spain), 31" x 22", was printed in an edition of 12 copies, signed by the artist, on Crisbrook Waterleaf Paper in November 1968. This extremely impressive portrait is reminiscent of Ulbricht's brilliant oil portrait head of Graves at SUNY, Buffalo, Library. A copy is in the National Portrait Gallery.
2. The Portrait of Graves painted by John Aldridge has been bought by the National Portrait Gallery (London).
3. In December 1974, the sculptor Carmen Alvarez Feldman completed a bronze portrait bust of Robert Graves, the only bust for which he has ever sat. In part at his instance St. Johns College, Oxford, purchased a copy of this work for permanent exhibition in its newly opened Robert Graves Hall. The bust was unveiled by John Wain in the presence of Robert Graves on 28 June 1975 during ceremonies marking the inauguration of Robert Graves Hall and the Thomas H. White Building at St. Johns College. In his acceptance speech, Graves praised the bust in the warmest terms. A second copy of the bust was presented to Graves on the occasion of his 80th birthday in Deya, Mallorca on 24 July, 1975.

Exhibitions
An impressive exhibition of letters, manuscripts, inscribed copies and first editions by Robert Graves was held in the Rare Books Room of the University of San Francisco Library June 17 to August 30, 1975. Among other important material were the corrected typescript of King Jesus, and letters from the 1920s to W. J. Turner and to Graves' sister Clarissa.