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Collecting Early Robert Graves

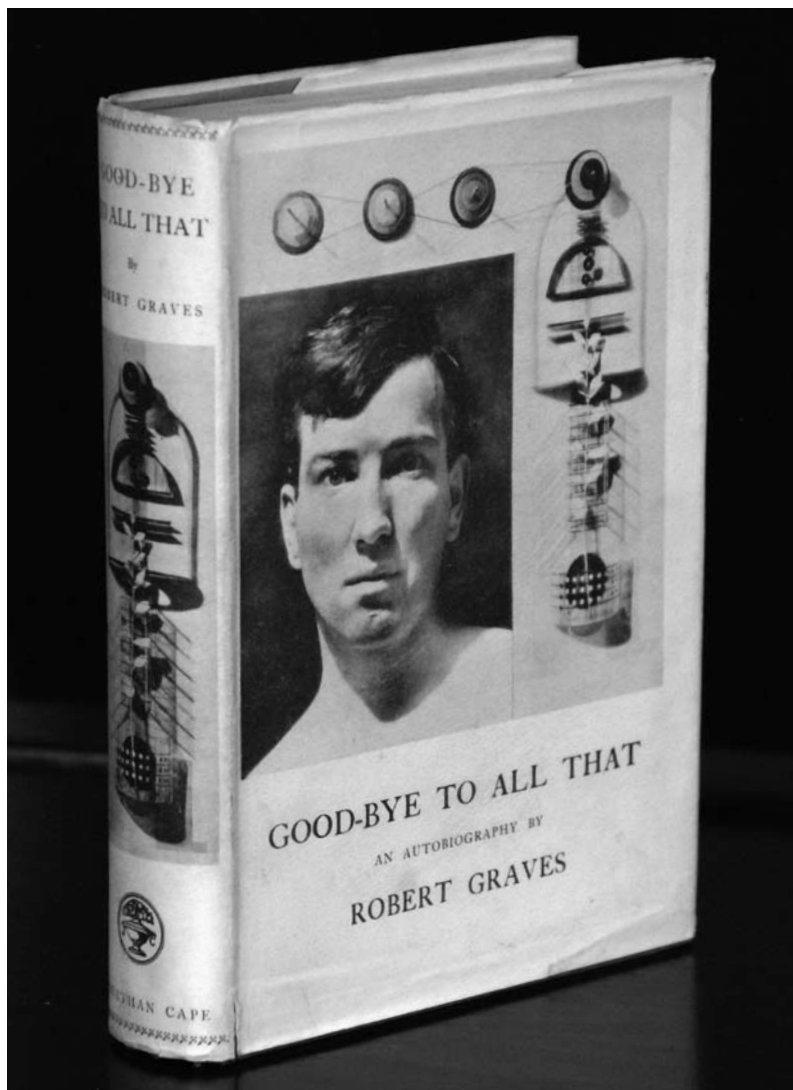
R. Eden Martin

Robert Graves first was known as a War Poet, along with Siegfried Sassoon, Wilfred Owen and others, during and immediately after the Great War. His reputation was enhanced by the appearance of his great fictionalized War memoir, *Goodbye to All That*,¹ which brought him increased fame and royalties. This resurgence of popularity and sales continued with publication in 1934 of his two *Claudius* novels.

Despite the success of his prose, poetry remained his first love. When his volume of *Collected Poems* was published in 1966, the *Times Literary Supplement* declared it to be “part of our permanent heritage.” And by the mid-1990s, when Miranda Seymour published her *Robert Graves: Life on the Edge*,² she made the case that Graves was “the greatest love-poet Britain has produced for over a century.”

My interest in Graves and Sassoon was initially less literary than historical. My father had served as a private in the American army in France in 1918, and I wondered about his experience. Like so many other soldiers, he never talked much about it – and, I think, did his best to forget it. The poetry and memoirs of Graves, Sassoon and others afford readers a glimpse of the horror.

Robert von Ranke Graves was born July 24, 1895, the son of Alfred Perceval Graves and his second wife, Amalie von Ranke Graves.³ A great uncle back up the line in



Amalie's family was the noted German historian, Leopold von Ranke. Alfred's father (Robert's grandfather) was the Bishop of Limerick. Alfred himself was an Irish poet and literary figure, some of whose verses had been turned into popular song.

Robert was the first son and third child of Alfred and Amy. His two older sisters were Clarissa and Rosaleen; and there would later be two younger brothers – Charles and John. Robert's early years were divided among the family's “Red Branch House” in Wimbledon,

a summer cottage in Ireland, and a house in the village of Harlech on the coast of North Wales. The family also occasionally vacationed in Bavaria.

By the time he was four years old, Robert was writing simple verses in a notebook kept by his mother. According to his nephew and biographer, these verses show that he “already had a considerable interest in words, and a lively imagination,” as well as “one of the most crucial attributes for a budding poet, which is a good ear.”⁴

Robert later wrote about his early exposure to books:

We read more books than most children do. There must have been four or five thousand books in the house altogether. They consisted of an old-fashioned scholar's library bequeathed to my father by my [grandfather].... To this were added my father's own collection of books, mostly poetry with a particular cupboard for Anglo-Irish literature....⁵

Robert wrote a poem about one of the books he found as a child in that library. He is “youngest poet” and the “ancient poet” is his father, Alfred:

THE POET IN THE NURSERY

The youngest poet down the shelves was
fumbling
In a dim Library, just behind the chair
From which the ancient poet was mum-
mumbling

See ROBERT GRAVES, page 2



CAXTONIAN

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ROBERT GRAVES, *from page 1*

A song about some Lovers at a Fair,
Pulling his long white beard and gently grumbling
That rhymes were beastly things and never there.

And as I groped, the whole time I was thinking
About the tragic poem I'd been writing –
An old man's life of beer and whisky drinking,
His years of kidnapping and wicked fighting;
And how at last, into a fever sinking,
Remorsefully he died, his bedclothes biting.

But suddenly I saw the bright green cover
Of a thin pretty book right down below;
I snatched it up and turned the pages over,
To find it full of poetry and so
Put it down my neck with quick hands like a lover
And turned to watch if the old man saw it go.

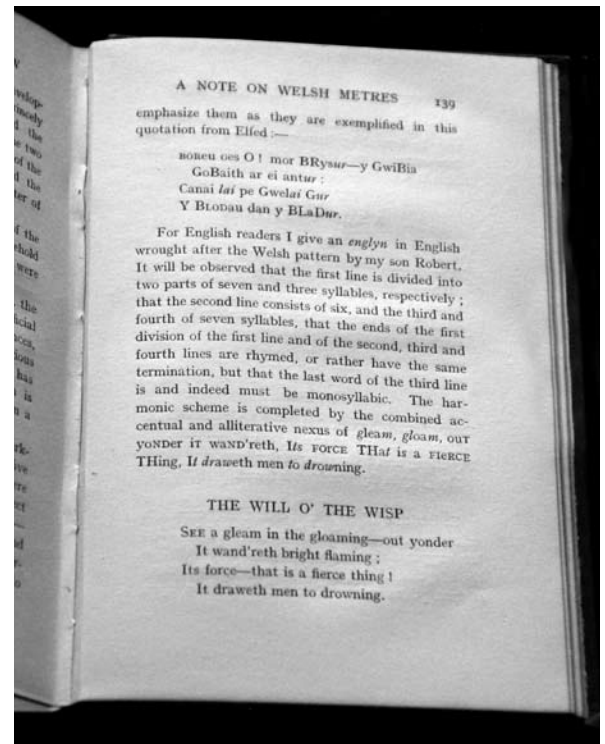
The book was full of funny muddling mazes
Each rounded off into a lovely song,
And most extraordinary and monstrous phrases
Knotted with rhymes like a slave-driver's thong,
And meter twisting like a chain of daisies
With great big splendid words a sentence long.

I took the book to bed with me and gloated,
Learning the lines that seemed to sound most grand,
So soon the pretty emerald green was coated
With jam and greasy marks from my hot hand,
While round the nursery for long months there floated
Wonderful words no one could understand.

This "nursery" poem appears at the beginning of Robert's first volume of collected verse, *Over The Brazier*,⁶ and records an actual event. He gave a copy of the first edition to his older sister, Rosaleen, whom he would later describe as his "best friend at the time."⁷ This copy contains Robert's handwritten notes in the margins indicating the places or circumstances in which he had written particular poems. Next to "The Poet in the Nursery," he wrote "...it happened at Wimbledon in the library. The second shelf from the bottom in the bookcase by the window." (More about this copy of his first book later.)

Robert's early schooling appears to have been typical for English boys from upper-class families. In the spring of 1902, at the age of six, he began attending a "dame's school" in Wimbledon; but the experience was so unsatisfactory that his father removed him after two terms. Later that year he was sent to King's College, Wimbledon. He liked it even less than the earlier school, did not understand the lessons, and managed only to learn a string of swear words. His father promptly hauled him out and placed him in another local preparatory school, where he stayed about three years.⁸

After a couple of further attempts,⁹ Robert was



Graves' first publication, at age 17, was in *Welsh Poetry Old and New in English Verse*, published by his father

eventually sent to another boarding school, Charterhouse, in Surrey. Here he was ragged and bullied in ways that seem characteristic of English public schools of that period. His nephew suggests that the experience was made worse by the fact that Robert had been raised to have strong moral convictions; and the low habits and foul language of his school mates – together with the hazing and bullying – not only set him apart, but made him appear "unbearably priggish."¹⁰ When he complained to the housemaster, Robert was treated by the other boys as an informer. By the time he had finished his schooling there, he had come to feel that the public school tradition, as exemplified by Charterhouse, was "fundamental evil" – "the atmosphere was heavy with romance of a conventional early-Victorian type, complicated by cynicism and foulness."¹¹

Throughout his adolescence, Robert's "best friend" was his sister Rosaleen.¹² Together they took long walks in Wales, composed nonsense verses, collected Welsh folk songs, and invented their own version of Welsh legends and myths.¹³

Perhaps it was the melding of Robert's sense of separateness and the liveliness of his imagination that led him to begin composing poetry in the spring of 1911. Robert later wrote that at school he was "left to my own devices," and only found relief from his unhappiness when he "began to write poems."¹⁴ One of the first of these appeared in the June 1911 number of the school magazine, *The Carthusian*. Its appearance led to an invitation to join the school's Poetry Society. Robert was by then almost 16 years old. This was the point in his life when, as he would later

write, poetry became his “ruling passion.”¹⁵

His other passion was boxing, which he took up with a vengeance – probably to protect himself from school bullies. Robert wrote that he broke his “aquiline nose” at Charterhouse while playing rugby, which “unsteadied” the nose – and that “boxing sent it askew. Finally, it was operated on by an unskillful army surgeon, and no longer serves as a vertical line of demarcation between the left and right sides of my face....”¹⁶

In the summer of 1912, Robert’s father Alfred published his own *Welsh Poetry Old and New in English Verse*.¹⁷ In it he included a short Welsh epigram entitled “The Will O’ the Wisp,” written in English by his son Robert.¹⁸ Although only four lines, it was Robert’s first poem to appear in a book. He was 17 years old.

During the fall term 1912, Robert became friends with a young master, George Mallory, who introduced him to modern English literature and to poets such as Butler, Massfield, and Rupert Brooke. Robert and his sister Rosaleen collaborated on a short story, which appeared in the Christmas number of the *Westminster Gazette*. Robert also contributed articles to school literary and humor magazines.¹⁹

In the summer and fall of 1913 several of Robert’s poems appeared in two different school magazines – *The Green Chartreuse* and *The Carthusian*²⁰ – and he was invited by one of his masters to have lunch with Edward Marsh, secretary to Prime Minister Asquith. Marsh had already edited and published the first volume of his series, *Georgian Poetry*. When Marsh left for London, he carried off with him a few of Robert’s compositions.²¹

In December 1913 Robert went up to Oxford to try for a scholarship. He failed to gain admittance to the top colleges, but did receive an “Exhibition” at St. John’s – a sort of half-step in the direction of a scholarship.

In early 1914, Robert accepted the position of “Assistant Editor” of *The Carthusian*.²² In its published letters and interviews, the paper quickly adopted a more aggressive tone than before – as a result of which, Robert and his friends were forced to resign from their positions.

Robert’s term at Charterhouse came to an end in late July 1914 shortly after his 19th birthday. At this point in his life, he should have been packing his things for Oxford. Instead, war broke out in the Balkans. In early August Germany violated Belgian neutrality, and England declared war.

Young Graves’ immediate reaction, like that of so many of his contemporaries, was to enlist. When it was suggested that he take a commission in the Royal Welch Fusiliers, he jumped at the chance. One of the regimental peculiarities, as he later pointed out, was its insistence on spelling the word “Welch” with a c. By mid-August he was on a train to the Fusiliers’ regimental depot in Wrexham.

Not surprisingly, most of the poems written by English poets early in the war were unabashedly patriotic and sentimental. Of these Rupert Brooke’s “The Soldier” (“If I should die, think only this of me ...”) is perhaps the most famous. Another example is Julian Grenfell’s “Into Battle,” which made its way into most of the anthologies (“And Life is Colour and Warmth and Light, And a striving evermore for these; And he is dead who will not fight; And who dies fighting has increase.”)

Graves was not immune from this tendency. Early on he wrote a patriotic poem called “Spoiled Salute,” which his father tried to place in one of the literary periodicals.²³

But the unheroic dullness of training and guard duty soon began to take their toll. Robert initially served in a detachment at an internment camp for enemy aliens. By October the casualty lists began to be published. He broke the monotony of the camp by writing poetry.

Through the months of early 1915, Robert hoped that he would be sent to France. “I wanted to be abroad fighting.”²⁴ But it was not until early May that he received the orders directing him to join the Second Welsh Regiment (as contrasted with the Royal Welch) near the Belgian border. Within a few days, he was in the English trenches.

Through the rest of May and June, Robert experienced the horror and boredom of trench warfare. In late June Robert’s unit was sent to the Vermelles area to prepare for the forthcoming battle of Loos, where it experienced heavy shelling and many losses.²⁵

In July, in a mood of deep bitterness, Robert wrote his poem, “Over the Brazier,” reflecting his musings and conversations with friends. This poem would become the title poem of his first published collection:

What life to lead and where to go
After the War, after the War?
We’d often talked this way before.
But I still see the brazier glow
That April night, still feel the smoke
And stifling pungency of burning coke.

* * *

By the end of July 1915, Robert was in



Laventie, near Armentieres, celebrating his 20th birthday. He was soon sent out on patrol duty into No Man’s Land, and continued to serve in the front lines, engaging in more dangerous night patrols through the end of August. During this period he wrote letters to his friends and family expressing his expectation that he would be killed or seriously wounded. His poems confirm that he knew he was facing death, and the danger strengthened his religious faith.

The British Army was preparing for the battle of Loos. On September 20, Robert wrote a letter to be sent to his family in the event of his death. On the 25th the British commenced their attack by releasing poison gas, which apparently did more damage to the English soldiers than the Germans.²⁶ The attack failed. By the time the battle had ended, the British has captured 8000 yards of enemy front at a cost of some 60,000 casualties. At one point Robert was waiting with his men for the order to go over the top and assault entrenched German machine-gun units 300 yards away. Recognizing the pointlessness, the officer in charge declined to order the attack – thereby probably saving Robert’s life. That night was spent bringing in the wounded and dead. One of the soldiers remembered later,

Young Mr. Graves worked like a Trojan ... and when I saw him late in the night he looked

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ROBERT GRAVES, from page 3

thoroughly exhausted. He was helping to get a stretcher down in the trench when a sentry near him forgot orders and fired a round. Mr. Graves called him a damned fool²⁷

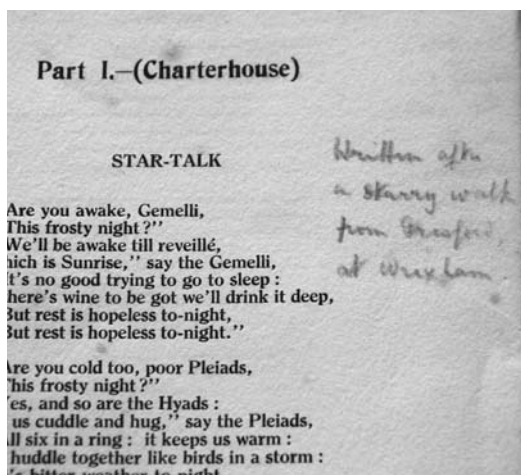
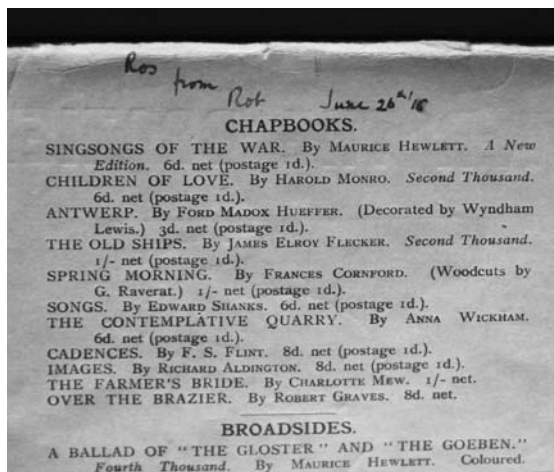
The nightmare continued until Graves' unit was withdrawn from the line on October 3. He wrote his parents that it was a miracle he had survived. He had had only about 8 hours of sleep in ten days. His only injury was a cut hand, but his nerves were shot.²⁸

During this period, Graves met Siegfried Sassoon, a 29-year old soldier and poet, with whom he would have a complicated relationship throughout the rest of his life. He and Sassoon initially hit it off well, with Sassoon giving him candid, detailed criticisms of his poems. Sassoon felt that many of his poems were "very bad, violent ... too realistic."²⁹

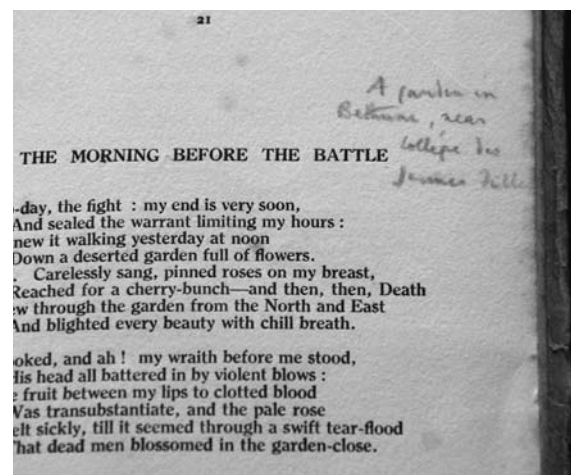
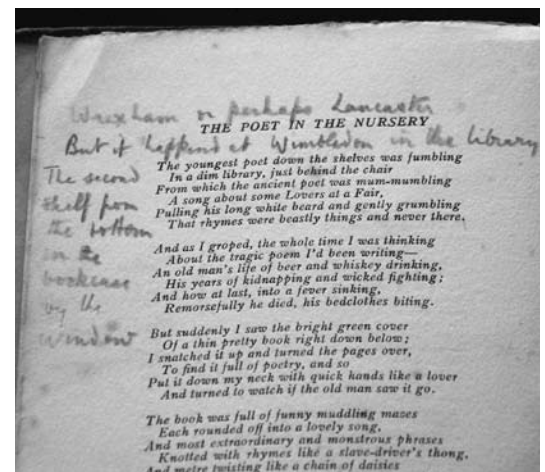
That same fall Robert's father Alfred selected several of Robert's poems, had them typed, and took them to Harold Monroe, the proprietor of the Poetry Book Shop and publisher of Eddie Marsh's volumes of *Georgian Poetry*. Monroe expressed interest; but instead of being grateful, Robert was concerned that these poems – which Sassoon had criticized so forcefully – might be published before Robert could make his own selection and edit those he felt worthy of inclusion.³⁰

Robert spent the rest of December and the first weeks of 1916 in training. In February, his father – ever the promoter – arranged for some of his poems to appear in the *Westminster Gazette*. Even better, by the end of February Robert had entered into an agreement with Monroe for the publication of his first collection, to be called *Over The Brazier*.

In mid-March one of Graves' closest friends, David Thomas, was struck in the neck by a German bullet. Robert's first thought when he heard the news was that David would be all right – he would be out of the War, but David choked to death in the regimental hospital.³¹ Robert felt the impact of his death more powerfully than any of the others. It prompted him to write the moving poem, "Goliath and David," with "Goliath" representing the



A selection of annotations Graves made in the copy of *Over The Brazier* given by Graves to his sister.



Germans. Here are the concluding lines:

Loud laughs Goliath, and that laugh
Can scatter chariots like blown chaff
To rout; but David, calm and brave,
Holds his ground, for God will save.
Steel crosses wood, a flash, and oh!
Shame for Beauty's overthrow!
(God's eyes are dim, His ears are shut.)
One cruel backhand saber-cut –
'I'm hit! I'm killed!' young David cries,
Throws blindly forward, chokes ... and dies.
And look, spike-helmeted, grey, grim,
Goliath straddles over him.

This poem was written too late for inclusion in Graves' first collection. It became the lead poem in his second book.

We note with sadness the passing of
Charles Miner '87
on January 31. A remembrance
will appear in a future issue.

In early May 1916, Robert – then back in England on leave – received six advance copies of *Over The Brazier* from Monroe. Higginson's Bibliography gives the publication date as May 1, 1916, though most of the copies were not available for distribution until June. My copy is the one Robert gave his sister Rosaleen. He presented it to her on June 26, 1916 – "Ros from Rob, June 26th, 16." His full signature, "Robert Graves," appears on the title page, just above the title.

As noted above, in the margins next to most of the poems, Robert wrote notes identifying the places or times when the poems were written, and in some instances describing the circumstances of their composition. In the case of the first poem, for example, "The Poet in the Nursery," Robert wrote that the events described had taken place in the library of the family home in Wimbledon. In the next poem, "Star-Talk," he pointed out that the poem was "written after a starry walk from Grisford, at Wrexham."

The first of the "War Poems" to appear in the volume was "Oh, and Oh!" Robert wrote in the margin that he composed it in "Lancaster when I was guarding P's of War at the

Wagon Works, August & Sept. 1914." He noted that he wrote "On Finding Myself a Soldier" at Le Havre. "The Shadow of Death" was written at La Bourse, and he added that "S.S. [Sassoon] rewrote this [the second stanza]." All in all, Graves provided explanatory notes for 24 of the poems.

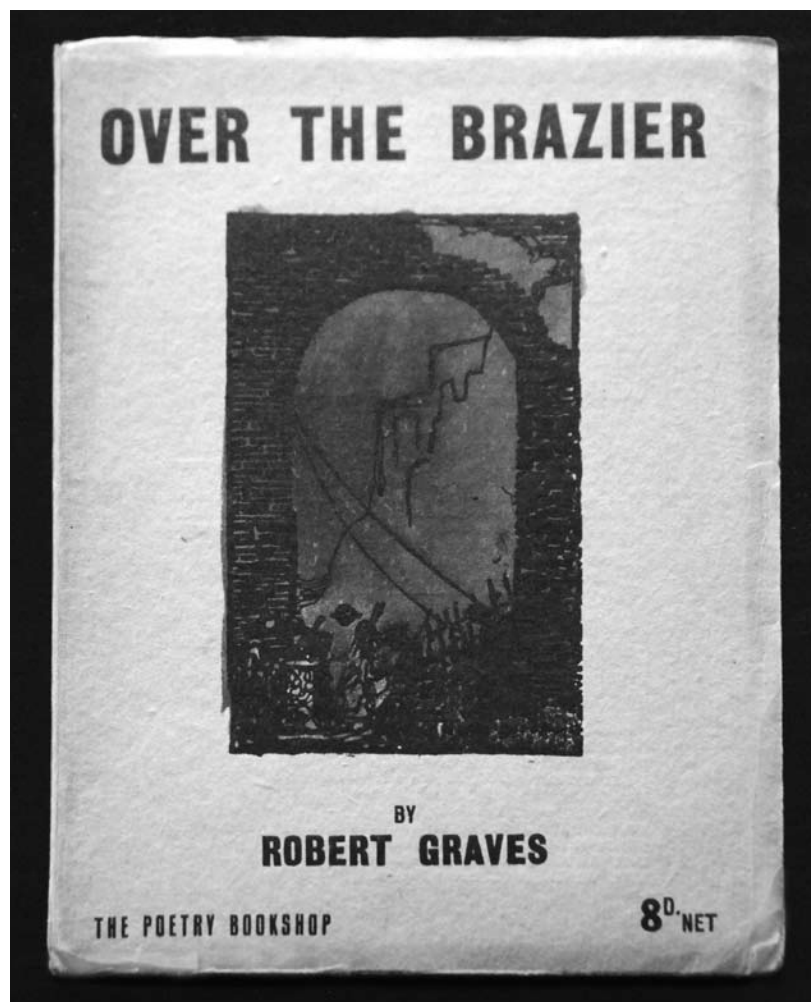
When he came to the last poem in the volume, "Over the Brazier," Graves added simply that he wrote it "With the 2nd Welch R at Vermelles." This dates the writing of the poem to late June or July 1915.

Like other poets of the period, including Sassoon, Graves was not above lobbying his friends to write favorable reviews in literary journals. His father Alfred joined in the lobbying. Perhaps as a consequence, John Strachey, editor of the *Spectator*, gave *Over The Brazier* a positive review. Robert later reported that the reviews were "very affable, mostly."³²

Sales were sufficiently strong that within a month the Poetry Book Shop decided to print additional copies in what they termed the "Second Impression." These copies did not appear until 1917.³³ They are indistinguishable from the earlier ones except for the printed words – "Second Impression" – in the upper right corner of the front paper wrapper.

A true second edition had to wait until 1920, when The Poetry Book Shop published what it called a "New Edition," in hardcover, with a jacket. Graves explained in a "foreword" that when the first edition was being completed, he was in France and "had no leisure for getting the final proofs altogether as I wanted them." For this second edition, he explained that he had made alterations in several poems, and had suppressed two which he deemed "inexcusable even as early work." The art work on the 1920 book and jacket are the same as the art work on the 1917 paper wrapper.

The British Army's Somme offensive commenced on July 1, 1916. It was the blackest day for England of the entire War. On that day,



First edition, first impression, of *Over The Brazier*.

the British suffered some 60,000 casualties, including 20,000 dead. Disciplined British soldiers walked uphill, climbing across barbed wire, in the face of heavy machine gun fire. No ground was gained.

Graves' unit did not reach the front lines until July 15. He was able to spend part of the day before – July 14 – with his friend Sassoon. The scene at the front by this time was terrible beyond description, with the trees broken from the shelling and the ground littered with bodies. Following the first awful day, the carnage had continued at the rate of about 10,000 British casualties per day.

On July 20 the Germans were laying down a barrage of shells from six and eight inch guns on a ridge where the Royal Welch were lying in reserve. As Robert later explained, the decision was made to move back:

As we did so, an eight-inch shell burst three paces behind me. I heard the explosion, and felt as though I had been punched rather hard between the shoulder blades, but without any pain. I took the punch merely for the shock of the explosion; then blood trickled into my eye and, turning faint, I called to Moodie: 'I've

been hit.' Then I fell.

One piece of shell went through my left thigh, high up, near the groin; I must have been at the full stretch of my stride to escape emasculation. ... But a piece of shell had also gone in two inches below the point of my right shoulder blade and came out through my chest two inches above the right nipple.³⁴

Graves was taken to a field dressing station where he received little attention because the medics thought he would surely die. His doctor reported later in the day that he had "no chance" of surviving. A report soon reached his field commander that "he died of wounds on the way down." When the Colonel made out his casualty list, he listed Robert's death; and on the next day he sent a letter to Graves' mother telling her that he regretted to write that "your son has died of wounds."

He was very gallant, and was doing so well and is a great loss."³⁵ The *Times* even published his name among the list of those who had been killed.

Graves remained unconscious for more than 24 hours. The morning after he was hit, the attendants found he was still breathing. Robert was then placed in an ambulance and taken away to a hospital. Although he had no way of knowing it at the time, his role in the front lines had ended.

On July 24, 1916, the letter arrived at the Graves home reporting Robert's death. The day before, his family had received a letter from Robert, written at the hospital, telling them of his wound. Several days passed before the family was sure he had survived.

In early August Robert was transferred back to Queen Alexandra's Hospital in London. By the end of August he had sufficiently recovered that he was able to take the train to the family home in Wales.

During the long period of his recovery, Graves not surprisingly turned to writing. One poem was a tribute to his friend, David Thomas, entitled "Not Dead." Others were

See ROBERT GRAVES, page 6

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ROBERT GRAVES, from page 5
about his childhood.

As he recovered, Robert's thoughts turned to a possible second book. After negotiations with the Heinemann firm, which was then publishing Sassoon's *The Old Huntsman*, Robert decided on a small "private" collection of his recent poems – one in which he paid the costs, and the copies were given away rather than sold. The collection was called *Goliath and David*, the title taken from the lead poem about his friend David Thomas.³⁶ Only ten poems were included – the last being "Not Dead," also about Thomas. Graves' bibliographer says there were 200 copies.³⁷ His nephew and biographer reports that there were 150.³⁸ Sassoon later wrote that he distributed 118 copies according to Graves' instruction, the remaining copies being left with the printer. Graves may have disposed of these himself.

Goliath and David shows no year on the title page. The Higginson bibliography dates the book to 1916, and recent evidence confirms that it was in fact printed at the end of 1916. (My authority for this is Carl Hahn, who is preparing an updated bibliography of Graves' work.) My copy was presented to Henry Ladd in 1921.

As *Goliath and David* was not "published," it was not reviewed. But the private reactions of Robert's friends such as Edmund Gosse were encouraging.

By late January 1917 Robert was back in France. His doctor insisted that because of his earlier wounds, he was unfit for service in the trenches. The problem was less the physical consequences of his chest wound than the after-effects of shell-shock. Accordingly, Robert was given administrative duties in battalion headquarters. Then after a brief period, he came down with bronchitis and was sent back to a hospital in England. Following his recovery, he was assigned as an instructor of officer candidates at Wadham College. Before long he was back in the hospital. His recovery continued through the spring and summer of 1917.

Throughout this period, Robert continued to take refuge in writing. He was now working on a third collection of poems to be called *Fairies and Fusiliers*.

It was during this period that Sassoon, who was recovering from a serious wound, issued a statement attacking British War policy and those in charge of it. Sassoon's statement, in flat defiance of military authority, placed him in jeopardy of a court martial. Graves helped arrange for Sassoon to be treated as a mental



case rather than be subjected to a trial. As Robert later put it, he "rigged the medical board." He also appeared as a witness and – positioning himself as a patriotic soldier – testified that Sassoon suffered "hallucinations" in the trenches. His perjury did not bother him much³⁹:

The irony of having to argue to these mad old men that Siegfried was not sane! Though conscious of a betrayal of truth, I acted jesuitically. Being in nearly as bad a state of nerves as Siegfried myself, I burst into tears three times during my statement.

The result was that Sassoon was shipped off to a convalescent home at Craiglockhart, near Edinburgh, for treatment and recovery. It was here that his famous but brief friendship with Wilfred Owen developed.

During the fall of 1917, Robert visited Sassoon in Craiglockhart. They now found things to disagree about – their respective attitudes toward the War and their views about poetry. They continued to meet and to exchange correspondence. Sassoon even made occasional financial advances to Robert. But the relationship had become strained.

As Graves was helping Sassoon avoid the consequences of his protest against the war, he

was also making final arrangements with Heinemann to publish *Fairies and Fusiliers*. Robert had originally intended to dedicate the book to Sassoon, but changed his mind – justifying the change as necessary to avoid individual jealousies.⁴⁰ It is also likely that Sassoon's public protest against the War had left Graves a little gun-shy. He may not have wanted to take the chance that a dedication could be mistaken for an endorsement.

Fairies and Fusiliers appeared in November 1917 in an edition of 1000 copies. It included 46 poems, several of which had earlier appeared in the privately-printed *Goliath and David*.

The book was bound in wine-red cloth, and had a tasteful blue-grey dust jacket.

The reviews of *Fairies and Fusiliers* were generally good; and the private reactions from friends were positive and encouraging.⁴¹ An American edition appeared in 1918 and a second American edition followed in 1919.

By December 1917, Robert became engaged to Nancy Nicholson, the 18-year-old daughter of a Welsh neighbor and artist. Sassoon was inexplicably grumpy about the news. He wrote in his diary before the wedding that Graves had been to see him, and that he – Sassoon – had "received his apologies for his engagement to Miss Nicholson."⁴² The wedding took place in January 1918.

Robert was reassigned to duties as an instructor of officer cadets, which assured him of home service throughout the remainder of the War. Robert's poetic inclinations now turned away from the harsh realities of the front lines and toward songs, ballads and even nursery rhymes.

The War ended on November 11, 1918 – the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month. (My father at that time was stationed well behind the front lines; he remembered playing cards at the time the Armistice was announced, and once told me that the

announcement “didn’t break the deal.”) Wilfred Owen was one of the War’s final casualties.

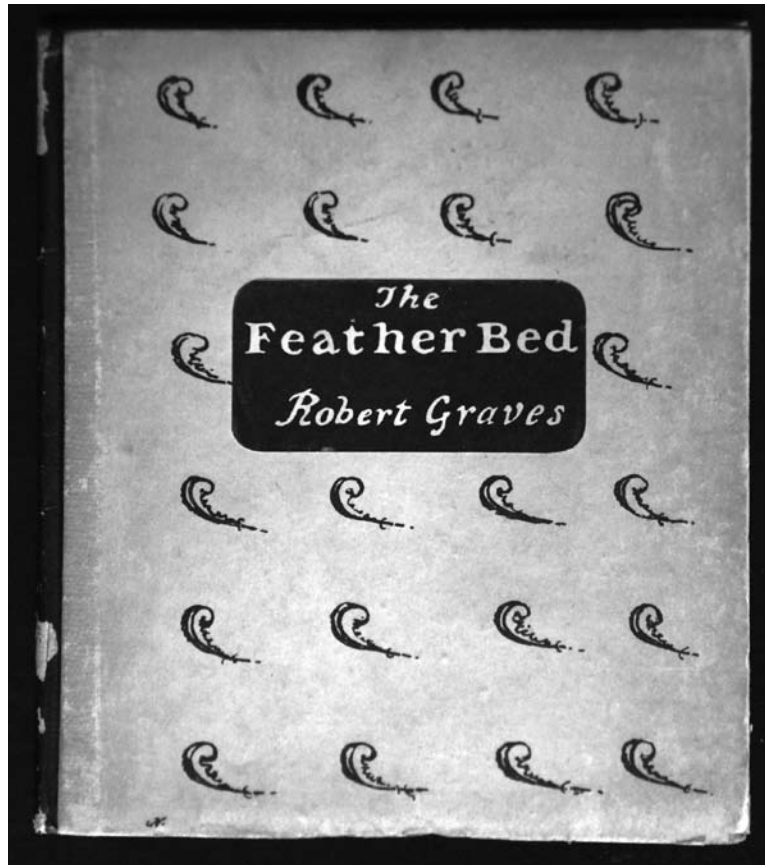
As the War neared its end, Robert and his new father-in-law, William Nicholson, were planning to launch a new literary journal, to be known as *The Owl*. The idea was to seek contributions from distinguished writers. Graves would do the editing, Nancy would contribute illustrations, and Nicholson would design the cover.

In May 1919 the first number of *The Owl* appeared. It listed a distinguished group of 18 contributors, including such names as Beerbohm, Galsworthy, Masfield, and Nichols. Thomas Hardy, the grand old man of English letters, contributed the first piece – a poem entitled “The Master and the Leaves.” Graves contributed two poems: “Ghost-Raddled,” and “A Frosty Night.”

There were to be 24 special copies of this first issue – each signed by all 18 contributors. Sassoon told in *Siegfried’s Journey* how he was delegated to take the 24 special copies of that first issue out to 79-year old Thomas Hardy’s home at Max Gate in order to get the great man’s autographs. He had to be content with Hardy’s artfully drawn initials.

A second issue of *The Owl* appeared in October 1919 (with poems by Graves, Sassoon, Nichols, and Edmund Blunden); and a final issue, entitled *The Winter Owl*, appeared in late 1923 (again, with contributions by Graves, Sassoon, and Blunden – and also, for the first time, T.E. Lawrence, who contributed an excerpt from his as-yet unpublished *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*).

The question was what to do now. Robert learned that if he enrolled at St. John’s College, Oxford, he would qualify for a small government stipend so long as he remained a student. By October 1919 he and Nancy had moved into a cottage in the garden of John Masfield’s house on Boar’s Hill, about 5 miles from the University. With no income other than the stipend and occasional small loans from the Graves family, the economic



pressures were severe. *The Owl* produced no money, and poetry collections were more artistically satisfying than remunerative.

Through the spring and summer of 1919, Robert had been working on a new group of poems with agrarian rather than wartime themes. The people of England had had enough of war. As Graves wrote in a remarkably candid letter to his friend Blunden:

War-poetry is played out I’m afraid, commercially, for another five or ten years. Rotten thing for us, but it’s no good blinking at it. Country Sentiment is the most acceptable dope now, and this is the name I’ve given my new poems.⁴³

By the start of the fall term at Oxford, he was working on the final page proofs of these new poems. But *Country Sentiment* was not published until March 1920, in an edition of 1000 copies. The tone of the poems is readily apparent from the first several titles: “A Frosty Night,” “Song for Two Children,” “Dicky,” “The Three Drinkers,” “The Boy out of Church” At about the same time, Knopf published an American edition, likewise of 1000 copies.

Not long after the English publication, Robert wrote to a friend saying that the book was “selling like anything and the reviews are good.” In fact, his biographer says it pleased few critics or readers. In any event, at 5 shillings a copy, it cannot have made him much

money.⁴⁴

In the meantime, Robert and Nancy had prepared a “tiny book” they called *Treasure Box* – containing 10 poems, printed by Chiswick Press in 200 copies. Nancy supplied two small illustrations. Though the poems were apparently written later, the little book actually appeared before *Country Sentiment*, in December 1919.

Dividing his time between his studies and his growing family (in 1920 he and Nancy had a second child). Burdened by poverty, debt, and occasional continuing bouts of shell-shock, Robert struggled through the early 1920’s to write poems that would please himself if not the critics.

“The Pier-Glass,” based on the story of a woman who kills her employer for seducing her and is then tormented by guilt, became the lead poem in *The Pier-Glass*, published in 500 copies in February 1921. Robert dedicated the

lead poem to T.E. Lawrence – Lawrence of Arabia – “who helped me with it.”⁴⁵ Years later he wrote that “Lawrence made a number of suggestions for improving these poems, most of which I adopted.”⁴⁶ About the poems in *The Pier-Glass*, Graves later wrote, “I made no attempt to please the ordinary reading public, and did not even flatter myself that I was conferring benefits on posterity.... I never wrote unless a poem pressed to be written.”⁴⁷

Lawrence at that time was at All Souls’ working on his great story of the Arab Revolt, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*. Graves writes about visiting him in his rooms at All Souls’, where he had the manuscript of his book, a copy of the Kelmscott *Chaucer*, three prayer-rugs, and a 4000-year old clay soldier on horseback from Carchemish. Lawrence and Graves planned at one time to drive the Magdalen College deer into the quadrangle of All Souls’, where they intended to claim the deer had “pastured from time immemorial.” But when Lawrence went away to work for Churchill on the Middle-Eastern settlement of 1922, the scheme came to nothing.⁴⁸

When not conspiring with Lawrence, Robert worked on a series of highly personal essays, which he completed in May 1921, and which eventually appeared in his treatise *On English Poetry* in 1922. It was less an analysis of forms or styles of poetry than “a highly

See ROBERT GRAVES, page 8

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ROBERT GRAVES, from page 7
autobiographical tract about the poetic life."⁴⁹ He dedicated the book to Lawrence and also to Dr. W.H.R. Rivers, the psychologist who had treated Sassoon at Craiglockhart and also continued to consult with Robert.⁵⁰

In 1921, after discussing with his academic advisor, Graves decided to give up his plan to obtain the B.A. degree, and decided instead to write a thesis on "The Illogical Element in English Poetry," which he hoped would lead to an honorary B.Litt. He served as joint editor of the collection, *Oxford Poetry 1921*, which included his own "Unicorn and White Doe."

In December 1921, Robert sent his friend Marsh the manuscript of a new collection to be called *Whipperginny*, after the title poem, the name of which refers to a card game. The new poems reflected the author's interest in morbid psychology and the increased self-awareness gained by his sessions with Dr. Rivers. The new book did not appear until mid-March 1923, in 1000 copies.

One of the pieces that was originally to have been included in *Whipperginny* was called "The Feather Bed" – a strange long poem about a young woman who kisses a young man, then runs away to a convent pursued by her lover. The Mother Superior visits the young man and attempts to seduce him. His biographer suggests that this poem shows "Robert faced a serious personal problem in trying to reconcile his sexual desires with traditional ideas of virtue"⁵¹ – an explanation which seems as good as any. *The Feather Bed* was published as a separate book by the Woolfs' Hogarth Press, in a limited edition of 250 signed copies, of which mine is number 243. It appeared in late July 1923. The cover design was done by Robert's father-in-law, William Nicholson. Perhaps because of the sensational subject matter, the book quickly sold out.⁵²

Robert's poems from this period reflect the strain brought on by the War and its aftermath, the continuing fragility of his economic situation, and the difficulties of his

family life. His next volume was given the name *Mockbeggar Hall*, the name of a former leper house. Again, the artwork for the front board was designed by Nicholson, and the book was published in 1924 by Hogarth Press. The cover art – depicting a hanging bat – adequately conveys the tone of the poems. Graves later regarded these poems as a "side-track" in his career.⁵³

Robert sent a copy in 1925 to "Laura Riding Gottschalk in admiration from Robert Graves 1925." Laura was a talented young American poet. Born Laura Reichenthal, she changed her name to "Riding" and married a young historian named Gottschalk. R.A. Gekoski in his *Catalogue 30* (2004) offered this presentation copy for sale, writing,⁵⁴ "The inscription represents the first contact between Graves and Riding and thus the beginning of one of the most notable and fruitful literary relationships of the twentieth century. At the time of the inscription Graves and Riding had not yet met, and Graves sent this book to her

Graves' books through the rest of the 1920's – at least until 1929 – present little of interest to the collector who is not a Graves specialist. These books, divided between prose and poetry, had nothing to do with the War, did little to place his literary career on higher ground, and are not difficult to collect. Whatever one thinks of them, they showed he kept busy.

In late 1925 Graves received an appointment as Professor of English at the University at Cairo. Under continued economic pressure and attracted by the dry, warm climate, he accepted. He also arranged for Laura Riding Gottschalk to come to England and then to accompany him, his wife, and their small children to Egypt where they would collaborate on a book of literary criticism. They sailed for Cairo in early January 1926. Sassoon came down to the docks to see them off.

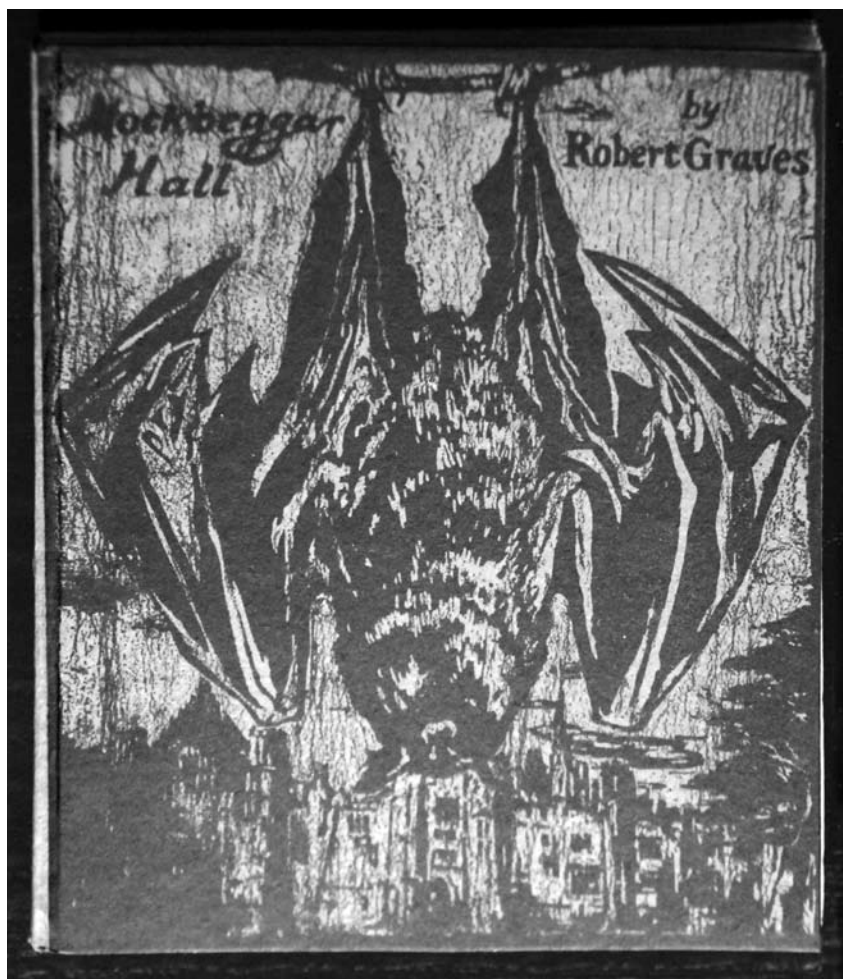
Laura Riding (who soon abandoned her married name Gottschalk) had a powerful personality and extraordinarily strong will,

and much of Robert's new resolution to say and write exactly what he thought may have been due to her influence.⁵⁵

Whatever the combination of causes, Graves decided that in his poetry, as in his relations with other people, he would tell the truth as he saw it; and he would not shrink from expressing plainly his views about conventional morality or about the conduct or motives of others – including his parents, his brothers and sisters, and his friends.

Graves' personality and mental state were such that he seems to have misunderstood conventional kindnesses or pleasantries, and he resented attempts by members of his family to influence his behavior. Possessed of a well-developed ego and the thinnest of skins, he had an enormous talent for turning molehills into mountains; and he

frequently reached out to seize opportunities to express himself bitterly in criticism or condemnation of those with whom he was closest. The exchanges of correspondence quoted in his biography make painful reading.



father Nathaniel Reichenthal to pass on to her." Graves had been impressed with a poem of hers that had been published the same year in "The Fugitive."

Robert's relations with Laura Riding and his wife became a sad soap opera. That he was able to write anything seems incredible. Eventually Robert simply walked away from his Cairo university position. Lack of income complicated the three-way relationship.

The main literary event in Graves' life over the next few months was the publication of a new collection entitled *Poems 1914-1926*, which appeared in 1927 to excellent reviews. His nephew/biographer says it "did much to secure his somewhat shaky position in the literary world."⁵⁶ One of the poems from this volume illustrates Graves' new resolution to tell his version of the unvarnished truth. Entitled "The Taint," it is plainly autobiographical, and commences as follows:

Being born of a dishonest mother
Who knew one thing and thought the other,
A father too whose golden touch
Was 'think small, please all, compass much'
He was hard put to it to unwind
The early swaddlings of his mind.

One can only imagine his parents' irritation when they read this exercise in poetic candor.

By 1927 Nancy and the children were living in Cumberland on a farm, and Robert and Laura were together in London scrambling out a weak living. Oddly enough, it was again T.E. Lawrence who came to their financial rescue. His abridged version of *Seven Pillars – Revolt in the Desert* (1927) – was a smash hit; and the publishers wanted to commission someone to write a popular life of the new hero. Lawrence agreed on condition that Graves be the author.

Within two months Robert had produced a draft of the complete text. In the circumstances, the work was bound to be more popular than polished literature, but it was highly readable. More important, it sold. Graves received an advance of 500 pounds; and when the book, *Lawrence and the Arabs*, appeared in November 1927, it was a huge success, with sales reaching 10,000 per week. An American edition followed in 1928. Virtually all the reviews were favorable. By the end of November, Graves was raking in approximately 350 pounds per week in royalties.

The year 1929 was a year of crashes and escapes. Laura fell in love with an Irish poet named Geoffrey Phibbs. This led to further episodes in the soap opera. Geoffrey developed an unwholesome affection for Nancy Graves. At one point, in a fit of jealous rage, Laura consumed some amount of a potent disinfectant and then leaped from the window of their fourth-floor flat, with nothing but the stone surface below. Graves, apparently in

the belief that Laura had killed herself, flung himself out of a third-floor window. Laura was not dead, but was seriously injured – with broken vertebrae and pelvis. Graves' injuries were somehow insubstantial. Amy, Robert's mother, then cut Robert out of her will. Robert in turn cut off relations with his family, including his sister and "best friend" Rosaleen, who, he asserted, had a "dirty, middle-class morality."⁵⁷

In the midst of these shenanigans and as Laura was recovering from the effects of defenestration, Robert completed work on the literary work that – more than any other – would make him famous. It was to be an autobiography of his experiences in the War and afterward entitled *Goodbye to All That*. Robert told his parents in a letter that he was writing it "to make money"⁵⁸ – his success with the Lawrence biography apparently having excited his commercial instincts.

Graves based the First War sections of *Goodbye* on an account he had started not long after he arrived in France – which, at the time, he had written as a novel. He now had to reconstruct his draft into autobiography. Other sections of the book were taken from long extracts from letters he had written at the time.⁵⁹ He completed the first draft on his 34th birthday, July 24, 1929, 12 days after

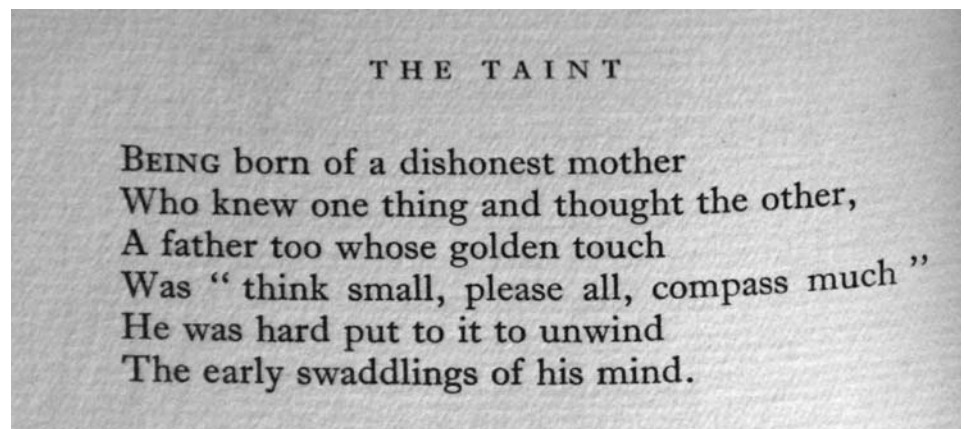
and why he gave it the "goodbye" title appeared in the first edition but were omitted in the most recent "revised" edition, published by Anchor in 1998. I have not gone through each edition to find when they were removed.

I did find, however, that Robert had added a few new words of explanation at the end of the 1998 edition, referring to the time in 1929 when he was about to leave Nancy and his children in order to start a new life with Laura in Majorca⁶¹:

New characters appeared on the stage. Nancy and I said unforgivable things to each other. We parted on May 6th, 1929. She, of course, insisted on keeping the children. And I went abroad, resolved never to make England my home again; which explains the 'Good-bye to All That' of this title.

Goodbye to All That was published by Jonathan Cape in London on November 18, 1929, priced at 10s. 6d. The first state of the book contained a poem which Sassoon had written in the hospital and sent to "Roberto" in 1918, shortly after having been shot in the head while on patrol. Graves called it "the most terrible of his war-poems."

In a later edition of his book, Graves writes that he "cannot quote" from the poem, "though I should like to do so."⁶² But he felt no such compunctions as he was preparing to publish



Laura's return from the hospital.

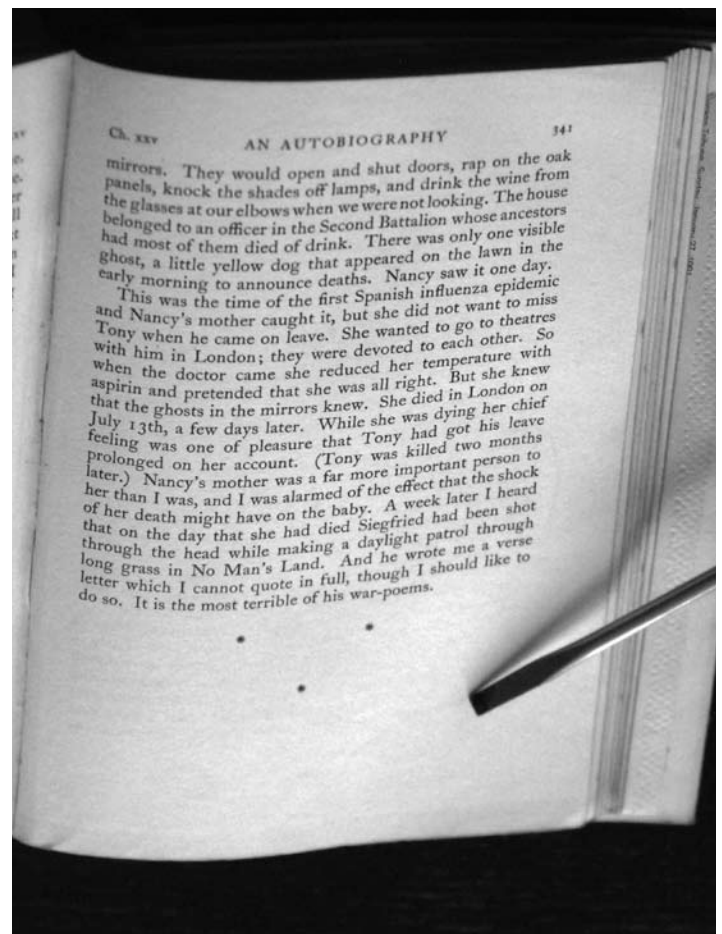
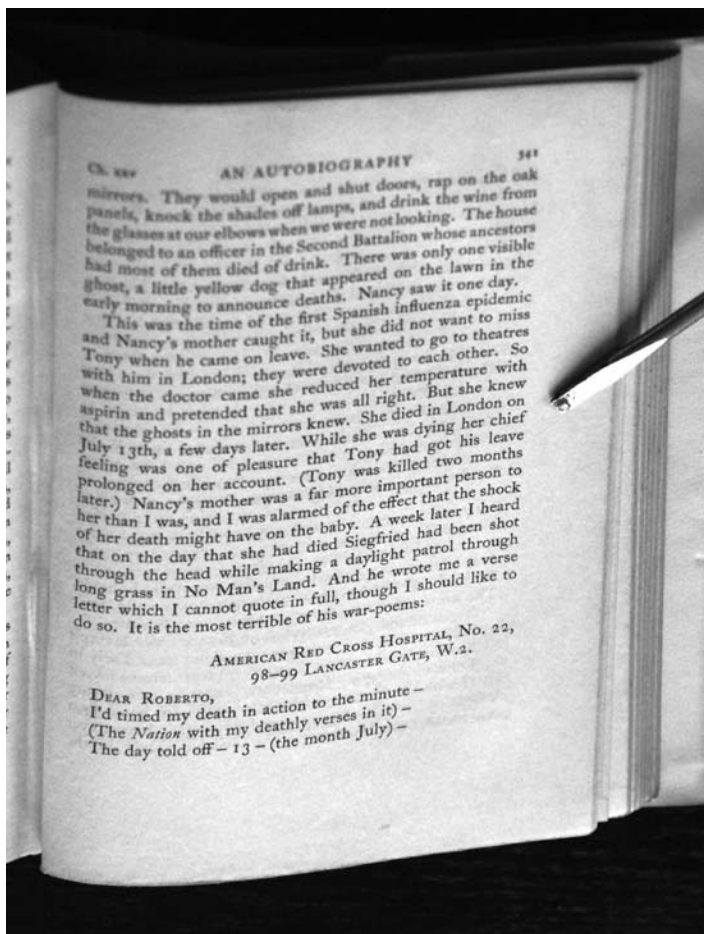
Why does so young a man write an autobiography? And why the unusual title? Graves explained his purposes in the introductory paragraph of the book as it first appeared: "an opportunity for a formal good-bye to you and to you and to you and to me and to all that; forgetfulness, because once all this has been settled in my mind and written down it need never be thought about again; money."⁶⁰ Again – candor first! The money from the Lawrence biography had just about run out.

These lines about why he wrote this book

his book in 1929. The first state of the text included the entire poem.

Unfortunately, Graves had neglected to ask Sassoon's permission to include his poem. He had also included in the text a story about a visit to Sassoon's home in 1916 that was highly uncomplimentary to Sassoon's mother – describing how she had tried to contact the spirit of a dead elder son. When Sassoon and his publisher discovered what Graves had done, they threatened legal action in order to force Graves' publisher to stop distribution

See ROBERT GRAVES, page 10



First and second states of the first edition of *Goodbye to All That*.

ROBERT GRAVES, from page 9

and to remove both the passage about Sassoon's mother and the poem – thus leaving an 11-line gap where the description had appeared, as well as a huge blank space on pp. 341-343 of the text.

Graves' bibliographer Higginson cites Faber and Boyle's *Modern First Editions: Points and Values*⁶³ for the proposition that "less than 100 copies" of the first state – containing the offending text – exist.⁶⁴ But judging from the frequency with which this first state is offered for sale by booksellers, the estimate of "less than 100 copies" is almost certainly too low. In any event, the publisher fixed the problem; and it is the second – or "expurgated" – state that found its way into the hands of the public.

Goodbye made a huge splash, the *Daily Herald* calling it the "most startling" war memoir yet written.⁶⁵ Thanks in part to the newspaper publicity, *Goodbye* sold 20,000 copies in the first five days.⁶⁶ And the money flowed in again.

Fussell in the *Great War and Modern Memory* noted the "staginess" of Graves' memoir – its nature as a series of "caricature scenes," in which "farce and comedy" trump tragedy and melodrama. Graves himself

later described his own approach as one of "mixing in" all the ingredients that readers like – descriptions of food and drink, passages about murders and ghosts, T.E. Lawrence ("a mystery man"), poets, battles. And, of course, "the most painful chapters have to be the jokiest." Of course, his scenes of trench warfare figure strongly in these chapters. Fussell called Graves "a tongue-in-cheek neurasthenic farceur," "a joker, a manic illusionist." *Goodbye*, according to Fussell, was no more "a direct and factual autobiography" than Sassoon's memoirs. It was instead "a satire, heavily influenced by the techniques of stage comedy."⁶⁷ Art triumphed over fact, as it usually does.

In this case, the triumph was more than usually pronounced. Whether Graves' factual inaccuracy is attributable to the speed at which he wrote the book, or the lack of time to check the facts, or the fact that his purpose was artistic rather than historical, the book contained many inaccuracies.

Graves' friends Sassoon and Blunden were so annoyed that they annotated a copy of *Goodbye* noting what they believed to be its mistakes. Their notations ran to 5631 words in ink on 250 of the book's 448 pages. Blunden

wrote on the title page of this copy: "Good-Bye to All That or, the Welsh-Irish Bull in a China Shop."⁶⁸ At one time they considered presenting a definitive annotated copy to the British Museum in order to preserve their version of the true facts.

Graves' parents and siblings were even more irritated with what they perceived to be his mischaracterizations or criticisms of them.⁶⁹

Meanwhile, Robert and Laura had left England for the Balearic island of Majorca, in the Mediterranean south of Barcelona. Here they would be far away from Nancy, free of any responsibility for bringing up the children, and untroubled by recriminations from family or former friends. As Graves wrote in a new prologue to *Goodbye* almost three decades later, "It was my better leave-taking of England where I had recently broken a good many conventions; quarreled with, or been disowned by, most of my friends; been grilled by the police on a suspicion of attempted murder [Laura's defenestration]; and ceased to care what anyone thought of me."⁷⁰

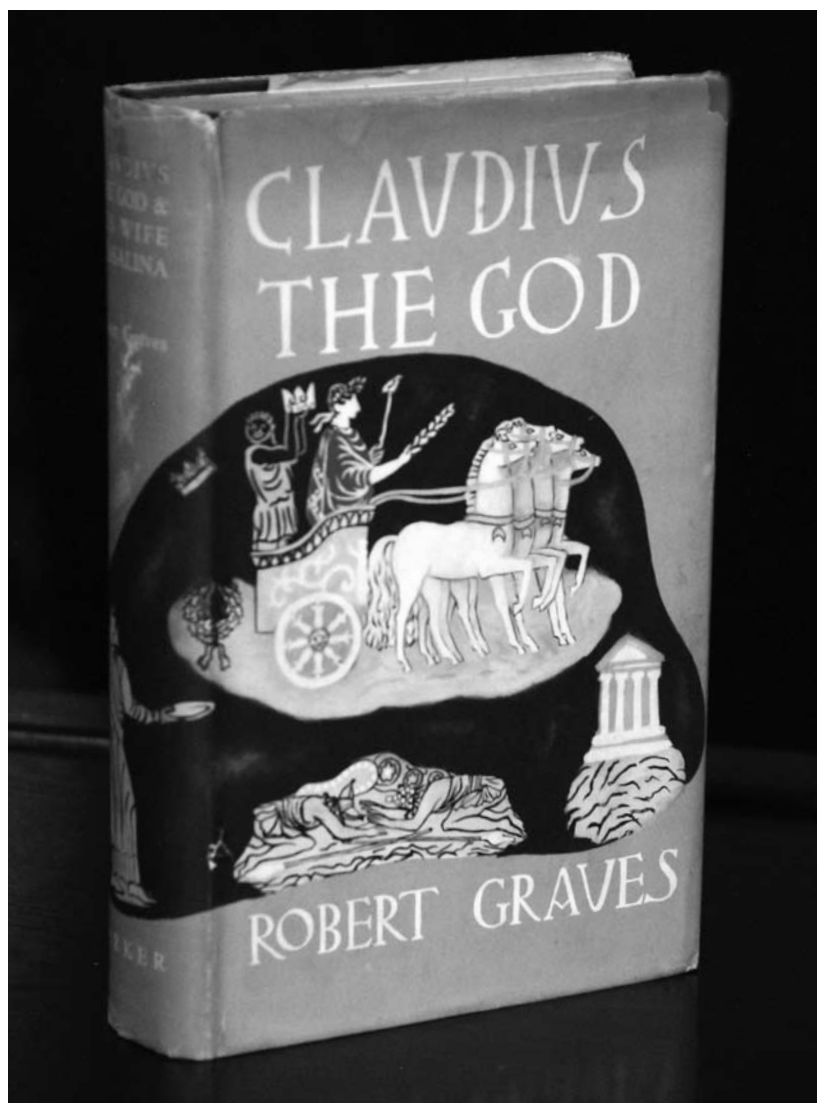
In Majorca they found a small fishing village, Deya, situated between the sea and

the mountains. A little ways outside the village, they rented a stone cottage, which had room for their press, which they transported from London. Considering the low cost of living in Majorca and the proceeds from *Goodbye*, Robert and Laura now faced the prospects of a comfortable life, away from the bustle of London and the hassle of family – free to live without convention and to pursue their art. As Robert wrote in the new prologue three decades later, the proceeds enabled him “to pay my debts and leave me free to live and write in Majorca without immediate anxiety for the future.”

Goodbye to All That was Graves' last book written in England before he and Laura left for Majorca. It is number A32 in the Higginson bibliography. By the time Higginson published his bibliography in 1966, the list had quadrupled – to A114. And Graves continued to write and publish during most of the next two decades – dying in Majorca in 1985 at the age of 90. Most of the literary works written in these later years would probably go unnoticed except for the fact that he wrote them. The two great exceptions, in my opinion, are his two *Claudius* novels.

Not long after completing *Goodbye*, Graves started to keep a journal of literary ideas and scraps. In it is what his biographer describes as a “synopsis of a complete historical romance of interpretative biography about the Roman emperor Claudius, a puzzle to the historians, as indeed he was to his contemporaries.”⁷¹ Claudius was the emperor who came between Caligula and Nero – a supposed buffoon who was afflicted with various physical infirmities.

Graves evidently took a good library with him to Majorca, for he wrote to his friend Lawrence that in preparing to write a novel about Claudius, he read Tacitus, Josephus, Dio Cassius, Suetonius, Seneca, and Arosius, among others. He began his writing in October 1932, and the manuscript took the better part of two years to write. Graves' son



William told me that he had always understood that *Claudius* was written as one book, but was split into two books by the publisher, Arthur Barker in London.

The first edition of the first volume, *I, Claudius From the Autobiography of Tiberius Claudius Born B.C. 10 Murdered and Deified A.D. 54*, appeared in May 1934. The number of copies is unknown. Nine impressions were printed in the following 17 months. The American edition appeared in June 1934, also followed by several subsequent printings. The book was translated into 16 languages, according to Graves' bibliographer.⁷²

I, Claudius is a story of great vice and cruelty within the imperial family, and is written with imagination and flair. Lawrence told him, “The writing is superb: the aloof and cold-blooded narration masterly: the possibility of Claudius having written it always born in mind ... And yet ... I have an uneasy feeling that it will be valued and collected and talked about for its vices, rather than for its force.”⁷³

The critics immediately recognized *I,*

Claudius as a fine piece of work. Robert was proud of the fact that only two critics challenged him on technical points of scholarship, and he satisfied himself that both were wrong. Laura Riding was driven into jealous rages at the continued flow of excellent reviews. When someone asked her if she would consider writing an historical novel, she said she “didn't think she could sink so low.”⁷⁴

Encouraged by the commercial success of this first volume, the publisher quickly proceeded to complete the second, entitled *Claudius the God and his wife Messalina*. It was finished in August and appeared in November, six months after the first. Though it was “much patchier” (to quote Graves' sympathetic nephew and biographer), it was also a critical and commercial hit.⁷⁵

For his two *Claudius* books, Graves received two prestigious awards – the James Tait Black Memorial and the Hawthornden. He also sold the film rights to a

movie producer and worked on a screenplay which was never used. They were, however, the basis for the British television series “*I, Claudius*” in the 1970's.

The *Claudius* novels had started Graves down the track of historical fiction. He would later write about *Count Belisarius* (1938), *Sergeant Lamb of the Ninth*, about a British soldier caught up in the American Revolution (1940 and a 1941 sequel), *The Story of Marie Powell, Wife to Mr. Milton* (1943), *The Golden Fleece* (1944), *King Jesus* (1946), and *Homer's Daughter* (1955). He also wrote books blending scholarship and a lively imagination – *The White Goddess* (1948), tracing the cult of the maternal deity throughout Europe, and *The Greek Myths* (1955); and he translated Apuleius' *The Golden Ass* (1950) and Lucan's *Pharsalia* (1956).

But poetry was his calling.

Robert and Laura eventually divorced; and Robert remarried. He spent the Second

World War years in South Devon, and after the war moved back to Majorca, where he lived until his death in 1985 at the age of 90.

The obituary writer for the *New York Times* quoted him as saying once, "Prose books are the show dogs I breed and sell to support my cat." And another time, responding to a banker who told him he would not get rich writing poetry, he said that "if there was no money in poetry, there was certainly no poetry in money, and so it was all even."⁷⁶

§§

All photographs of items in the author's collection, photographed by Robert McCamant.

NOTES

¹ London, 1929.

² New York, 1995.

³ For the basic biographical facts, I have relied on Seymour's biography as well as Robert's own great memoir, *Goodbye to All That* (London 1929). (In the citations that follow, I refer to the Anchor 1998 paperback edition of *Goodbye* rather than the first edition. I also omit the hyphen in "Good-Bye" which appeared in the first edition but not those after 1957.) Also useful is Richard Perceval Graves' three-volume work, *Robert Graves The Assault Heroic, 1895-1926* (London, 1986), *Robert Graves The Years with Laura Riding, 1926-1940* (London, 1990), and *Robert Graves and the White Goddess* (London, 1996). The author, Richard Perceval, is Robert's nephew. Consequently, he had access to family letters, diaries and other papers not available to earlier biographers. For Robert's experiences in the War, I rely on Helen McPhail and Philip Guests, *On the Trail of the Poets of the Great War, Robert Graves & Siegfried Sassoon* (South Yorkshire, 2001). For bibliographical details, we have Fred H. Higginson, *A Bibliography of the Works of Robert Graves*, (Hamden, Conn. 1966), and Harvey Sarnier, *A Collection of the Works of Robert Graves* (Cathedral City, Cal, 1995). See also William S. Reese, *Robert Graves, A Centennial Exhibition at the Grolier Club*, Spring 1995 (New York, 1995). Reese, a distinguished American book dealer, compiled a great collection of Graves manuscript material as well as books. Sarnier, a former resident of Kenilworth, had one of the largest Graves collections of its kind. (His book on his own collection reports, for example, that he has 68 copies of *Goodbye to All That*, 55 copies of *I, Claudius*, etc.) Edward Maggs, the distinguished book dealer, wrote that Sarnier bought Graves' books "like a squirrel preparing for a harsh winter." (Sarnier, "Introduction").

⁴ Graves, I, 39.

⁵ *Goodbye*, 30.

⁶ London, 1916.

⁷ *Goodbye*, 33.

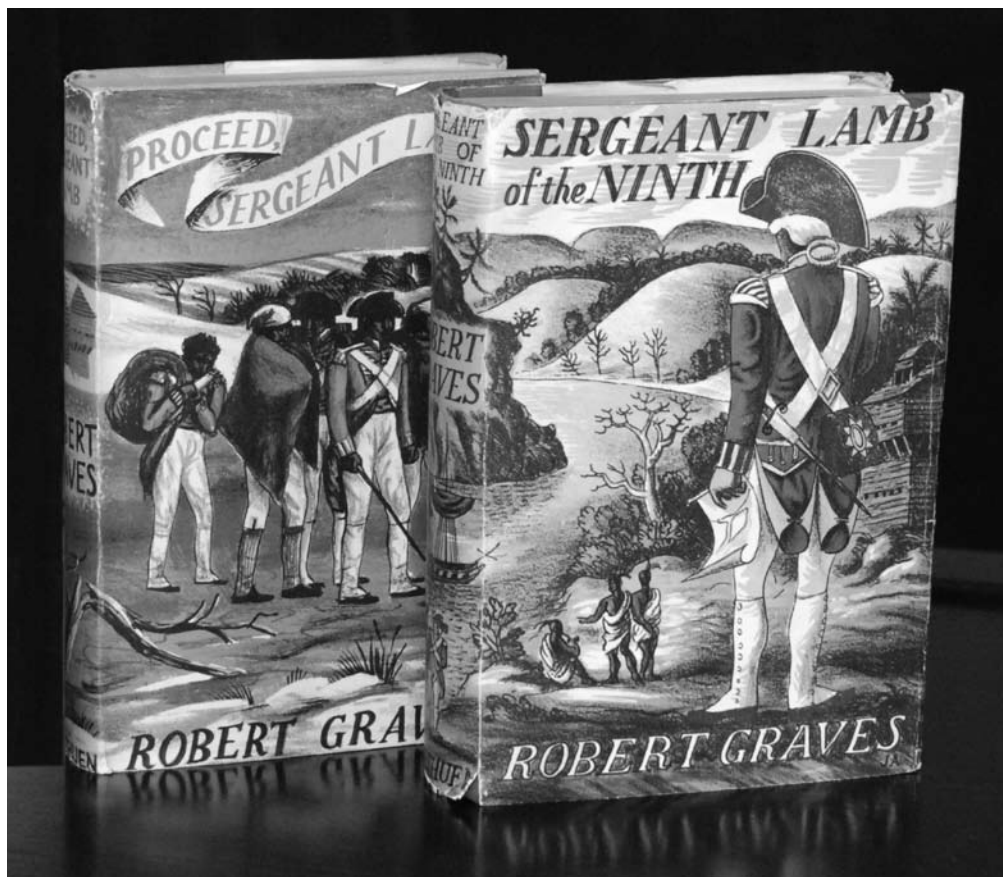
⁸ *Goodbye*, 17-18.

⁹ *Goodbye*, 19-20.

¹⁰ Graves, I, 68.

¹¹ *Goodbye*, 36, 40.

¹² Graves, I, 69, 75, 76.



¹³ Many years later Rosaleen wrote a charming little book called *Games From an Edwardian Childhood*, (London, 1982). In it she describes how all five of the children played together, and how their father "would come and sit on the edge of our beds and tell us wonderful stories, straight out of his head ... He would bring us little toys which he'd bought on the kerb in London. Mother had a lovely contralto voice and played the piano, so we were brought up with music and sang folk-songs in French, German and Italian and, of course, Irish, Scots and Welsh songs." (*Games*, p. 11.)

¹⁴ *Goodbye*, 42.

¹⁵ Graves, I, 72.

¹⁶ *Goodbye*, 3.

¹⁷ London, 1912.

¹⁸ p. 139.

¹⁹ *Goodbye*, 51; Graves, I, 84-90.

²⁰ Higginson, 219-220.

²¹ *Goodbye*, 51.

²² Graves, I, *The Assault Heroic*, 100-101.

²³ Graves, I, p. 117.

²⁴ *Goodbye*, 72.

²⁵ McPhail and Guest, 35.

²⁶ Graves, I, 136.

²⁷ Graves, I, 137.

²⁸ *Goodbye*, 169.

²⁹ *Goodbye*, 175.

³⁰ Graves, I, 142.

³¹ *Goodbye*, 196.

³² Graves, I, 148.

³³ Higginson, 14.

³⁴ *Goodbye*, p. 218.

³⁵ Graves, I, 155.

³⁶ Graves, I, 143-145.

³⁷ Higginson, 15.

³⁸ Graves, I, 346.

³⁹ *Goodbye*, 263.

⁴⁰ Graves, I, 183.

⁴¹ Graves, I, 188.

⁴² Graves, I, 190.

⁴³ Graves, I, 217.

⁴⁴ Graves, I, 228-229.

⁴⁵ Graves, I, 237.

⁴⁶ *Goodbye*, 300.

⁴⁷ *Goodbye*, 320-321.

⁴⁸ *Goodbye*, 300-301.

⁴⁹ Graves, I, 247.

⁵⁰ Graves, I, 243, 262, 273.

⁵¹ Graves, I, 267.

⁵² Graves, I, 286.

⁵³ Graves, I, 280.

⁵⁴ Gekoski Catalogue 30, p. 17.

⁵⁵ Graves, II, 54.

⁵⁶ Graves, II, 42, 52.

⁵⁷ Graves, II, 119.

⁵⁸ Graves, II, 100.

⁵⁹ *Goodbye*, 91, 107.

⁶⁰ Graves, *Goodbye*, First Edition, p. 13.

⁶¹ *Goodbye*, 343.

⁶² *Goodbye*, 1998 ed., 277.

⁶³ Second Series, London, 1931.

⁶⁴ Higginson, p. 48.

⁶⁵ Graves, II, 133.

⁶⁶ Graves, II, 134.

⁶⁷ Fussell, 204-207.

⁶⁸ El Dieff Catalogue of Items from the Library of Siegfried Sassoon, item 1.

⁶⁹ Graves, II, 134.

⁷⁰ *Goodbye*, pb., 1998, prologue.

⁷¹ Graves, II, 145.

⁷² Higginson, p. 61-62.

⁷³ Graves, II, 190.

⁷⁴ Graves, II, 218.

⁷⁵ Graves, II, 220.

⁷⁶ *N.Y. Times*, December 8, 1985.

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A few excerpts:

“Each book, after all, consists of a succession of writing surfaces, most of which are usually covered with words. It is a natural thing, therefore, to regard the paper as writing paper and to place more words on it. A regular part of the ritual of publishing for many authors is to inscribe copies of their books for their friends; owners of books frequently write their names into their books and annotate the texts as they read; and some people use the endpapers of books to make comments of other kinds.... As a result, ‘association copies’ (as they are now usually called) have become a standard category among book collectors.” – **G. Thomas Tanselle**, Introduction.

“Holding this vellum-bound book today, one finds it hard to imagine the furious reading, rereading, and passing-around this volume experienced between January 16 and 18, 1599. Though van Meteren’s political assessments prompted complaints, it seems that the representatives were more disturbed by passages divulging personal matters. Some higher authorities felt that their efforts had been slighted, claiming the work was out of balance. Van Meteren was attacked by

members of both Protestant parties as well as by Catholics. He was also accused of revealing state secrets.” – **James Tanis**, “Van Meteren’s Contentious *Memorien*.”

“One such fold marks an underlined text mentioned above where Selden awarded a crown of laurel to Jonson; but the page is further flagged with a blank slip of paper and a carefully inserted bay leaf – dry and brown, but astonishingly unbroken. The noted dealer Robert Harding, of Maggs Bros., Ltd., who handled the sale of the book to the Folger in 2008, wrote: ‘This personal tribute from Lady Anne Clifford to Ben Jonson [six months after the poet’s death], reaching out from 370 years

ago, is the most touching and evocative thing I have ever discovered in a book.’” – **Richard J. Kuhta**, “Lady Anne Clifford’s Copy of *Titles of Honor*.”

“What makes this modest, fifth edition so fascinating are the associations attached to it, and how it came to reside in Boston. The story begins with a trip to Paris in 1775. Johnson

Buchanan (1763–1808), was chosen by Washington to be part of a volume of nine tracts devoted to the moral and political problems presented by slavery. Like Washington’s other tract volumes, it was bound for him in full calf with a red-leather title label on the spine. Two of the tracts in the volume bear the president’s signature on their title page. While it lacks

Washington’s signature, Buchanan’s tract presents powerful arguments that drew the attention of not one, but two important southern presidents, Washington and Jefferson Davis.” – **Stanley Ellis Cushing**, “Presidential Views of Slavery.”

These are but the smallest tastings from the Club’s extraordinary new volume. It features 51 authors, 52 entries, 234 pages, and 112 color images. Of the books, 24 are in private hands, while 28 are in institutional collections. Club members will have an opportunity to acquire the book – and even have their copy signed by authors present – at the dinner meeting on Friday, March 18. (Retail price of the book will be \$75; at this meeting only, Caxtonians can purchase copies for \$50).

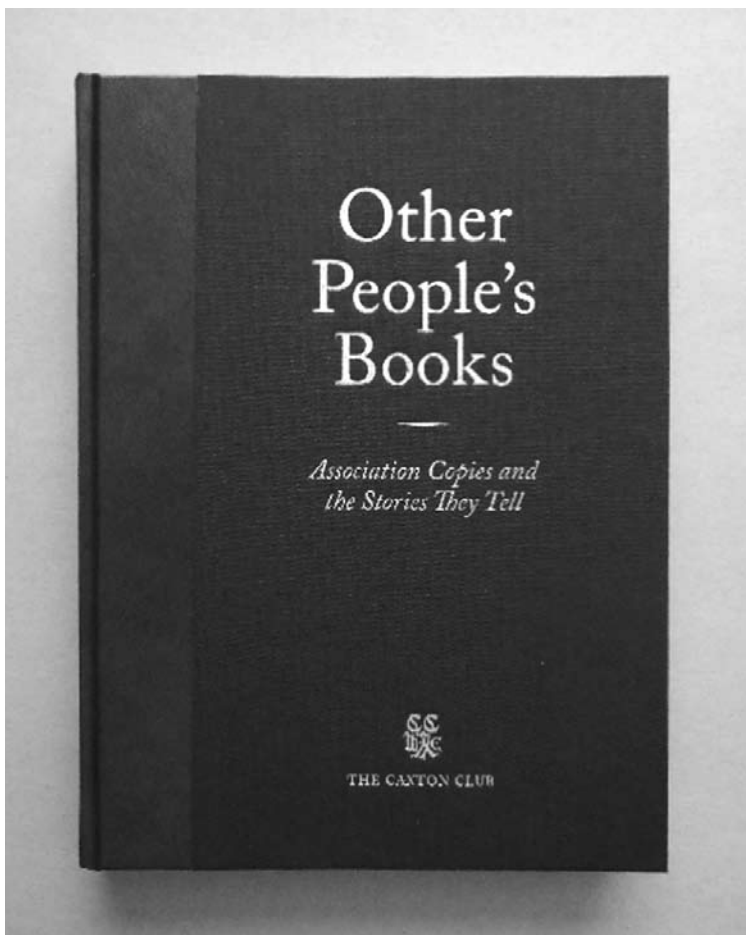
The gala will be followed by a Symposium to be held at the Newberry Library from 9 am to 1:30 pm on Saturday.

Three keynote speakers will begin the day: 🐾 David Pearson, Director of Libraries, Archives

and Guildhall Art Gallery, London, will talk on “Other People’s Books? Not Just Association Copies!” 🐾 Tom Congalton, Proprietor, Between The Covers Rare Books, New Jersey, will discuss “Complicated Lives: Association Copies as Artifactual Evidence” 🐾 Heather Jackson, Professor of English, University of Toronto, will talk on “Investing in Marginalia.”

Following their presentations, a panel discussion, moderated by Mary Williams of Leslie Hinmann, will include the previous speakers and Club members Celia Hilliard, R. Eden Martin and C. Steven Tomashefsky.

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and his close friends the successful brewer and man of society Henry Thrale and his wife, Hester, visited Paris together. During that trip, they met a young Florentine nobleman, Giovanni Tommaso Manucci (1750–1814). Soon after, in February 1776, Manucci traveled to London, where he was a guest of the Thrales at their home, Streatham Park.” – **Samuel B. Ellenport**, “Samuel Johnson’s *The Prince of Abissinia*.”

“It was a common practice in the eighteenth century to preserve tracts of value by grouping them together by subject and having them bound in boards. The particular tract that I have singled out for attention, by George

Book and manuscript-related exhibitions: a selective list

Compiled by Robert McCamant

(Note: on occasion an exhibit may be delayed or extended; it is always wise to call in advance of a visit.)

Art Institute of Chicago, 111 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, 312-443-3600: "Egoyomi: Japanese Picture Calendars" (Japanese prints that incorporate calendar markings into their designs; some say because these were in defiance of the law, the calendar markings were hidden in an attempt to obscure the true purpose of the prints), Gallery 107 through April 3. "Paper Architecture: Visionary Structures on the Printed Page" (the potential of the designed environment to transcend the limits of physical space and political time), Ryerson and Burnham Libraries, through March 14.

Chicago Architecture Foundation, 224 South Michigan, Chicago, 312-922-3432: "Chicago Model City" (unique models of downtown, of the Eisenhower expressway from 1950, more.) Atrium Gallery, ongoing.

Chicago Botanic Garden, Lenhardt Library, 1000 Lake Cook Road, Glencoe, 847-835-8202: "Caring for Collections: Conservation of the Rare Book Collection" (techniques used by professional conservators for rare books), through May 1.

Chicago Cultural Center, 78 E. Washington Street, Chicago, 312-744-6630: "Finding Vivian Maier: Chicago Street Photographer" (recently-discovered pictures which capture the people and fashions of the 50s, 60s, and 70s), through April 3. "Chicago and the Diana: Toy Camera Images" (Dan Zamudio's intimately scaled black and white images are reminiscent of faded works in old photo albums), through March 27.

Harold Washington Library Center, 400 S. State Street, Chicago, 312-747-4300: "Hexagon: Textured Surface and Layered Space, an Exhibit by Six Chicago Artists" (paintings, collage, sculpture and multimedia works by the women of Hexagon), North Exhibit Case, Eighth Floor, through March 18; "Alfred Appel on Classic Jazz" (works by the late Alfred Appel, Northwestern professor, who wrote widely on the history of jazz with special focus on Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, and Fats Waller), Upright Case, Eighth Floor, through June 30; "Made by WPA: Illinois Art Project Chicago" (exhibition and film highlight the history and legacy of government-funded arts programs during the 1930s in Illinois), Chicago Gallery, Third Floor, through April 3.

Columbia College Center for the Book and Paper Arts, 1104 S. Wabash, Chicago, 312-369-6630. "Counting on Chance: 25 Years of Artists' Books by Robin Price, Publisher" (a mid-career retrospective of the contemporary book artist and fine press printer), Second Floor gallery, through April 9.

DuSable Museum of African American History, 740 East 56th Place,

Chicago, 773-947-0600: "For all the World to See: Visual Culture and the struggle for Civil Rights" (the historical role played by visual images in shaping, influencing, and transforming the fight for civil rights), through May 16.

Lake Forest-Lake Bluff Historical Society, 361 E. Westminster Avenue, Lake Forest, 847-234-5253: "Uncanny, Unabridged, Unforgettable: 150 Years of Lake Forest" (honors Lake Forest's Sesquicentennial), preview party March 13, runs through December 29.

Loyola University Museum of Art, 820 N. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, 312-915-7600: "Eric Gill: Iconographer" (wood engravings drawn from the University of San Francisco's Albert Sperisen Collection), through May 1.

Museum of Contemporary Art, 220 East Chicago Avenue, Chicago, 312-280-2660: "Urban China: Informal Cities" (a retrospective of the

magazine combined with a space transformed into a physical manifestation of its pages), through April 3; "Jim Nutt: Coming Into Character" (the first major exhibit of his work in 10 years), through May 29.

Newberry Library, 60 W. Walton Street, Chicago, 312-943-9090: "French Canadians in the Midwest" (documents exploring the history of the French-Canadian presence in Illinois), Spotlight Exhibition Series, R. R. Donnelley Gallery, through March 12.

Northern Illinois University Art Museum, NIU Altgeld Hall, DeKalb: "Best Face Forward: The Presented View" (studio photographic portraits), through March 11.

Northwestern University, Charles Deering Library, 1970 Campus Drive, Evanston, 847-491-7658: "From the Heroic to the Depraved: Mainstream and Underground Comic Books at Northwestern University Library" (featuring comic books from the Pre-Golden, Golden, Silver, Bronze, and Modern eras, as well as the Underground; including a selection of Big Little Books, dime novels, woodcuts, and engravings that chronicle the beginning of comic books as they are known today), Special Collections and Archives, through March 26; "Best of Bologna" (reproductions of children's-book illustrations), newly-installed permanent exhibit, 4th floor, main library.

Oriental Institute of Chicago, University of Chicago, 1155 E. 58th Street, Chicago, 773-702-9514: "Visible Language: Inventions of Writing in the Ancient Middle East and Beyond" (illustrations of new research on the origins of writing), through March 6.

University of Chicago, John Crerar Library, 5730 South Ellis Avenue, Chicago, 773-702-8740: "Sweet Home Chicago: Chocolate and Confectionery Production and Technology in the Windy City" (drawing from items in the substantial cookery collection at the Library, this exhibit explores the history of chocolate and confectioners in the city and the science and technology of the candy making process), Atrium, through June 11.

Until a replacement exhibit editor is found, please send your listings to bmccamant@quarterfold.com, or call 312-329-1414 x 11.



Loyola Museum of Art: Eric Gill
ERIC GILL: ALBERT SPERISEN COLLECTION, UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO.

Caxtonians Collect: Michael F. Suarez, S.J.

Interviewed by Robert McCamant

How can a man co-edit the *Oxford Companion to the Book* while simultaneously teaching half the year at Fordham and half the year at Oxford? "I found that if I got started at 5 in the morning and worked until 1 pm, I was able to get quite a bit of editing done before I turned to my other duties," explains nonresident Caxtonian Michael Suarez, now finished with that particular project but embarked upon others.

He forsook his "dream job" of half the year in New York – teaching at Fordham – and half the year at Oxford for the opportunity to become the Director of the Rare Book School (RBS) at the University of Virginia. "From my perspective, bibliography is the most humanistic discipline," he says. "My teacher and mentor D. F. McKenzie used to say, 'Every book is alive with the judgments of its makers.' Editing choices, technical choices, artistic choices, business choices: they all leave their mark on the book as published. When you can figure out what happened in producing a book, it frequently helps you to understand what both author and publisher were trying to convey."

But bibliography is in trouble in academe these days. "Only two of the top 40 English Ph.D. programs in the US currently require any bibliography coursework," Suarez laments. "But this year RBS will offer 27 courses to some 300 students. We think our intense week-long programs are an excellent way to reach the people who need the information and skills, whether they are librarians, students, or individual collectors."

He soon warms to the topic, ticking off examples of the things you can learn at Rare Book School. "We have Albert Derolez coming in from Belgium to teach codicology and paleography [the analysis of manuscript books by looking at their writing and physical form]. We have Sue Allen coming from New Haven to teach about 19th-century publisher's bookbindings, as only she can. We have Naomi Nelson and Matthew Kirschenbaum exploring the modern perplexities of 'born digital' items, which few of us have a clue how we will store and present, let alone catalog."

"If you're interested in the book trade as a field of study, it's lonely out there. You may be

the only person at your university who's got the bug. RBS is your ticket to get together with others who share your interests. We are as much a community of book lovers as we are a school of book learners," he concludes.

As the photograph suggests, Suarez is a Jesuit priest. "Jesuits often work at things that theological training normally does not equip



you for, or at things few priests would choose to do. In my case, I've done some of both. I was a prison chaplain at Riker's Island, and I worked at a home for unmarried teenage women in the Bronx where I ended up as the Lamaze labor partner 17 times. I think the prison work was especially important in my own formation, and sometimes I think it's what I ought to be doing. But I really love what I do now, and I feel truly fortunate to be at Rare Book School."

He entered the Jesuit novitiate after a bachelor's degree from Bucknell. When he was a novice, a teacher happened to see a literature paper he had written and told him that he might be able to get a Marshall scholarship. It came true, and Suarez spent three years reading the canon (in the literary, not ecclesiastical, sense) at Oxford. He fell especially under the sway of the aforementioned McKenzie, whose field was bibliography writ large. He was able to do historical and bibliographic research even without an advanced degree.

Then he came back to the States, studied

philosophy, and, during his four years of full-time theological studies, taught at Harvard, where he was influenced by Helen Vendler (an expert on lyric poets) and the Houghton bibliographer Hugh Amory. Eventually he was certain he wanted to return to Oxford to get a Ph.D., and with his superior's support he moved there in 1994. Remarkably, he was awarded a post-doctoral fellowship in his first year of graduate studies and began to teach bibliography to doctoral students as a new member of the Faculty of English at Oxford in his second year.

As he was completing his thesis, he figured he would just stay on in the English Faculty at Oxford, living in Campion Hall (home for Jesuits at Oxford) and pursue bibliographic and literary studies. But his superior wanted him at least part of the time in the U.S. He was hired by Fordham, and commuted across the Atlantic for ten years. Co-editing the *Oxford Companion to the Book* (not to mention *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain, Volume 5, 1695-1830*) took up much of his "spare" time, as did the parish in Oxford where he worked for fifteen years.

Another spare-time activity is collecting books, chiefly for his research and teaching. He has theological works in Greek, Latin, and English, as well as lots of 17th- and 18th-century poetry. Robert Dodsley is a particular interest, since he was both an author and a publisher and shaped so many people's taste in poetry. ("My collection of Dodsley's *Collection of Poems by Several Hands* does not as yet rival that of Herman W. Fritz' Leibert [now at the Beinecke], but having uncovered some piracies unknown to him, I am hoping eventually to assemble the most complete collection extant.") And loving bibliography as he does, he has assembled a wide variety of specimens illustrating the history of printing.

Suarez joined the club in 2010, nominated as a non-resident Club member by John Chalmers and seconded by Alice Schreyer. He attended his second meeting as the guest of Donna M. Tuke, who provided an additional second to the nomination, noting his passion for scholarship and books, his energy, and his compassion.

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Bookmarks...

Luncheon: Friday, Mar. 11, 2011, Union League Club Jack Cella
A Lifetime at the Helm of America's Best Academic Bookstore: including details of its Grand New Location

The manager of the Seminary Co-op Bookstore in Hyde Park for close to 40 years, Caxtonian Jack Cella will tell about the bookstore from its beginning in 1961 right up to its current membership/shareholdership of 53,000. The store has always been a favorite with University of Chicago faculty members, one stated: "if it isn't on Jack's front table, it's not worth reading." Visiting the shop is an adventure: it is located in a basement with a series of forked paths accented by draped electric cords, a multitude of taped-up pipes and an antique boiler. A well known frequent customer has caused a global spotlight to be shown on the Co-op, perhaps resulting in an upcoming move. Come and hear about Stanley Tigerman's involvement in the new location, about famous customers including Saul Bellow, about interviews Jack has had including with Al-jazeera, and about well known Caxtonians including Bob Rosenthal – not to mention the dear customer who had his ashes strewn at the Co-op. All this from a man many say has the memory of at least 2 elephants.

The March luncheon will take place at the Union League Club, 65 W. Jackson Boulevard. Luncheon buffet (in the main dining room on six) opens at 11:30 am; program (in a different room, to be announced) 12:30-1:30. Luncheon is \$30. Details of the March dinner: it will take place at Newberry Library, 60 W. Walton. Cocktail reception at 5:30, dinner at 6:30. Dinner is \$65. Discounted parking is available at 100 E. Walton

Beyond March...

APRIL LUNCHEON

We will meet Friday, April 8 at the Union League Club with speaker and topic to be announced.

APRIL DINNER

Nonresident Caxtonian and former Chicagoan Ed Colker will talk on April 20 about his work creating *livres d'artiste*, many featuring the work of esteemed modern poets and all including his own prints.

MAY LUNCHEON

We will meet Friday, May 13 at the Union League Club with speaker and topic to be announced.

MAY DINNER

On May 18, Dennis McClendon will talk about how historic maps tell Chicago's history. McClendon produced the maps for the *Encyclopedia of Chicago*.

Note: dinner is on Friday!

Dinner: Friday, March 18, 2011, Newberry Library
Gala Publication Party for *Other People's Books: Association Copies and the Stories They Tell*

This evening the Caxton Club will celebrate the publication of the 66th volume in our distinctive series of books for booklovers. *Other People's Books* features fascinating stories of associations told in essays by 52 authors and a scholarly introduction by G. Thomas Tanselle. The hardbound, 224-page book was printed in four-colors in Italy in an edition of 1,000 and is illustrated with 112 images. Copies will be available for purchase (retail price \$75; at this meeting only, Caxtonians can purchase copies for only \$50). At least 25 local and out-of-town authors will be present. The authors include custodians of special collections at major North American research libraries and private collectors. Nineteen of the authors are fellow Caxtonians. To help you create your own association copy, authors will be available for book signing throughout the evening. Dinner will be followed by a short program featuring remarks by Kim Coventry, chair of the Club's publication committee; Stephen Enniss of the Folger Shakespeare Library; and Caxtonian Roger Baskes.

*and 100 W. Chestnut (entrance from Clark Street). Have your ticket validated at the Newberry desk. For reservations call 312-255-3710 or use the Caxton web site; **reservations are needed by noon Tuesday for the Friday luncheon, and by noon Tuesday for the Tuesday dinner.***