

## ***Sixteenth International Robert Graves Conference***

Robert Graves and the Popular Imagination

15-18 September 2024

### **Speakers and Abstracts**

#### **Plenary Lectures**

##### **Jean Moorcroft Wilson: ‘When the Musing Had to Stop’**

Jean Moorcroft Wilson has been described as the ‘doyenne of war poet biographers’. Her publications include biographies of Isaac Rosenberg (on whom she lectures worldwide), Siegfried Sassoon, Edward Thomas and Virginia Woolf. Her *Robert Graves: from Great War Poet to Good-Bye to All That* is published by Bloomsbury.

##### **Gregory Leadbetter: ‘Which Flowers to Choose? Robert Graves and the Dilemmas of Anthologising’**

Gregory Leadbetter is Professor of Poetry at Birmingham City University. His research and criticism focuses on Romantic, twentieth-century and contemporary poetry and its contexts, and the history and practice of poetry more generally. His book *Coleridge and the Daemonic Imagination* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011) was awarded the University English Book Prize 2012. His books and pamphlets of poetry include *Caliban* (Dare-Gale Press, 2023), a *New Statesman* Book of the Year 2023; *Balanuve*, with photographs by Phil Thomson (Broken Sleep, 2021); *Maskwork* (Nine Arches Press, 2020), longlisted for the Laurel Prize 2021; *The Fetch* (Nine Arches Press, 2016), and *The Body in the Well* (HappenStance Press, 2007). Recent work for the BBC includes the extended poem *Metal City* (Radio 3, 2023). A song-cycle featuring poems from *The Fetch* by the composer and pianist Eric McElroy has been widely performed, and a recording with the tenor James Gilchrist was released in 2023.

#### **Panel Sessions: Abstracts and Biographies**

##### **Panel 1:**

##### **Adrianna Marinelli: ‘Popularising Classics: Robert Graves’s Representation of Ancient Rome in *I, Claudius* between historical accuracy and fictional creativity**

*I, Claudius* (1934) stands as one of the most successful literary phenomena in the history of Western literature. My paper focuses on the reconstruction of the ancient world, particularly Rome, which is not used simply as an historical setting, but is made into a character itself. Drawing meticulously on ancient sources, Graves recreates a city that not only reflects its real topography, but also embodies the legendary personalities of its protagonists. The aim is twofold: on one hand, my analysis will shed light on Graves’s use of ancient sources and his peculiar method of dealing with them. This will provide new insights into how Graves, who was both creative writer and classicist, strikes a balance between historical accuracy and fictional creativity. On the other hand, it will also illustrate the reasons which have made *I, Claudius* a masterpiece of contemporary Western literature.

Adriana Marinelli is a 2nd year Ph.D. Student in Linguistic, Terminological and Intercultural Studies at Parthenope University of Naples. She holds an MA in Philology, Linguistics and Literary Traditions from D'Annunzio University of Chieti-Pescara. In 2022 she received a fellowship from the same University to conduct her research on Robert Graves and Ovid. Her PhD project focuses on the influence of classical antiquity on Robert Graves's poetry by adopting critical-semiotic approaches, mainly informed by linguistic ones. She has participated in several conferences with papers on Robert Graves and Classics. She has also conducted her research with the Robert Graves Collection, housed in St. John's College, Oxford. She is currently involved in the international research project YourTermENVI by the Terminology Coordination Unit of the European Parliament.

### **Philip Ward: 'Robert Graves and the Music of the 1960s'**

This paper will examine the relationship between Robert Graves and popular music of the 1960s as well as the influence of *The White Goddess* (in its revised 1961 edition) on popular musicians who emerged during that decade. The survey falls into three parts. In the first I offer examples of musicians who knew Graves personally but have not declared any clear debt to his writings. These include Robert Wyatt (whose mother knew Graves well) and his sometime fellow members in The Soft Machine (Kevin Ayers, Daavid Allen). Graves's friendship with the folk singer Isla Cameron and support for local Mallorcan group Los Valldemosa exemplify other forms of personal interaction. Secondly, I consider cases of individuals who drew inspiration from *The White Goddess* but had no known personal connection to Graves: for example, Marianne Faithfull, Beverley Martyn, Marc Bolan, Richard Thompson, Robin Williamson (The Incredible String Band) and Peter Stampfel (Holy Modal Rounders, The Fugs). Several songs are offered in evidence. Finally, I look at one instance of an artist who not only expressed enthusiasm for *The White Goddess* but who also met Graves on two occasions (allegedly): Bob Dylan. Although Graves was not himself sympathetic to rock or pop music, his work found resonance within the 'counterculture': Dylan's slippery public statements and elusive lyrics prompt some concluding thoughts on Graves and the music of the 1960s.

Philip Ward is an independent scholar and freelance author; Senior Member, Wolfson College, Cambridge. List of publications: <https://brushondrum.blogspot.com/2020/06/taking-stock.html>

### **Panel 2:**

#### **Julia Simonne: "'Troublesome Fame": a personal look at Graves and his friendships with other writers and artists from the late 1950s to mid-1970s'**

Julia Simonne was Robert Graves's last muse and the inspiration behind more than 250 of his poems between 1966 and 1975. She has participated in both BBC radio and television documentaries on Graves and has written several articles on aspects of his life and late poetry, many of which have appeared in the journal of the Robert Graves Society *Gravesiana*, (now *The Robert Graves Review*). She trained as a dancer at the Royal Ballet School, and danced with the Royal Opera Ballet, Royal Norwegian Ballet and English National Ballet and was Principal Dancer with the Theatre Ballet of London. She is an Associate of the Royal Academy of Dance and has worked internationally as a choreographer, guest teacher and lecturer.

#### **Kirsten Norrie: 'Robert Graves: Traveller of the Celtic Alphabet of Trees'**

From blossoming fools to coffin-lid riders, a tracking of instinctual arboreal lights via Robert Graves's edited tarocchi references in *The White Goddess*, bejewelled and bloody bark in *The Dream of the Holy Rood*, and Druidic mnemonic compositional techniques.

Kirsten Norrie has published four critically acclaimed poetry collections and a pamphlet under her Highland matrilineal name MacGillivray: *The Last Wolf of Scotland* (Red Hen Press 2013) and *The Nine of Diamonds: Surroial Mordantless* (Bloodaxe Books 2016), *The Gaelic Garden of the Dead* (Bloodaxe Books, 2019), *Ravage: An Astonishment of Fire* (Bloodaxe Books, 2023) and *The Demon Tracts* (Broken Sleep Books, 2024). Trained at The Ruskin School of Drawing and Fine Art, Oxford University she also has an AHRC-funded DPhil in Scottish Poetry and Performance from Wolfson College, Oxford University (2009-12). Her work has appeared in the *Guardian*, the *TLS*, the *Scotsman* and on BBC Radio 3 Late Junction and the Verb. In 2024-5 she is the Judith E. Wilson Poetry Fellow at the University of Cambridge and was previously an AHRC Kluge Fellow at the Library of Congress and a 2019 recipient of a Fondation Jan Michalski writer residency in Switzerland. The MacGillivray archive is held at the Scottish Poetry Library. [www.kirstennorrie.com](http://www.kirstennorrie.com)

### Panel 3:

#### **Elena Theodorakopoulos: ‘Not (a)muse(d): misogyny and melodrama in *The Laureate*’**

My paper focuses on the popular image of Robert Graves and his partnership with Laura Riding as seen most recently in the film *The Laureate*. The film’s melodramatic and highly fictionalized take on the relationships between Robert Graves, Nancy Nicholson, and Laura Riding appears to owe quite a lot to the tendency in biographies such as those by Miranda Seymour and Martin Seymour-Smith, and in the account by T.S. Matthews, to represent these relationships in rather dramatic ways. This representation has also found its way into scholarship, for instance in the introduction to a recent volume of essays on Graves and the Classics one finds references to a ‘theatrical affair’ between Graves and Riding, and to its Graves abandoning Nancy Nicholson ‘after a gothic denouement’. In *The Laureate*, there is an abundance of the gothic and the theatrical, alongside a good serving of misogyny in the portrayal of Riding especially. The White Goddess is always present in the narratives spun in biographical accounts of this period in Graves’s life, along with the almost universally accepted identification of Laura Riding as, in Randall Jarrell’s words the ‘White Goddess incarnate, the Mother-Muse in contemporary flesh’. I hope to show in this paper how *The Laureate* perpetuates this ultimately destructive image of Laura Riding, while also doing no justice at all to Graves or to Nicholson as individuals or as artists.

Elena Theodorakopoulos is Associate Professor in Classics at the University of Birmingham. She works on Latin poetry of the late republic and Augustan periods, and on the reception of classics in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, especially in writing by women. Most recently she has started work on Laura Riding. She has published a book on the representation of Rome in film *Ancient Rome at the cinema* (2010), and has written widely on modern women’s writing and classical reception.

#### **Mark Jacobs: ‘Laura Riding and Robert Graves – Literary Mayhem: Selected Letters 1971-1980’**

The paper I present is that until students, scholars, readers and admirers of Robert Graves understand the working relationship between him and Laura Riding between 1925 and 1940, and her work in particular, they will not understand the work, especially the poems, of Robert Graves. I suggest a clear case is that of Laura Riding and *The White Goddess*, but there are others, such as *The Long Weekend*, *The Reader Over Your Shoulder*, and yet more, reaching right up to *The Nazarene Gospels Restored* or *The Greek Myths* and so on.

The early work – the poetry, *A Survey of Modernist Poetry*, *Goodbye to All That*, the Claudius novels – all need to be considered as integral in this relationship, as well as the later work. Until an understanding of Laura Riding is reached, there will be no satisfactory understanding

of Robert Graves. This book, *Literary Mayhem*, offers, in her letters, her person and her work, a very large insight into the essence of their collaboration.

#### **Panel 4: ‘Robert Graves for Children’**

##### **Neil Philip: ‘Children if You Dare’**

##### **Joseph T. Thomas Jr: ‘I found the strings were painted’: Poetry, Childhood, and *The Penny Fiddle***

##### **Michael Joseph: ‘Robert Graves’s *The Big Green Book*’**

This panel examines different facets of Robert Graves’s books for children. Neil Philip argues that despite his having devoted substantial energy to writing for children, Graves’s achievements as a children’s author have been overlooked. He provides an overall assessment of Graves as a children’s author and traces connections back to Mother Goose and forward to British poets James Reeves and Ted Hughes.

Michael Joseph will focus on Graves’s *The Big Green Book* (1962), illustrated by Maurice Sendak, noting its origin The Modern Master’s Series inaugurated by Louis Untermeyer then poetry consultant at The Library of Congress, with reference to the correspondence between Untermeyer and Graves. Joseph argues that Graves’s work profoundly influenced Sendak’s signature book, *Where the Wild Things Are*, which includes many Gravesean touches, and that Graves has been denied a good deal of the credit for innovations in children’s literature customarily ascribed solely to Sendak.

Joseph Thomas will conclude by discussing Graves’s book of poems for children, *The Penny Fiddle* (1960), as a kind of poetical primer—an *ars poetica*—that explores the poetic imagination, the act(s) of reading and meaning making, and the qualities necessary (or less dramatically, advantageous) to both creators and readers of poetry. *The Penny Fiddle* advises young readers on how to situate themselves most imaginatively (and thus most productively) in relation to poetry.

Neil Philip is a writer, folklorist and poet based in the Cotswolds. His numerous books include *The Adventures of Odysseus*, *The Cinderella Story*, *A Fine Anger: A Critical Introduction to the Work of Alan Garner*, *The Great Mystery*, *Horse Hooves & Chicken Feet: Mexican Folktales*, *Mythology* (with Philip Wilkinson), *The Penguin Book of English Folktales*, *The Tale of Sir Gawain*, *Victorian Village Life*, *War and the Pity of War*, and *Working Girls: An Illustrated History of the Oldest Profession*. The title of his talk taken from Graves’s poem, “Warning to Children,” is “Children if You Dare.”

Joseph T. Thomas Jr is a scholar and poet, based in San Diego, California, at San Diego State University, and a frequent contributor to *The Robert Graves Review*. He has written numerous articles and two books, *Strong Measures* (poems), and *Poetry’s Playground*. The title of his talk, taken from the title poem of *The Penny Fiddle* is “I found the strings were painted.”

Michael Joseph is the editor of *The Robert Graves Review*, the Robert Graves Society liaison to the Modern Language Association, and a Vice-President in North America of The Robert Graves Society. He is professor emeritus at Rutgers University where he was the rare book librarian. He has written numerous articles as well as several novels, collections of short stories, and poetry chapbooks. His recent publication is a book of poems, *The Marvelous Real in a Land of Dreams*. He is based in New York City.

## Panel 5:

### **William Graves: ‘Update on the letters project’**

William Graves is a retired petroleum geologist, Robert Graves’s eldest son by his second marriage, and his Literary Executor. He is Honorary President of the Robert Graves Society, and director of the Fundació Robert Graves. As director of the Fundació he has helped organize the non-academic side of the Graves Conferences in Mallorca. Ed. of Graves’s *Poems About War*, author of *Wild Olives*, *Life in Mallorca with Robert Graves*, and translator into Spanish of *The White Goddess*. He has worked and collated the data for Robert Graves Websites, and the Worldwide Location Register of Robert Graves Manuscripts and Letters Project, and more recently an integration of all these, and the presentation of an online version of Robert Graves Letters to incorporate and make available transcriptions, published and new, of all extant letters (some 10,000) which Graves wrote. <https://www.robertgraves.org/> <https://www.robertgravesholdings.org/> <https://www.robertgravesletters.org/> [robertgravesletters/ graves.palma@gmail.com](mailto:robertgravesletters@graves.palma@gmail.com)

### **Philip Graves: ‘...There is no olive harvest this year’**

The paper will reveal the number of Robert Graves letters now available on the website on the date of the conference. We are now well over one third of the way through (assuming our estimate of 10,000 extant letters is reasonably accurate) in transcribing and making them available online. Then I will describe briefly the nature of the correspondences for each of the recipients (including some remarkable people of the 20th Century) for which we have a large number of letters as well a few anecdotes, facts and interesting things I have found so far doing the transcriptions. Also, I will show a few statistics on the letters we have transcribed so far. The reason for the title will be revealed towards the end of the talk.

Philip Graves obtained a Mining Engineering degree at Imperial College and after a few years working in South African mines moved back to Europe and into management consulting and eventually as a data professional. Has been providing ad-hoc technical support to William Graves for the last 20 or so years and more recently actively involved in creating, developing and administering the various Robert Graves websites which include the new Robert Graves website, the online version of the *Robert Graves Review* and the Robert Graves Letters website, the new Robert Graves Holdings website.

### **Joseph Bailey: “‘To Basil and Kathleen with Love on New Year 1945”: Letters between Robert Graves and Basil and Kathleen Liddell-Hart near the End of World War Two’**

The dedication of one of Robert Graves’s most notable poems, ‘To Juan at the Winter Solstice’, written on the birth of his young son Juan at the end of December 1944 and dedicated to Basil and Kathleen Liddell-Hart, indicated the high regard that Graves held for both of his friends, Basil Liddell-Hart and his wife Kathleen. His poem was printed by a local printer in Brixham, Devon, and sent to the Liddell-Harts at their home in Westmoreland in Cumberland. The poem was subsequently collected in his *Poems 1938-1945* and published in 1945. It was sent with one of several letters sent towards the end of WW2 and provides a fascinating insight into the social history of the time and personal relations between the three friends.

Joseph Bailey worked for a law firm specializing in the Criminal law from 1986 until 2016. He has subsequently been tutor in English literature to the Sixth Form at a school in Ham. He

is a long-standing member of the Graves Society, attending his first conference at the British School in Rome in 1998. Subsequently he has given conference talks about Graves's involvement in the reform of the criminal law of strict liability in the 1960s and the letters between Robert Graves and Basil Liddell Hart, the military historian, during WW2.

#### **Panel 6:**

##### **Tanja Cvetković: 'In the Eyes of His Readers: Robert Graves and the Critical Imagination'**

Starting from the critical reception of Graves's work by some eminent scholars who refer to him as 'a minor poet but the one of extraordinary talent' and who cannot reconcile the unconventionality and traditionality in Graves's work, this paper will focus on some poems which could prove his extraordinariness and illustrate in which ways Graves distinguishes himself from other poets of the time. Some of the poems that I have in mind are: 'In Broken Images', 'Warning to Children', 'The Climate of Thought', 'End of Play', and 'The Terraced Valley'. Following my train of thought from the previous Graves conference, I will continue to explore the elements of postmodernism in Graves poems trying to prove that, though a traditional modern poet, Graves was well ahead of his time and was one step further into a new literary age. The focus will be on some postmodern features which figure in the poems: the deferral of truth, the interplay of dichotomies, the affirmation of the poem in terms of its absence, the absence of the centre, the dichotomy between the concrete and the abstract, the limitations of linguistic representation. The paper points to the necessity of an imaginative and intellectual engagement of the reader in the process of creating the meaning of the poem.

Tanja Cvetković is Associate Professor of English language at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš, Serbia. She has published scientific articles and the following books: *English for the Students of Humanities* (2016), *Between Myth and Silence: Canadian Literature, Postmodernism and Robert Kroetsch's Out West Triptych* (Beograd: Nolit, 2010); *The Journey from Slavery to Freedom in the Novels of Toni Morrison* (Niš: MB Grafika, 2008). She has translated Robert Kroetsch's *The Studhorse Man: Vlasnik Pastuva* (Beograd: Nolit, 2009) and *Gone Indian: Otišao u Indijance* (Zrenjanin: Agora, 2018) into Serbian.

##### **Joan Rodriguez-Amat: 'Graves in the News'**

If we are to consider Graves in the popular imagination, there's nothing like a daring dive into the news that has talked about him over the last few decades, taking advantage of the possibilities of computational analytics and the databases of archival heritage. This paper works with the news that emerges from a search on the Nexis database including the words 'Robert Graves'; and filtering by European Newspapers in English or in Spanish and within the subject of 'Humanities & Social Science'. The search brings 5,932 pieces of news, 5451 in English and 481 in Spanish published between 1981 and 2024. An initial computational analysis offers a broad stroke picture that shows how Graves has been represented over the years and opens a fertile strand of further -more human- interpretive enquiry. Considering Graves's representation as big data puts me in mind of Benjamin's Angelus Novus: 'But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.'

Joan Ramon Rodriguez-Amat is Senior Lecturer in the School of Journalism, Media and Communication at the University of Sheffield, and previously Principal Lecturer and Research Lead for the Department of Culture and Media at Sheffield Hallam University. His

research insists on exploring the indeterminacies of culture and data, critically combining complex computational tools and radical qualitative and interpretive approaches: sometimes by looking at culture and policy; sometimes enquiring about the locations of culture, and sometimes by challenging the notions of identity and community articulated and enhanced by interactions online; sometimes the three.

#### **Panel 7:**

##### **Susan Vincent: ‘Robert Graves and T.E. Lawrence: friendship and personality’**

This paper will examine the stories Graves and Lawrence told about each other to themselves and to friends in published letters and books. Their friendship was initially based on a love of poetry but led to showing the wider world who the real Lawrence of Arabia was.

Susan Vincent is a member of the Committee of the T.E. Lawrence Society and has chaired the Dorset Group for the last five years. She is also a regular speaker on Lawrence and his circle of friends including George Bernard Shaw and Thomas Hardy, together with Lawrence’s love of music, particularly Richard Wagner. In December Susan completed her M.A. in Classical Studies with the Open University. Career wise Susan has been a head-hunter in the fields of Media, Engineering, and Energy.

##### **Richard A. Kaye: ‘Robert Graves, Siegfried Sassoon, and the Hidden Anxieties of Post-War Homoerotic Public Revelation’**

One of the most vexed literary relationships in the history of the First World War in Britain is that between Robert Graves and Siegfried Sassoon, an intense friendship that did not survive the 1929 publication of Graves’s memoir *Good-bye to All That*. Graves’s publisher Jonathan Cape had sent Sassoon an advance copy of the book, doubtless hoping for a favourable endorsement but which prompted Sassoon--just six days before the book’s publication--to demand the removal of several pages related to Sassoon, forcing the publisher to cancel out those pages in those editions that had not yet been printed. The exasperated relationship between Graves and Sassoon continues to draw biographical and critical attention, some of it based on new archival sources. In a 2016 *Times Literary Supplement* essay on Sassoon’s copy of Graves’s memoir (located in Yale’s Beinecke Library since 2015), Jean Moorcroft Wilson characterized the much-annotated volume as a ‘work of art’ that further disclosed Sassoon’s animus against Graves. What Wilson neglected to note, however, was the specificity of that animus, one partly related to fears of homosexual revelation and even prosecution that *Good-bye to All That* had stirred up in Sassoon. My talk is drawn from my examination of both Sassoon’s copy of *Good-Bye to All That* in the Beinecke and the annotated copy Sassoon and Edmund Blunden created located in the Berg Collection at the New York Public Library, the latter displaying Blunden and Sassoon’s shared hostility towards Graves. I explore Sassoon’s semi-covert expression of his intensified anxiety about Graves’s public discussion of Sassoon.

Richard A. Kaye is Professor in the Department of English at Hunter College. His areas of interest include Victorian Literature and Culture, the History of the Novel, Literature of the Fin de Siècle, Modernism, World War I Literature, Psychoanalysis, Queer Theory, and Visual Culture. He is the author of *The Flirt’s Tragedy: Desire without End in Victorian and Edwardian Fiction*. He has published essays on William Makepeace Thackeray, Edith Wharton, the Brontës, Charles Dickens, George Bernard Shaw, Oscar Wilde, T. S. Eliot, D. H. Lawrence, Wallace Stevens, Henry James and Sylvia Plath. He has edited a collection of new essays on Oscar Wilde, entitled *The Picture of Dorian Gray in the Twenty-First Century*, forthcoming in 2025 from Oxford University Press. He is editor of the journal *The D. H. Lawrence Review*.

## **Robert Graves Society Sessions in Order of Delivery**

### **Sunday Book Launch and Reading**

Gregory Leadbetter (see biographical note above)

Nicola Nathan has a degree in English Literature from Oxford University, is a qualified solicitor and English teacher, and is training to become a Jungian analyst. Her poems have been published in magazines including *Poetry London*, *The Edinburgh Review*, *Ambit*, *Agenda*, *Wild Court* and *The High Window*. Her pamphlet, *Tiny*, was published by *The Next Review* in 2016. Original monologues (co-written with David Harsent) were performed at Chancellors Hall, Senate House, in February 2020, for an event celebrating the musical commissions of Patron of the Arts, Winnaretta Singer, Princesse de Polignac (1865–1943). A second pamphlet, *Hekate*, was published by Dare-Gale Press in 2022.

Paul O’Prey has edited Robert Graves’s selected poems, selected letters and essays on poetry. He gave the 2016 Robert Graves Society Talk at St John’s College Oxford and the 2017 Annual Robert Graves Society Lecture at the Wimbledon Book Festival. Paul has published three poetry pamphlets: *Fleet* (2021), *Mappa Mundi* (2023) and *Pilot Songs for a Phantom Island* (2024). Recent edited books include *First World War: Poems from the Front* (2014) and *Counter-Wave: Poetry of Rescue in the First World War* (2018). Along with Pilar Garcia, Paul runs Dare-Gale Press.

Dunstan Ward has published three collections of poetry, *Beyond Puketapu* (2015), *At This Distance* (2019), and *Departures* (2024). With Beryl Graves he edited the three-volume Carcanet edition of Robert Graves’s *Complete Poems* (1995–1999), and the Penguin Classics edition (2003). He was president of the Robert Graves Society 2000–2010, and is a former editor of *Gravesiana* (now the *Robert Graves Review*). He has written articles on Graves and edited two collections of essays, *The Art of Collaboration: Essays on Robert Graves and his Contemporaries* (2008), and *Robert Graves and the Mediterranean* (2012). In 2007 he retired as Professor of English at the University of London Institute in Paris; since 2010 he has been teaching at the Paris centre of Columbia University.

### **In Conversation**

Patrick McGuinness is a British-Belgian writer and academic. The author of two novels, a memoir and three books of poems, he teaches French and Comparative Literature at Oxford, where he is a Fellow of St Anne’s College. His most recent publications include *Real Oxford* (Seren, 2021) and *Blood Feather* (Jonathan Cape, 2023). *Ghost Stations: Essays and Branchlines*, appears in Spring 2025 from CB Editions.

Sean O’Brien’s eleventh collection, *Embark* was published by Picador in 2022. A further collection is to appear in 2026. Recent publications include the chapbook *Impasse: for Jules Maigret* (Hercules editions, 2023) and the pamphlets *Otherwise* (2023) and *Juniper* (2024), both from Dare-Gale. His work has received the Gregory, Somerset Maugham, Cholmondeley and E.M. Forster awards, as well the T.S. Eliot and (three times) Forward prizes, among others. His translations include Dante’s *Inferno*, the *Selected Poems* of Corsino Fortes and the *Collected Poems* of Abai Kayunbayuli, as well as staged versions of works by Aristophanes, Tirzo Molina and Lope de Vega. He has published novels and short stories, criticism and reviews. He is Emeritus Professor of Creative Writing at Newcastle University and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature.

### **Performance: ‘Graves’s Traces’**

Alan Cox (Actor) – Alan has had a long career on stage and screen, marking almost half a century. After starring in Stephen Spielberg’s *Young Sherlock Holmes* when he was 14, he followed his father Brian Cox in studying at LAMDA, before joining the Royal Shakespeare Company. Several productions at the National Theatre followed, before seasons at The Chichester Festival Theatre. Alan has acted in Shakespeare, Chekhov, Ibsen, Wilde, Shaw, Tom Stoppard, John Mortimer and Alan Bennett and in 2018, following a love of Robert Graves, played the anti-Byronic hero Dick Tompian in *But It Still Goes On*. His extensive stage work has also included productions in the US, *Translations* by Brian Friel on Broadway and a national tour of *The Caretaker* by Harold Pinter. His film work includes *Contagion*, *Mrs Dalloway* and *An Awfully Big Adventure*. His television includes *Not Only but Always*, *A Voyage Around My Father*, *John Adams*, and *The Gold*. Most recently Alan played Werner Heisenberg in the wartime thriller *Farm Hall* at the Theatre Royal Haymarket.

### **Robert Graves Society Talk: ‘Olympic Graves’**

Charles Mundy is President of the Robert Graves Society and Fellow of the English Association. His edition of Robert Graves’s *War Poems* is published by Seren. He is Professor of Modern Literature and Deputy Director of the Creative Industries Institute at Sheffield Hallam University.

### **Monday Reading and Book Launch**

MacGillivray (see biographical note for Kirsten Norrie, above)

Patrick McGuinness (see biographical note above)

Sean O’Brien (see biographical note above)

### **Lecture-Recital: ‘Song-Enchanted Fellows’: Robert Graves and Musical Imagination**

Described as ‘one of the leading composer-pianists of his generation’ (*Musical Opinion*), **Eric McElroy** has concertized throughout North America and Europe and been praised for both his ‘stunning virtuosity’ (*Seen and Heard International*) and ‘intellect with flair’ (*BBC Music Magazine*). A prolific composer, his works have been performed in Germany, Austria, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Eric’s 2023 debut-CD, *Tongues of Fire* (SOMM Recordings), features his own song-cycles as performed by himself and the distinguished tenor James Gilchrist and was released to critical acclaim on both sides of the Atlantic. His CD of unpublished songs by Ivor Gurney with baritone Marcus Farnworth will be released by Naxos in October 2024, and further CDs are forthcoming from SOMM in 2025. Eric holds degrees in piano performance from Washington State University, Musik und Kunst Privatuniversität der Stadt Wien, and the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire. In 2023, he completed his doctorate in musicology under the supervision of Daniel Grimley at the University of Oxford.

Hailed as ‘astonishing and luminous’ (*Bachtrack*), soprano **April Fredrick** grew up in rural Wisconsin and trained first as a violinist before studying voice at the University of Northwestern St Paul in Minnesota. She went on to study at the Royal Academy of Music, where she gained an MMus in Vocal Performance and a PhD on the late songs of Ivor Gurney, singing with the Historical Performance department under Laurence Cummings, premiering works by Academy composers, and frequently appearing as part of the Lyric Song Salon. She has recorded over a dozen CDs, including the premiere recording of John Joubert’s opera *Jane Eyre*, which was met with international acclaim. April’s first two discs on the SOMM label – Barber’s *Knoxville: Summer of 1915* with Copland’s *Songs of Emily Dickinson* with the Orchestra of the Swan and *Earth’s Call*, John Ireland’s songs with pianist

Mark Bebbington – were described as ‘humane and vulnerable’, with ‘creamy timbre and velvet strength’, (*MusicWeb*), where ‘not the slightest distance can be felt between her and the texts’ (*Gramophone*). Other recent performances Mahler’s *Symphony No. 4* with the Warsaw Philharmonic, the world premiere of Philip Saywer’s *Songs of Loss and Regret* with the English Symphony Orchestra (Nimbus Records) in Hereford Cathedral, and Strauss’s *Vier Letzte Lieder* with the Blackburn Symphony Orchestra. Upcoming work includes, Brahms’ *Requiem* and Strauss’ *Vier Letzte Lieder* with the Nottingham Harmonic Society and the world premiere of a new song-cycle by David Matthews.

**Robert Graves Society Talk: ‘Robert Graves and the Real Oxford’**

Patrick McGuinness (see biographical note above)