Robert Graves and the "Post-Catastrophic Comedy" of *But It Still Goes On*

Michel W. PHARAND

"Caricature Scenes" From Life

Robert Graves's play *But It Still Goes On* (1930) is no masterpiece: R.P. Graves calls it a rather unsatisfactory "mixture of philosophical asides and autobiographical fantasy" (R.P. Graves 142); Katherine Snipes thinks it "atrociously bad-tempered" and "cynical and vindictive" (Snipes 132); Miranda Seymour dismisses it as "a botched play" (Seymour 195). And yet under close scrutiny, the play provides a number of important insights into Graves's emotional and intellectual state during one of the most difficult periods in his life.

In his introduction to *Occupation: Writer* (1951), where it is reprinted, Graves calls his comedy "a tactful reshuffling of actual events and situations in which I had been more or less closely concerned" (x). As will be seen, the play's tangled liaisons and multiple sexual intrigues, and the central character's disgust with the world, mirror the anarchy of a time when things were falling apart for Graves, during the writing of *Good-bye to All That* (1929): on April 27, his lover Laura Riding drank Lysol and jumped from a window, breaking her pelvis and seriously damaging her spine; on May 6, Graves and his wife Nancy Nicholson separated (she left him for Geoffrey Phibbs); and in October Graves and Riding left for Mallorca. Graves was in debt, had quarreled with most of his friends, was contemptuous of English society, and still suffered from wartime "neurasthenia," today's post-traumatic stress disorder. By early 1930, he was also angry with his parents, "perhaps because they had now accepted Geoffrey's role in Nancy's life" (R.P. Graves 139). All of these disturbing events and emotions found their way into *But It Still Goes On*.

Interestingly enough, Graves did not write the play as a spontaneous literary catharsis to purge him of these domestic and psychological upheavals. It was commissioned by producer Maurice Browne, who had recently staged R.C. Sherriff's successful *Journey's End* in 1929. Publisher Jonathan Cape was hoping "for a cynical diatribe against modern mores, written in the same blackly ironic mood which had proved so successful in *Goodbye*" (Seymour 195). And though the play is replete with cynicism, when Graves sent it to Browne at the end of May 1930, it was returned with a warning that if it were produced, the far too candid treatment of Lesbianism and homosexuality would harm Graves's reputation and jeopardize future successes. So Graves decided to "tidy it a bit more" and publish it with some shorter works, including "The Shout" (R.P. Graves 144).[1]

That *But It Still Goes On* never made it to the stage is not surprising. Although his father had been, among other things, a popular dramatist (Fussell 116), Graves knew nothing about the modern theatre or dramatic techniques, had never been much of a theatergoer, and was contemptuous of "all the ingredients that went into West End successes" (Seymour-Smith 208). Ironically, some of his work is to a large extent 'dramatic' or 'theatrical.' Randall Jarrell called Graves "the true heir of Ben Jonson" because some of his poems are "inspired hostile observations, highly organized outbursts of dislike, revulsion, or rejection" (Bloom 15). Paul Fussell considers *Good-bye to All That* "a mode of theatre" (Bloom 111) whose anecdotes are "virtual playlets" (116) from a "Comedy of Humors" (111). That Graves was acutely aware of the dramatic nature of his personal experiences—his wedding to Nancy, his years in the ranks, his teaching in Cairo—is evidenced from his calling them "caricature scenes." They are "theatrical," writes Fussell, "because they present character types entirely externally, the way an audience would see them," with remarks in dialogue form (116), and because they rely on techniques associated with comic writing for the theater: astonishing coincidences, climactic multiple endings, last-minute rescues, and so on (117). These "caricature scenes" indicate that, just prior to writing his comedy, Graves was recasting 'dramatically' the seriocomic events of his life. Almost as if he knew he was about to write a work for the theatre, Graves ends *Good-bye to All That* by stating, "New characters appeared on the stage" (*Good-bye* 343).

"Comedy of Humors"

The complex plot and interlocking sexual triangles and preferences of *But It Still Goes On* rival those of many a television soap opera: David Casselis (who is gay) wants to normalize himself by marrying the innocent Dorothy Tompion, sister of Dick (whom Casselis loves). Charlotte Arden (also gay) had once tried to make Casselis fall in love with her, and although she is now in love with Dorothy, decides to marry Dick for the same reasons as Casselis's. Dick is willing (if reluctant) but rejects her when he learns the marriage is to remain unconsummated. To spite him, Charlotte marries his father, Cecil Tompion (whom she loathes). Tompion marries her in part because he is sexually voracious, in part to humiliate his son (whom he pities). When Tompion's mistress Elizabetta learns of his engagement, she tries to shoot him—this despite her attempted seduction of his son Dick and her affair with Pritchard, literary rival of both Dick and Tompion. Five months later, when Dorothy discovers that her husband David prefers men, she shoots him. Charlotte, still spiteful and now pregnant by Tompion, commits suicide, but before dying reveals (falsely) that the child's real father is Dick. After Dick and the others humiliate Tompion, he shoots himself. Dick tells the police that Tompion had confessed to killing Casselis (to protect his daughter's honor).

The religious and morally orthodox Dorothy gets away with murder (literally) and looks forward to raising her father's rescued child as her own.

Although this is a convoluted play, *But It Still Goes On* is also rather simple because Graves uses some recognizable stock character types of the theatre. Tompion is a variation on the *senex*: an "elderly parent" but also "a disgusting old satyr" (312) whose obsession is seduction. With his "unpleasant voice, decisive gestures, florid complexion" (221), he is also something of an *alazòn*" the deceiving or self-deceived braggart or pedant. The beautiful Elizabetta is the *meretrix*, the flirtatious "harlot" whose tastes are expensive and paramours numerous. A doctor fresh out of medical school, Dorothy is the *virgo*, a virgin so naïve that she completely fails to understand Charlotte's confession that she is a Lesbian and Casselis a homosexual. (Ironically, she marries Casselis and remains a virgin.) The Welsh poet Richard Pritchard—whose name may echo the kind of poetry he writes— is something of a *nebbish*, an ineffectual nonentity. Casselis claims that "He's got the delusion that he's the only poet living who's really good" (223). The central character is Dick, Graves's mouthpiece, described as "most self-contained": nothing "shakes him out of his composure" (213). He has affinities to the *vice* of morality plays, the mischief-maker or trickster who possesses a sinister as well as a comic side. He reminds us of Alceste, Molière's misanthrope who rails against his selfish and dishonest peers. It is more difficult to find dramatic precedents for Casselis and Charlotte. The romantic and sentimental Casselis is described as "disarmingly dishonest" (230), while Charlotte, on the other hand, is sophisticated and pragmatic—but also ruthless. Although they are not young—she is twenty-seven, he is thirty-eight—they might be called the play's *inamorato* and *inamorata*, given their quest for emotional fulfillment, or more precisely for the kind of relationship expected by their society: a heterosexual one. But their own "comedy" of humors ends tragically.

"Everyone's *Memento Mori*"

The earlier plot summary cannot not do justice to situations absurd enough—and bleak enough—to rival those in Beckett and Ionesco. There is a streak of dark humor running through this comedy, almost a death-wish. People are bent on shooting at one another at the slightest provocation: to illustrate for Casselis the after-effects of the Great War, Dick takes his Webley and fires at his father; when Elizabetta learns of Tompion's engagement, she fires the gun at him. In fact, Dick's revolver is a prominent symbol in the play. "It's like a human skull or coffin," he tells Casselis, "that holy men in the middle-ages used to keep about the place to remind them of death" (220). Dick himself used it only four times during the war: to kill a pack-mule and a German, to shoot at one of his own men (to prod him out of the trench), and to attempt suicide that same night, when

he found his man dead in the trench: "A shell burst just as I pulled the trigger and it spoilt my aim" (221).[2]

The action of the play stems from Dick's decision to instigate what he calls "a romping elimination of the unfit" by "putting [his Webley] into circulation as everyone's *memento mori*." He dubs his scheme "a Post-Catastrophic comedy" (227) and sets it into motion by implying to his father that it was Pritchard who fired at him, which leads Tompion to believe that Pritchard is jealous of his literary success. Dick sends the gun to his father in the guise of a peace offering from Pritchard, who had read Tompion's flattering review of his new book. When Pritchard arrives, furious at Tompion's mock-praise, he easily accepts the Webley from Dick, who also tells him that Elizabetta is a great admirer of his poetry, thus setting the stage for their affair. The revolver eventually finds its way into the hands of Dorothy, Elizabetta, and Tompion again—resulting in one murder, one attempted murder, and one suicide.

Despite these macabre events, *But It Still Goes On* is more than mere "Post-Catastrophic comedy" or black humor. Graves is writing what is called "high comedy," whose purpose is to arouse "thoughtful laughter by exhibiting the inconsistencies and incongruities of human nature and by displaying the follies of social manners" (Holman 229). The play allows Graves to vent his frustrations with a number of serious issues: the aftershocks of the Great War (whose conscience is Dick); mediocre poets (with Tompion and Pritchard the main targets); and the varieties of sexual desire (mostly those of Casselis and Charlotte).

"The True Catastrophe"

Graves's "reshuffling" of his chaotic personal history is not so "tactful" that one cannot recognize his originals. His mouthpiece is Dick Tompion, like Graves a young poet and ex-soldier. The choice of "Dick" is interesting in light of Graves's admission the previous year in *Good-bye* that while at the Charterhouse School, "I fell in love with a boy three years younger than myself, who was exceptionally intelligent and fine-spirited. Call him Dick" (*Good-bye* 48). (Moreover, Siegfried Sassoon's *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man* (1928) has a Dick Tiltwood.[3]) When he is not busy scheming, Dick Tompion is explaining his worldview to his old army friend David Casselis, the homosexual architect "evidently modelled to a considerable extent" upon Sassoon (R.P. Graves 143).[4] David is "well-built, good-looking, nervous, tall, fastidious, ironic"—and in the early draft of the play "a repressed homosexual."[5]

The play takes its title from the expression Dick uses as a leitmotif to express his revulsion with the modern world. Minutes into the first scene, Dick stops with both hands the globe he has been revolving: "The extraordinary thing to me, David, is: that it's finished and ended and over, but

it still goes on … like the watch in the pocket of a dead man." He claims that "the bottom has fallen out of [the world]. The Sunday journalists and the politicians and the Church of course all pretend that it hasn't, and everyone else plays up to them. But it's no good. It's finished; except that it still goes on" (217). He asserts that "no public recognition has been made of what is after all the most important human catastrophe that's ever happened" (218), although not the Great War, which was merely "a diversion to distract public attention from the all-important loss. The War is always made to account for every remarkable change in human affairs that has happened since the true catastrophe. The pretense is that the War was only a temporary morbidity, and that these changes are morbid hang-overs from the war and so only temporary too" (219). The war was "the loudest noise humanly possible, a counter-noise to the noise the bottom made falling out of things" (220). He resumes this line of thought at the beginning of Act II when he refers to doctors, soldiers, politicians, and the Church as "the four prime pre-catastrophic professions—the four that abandoned themselves to an orgy of usefulness during the war to prove that they still had firm ground under their feet" (254).

Act III is equally polemic, with Dick explaining that "… it's impossible for a proper person to feel the world as a necessary world—an intelligible world in which there's any hope or fear for the future—a world worth bothering about—or, if he happens to be a poet, a world worth writing for—a world in which there's any morality left to bother about, but his own personal morality: *that* gets more and more strict, of course" (293).[6] He goes on to say that "…it was a stupid war, it came too late, it wasn't thorough enough, and several proper people were killed in it along with the unnecessaries. … Now there's nothing to rebel against or be conservative about" (293, 295). The play comes full circle with Dick repeating what he had told Casselis in Act I—"The extraordinary thing is that it still goes on" (315). In a visual reminder of his stopping the revolving globe, Dick circles the air with his hand and continues to do so as the curtain falls.

What Graves is trying to express through Dick Tompion is that there was already something rotten in English society before the war, that the war must not be made a scapegoat for the way things are now. The real tragedy is not so much the war itself but rather what "still goes on": the failure of the Establishment (the press, the clergy, the government, the professional classes, the military) to recognize the futility of life in a post-catastrophic and amoral world; in short, the foolishness of "still going on" as if nothing had happened. Indeed, the war "still went on" in "morbid hang-overs" for Graves himself long after the fighting ended: he continued to suffer from "neurasthenia," paranoia, nightmares, and hallucinations for years. Although Dick does not exhibit any of these symptoms, neither is he mentally stable. In his polemics about " proper people," which appear related to his plans for the "elimination of the unfit," he is something of a nihilist. And like his famous predecessor, Turgenev's Bazarov, he fails to counter his destructive tendencies

with anything life-affirming. The only thing he can do is put his Webley into circulation and wait for the bang.

"A Belated Tennyson"

Graves's second target (literally) is the popular poet Cecil Tompion, "a savage caricature" of his father (R.P. Graves 142). Poet Alfred Perceval Graves, a leader of the Celtic revival in Ireland and president of the Irish Literary Society, becomes in the play a wealthy member of the literary establishment whose work is facile but widely-read (while his son's poems are difficult to understand and published only in limited editions—with limited sales). Everything about Tompion is artificial and calculated: his work-schedule is rigid (3500 words a day) and his letters "carefully, carefully written for an eventual *Life and Letters of*" (214). Charlotte's younger sister Jane calls him "a belated Tennyson who hasn't been able to improve on Tennyson and so would like to be a Byron. But he's ashamed to be a Byron openly, because he's a Tennyson" (302). We are given a sample of Tompion's work when his noisy love-making with Charlotte leads Dick to taunt him by quoting from his latest volume, about the "cinders of middle age …[f]anned and about to burst into the hottest and most devouring flame of all" (280).

Dick's work, on the other hand, is more challenging: "Of course, he's *difficult*," says Jane, "one can't read him lazily like one can Mr. … well—say Richard Pritchard's poetry" (278). This echoes ideas expounded by Graves and Riding some years earlier in A *Survey of Modernist Poetry* (1927), where they defended modern poetry against charges of obscurity and instead blamed the reader, "who confuses simplicity and easy intelligibility with clarity and is unwilling to make the intellectual and imaginative effort demanded of great poetry" (Somerville 109). If Tompion is a Tennyson, Dick is perhaps a Hopkins or a Cummings, poets who passed the Graves-Riding acid test (while Pound, Eliot, and Yeats failed).

Charlotte counters Jane's remark with a charge that also has its roots in the early days of the Graves-Riding collaboration. She asks: "But what single poem of his [Dick] will be found in a popular anthology a hundred years from now?" (278) In 1928, Graves and Riding had published *A Pamphlet Against Anthologies*, where they condemned the pernicious influence of published anthologies and claimed that, as far as the reader is concerned, "the personal taste of the anthologist becomes … a judgement of the nature of English poetry." Moreover, "the taste or idiosyncrasy of the anthologist is certain to distort both the history of poetry and the reputation of individual poets. …Worse, the shape of very popular anthologies …may subvert the nature of poetry by encouraging the writing of poems which seem designed to fit such an anthology," thus fostering a corrupt taste in poetry even among poets (Somerville 110). Tompion may be guilty of much more than trying to

improve on Tennyson! The answer to Charlotte's question is that not a single of Dick's poems is likely to be anthologized, whereas Tompion's mediocre work would probably be deemed worthy of a popular anthology.

The father-son literary rivalry is exacerbated by a generation gap that seems unbridgeable. To Dick, Tompion is a sham whose morals are as suspect as his poems. For Tompion, his son's "literary acrobatics" and critical views are "absurd" (278). He berates Dick as typical of his generation: "No manners. No respect. Stupendous conceit" (257); "They don't know what Passion is when they love any more than they know what Style is when they write. … They think that [having fought in the war] gives 'em a right to sag for the rest of their lives. No sense of drama, no religious enthusiasm, no strong religious doubts even. Just nothing. And nine out of ten are perverts" (259). Ironically, Tompion's indignation is also found in the reaction of his model, Graves's father, upon reading *But It Still Goes On*: A.P. Graves recorded in his diary that the play was "blasphemous, brutal and even bestial with wrong sex attractions" (quoted in R.P. Graves 154).[7] It remains to be seen how accurate his assessment was.

"Wrong Sex Attractions"

The third strand in *But It Still Goes On* is the treatment of sexual relationships and marriage. Although Lesbianism and homosexuality are discussed at length, it is only with euphemisms, such as "obsession" (245, 265), "temperament" and "psychology" (229), "persuasion" (231), "that way" (240), "his trouble" (263); or with allusions to Casselis as "the sort of man who can never be in love with any girl" (232). However, Graves was far less circumspect in the first draft of the play. In the published version, Casselis tells Charlotte, "I got in with a set of aesthetes" (244), but the draft reads, "I got in with the homosexual set there;" Charlotte's reference to "you men-victims" (248) reads, "you men homosexuals;" and whereas Tompion refers to his son's generation as "perverts" (259), the first draft calls it "rotten with the homosexual taint" (SIU). One imagines an even more outraged A.P. Graves, had his son published the play without those emendations.

Despite the prevailing social stigma of homosexuality that forced Graves to attenuate his dialogue, being gay is portrayed in *But It Still Goes On* as unacceptable yet nonetheless instinctual rather than socially-constructed. When Charlotte tells Casselis she knows he is gay, he replies: "[I]t's the way one's born," "it's no crime—just a misfortune," although he is not convinced about there being two types, "the congenital and the acquired. That's what's usually said. But I don't know" (241). Casselis admits that at school he was "pious, not to say priggish" but also "minxish and flirtatious like a Society belle. I kept my innocence—but only technically" (244). This profession of innocence is similar to Graves's own admission of public school chastity. In *Good-bye*, he

famously wrote that many boys in English preparatory and public schools never recover from the "perversion" of despising women, admitting that "I only recovered by a shock at the age of twenty-one," a sentence deleted from the revised 1957 edition.[8] "For every one born homosexual, at least ten permanent pseudo-homosexuals are made by the public school system: nine of these ten as honourably chaste and sentimental as I was" (*Good-bye* 19).[9] Despite Casselis's distinction between "born" and "pseudo" homosexuals, he ascribes his own sexual orientation to biology. Even Dick sides with the biologists, asking Charlotte:"Why the Devil aren't you content to remain as God made you?" (267)

Despite their natural tendencies, Charlotte and Casselis are determined to conform, and their choice of partners is governed by similar principles: Casselis wants Dorothy because she is anti-sentimental and "rather boyish-looking" (246), claiming, "I really believe I'm going to fall in love with her"(246). In the same way, Charlotte tells Dick she would get accustomed to him—"the disgust will wear off"(265)—if she could only fall in love with him. There is something naïve and sentimental, and certainly unrealistic and clinical, about what Charlotte calls their "experiment." It is all rather too symmetrical: Casselis finds Dick too domineering, Charlotte finds Dorothy too foolish; Casselis will try to love Dorothy because she is Dick's sister, Charlotte will try to love Dick because he is Dorothy's brother. "Our only hope of becoming normal members of Society …" (248), says Casselis. Charlotte, however, calls their state "humiliating" and a "misfortune," exclaiming: "God, I would give my soul to be in love with Dick in the way I am with Dorothy" (248).

But in the end, biology triumphs: Charlotte's continued loathing of Cecil and Dick culminates in her suicide, and Casselis's unwillingness to consummate his marriage, coupled with his ongoing interest in men, result in his getting shot by his wife. Their "experiment" in becoming "normal members of Society" has failed.

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If sexual orientations are a source of chaos, so is marriage. Casselis defends it as "a social convenience" (253) and "a sort of business partnership" (255), whereas Dick considers it "an enemy of romance" (255). For Dick, however, marriage includes sex, and when he sees how repulsive Charlotte finds her first kiss and realizes that the union will be Platonic, he rejects her, asserting that love and marriage are "dead-world" ideas (265). Charlotte gives him until midnight to have her, or she will give herself to the first man who will. She vindictively decides on Tompion simply because he is the man Dick most dislikes in the world.

Ironically, only the flirtatious Elizabetta seems to take the idea of marriage seriously. She had appeared in Tompion's *Sussex Cycle* as Lavinia, Phebe, and Esmeralda, but what she really wants is to be his wife, not his muse. So when Dick tells her about his father's fiancée, she arrives wielding the Webley (taken from Pritchard's pocket). When she learns Tompion had vowed never to marry

her—while for years assuring her that he would—she shoots at him, but thanks to Dick's intervention, she misses. Her rage abates rather quickly when he convinces her that Pritchard is the better man. Dorothy is so furious with everyone that she decides to keep the revolver herself.

Five months go by and Dorothy ascribes her unconsummated marriage to "a nervous failure" (288) in Casselis. Moreover, she desperately wants children. Charlotte's marriage is no better: Jane tells Dick that one of Charlotte's unposted love letters to him shows that she is thinking about him sexually. "Sex is fear," Dick tells Dorothy and Casselis. "Loneliness sometimes; that's fear. Or dullness; that's another." During the war, "Fear filled the brothels of France. …Those were rabbit days. … Emblem of cowardice, emblem of sexuality, emblem of prolific breeding. Copopulation!" (294)

The "elimination of the unfit" will take care of it. The play's dénouement is swift, tidy—and implausible. When Dorothy arrives minutes after shooting her husband—who "just *triumphed* in his filth" (303) when confronted with the letters she found in his pocket-book—Jane and Dick immediately provide her with an alibi. Meanwhile, Charlotte has thrown herself over the banisters and will spend thirty-six hours in horrendous pain before dying, her baby saved by Dorothy.[10] Tompion arrives to announce that Charlotte has told him the child is Dick's; he picks up the Webley and is about to shoot his son when Jane comes out from behind the curtains (where she was hiding) and tells everyone how Tompion had tried to make "violent love" (309) to her while his wife was dying.[11] Tompion goes into the bathroom and shoots himself. Dick matter-of-factly telephones the police and tells them his father has confessed to killing Casselis. All's well that ends well.

"I Can Write Detachedly"

Or does it? Was Dick's "elimination of the unfit" justified? Tompion, Charlotte and Casselis have been eliminated, but were they "unfit"? Their violent deaths stem from their inability to come to terms with their sexual urges: Charlotte did not overcome her disgust with men, Casselis did not get over his attraction for them, and Tompion was destroyed by his indiscriminate sexual appetite. Ironically, those who survive are not exactly "proper people": Pritchard remains a mediocre poet, Elizabetta an opportunist, Dick a manipulative hypocrite responsible for much of the damage, and Dorothy a murderer. However, as this is not Greek tragedy, there is no nemesis. Besides, most of the characters in *But It Still Goes On* are cads, and none really deserves our sympathy.

"I deny any further interest in great occasions, great men, great emotions, so I can write detachedly," Graves wrote to Sassoon while composing the play (letter of 20 February 1930, O'Prey 201). Here Graves sounds like his alter ego Dick: "I've no grudge any more. I'm simply

quit, after a long enough period of conventional usefulness. …[a] rebel's someone who wants to reform things. I don't" (296-97). In *But It Still Goes On*, Robert Graves's detachment takes the form of what Anthony Burgess called "bumptiousness and indiscretion" (Bloom 179), and as we have seen, the play has enough of it to offend everyone. But Graves's purpose was not so much to offend or even "reform things," but simply to show the English what a farcical shambles their "post-catastrophic" society had become, and how that catastrophe, in all its absurdity, still goes on.

(This essay is a revised version of a paper presented at The International Robert Graves Conference, Oxford University, England, on 12 August 1995.)

Notes

[1] The book was published in November 1930, but financially it did badly in America and only went into a small second edition in England (Seymour-Smith 211).

[2] Graves's real-life near-death experience occurred when he was so seriously wounded (on 20 July 1916) that his name appeared on the official casualty list. "I must have been at the full stretch of my stride to escape emasculation" (*Good-bye* 218).

[3] Graves's "Dick" was George Johnstone. He met the real Tiltwood, Lieutenant David Thomas, in November 1915. Sassoon called Graves's review of *Memoirs* "needlessly ungracious and egotistical" (letter of 7 February 1930, O'Prey 199). Sassoon was nine years older than Graves; Casselis is eight years older than Dick.

[4] While Graves was writing the play, Sassoon was accusing him in long letters of distorting the truth in *Good-bye*. Sassoon made Cape omit two passages from *Good-bye* before it was published. See O'Prey 196-209.

[5] *But It Still Goes On* in *But It Still Goes On: An Accumulation* (Jonathan Cape, 1930): 217. All quotations are from this edition. The early draft is in *The Robert Graves Papers*, Southern Illinois University archives (SIU).

[6] R.P. Graves writes that many of Dick's ideas—such as this one—are "pure Riding" (R.P. Graves 142).

[7] Graves's mother claimed the play "gives Nancy's adultery fully away" (quoted in R.P. Graves 154), an allusion to Elizabetta leaving Tompion for Pritchard as a parallel to Nancy leaving Graves for Phibbs. For the controversy surrounding A.P. Graves's autobiography, *To Return to All That* (published on 14 July 1930), see R.P. Graves 148-55.

[8] Seymour-Smith claims that Graves censored the line "only because he knew it to be an oversimplification" (Seymour-Smith 73).

[9] During his convalescence at Somerville College, Graves "fell in love" with a nurse. "My heart had remained whole, if numbed, since Dick's disappearance from it, yet I felt difficulty in adjusting myself to the experience of woman love" (*Good-bye* 248).

[10] Graves's sister Rosaleen was a doctor. When Laura was taken to Charing Cross Hospital, Rosaleen's influence ensured the best possible treatment. But Laura's behavior there drove Rosaleen "to write of her as a borderline mental case" (Seymour 173 and 184).

[11] Tompion's suicide might have seemed more plausible had Graves not altered his early draft. The published version reads, "this disgusting old satyr came into my bedroom and tried to play" (312), but the first draft reads, "this disgusting old father of yours tried to rape me" (SIU).

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