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The Housman Society Journal

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Chairman's Notes

The Society has pleasure in enclosing with this volume our latest publication, *Housman and Heine: A Neglected Relationship*. It comes with our compliments and we trust that you will get much pleasure from browsing its pages. It has always been well known that Heine was one of the main influences on A.E. Housman's poetry, but there has been surprisingly little written on this subject, so Jeremy Bourne's book, which he has been working on for a long time, is doubly welcome. By placing a selection of Heine's best-known poems alongside those of Housman which have a similar connection or theme, he proves the rationale of the book very clearly. The translations, specially created by our member Professor Gaston Hall, are remarkable in that they echo so well the metre, rhyme, and emotional content of Heine's poems. The original German, the translation, and a selected Housman poem follow each other and the book is liberally illustrated by Robin Shaw's evocative drawings. There are also chapters by Linda Hart, Professor Henry Woudhuysen and Jeremy Bourne himself which explain the historical background, and in particular the likelihood that Housman would have known and loved German verse from a very early age. The book contains a brief chronology for each poet, as well as a select bibliography and an index.

Shortly after the last Journal had gone to print our prestigious event in Poets House in New York took place and it was good that a number of members from the other side of the Atlantic attended as well as committee members Robin and Kate Shaw who had done all the liaising to bring it about. Thanks of course go to them as well as Christopher Ricks and Archie Burnett who dazzled the audience with their respective talks.

Last year's Schools Poetry Reading Competition expanded to include Bromsgrove's Middle schools (covering the ages of 8 to 13 in the Bromsgrove area) and, although entrants from only four schools materialised on the day, it was a start on which we hope to build this year. In the Sixth Form category the some readers reached an excellent standard and it was very good to be able to present the Housman Cup to the best overall winner. The cup (a replica of the wine cooler the students of UCL gave to A.E.H. in 1911), which was given by Raymond Grove's family in his memory in 1999, has languished unawarded since the demise of the Society's Poetry Competition some ten years ago but this year it has pride of place in North Bromsgrove High School's Trophy case.

Our Annual General Meetings are held in the Chairman's House so tend to be friendly affairs but that does not stop some members asking testing

questions of the Treasurer. However he is so on top of the accounts that nothing phases him and his achievement in completing the year's accounts in time for them to be sent out before the AGM is impressive. Last year saw an increase in the Society's net worth of £1,300, a sum which will be of value in helping pay for the ambitious future plans of the committee.

The first big expense will be the Housman and Heine book which was always going to have a very limited sale; yet we felt that it was one that all members should have the opportunity of reading so are giving it as a Christmas present. Other expenses will include a subsidy for next October's Society weekend, a reprint of *Three Bromsgrove Poets* and of course our sponsorship of the Hay *Name and Nature of Poetry* lecture. We also hope to sponsor an event at the exciting new Much Wenlock Poetry Festival, which, being in the heart of 'Housman Country', deserves our support. We have also just had the capital outlay of reprinting some of our greetings cards as well as producing two new ones. These I am glad to say are selling well and contribute significantly to the Society's income.

The Commemoration of Housman's birthday in Bromsgrove has become quite an established local occasion and, with our new Member of Parliament being the guest of the day, there seemed to be more councillors present than usual. After retiring for a buffet lunch in the Council Chamber the event concluded with the winner of our Schools Poetry Reading Competition, Daniel Edwards from North Bromsgrove High School, reciting the two poems with which he won the competition in November. His Housman poem was *Grenadier*, Number V from *Last Poems*, was followed by *Nothing* by the "performance poet" John Cooper Clarke - who first became famous during the punk rock era of the late 1970s.

The story has been well told in the Newsletter of the Marlborough Edition of *A Shropshire Lad* but it was very good to have the opportunity of hearing at the Ludlow Commemoration Paul Griffin's account of how the edition of 2009 (limited to ten copies) came into being. We also heard his story of how he wrote as a 16 year-old to the 87 year-old Laurence Housman with a request to write a preface to the edition and received a reply which said that he was "sufficiently interested and pleased by your proposal to print a special edition of *A Shropshire Lad* with fine paper and binding, to earn a copy by writing at your request the enclosed preface".

It is hard to believe that our sponsored lecture at Hay on *The Name and Nature of Poetry* at the Hay Festival of Literature was the thirteenth in the series.

Our 2011 lecturer was Ruth Padel, the latest in a long line of distinguished speakers, and her interpretation must have been one of the best, for throughout she used A.E.H.'s original lecture as a basis for her own, which made it especially relevant to the occasion. There was another excellent attendance and members will certainly enjoy reading it later in these pages.

I do hope that the majority of members heard the Radio Four documentary about A.E. Housman which was broadcast on 1st September, for it seemed to me to be an exceptionally good one. Its origins were interesting in that in a previous programme the presenter was making he was so surprised to find the number of young poets who had all cited Housman as a primary influence, that he decided to make a programme solely devoted to the author of *A Shropshire Lad*. I am hoping to make a CD available for private circulation but have not yet reached agreement on how best to do this.

For some while now we have been concerned in the committee about planning for succession, particularly as the member base in Bromsgrove is surprisingly weak and there is a shortage of obvious replacements for key officers and committee members (especially the Chairman!) in the Society when they reach an age when they feel they are no longer able to carry out their duties. Communication by e-mail makes life much easier than it used to be but one still has to have a centre of operations and meetings to plan the activities of the Society – and inevitably that place is Bromsgrove. I intend putting this topic on the agenda of the Annual General Meeting next year so that the membership can share our concerns and hopefully come up with ideas that will ensure the continuing health of the Society. From the outside it would appear that with a thriving Newsletter, a Journal that shows that interest in Housman is as great as ever and an annual programme of events that is considerably more than most societies offer that all was well. The reality is somewhat different with too much responsibility resting on too few shoulders.

I pay tribute to the committee for their loyalty and skills again – as an example of the talents we have I ask you to look again at three of the articles in the last Newsletter that struck me as being of great interest and exceptionally well written. This Journal seems to be another excellent and varied edition – though I have to say that the Greek accents in Neil Hopkinson's article did cause us some problems! – and our thanks go to David Butterfield for finding time to fit it all in on top of his busy university schedule.

The Housman Lecture

The Name and Nature of Poetry

by

Ruth Padel

Delivered at the Hay Festival of Literature on 1st June 2011

At the beginning of Tom Stoppard's play *The Invention of Love*, A.E. Housman has just died. His shade asks Charon why they are hanging round on the bank of the Styx. "Are we waiting for someone?"

Someone else is coming, says Charon. He has two fares today, "A poet and a scholar, I was told."

"I think that must be me," says Housman.

"Both of them?" "I'm afraid so."

"It sounded like two different people." "I know," says our man.

I'd like to thank the Housman Society very warmly for inviting me to give this lecture, not only for the honour but for the opportunity to explore what it means to relate the poet to the classical scholar in a single self. I want to talk about two aspects of one self, aspects so different that they sound like two different people. I have spent the last twenty years trying to fuse the classical scholar and the poet in my work but the very title of Housman's famous lecture speaks of twoness. 'Name *and* Nature' reminds us that how a thing or person is seen from the outside may differ from its essence.

I'd like to suggest that a sense of twoness, and an interest in making sure that these two *stay* different, not only powers Housman's lecture but also says something important about his poetry. More widely I'd like to ask, what does a desire to keep these things apart say about the ways in which this thing called 'poetry' sits in all of us, poets, critics, scholars and readers?

A reader is what Housman claims to be in his lecture. He denies being a literary critic. He reads, he says, for pleasure, and is offering for his lecture mere personal opinions. These include some claims about poetry with which many of us would agree, but also some pretty far-out ones. Poetry is so entwined with who you are that your opinions about it say as much about you as they do about *ars poetica*.

Many poets today when asked to talk about ‘poetry’ tend to wriggle: they would rather talk about poems. Maybe there are many different ways of experiencing this thing we call ‘poetry’, and few of us experience them all. I once had supper at a table with a bunch of strongly-scented freesias in the middle. There were nine people present, and we discovered that though we all smelt the freesias, we smelt different flowers. Four could only smell the white and purple ones, five only smelt the yellow, red and orange ones. We all experienced the scent as overpowering but couldn’t smell all the flowers.

Maybe there are people who smell all freesias but they weren’t at the table that night, and we might take the different colours those flowers can be as an image for the different roles poetry can play in one person’s psyche and life. The name is the same. But what you think the nature of poetry is will depend on *your* nature.

Housman starts out by saying that “the function of poetry is to transfuse emotion not to transmit thought”. Robert Frost, fifteen years younger but still a twentieth-century poet with his feet in nineteenth-century Romanticism, said a poem “begins as a lump in the throat, a sense of wrong, a homesickness, a loneliness.” I think most poets would agree with Frost when he says that a poem “is never a thought to begin with” and “the freshness of a poem belongs to its not having been thought out”.

You write a poem to discover thought, not to explain it. Why write a poem if you already know what you want to say?

Philip Larkin, born in 1922, sixty years after Housman, also puts emotion first. “Poetry should begin with emotion in the poet,” he says, “and end with the same emotion in the reader. The poem is simply the instrument of transference.”

Trans is “across”. What with “transfuse”, “transmit” and “transference”, these poets all feel that something is coming across some space between poem and reader. The question is, what?

This is where Larkin brings in the intellect. “A poem isn’t *only* emotion,” he says. “You’ve got the emotion side, let’s call it the fork side, and you cross it with the knife side, the side that wants to sort it out, chop it up, arrange it and either say thank you for it or sod the universe for it.”

Fork and knife, emotion and thought, are two different things working together. But Housman, who in his scholarship is master of the knife, wants to keep intellect out of poetry. No sharp thought or chopped-up arranging: he wants poetry to “set up in the reader’s sense a vibration corresponding to what

was felt by the writer”. Poetry written with the intelligence alone he calls sham.

There was a lot of sham poetry about in the eighteenth century, he says, when “Man ceased to live from the depths of his nature; lighted the candles and drew down the blind to shut out that patroness of poets, the moon.” This shutting out resulted, he says, in “pseudo-poetic diction” – solidly flashy ornament, which readers came to identify as “poetic” but was actually both “pompous and poverty-stricken... a thick, stiff, unaccommodating medium interposed between the writer and his work. A deadening of language which deadened perception.”

Against this deadness and stiffness he pits metaphors of flow and fluidity which he identifies with true poetry. But we might contrast his sense of flow with the dryness of his scholarly work; and might even remember that classics itself has an inbuilt twoness.

Classical scholars tend to divide into Hellenists and Latinists. I spent twenty years writing a PhD and two books on Greek poetry: that’s nothing to Housman’s lifetime on Latin. Housman was superb at Greek too, but the two related languages operate rather differently and the language in which Western philosophy and science began, as well as drama and lyric, was Greek.

In keeping things apart, Greek has a unique facility. It makes you alert to oppositional thought, and prepares the reader for contrast, by two tiny words. The first word *men* – whose clumsy English translation is ‘on the one hand’ – signals a coming comparison. It always follows a keyword, and looks forward to the even smaller word *de*, ‘on the other hand’, which follows the contrasting word. This contrast can be implicit rather than overt. A famous fragment of Sappho translated by many poets including Housman himself (in *More Poems* X-XI, 1936) and Lawrence Durrell, runs in Greek (transliterated):

Dedûke men hâ selânâ
Kai Pleiades; mesai de
Nuktes; para d’erchet’ ôra –
Egô de monâ kateudô.

Translated literally, this is:

It has set (*on the one hand*) the moon;
and the Pleiades. Midnight;
the watch (or the hour) goes by.
I (*on the other hand*) lie alone.

The *men* and the *de* point the contrast between “I” and the happily “set” (or sunken) moon; between an outside world which “goes by” in its own calm normality and an “I” stuck in sleeplessness. Anyone failing to sleep in the middle of the night knows this contrast is total. But what the words actually contrast with “I” is the verb “it has set”. The real contrast is not spelt out.

Men and *de* help to make Greek one of the most intellectually flexible and exploratory of languages. But Latin is the great condenser. It is just as subtle (no one can be subtler than Virgil) but in a totally different way. Latin goes for economy and terseness. It has no articles, no *the* or *a*. From a Hellenist’s perspective, Latin feels closed while Greek feels open.

I don’t want to over-stress this, but maybe it is not coincidence that Latin is the language Housman chose to work in. When Yeats caricatures scholars who cough in the ink on the page while they work on the philology of a love poet, it is Latin scholars he goes for. They

 Edit and annotate the lines
 That young men, tossing on their beds,
 Rhymed out in love’s despair
 To flatter beauty’s ignorant ear.

Lord, says, Yeats,

 - what would they say
 Did their Catullus walk their way?

The kind of scholarship Housman did was not even editing and annotating but something drier still: working out the correct readings of an original text through identifying the different families of manuscripts copied and recopied over centuries. Textual not emotional transmission. He began by working on the manuscripts of Propertius, a love poet in the Catullan tradition, but switched to Manilius, a Roman poet who wrote five books about astronomy which was what we call astrology: Manilius was the first to record the use of astrological ‘houses’. Housman did not think much of Manilius as a writer. He told the poet Robert Bridges not to waste his time on Manilius. “He writes on astronomy and astrology without knowing either.” What Housman cared about was the textual recension. He published his edition over twenty-seven years, from 1903 to 1930 in five volumes. In the preface to one, he pours scorn on editors who dismiss a reading which does not fit their theory of the dating of the manuscript and suggests it may be later than they’d like:

An editor of no judgment, perpetually confronted with a couple of MSS to choose from, cannot but feel in every fibre of his being that he is a donkey between two bundles of hay. What shall he do? Leave criticism to critics, you may say, and betake himself to any honest trade for which he is less unfit. But he prefers a more flattering solution: he confusedly imagines that if one bundle of hay is removed he will cease to be a donkey.

All this sounds dry as dust – diamond, abrasive dust. But this life labour had a dedicatee which suggests the opposite of dryness: Moses Jackson, the totally straight friend who disengaged himself from Housman when he realized the intensity of Housman's feelings towards him, who married and went abroad to live and die in another country, and who is behind much of *A Shropshire Lad*. Housman knew Jackson would never read what he had written. He would have identified with Yeats's image of love's despair, rhyming "to flatter beauty's ignorant ear." But he would thoroughly have enjoyed Catullus walking his way and in later years he fell in love with a Venetian gondolier.

Housman thinks good poetry needs two things. One is truth of emotion. Most of today's practicing poets would agree. If you are not absolutely clear that you are being true to your own feeling, and your own imagination, the poem won't work. The second is natural diction – and we would agree with that too. So would Frost, who made his poems out of everyday speech rhythms and plain language.

But at some point a poet of today will start to pull away from Housman's claims – maybe when he says that poems have "other things" in them as well as poetry. Readers believe, he says, that they are admiring poetry when in fact they are admiring something "they like better". Wordsworth's "fine insights" "are distinct from his poetry. Most readers react to his ideas rather than his "thrilling utterance which pierces the heart and brings tears to the eyes"; and ideas, he says, are not poetry. "No truth is too profound or exalted to be expressed in prose." All prose writers would agree with that. "If what you want to do is state an idea," he says, "do it in prose!" Poets would agree – for a poem with an overt message lets poetry down, as well as letting its message down. As Keats said, no one likes a poem that seems to have designs on you. However important *what* you are saying, it has got to be good as a poem first. "Poetry is its own reality," says Seamus Heaney. Whatever the outside pressures, political or moral, your "ultimate fidelity must be to the artistic event."

So we are with Housman on all these truths – but where he is going with them?

Some ideas, he says, “lend themselves more kindly to poetical expression” than others. But what happens is that they “receive from ‘poetry’ an enhancement which glorifies and transfigures them”. So unless you wield the knife and do some sharp critical analysis, you don’t realize they are actually separate from the poetry which is transfiguring them. “Poetry is not the thing said but a way of saying it; not the sentiment but the words in which the idea is clothed.”

He praises Blake’s “pure” poetry which he says does not say anything intellectually clear or important: Blake is “poetry neat or adulterated with so little meaning that nothing except poetic emotion is perceived and matters”.

This is where I part company with him. Housman says that poetry combines language and intellectual content but it is better not to “draw the meaning out”. He also quotes Coleridge: “Poetry gives most pleasure when only generally and not perfectly understood.”

I don’t believe a good poem can ever be “perfectly” understood. I think understanding belongs to the reader, that readers are different and that with a good poem each reader can always go further. The fact that no one will ever reach the end of understanding it is part of the pleasure it offers. I think Housman’s claim that it is “better” not to draw the meaning out (as if ‘meaning’ were an inflammation, and when you poultice the wound you can get rid of this painful inconvenient thing called thought, leaving behind pure poetry) is both untrue and says something important about him – and what poetry was for him.

I stick up for sense as well as sound; for meaning and ideas as well as words and music. I think they are all in the mix of what we call poetry. The name “poetry” comes from the Greek verb *poieô*, “I make”, equivalent to French *je fais*. A *poietês* is a “maker” and makers work with many fabrics not just pure clay. The art lies, as we all know, in the putting together, the combining.

Let’s see how this works with a poem which was published two years after Housman’s lecture in 1933 – *Snow*, by another classical scholar, Louis MacNeice.

The room was suddenly rich and the great bay-window was
Spawning snow and pink roses against it
Soundlessly collateral and incompatible:
World is suddener than we fancy it.

World is crazier and more of it than we think,
Incorrigibly plural. I peel and portion

A tangerine and spit the pips and feel
The drunkenness of things being various.

And the fire flames with a bubbling sound for world
Is more spiteful and gay than one supposes –
On the tongue on the eyes on the ears in the palms of one's
hands –
There is more than glass between the snow and the huge
roses.

There are endless meanings here, and we can never draw all of them, as Housman asks us, out. Meanings to do with Irishness and relations to Yeats. Political meanings, about the gathering darkness of the 1930s. Intra-poetry meanings, about the challenge which modernism – and particularly in Britain T.S. Eliot – posed to lyric form. Is formal patterning still up to a 1930s world? Or, faced with the open waste land of experience, personal, social, political and linguistic – in a post-Freud, post-Marx world, where fascism is rising – should we (this poem asks) be dealing newly with the rage for order expressed through the traditional lyric forms?

In the years Housman was incubating this lecture, MacNeice was intensely concerned with how poetry could tackle flux and multiplicities through lyric pattern and structure. A war had happened, a war was coming. Modernism had brought the street into poetry: MacNeice wanted to net the street in lyric form. “When we were young,” said Larkin in his obituary of MacNeice, “his poetry was the poetry of our everyday life, of shop-windows, traffic policemen, ice-cream soda, lawn-mowers and an uneasy awareness of what the newsboys were shouting.”

There is a parallel here with Housman in 1896. The war of *A Shropshire Lad* was the Boer war, in which Housman's brother died. But as Robert Lowell said, it was as if Housman had foreseen the Somme, and by the time the First World War began *A Shropshire Lad* was in everybody's pocket. Here is one of these pocket copies, five inches long, slim as a cigarette case, fit to slip into the breast pocket of a tweed jacket, and inscribed as a birthday gift to my father in May 1933, the very month Housman gave his lecture.

MacNeice in that decade, faced with a new war, still felt with Yeats and Housman that the lyric poem as a dramatic structure was up to the job. Most English writers, says Edna Longley in her essay, ‘The Room where MacNeice wrote Snow’, were following the chaotic fragmentariness of *The Waste Land*. But

like Auden, MacNeice was looking for new ways to let the mesh of lyric form encompass those fragments which in *Eclogue for Christmas* – published in the year of this lecture, 1933 – he calls “Broken facets”:

I who was Harlequin in the childhood of the century,
Posed by Picasso beside an endless opaque sea,
Have seen myself sifted and splintered in broken facets,
Tentative pencillings, endless liabilities, no assets...

His rhyme *facets / assets* meets the challenge of Picasso’s (and Eliot’s) fragmentariness. In *Snow*, despite modernism’s splintering of the nineteenth-century lyric mirror, MacNeice has found a lyric to express the bitterness and commercialism of the new *Zeitgeist*. “World is crazier and more of it than we think. Incurrigibly plural”... this is his answer to Eliot. The bay-window itself “spawns” snow as if the window (the ‘wind’s eye’, eye of the house, between the inside and outside yet part of the house) is itself creating this stuff outside.

MacNeice taught Greek at Birmingham University; he too was a classical scholar, and must have been familiar with Plato’s imagery describing the eye as window to the soul. “Between” at the end of the poem (“between the snow and the roses”) is ambiguous. As Longley points out, it points to distance but also keeps the two things in a relationship. It is as if the betweenness, the mediating thing, our perceptions of world, itself generates meaning.

Collateral and incompatible, qualifying the two things kept apart, snow and roses, are mirrored in the second verse by *incurrigibly plural*. The second stanza takes the idea of apartness and multiplies it, like snowflakes, into an infinite number of things. MacNeice poses the problem about our relation to the world outside, and resolves it by the “more than glass” between the snow and the roses. He does this both by *what* he says and also by *how* he says it: By meaning, thought and also idea and musical utterance, all at once.

There are endless interpretations of this poem. Paul Muldoon’s poem *History* is itself partly about the multiple understandings of history in Ireland, and how you can never reach an end of them. It ends with a memory: the poet and a girlfriend climbing, “long ago”,

through the bay window
And into the room where MacNeice wrote *Snow*,
Or into the room where they say he wrote *Snow*.

MacNeice is supposed to have written that poem in his father’s house in Belfast, 77 Malone Road, but here’s another understanding, or misunderstanding, of

history: I was told by E.R. Dodds, MacNeice's friend and editor and long afterwards my PhD tutor and friend, that MacNeice wrote it about Dodds' wife's roses in their house in Birmingham. Like poetry, history is open-ended and, in MacNeice's word, various.

Ezra Pound said there are "no ideas but in things" and Housman's notion that the words are "clothes" for the idea implies you can take them off. I don't believe you can. For me, poetry is the poem in all its meanings and resonances. When you hear G on a violin you also hear other enharmonic notes which become part of the sound, and there are more than multiple meanings in *Snow*: there are multiple resonances. This is the way I smell the freesias: for me, poetry is the inter-meshing of ideas and language. All the meanings, sense, ideas, sound, music, feelings, connexions and implications of the way the words behave with each other.

I'll stand up for understanding too, as well as ideas. Housman goes on to say, "Perfect understanding will sometimes extinguish pleasure,". "It is better to swim in the sensations evoked," he says, than understand.

I disagree: you *can* just swim in a poem, nothing wrong with that, poetry is for enjoying and you'll never reach a "perfect understanding" of , say, *Snow*. But understanding doesn't extinguish pleasure. It can enhance it.

He is afraid, apparently that the pleasure might be snuffed out by understanding. What does this say about where poetry sits in Housman and what poetry represents for anyone with Housman's range of reactions? He feels the mysterious grandeur of some of Blake's poems would lose their grandeur if they were less mysterious. The ideas in it are only embryos, he says, "not condensed into thought."

I find mysterious grandeur quite suspect; I associated it with sham poetry, and I won't define poetry as something it's better not to look at the meaning of. If there's mystery I want to feel there's a point to it, a real secret to the sphinx. Everyone is entitled to their own take on the freesias, and we all "use" poetry in many different ways. But I think one way Housman uses it in a way I cannot share: not to mean too clearly.

Of course we have to think here what Housman had to hide, homosexuality in an age when its practice was illegal, and also his love for someone unattainable. But I think it's more than that. Housman was appointed to his Cambridge Chair a hundred years ago this year, in 1911, the year an American student drafted in his college notebook a poem he came to call 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock'.

I think one thing Housman used poetry for was to explore aspects both of himself and of his feelings about what was happening in the world outside, which he would not allow himself to engage with elsewhere. I think he turned to poetry as a safe precinct, an inner chamber.

Nothing wrong with that. Poetry is a structuring of emotion to which many people turn when the rest of the world falls apart. After 9/11, thousands of people in New York attended a poetry reading set up by the Poetry Society of America. But this image of poetry, as safe and sacred form, is exactly what Eliot was challenging in the stanza-free forms of *Prufrock*, or *The Waste Land*, as well as in what he was saying.

Housman's wish for poetry not to mean too precisely explains his famous conclusion that poetry is a physical not intellectual thing. He speaks of tears, of hairs that bristle so he cannot shave, the shiver down the spine and a constricted throat. He invokes Keats who says that when he thinks of Fanny Brawne, "something goes through me like a spear." These are exactly the sensations of falling in love as described in one of the most famous fragments of lyric poetry: another Sappho poem, Fragment 31, translated by Catullus and many after. Here is Ann Carson's translation:

When I look at you, even a moment, no speaking
is left in me
no: tongue breaks and thin
fire is racing under skin
and in eyes no sight and drumming
fills ears

and cold sweat holds me and shaking
grips me all, greener than grass
I am dead – or almost.

We know this poem because the ancient critic Longinus quotes it in his treatise *On the Sublime* as a supreme example of poetic intensity:

Are you not amazed, how she evokes soul, body, hearing, tongue, sight, skin, as though they were external and belonged to someone else? And how at one and the same moment she both freezes and burns, is irrational and sane, terrified and nearly dead, so we observe in her not a single emotion but a whole concourse? Such things do, of course, commonly happen to people in love. Sappho's supreme excellence lies in the skill with which she selects the most striking and vehement circumstances of the passions and forges them into a coherent whole. (trans. Campbell)

For MacNeice, who as a classical scholar knew both the poem and Longinus, this bears closely on his concerns in the early '30s: the challenge of the *Waste Land*, the multiplicity of experience versus the mesh of form and the precinct of the poem. Housman worked differently. When the love of his life retreated from him, he turned to both scholarship and to poetry. But he needed to keep these two precincts separate.

I often find it helpful, in teaching, to compare two different stages of writing a poem to two different ways of making a sculpture. One is to gather everything in while the fabric is molten like wax or clay. Then comes a second stage, chipping away, freeing the image in the stone.

Not all poets work like this. Many work slowly on a line, building it up. Some start with the rhythm. Every poet and every poem is different. It is common for poets to talk of the poem's demands: it feels easier to think of it like that, as if it does not come entirely from yourself.

Housman himself spoke of the first stage of writing a poem as a passive stage. I think the next stage – the chipping stage, when you use Larkin's knife, the active stage – is when you take the responsibility for the poem. In one sense, Housman slid away from responsibility for the thought (though not the language) of his. He refused to take royalties for his poems; and he never showed his poetry side to his students.

"He used to walk to the desk," said one, "open his manuscript and begin to read. At the end of the hour he folded his papers and left the room. He never looked either at us or at the rows of dons in the front."

But the mask could slip. One morning in May 1914, when the Cambridge trees were in full blossom, he was lecturing on the seventh Ode in Horace's Fourth Book, *Diffugere nives, redeunt iam gramina campis*, 'The snows have fled, now grains come back to the fields'. Housman dissected this, remembered a student, textually and grammatically, "with the usual display of brilliance, wit and sarcasm. Then for the first time in two years he looked up at us and in quite a different voice said, 'I should like to spend the last few minutes considering this ode simply as poetry.' Our previous experience of Professor Housman would have made us sure he would regard such a proceeding as beneath contempt. He read the ode aloud with deep emotion first in Latin, then in an English translation of his own".

This is Housman's version of Horace's ode.

The snows are fled away, leaves on the shaws
And grasses in the mead renew their birth,
The river to the river-bed withdraws,
And altered is the fashion of the earth.

The Nymphs and Graces three put off their fear
And unapparelled in the woodland play.
The swift hour and the brief prime of the year
Say to the soul, *Thou wast not born for aye.*

Thaw follows frost; hard on the heel of spring
Treads summer sure to die, for hard on hers
Comes autumn, with his apples scattering;
Then back to wintertide, when nothing stirs.

But oh, whate'er the sky-led seasons mar,
Moon upon moon rebuilds it with her beams;
Come *we* where Tullus and where Ancus are,
And good Aeneas, we are dust and dreams.

Torquatus, if the gods in heaven shall add
The morrow to the day, what tongue has told?
Feast then thy heart, for what thy heart has had
The fingers of no heir will ever hold.

When thou descendest once the shades among,
The stern assize and equal judgment o'er,
Not thy long lineage nor thy golden tongue,
No, nor thy righteousness, shall friend thee more.

Night holds Hippolytus the pure of stain,
Diana steads him nothing, he must stay;
And Theseus leaves Pirithoüs in the chain
The love of comrades cannot take away.

'That,' he said hurriedly, almost like a man betraying a secret, 'I regard as the most beautiful poem in ancient literature,' and walked quickly out of the room." (Mrs T.W. Pym in *The Times*, 5 May 1936, 5).

Housman's translation of *Diffugere nives* turns this ode into a poem about lost love: about how you cannot bring back your dead comrade. He makes it his own, and reeves it into the cherry-blossom arena of *The Shropshire Lad*. As

another student said who remembered the occasion, “I felt most uncomfortable. I was afraid the old fellow was going to cry.”

In his lecture, Housman quotes Wordsworth’s saying that poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings and says that he himself writes poems after drinking beer, which is “a sedative to the brain”. When he then went for a walk, “there would flow into my mind, with sudden and unaccountable emotion, a line or two of verse, or a whole stanza.” Then a while afterwards, “perhaps the spring would bubble up again.”

He describes his own first “passive” stage of writing a poem as involuntary. Like a secretion, he says: like turpentine in the fir or pearl in the oyster. If the brain had to take over, the poem didn’t work, and cost a lot of trouble. For him, poetry is a place where emotionally you only wield the fork. Knives he reserved for the rest of his intellectual life. Poetry was a way, perhaps, of not thinking about what he felt.

He chose the dry-as-dust”, says Auden in his elegy for Housman, deliberately:

Kept tears like dirty postcards in a drawer...
In savage footnotes on unjust editions
He timidly attacked the life he led.

Housman’s take on poetry is a take also on distance: an idealizing of distance. This is not bad. We are back to the purple and white versus the red and yellow. ‘Blue remembered hills’ fulfil a strong need for many people. Housman grew up in Bromsgrove, Worcestershire, where I was lucky enough to be invited to read a couple of years ago and which is wonderfully evoked in Geoffrey Hill’s *Mercian Hymns*. But what turned him on was what he saw on the edge of it. “I had a sentimental feeling for Shropshire,” he said, “because its hills were our distant horizon.” The distant place in childhood becomes an image for emotional distance.

Tennyson said he always felt drawn to the words “far far away” and I think for many people poetry is linked to a sense of distance between two things, or between yourself and something else. It may be the distance of memory, between you and childhood, Or an emotional distance, between you and your beloved. MacNeice sees “more than glass” between the snow and the roses.

Which brings us back the possibility of distance between “name” and “nature.” We might call it the outside and the inside, both of poetry and of a person. Housman liked distance – he lived by keeping things apart, there is

meaning in his poems but he's not going to face it and he'd rather you didn't draw it out. Out of the freesia colours, which we have taken today to stand for poetry, I prefer the other end of the spectrum. I opt for fusion, trying to understand, and for clarity of emotion and thought. But poetry is a mansion with many chambers and Housman created something extraordinary out of his yen for distance. Shropshire is not where he lived: he went there to gather names and colour like Wenlock and Hughley church.

Stoppard makes Housman say that though his body was buried in Shropshire, it was "a county where I have never lived and seldom set foot". Housman's Shropshire is shorthand, perhaps, for how he uses poetry, as many people do, to access the unattainable. Shropshire is keeping things separate. Shropshire is connecting through beautiful language with what you refuse to spell out in thought, and perhaps will never grasp in life.

Into my heart an air that kills
From yon far country blows:
What are those blue remembered hills,
What spires, what farms are those?

That is the land of lost content,
I see it shining plain,
The happy highways where I went
And cannot come again.

A.E. Housman's Prose Contributions to *Ye Rounde Table*

by

P. G. Naiditch

Introduction

A.E. Housman contributed to *Ye Rounde Table*, an Oxford and Cambridge undergraduate Magazine. So long as the periodical was in existence, Housman maintained his association with it. The periodical itself was published in 1878, in six numbers. It was not a widely-known journal: *Ye Rounde Table* was referred to, in passing, by W. M. S(aunders)¹ ('Cambridge Magazines', *Notes and Queries* 14 Feb., 1885, pp.133 sq.); G.J. Gray ('Cambridge University Periodicals', *Cambridge Review* 7, 10 March, 1886, p.259); and Harry Currie Marillier (*University Magazines and their Makers*, London 1899, p.80). In 1934, Laurence Housman offered his set of the periodical to an unknown bookseller, but in his cover-letter did not identify the periodical itself (cf. 3 July, 1934: Yale University, New Haven, Conn.). The next reference belongs to the year of AEH's death. LH told A.S.F. Gow that his brother had contributed to *Ye Rounde Table*, adding that AEH had desired the works to be forgotten (LH to Gow, 13 July, 1936: Trinity College, Cambridge, add. ms. a 71.115 [1]; LH to Gow, 14 Oct., 1936: *ibid.* add. ms. a 71.83 [2]). See also Houston Martin in John Sparrow to Gow, 10 Oct., 1936: Trinity College, Cambridge, add. ms. a 71.237 [2v]. The chief pseudonym used by Housman was not then made known.

In 1957, Laurence Housman inadvertently revealed to the public Housman's association with the work. Quoting from memory 'The Mermaid' (i.e. 'The Sailor-Boy'), he attributed it to his brother (*Manchester Guardian*, 5 Feb., 1957, p.5). Probably about the same time, Laurence turned several numbers of the periodical over to Blackwell's, from whom John Carter acquired them in May 1957 (Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, PR 4809.H15 R6). Carter discovered 'The Sailor-Boy' under the name 'Tristram' (*The Book Collector* 6, 1957, p.404). But Laurence's indiscretion only anticipated the inevitable.

Long before 1957, on 6 Jan., 1893, A.W. Pollard had supplied Falconer Madan with a key to most of the contributors to the periodical, and this information Madan added to his own set. The set came to Yale University with the Madan Collection. Soon afterwards, T. Burns Haber examined this set and, in the *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 61.4, 1962, pp.797-809, wrote about it. He

gave however no indication of recognising contributions by Housman not under the pseudonym 'Tristram'. That there were such compositions I had privately conjectured, and a letter from Pollard, once in John Sparrow's possession, now lost, confirmed my suspicion that Housman had written under the name 'King Arthur'. Other evidence showed, however, that the poem in question was a joint-composition, each contributor composing a stanza until the work was complete (AEH to Mrs Wise, [17 Feb., 1878]: Adelman Collection, Canaday Library, Bryn Mawr College, Pennsylvania). Consequently, since Madan's key passes over several pseudonyms found in the periodical, it is possible that other Arthurian names disguise additional Housman contributions. I think of the third stanza of 'A Dialogue of the Present Day' by 'Uther' (*Ye Rounde Table* 1.4, 11 May, 1878, p.56) and the second stanza of 'Frenzy' by 'King Arthur' (*ibid.* p.62).

The periodical itself is rare. No more than two complete sets are known to me. No. 1: Bodleian, British Library, Lilly, Sparrow (two copies), Yale. No. 2: Bodleian, Lilly, Sparrow, Yale. No. 3: Bodleian, Sparrow, Yale. No. 4: Bodleian, Lilly (two copies), Sparrow, Yale. No. 5: Bodleian, Sparrow, Yale. No. 6: Lilly (three copies), Sparrow, Yale.

No reprint of the entire periodical exists. Archie Burnett has published the verse in *The Poems of A.E. Housman*, Oxford 1997, pp.215-23, 230-6 with commentary, pp.519-528; cf. *The Letters of A.E. Housman* (A. Burnett ed.), Oxford 2007, I.p.31.

The reader should know that some of Housman's text is likely to prove offensive.

* * * * *

Ye Rounde Table I, Feb. 2, 1878, no. 1, pp. 4 sq.:

The History of a Crime

by a Gaul at Oxford

Chapter I – Night

IT was night.

But we did not say so at Oxford.

What did we say?

We said, “Est nox.”

This is Latin.

Latin is invariably spoken at Oxford.

If you do not believe me, see the Statutes of the University.

I repeat that it was night. I [column 2:]

Why do I repeat it?

Because it is necessary to fill a page and a half of this magazine, and this is best done by repetition.

Or by short paragraphs.

Like this.

Or this.

That is why I repeat that it was night.

In England it is night on an average once in twenty-four hours.

I have a very remarkable knowledge of the manners and customs of these English.

Chapter II – The Oak

At Night, a very striking spectacle may be seen at Oxford.

It is this.

The more studious Undergraduates are to be seen sporting in the branches of a stately tree, which grows before the door of their rooms.

What is this tree?

It is the British tree.

The British tree is the Oak.

The British Navy is built of Oak. II [page 5:]

The heart of the British Sailor is made of Oak.

The conduct of these Undergraduates is technically known as sporting the Oak.

Me also, I have sported the Oak.

Chapter III – The Sob

I WENT down stairs.

I went down three steps at a time.
Why do I mention this apparently trifling fact?
The actions of great men are never trifling.
I do not say that I am a great man.
The world says so.
I agree with the world.
That is all.
I heard a sound.
The sound of a sob.
The sound of a sob of one of my friends.
I entered his chamber.
He was seated at a table, weeping.
I slapped him on the back.
They do this, these English.
I said, “Woa Emma!”

Chapter IV – Emma.

WHY did I say this?

Was my friend’s name Emma?
It was not.
Why then did I say this?
They say it, these English.
You ask me, do I know who is Emma.
I will answer you.
My answer is this.
I do not know.
They are droll, these English. | [column 2:]

Chapter V – The Digamma

I SAID, “Why do you weep?”

He said, “I weep for the lost one.”

I said, "Who is she?"
 He replied, "She is not a she."
 I said, "Then why weep for her?"
 He answered, "I do not weep for her."
 I said, "For whom then?"
 He said, "For the lost Digamma."
 I said, "Who is she?"
 He replied, "I do not know."
 I said, "Who lost her?"
 He said, "I do not know."
 I asked him, "'Who does know?"
 He said, "I do not know."
 I said, "You are mad."
 He said nothing.
 I glanced at his book.
 It was Farrar's Greek Syntax.

Chapter VI – Farrar

WHO was Farrar?

He was master of the great military academy, which was founded by the triumphant Duke of Malbrook.

He became much imbued with the military spirit.

So much so that he became a Cannon.

He was then placed at Westminster to protect the British Parlement [*sic*].

Westminster is where the Gunpowder Plot took place.

Why do I mention this Plot?

Because it is the only Plot which you are likely to find in this Novel.

Every Novel must have a Plot.

Now this has one.

This is why I have made this digression.

TRISTRAM.

(to be continued in our next.)

Ye Rounde Table I, Feb. 23, 1878, no. 2, pp. 19-21:

The History of a Crime

by a Gaul at Oxford

Chapter VII – Genius Touched

THE grief of my friend was heart-rending.

It moved me deeply.

Most things do.

The number of things which do not is inconsiderable.

You may observe that this is the same statement in a slightly altered form.

You are right.

I scorn to deny it.

The utterances of genius are worthy of multiform reproduction.

I am resolved that they shall get it.

I therefore repeat that I am touched by most things.

Touched to the heart.

The enemies who are always created by genius have gone further, and ungenerously hinted that I am also touched in the head.

They have noticed that, when touched, I shed tears.

They affirm that these outpourings of a noble soul proceed from water on the brain.

They are wrong.

If you affirm it, you are wrong.

You may perhaps say that you are not.

I repeat that you are.

If you again contradict me I shall crush you with the same answer.

You are therefore defeated in the argument.

This is logic. [column 2:]

Chapter VIII – Logic

I ADDRESSED my friend.

This is what I said.

“The Digamma is lost. That is true. But there is comfort in the thought. Do you ask me why? Because you are now unable to lose her again. If you are unable to lose her, she is, of course, unable to be lost. Now a thing cannot do that which it is unable to do. The Digamma is unable to be lost, therefore she cannot be lost. And a thing is not that which cannot be. Therefore, as the Digamma cannot be lost, she evidently is not lost. Those why do you weep?”

This, again, was logic.

My friend was struck by it.

I perceived that he was struck.

I said, “Was it a heavy blow?”

This was a witticism.

Chapter IX – Witticism

What is a witticism, do you ask?

A witticism is a thing at which we laugh.

It is your duty to laugh at this.

You may very probably reply that you cannot.

I can quite believe you.

It takes time.

And practice.

And perseverance.

Very much so.

I once found it difficult to laugh at witticisms. || [page 20:]

Especially my own.

But I did it at last.

This was my method.

I held on firmly to the legs of the table, and directed my friends to catch hold tightly of my back hair.

Then, by an enormous effort of will, I forced a faint smile, through my irrepressible tears.

I am now able to laugh heartily over such a witticism as the above.

From this fact you may judge of my immense control over acute mental agony.

Chapter X – I Turned to Go

ITURNED TOGO

I

At this important and majestic monosyllable, let us for a moment pause.

I have here compressed the name of the greatest man in the world into the shortest paragraph in the world.

Short paragraphs are high art.

They also fill up.

And are thus highly artful.

But we are here becoming low.

Chapter XI

I WAS arrested by a cry from my friend.

I said, “What’s the lugubriosity?”

He replied, “Listen. To Farrar’s Brief Greek Syntax, page 10, note. *‘It may, however, be considered probable that the Digamma had a complex—’*”

“Ah!” said I. “Poor young thing. Had she indeed? I had one once myself.”
[column 2:]

My friend proceeded, “ – *had a complex sound, viz.: the sound of a guttural combined with a labial, a fact which is etymologically of the utmost importance, since it accounts for many otherwise impossible letter-changes in Greek words.*”

At this point my friend stopped.

He then uttered a shriek and fell on his face on to his reading lamp.

He cried, “I have found, – oh, miseries! – I have found what they have done with her.”

I said, “Read!”

He read in a hoarse whisper, this: – “ *‘The Digamma is foully handled in Ferrar’s Comparative Grammar, pp.87-90.’*”

There was silence.

I only gnashed my teeth. That is all.

In a ghostly whisper he proceeded.

“‘*He says, –*’”

He was unable to continue.

I said, “What does he say?”

“This. ‘*He says that it had nearly the sound of W.*’”

Again there was silence.

I said, “This is the last and foulest insult of all. Let us swear to avenge La Digamma. Let us swear to sweep from the earth these oppressors of youth, beauty, and misfortune: this Farrar and this Ferrar!”

We swore.

While my friend prepared a couple of infernal machines, I again glanced my eye over the shameful page.

I cried, “Ha! *Sacre bleu!*”

He paused. He said, “What?” [page 21:]

I said, “My friend, you erred. The Digamma was not foully handled by this Ferrar. She was *fully* handled!”

The shock was too great.

A vacant look came over him. He began to sing.

This is what he sang.

“Said the juvenile successor of Amos to the elderly predecessor of Jonah, ‘I am arid, Hebrew Prophet, I am arid.’”

I recognised a garbled version of a popular song. [column 2:]

I shed a tear.

I then shed two more.

At this moment, one of the infernal machines fell from his listless hand.

It exploded, and blew him to fragments.

He then let fall the other engine of vengeance.

I saw that it was about to explode.

I then went to press.

TRISTRAM

FINIS

Punch and Jouida.

A Novel

[column 1:] I.

BENEATH its sinister and voluptuous marble smile, a man lay sleeping in the hot, swooning afternoon. The lamp of day, Hêlios, the beautiful, heartless, godlike Greek divinity, was yielding his tired tarnished chariot to the passionate and crimson arms of Pelops. The glare of his dazzling rays poured over the Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter city; the hoary olives of the Academe dropped their purple clusters beneath his fervid lips, to float away upon the sultry and languishing gale to the wine-dark waters of the Bosphorus. The marble spires and gilded columns wavered and bowed their tremulous heads beneath the light Etesian gale, as it wandered wearily on through the luxurious ceilings and empurpled floors of the leading upholsterers' shops; while on the breeze the dying sunbeams floated bewildered over gorgeous draperies of Ormuz and silks of Samarcand, where the cochineal of the Indies trailed in reckless profusion over the priceless Brussels and Kidderminster carpets. High above all else into the purple and palpitating heaven, the Olympus of the Greeks, towered the two mighty theatres, the immemorial glories of the city. The one had been reared by the mystic High Priest, Sheldônios: the other by the strange, secluded Caledonian Queen from whom it drew the liquid and rever-[column 2]berating name of the Vic. Tier upon tier its marble circles of seats, beneath the cope of the mauve sky tinged with lavender, flashed azure in the scarlet kisses of sunset. Here, around its tessellated Palladium and odorous altar of Dionysius, were wont to gather the hoar and wintry sages of that marvellous and secret Stoa, while before them Chorus and Choregus, Protagonist and Pericycloma, evolved the blind and reeling staggerings of mortals beneath the Cumæan sneer of the tangled meshes which sprang ready armed from the brain of the pale Hellenic Zeus to entrap in their Minos-haunted labyrinth the pulsations of mankind. The Theatron Sheldônion, across the dusty causeway, with the hot summer lightning streaming through its insuperable porticoes, contained the broad and foam-white proskenion, upon which the snowy-haired philosophers themselves were wont, under the direction of the inspired Maestro, Fra Vice Cancellario, to roll on saffron thrones and roll out the passionate odes and limitless epic raptures of an Artaxerxes or a Diodorus Siculus. Outside its palpable walls and terraced undulations stood twelve august and variegated statues.

It was beneath the sinister and voluptuous marble smile of one of these, that a man lay sleeping in the hot, swooning, &c. It is an inscrutable simile. No

man yet has drawn the fierce dark secret from [p. 42 column 1] the marble lips. Some tell me it is the face of the implacable rose-crowned Nero as he watched the burning of Rome. Some say that it is Judas Iscariot. Some that it is the third Sorceress in Macbeth. But when they tell me this, I smile, for I know that they are wrong. I know that it is the face of Diogenes, the Cynic tyrant of Syracuse, his lips wreathed with which he might have sat in his tub in that artfully wrought and artistically decorated chamber, in which he could hear all the bloodless whispers and scorching shrieks of the prisoners in his dungeon; with that same smile with which he might have doomed the fragile and floating Europa to a fiery death within that brazen bull which she had wrought with her own rich creamy hands and dewy-petalled finger-tips.

Here the man lay sleeping. His face was brown; his dark eyes flashed a red luster through his closed eyelids; his head was concealed by a multitude of raven locks, which uttered a warning croak at intervals. His white teeth and whiter hands were clenched like the tusks of the Calydonian Minotaur. His scarlet lips and waistcoat formed a dazzling harmony. His glossy velvet moustache drooped on to a coat of the same material, though more worn at the seams. The dust was on his feet, and dew-drops on his hair. He had gone to sleep at five-and-twenty minutes past two.

At a quarter to four he opened his [column 2] melting eyes and sat up. He had then slept an hour and twenty minutes. He had in his hands violets, primroses, roses, lilies, poppies, dahlias, chrysanthemums, and amaranths, which gleamed many-coloured in the light of the falling sun. With that true artistic sense, which is the heritage only of the bluest blood of the nobility and the yellowest gold of the millionaire, he had selected them in far-off fields from the wide difference between them in colour and in time of flowering. They thus presented a vision of the loveliest and most hyacinthine variety, as their purple and crimson odours rolled heavily over the gilded pavement, or dripped in strains of luxurious music, note by note, down the cool marble steps. He dabbled his fevered forehead and yearning hands in the melodious and radiant pool.

At last he rose and turned to a mystic and exciting stage or sentry-box which reared its oscillating height at his side. An eager and gesticulating crowd had even now gathered around the marvelous alien; for his figure indeed attracted them. With the same supreme taste which taught him to choose his billowy garland of blooms, he had, moreover, one of his eyes ebony black and the other of limpid blue. You know, for I have told you, that when he slept they flashed with a fresh rich red. He had thus at his command an ever-changing rainbow-gleam of radiance, and as he glanced up, a varying iris played over the eager crowd. They

cried out with quivering [page 42 column 1:] lips and pleading eyes. “Begin,” they said.

He swept aside with a haughty sweep of his fine aristocratic hand the Tyrian folds of the curtain; and as he proudly withdrew his olive form into the Phœnician recesses of the sentry-box, there appeared on the miniature stage two passionate and divine existences.

They were Pulcinello and Jouida.

II

They were locked in a dreamy and tempestuous embrace. The long lithe creamy arms of Jouida wooed the amorous breezes as they extended over the Herculean shoulders of her Amœbœan lover, while over the snow neck of the maiden shot out the rose-tinted nose of Punch. Of all his splendid and glittering countenance no portion shone like this. It was not the pale-blooded and pious organ of a chill northern race, pointing heavenward, as it were in an inhuman frenzy of frozen devotion. It was not the calm clear logical feature of the fine and carefully varnished Greek. It was rather the full, robust, resonant Roman, swollen with [column 2] the wantonness of empire, and rushing forth from the face in a grand and gracious swoop as the eagle darting from its eyrie upon the doomed hare who vainly leaps towards her burrow to find shelter in the bosom of the earth from this thunderbolt of the Uranian and celestial heaven. The thoughtful brow of Pulcinello rose like a beetling crag above the twin Vesuvii or Ætnæ of his eyes, between which, with the tense and vigorous curve of the cataract from the rock or the chased silver bow of the godlike archer Phœbus, leapt forth that mighty feature and descended with fierce and insatiable desire upon the upward rushing chin, like the surging tides of the seas that beat upon the crowned Acropolis of the grey-eyed goddess whom the ruthless Turnus slew. Above the embracing lovers in the air a dim and tremulous canine form. Pulcinello gazed at it with hot eyes dimmed with passion, and as he dashed his imperial hand across them he murmured the immortal words sung so long ago by the blind bard beneath the walls of Ilion: – “Toby, or not Toby? that is the question.”

TRISTRAM

(To be continued.)

Punch and Jouida.

A Novel

[column 1:] Chapter III

Once a long, long time ago, Jouida was born. At that time she was quite quite young. In nearly twelve months after that time she was almost one year old. Just fancy! one whole year! Oh dear me, what a nice young lady! Yes, really very quite.

She used to dream, – dream, – dream. This was when she was asleep, – oh, so fast asleep. Sometimes she was awake, – oh, so wide awake, and then she used to scream, – scream, – scream. They used to give her a bottle, and rusks, and things. They were kind rough people, but I am afraid they were very very stupid. Jouida did not want their bottles. Jouida didn't 'ike 'usks an' tings, did se? Nicey ikky sing. Pitty ikky 'Ouida, den. Ugl – ugl!

When she was the least little bit older, she began to think of what she did want, but she did not know what she did want, so she began to cry. When she wanted [column 2:] was Love, and Passion; but she did not know this, so she used to cry. She thought it was so nice to cry.

She used to live in a garden with an old woman, who was her mother. There were flowers in the garden, and bees, and butterflies, and peaches, and birds of Paradise, and bluebottle flies. The flowers did not grow out of the ground, because the ground might have been muddy, and that would have made a mess. But the dews used to fall on them at morning and evening, and the good kind sun used to shine on them, and the flowers used to talk to Jouida quite as much sense as Jouida ever talked to them, and Jouida used to sleep among them at night, but she never caught a cold, because that would have made her say her m's and n's just like b's and d's, and that would not have been nice for little Jouida. And when the bees used to sting her on the nose it never used to swell, because she always [p. 53 column 1:] kissed the place to make it well with her red ripe lips, and then she used to say, "How doth the little busy bee!"

But one day the old woman died. When the old woman began to do this, she called Jouida and said, "Povera infanta mia."

Then Jouida said, "How did you learn Italian?"

And the old woman said, "If I must die, I should like to die with good

taste, and so I have bought this Italian grammar. I must die, because you would never do for the heroine of a novel by a talented authoress unless I did. They all do it. Adieu, my child. Always run away when you see a man, and mind and bury me nicely.”

Then the old mother died, and Jouda buried her very nicely among the flowers, and then she went indoors and washed her hands with soap and water, and then she dried them quite dry with a towel. After this she went out and sat in the middle of the road and said, “I should like to have a lover with a long, long nose, and jaws – oh, so big!”

This is what the dear little Jouda said. Poor little Jouda!

Chapter IV

JUST at this instant a splendid *personnel* came swaggering along the *grand chemin* in a cocked hat, and a long nose and big jaws. He was loosely decorated with sovereigns and bank notes. Heaps of the coins were tumbling out of his pockets, through those purposely made [column 2] holes in them, which the genuine nobleman is never without. His *mouchoir*, or rather his *mouchoirs* (which is pronounced the same in the plural as in the singular, – the “s” being not sounded *dans la langue Française*), – for he had five or six of them all over his divine person, – were million-pound notes. When he caught sight of Jouda he dashed from his shaggy brows the luxurious Turkey carpet in which he was enveloped, and fixing in *each* eye a diamond eyeglass, – few but he could have afforded to purchase the pair, – removed lightly from his lips a cigar composed of unpaid bills.

“By George, – a gal!” he exclaimed.

Without another word he caught Jouda by the scruff of her neck, and whirled her rapidly round and round with a refined and aristocratic oath. Jouda was not half so much surprised as the reader at this sudden change of style from the innocence of her education to the more polished and passionate manners of the highest society of Europe.

She understood.

She rose and kissed him on the mouth.

She hung over him with her arms twined and tangled round his noble neck like lithe fierce brown serpents. But she had had the advantages of a correct

education.

She said, “And now let us go to church and be married.”

“As you like it,” he replied, – quotation from M. Guillaume Shakspeare, –
“and I may as well tell you, – my name is Punch.”

[page 54 column 1:] Chapter V

TO her cost.

Within a few days after their marriage she faced him with foaming eyes and a flaming mouth, and poured from Sibylline lips the scoriac lava of her passion. Beneath the cold cool glare of the lunar moon, with a lurid and defiant laugh she uttered in a whispered shriek the words:

“S’pose they calls yer Punch ’cos yer Panches yer wife, eh? *vous vieux sclerat, vous!*”

He looked at her with marble moveless nose.

“Pun not good,” he said. “But go on, you may improve. You’ve got a good Billingsgate.”

He kicked her slightly on the head, and then dawdled rapidly out of the room—*hors de la chambre, en effet*.

One day she cast her baby upon his arms to fondle and dandle with a father’s care. Scarcely had the rustle and scream of her satin *chevelure* and the glitter of her priceless *parure* swept with her from the highly decorated apartments, when the baby woke with a very very pitiful cry.

It said, “I want my ma.”

Punch did not hesitate. With one glance towards the multitudinous spectators he hurled his wailing child into their midst, and brandished his stately nose in noble scorn. Jouda at that moment entered the room, when, with the highest instincts of the blue blood that gurgled and thundered in his veins, he slew her on the spot with a bludgeon. There fell a spot of gore on the tessellated [*sic*] pavement, and he slew her on *that* spot too. Then he groaned and sought his couch, tearing with fevered hands his scented whiskers.

Ha! is it she indeed? – the Ghost – *le Revenant* – of Jouda? In the tawny

visions of the night, beneath the starry stars, is it her scarlet shadow that would strangle him – till she is repulsed, baffled, vanquished? Ha! ha! is this the scaffold? The black-masked hangman drags him to it: the Beadle assaults him on his regal path. But they are no match for the fierce wild genteel man. He hurled the Beadle to the gory depths of Tartary, to Saturn and his Titian allies. His bronze and massive fingers strangled the hangman in his own noose. In a moment he was the enervated fastidious dandy again. Leaning over the box to the audience, he murmured with graceful affectation, –

“Weally now, thith ith wather too much. No more now. You might thtwike me with a feather! Punch and Judy will now be clothed.”

He would have said “closed,” but his aristocratic lisp forbade it. This was an ill chance. The Fra Vice Cancellαιο, lurking in the Theatron Sheldônion, caught the last words. He burst out of the Theatre and into the following speech: –

“Statutum est quod nec funambuli nec histriones (qui quaestus causa in scenam prodeunt) nec gladiatorum spectacula permittantur.”

[page 55 column 1] The showman walked into a *maison publique*. My reader! The rose-bloom of Passion bears the luscious fruit of high morality. This voluptuous and [column 2] tempestuous story closes in the lightning flash of a grand example. The showman walked into a *maison publique*. Go thou and do likewise. *Faites comme ça*.

TRISTRAM

The End

Ye Rounde Table I, June 1st, 1878, no. 5, pp. 72-4

Under the Clock

Thursday May 8th. Sir Stafford having flashed and faded from our eyes, we [page 72 column 1:] settle down, – after the hon. member who is interested in the delivery of letters has had his “little talk” with the Treasurer, – to the adjourned debate, which is led off by Mr. Cook, with the best speech one has heard for a long time. Being young, he is rather too virulent, a fault which rather spoilt his review of the first night’s debate, though here he made a good point. “The speeches in which argument and good taste were most conspicuous were those on the Liberal side; though on the other side these qualities were equally conspicuous. Conspicuous, I mean, by their absence.” And then, further on, he undertook to refute the Russia-and-India theory by the utterance of “a Hebrew prophet, whose plenary inspiration is now a recognised article in the creed of the

Conservative party.” Every one began to summon up what Bible knowledge he had, and to conjecture who this might be. Public opinion inclined to one of the Obadiahs, senior or junior. When it turned out that it was “Benjamin Disraeli, now Earl of Beaconsfield,” there was much deserved applause. Altogether the whole speech was neatly put, and fluently delivered, though too essayish in parts. Then turned up our Ex-President, who signalised his return to the arena by gesticulating in a most dangerous and unusual way, with the [column 2] final result of dashing over one of the glasses of water. Then we had one of the lights of the Cambridge Union, who had been brought up by the Treasurer. And this was particularly generous on the part of the Treasurer, as he had been to Cambridge himself in the Vac., but, finding an audience which was not used to his little ways, had scarcely produced his usual impression. The light of the Cambridge Union shrieked a good deal at the top of his voice about “the hon. member from Balliol,” and, worse still, “the hon. member from *New*.” And then the hon. Treasurer got up, and was very shaky indeed. First he said he was not going to propose an amendment, and then he likened the light of Cambridge to Balaam, and himself to some one else in the story, – *not* the animal which the malignant might suggest, – and by the time he had got through that, he forgot all about what went before, and concluded by moving an amendment. Then we languished into a division.

Thursday, May 15th. The Librarian having brought forward a highly novel list, and that gushing thing from Univ. having objected to it, and the Treasurer having described how his personal fascinations seduced two members of the Library Committee, one of whom was the “theological guide, philosopher and friend” of the Librarian, away to the Royal Academy, when they ought to [page 74 column 1] have been Library Committing, and the list having been carried, up rises the Great Unattached, and proceeds to arraign the Treasurer for his “official jokes.” In the course of his remarks he casually observes that the Treasurer is in the habit of making a public fool of himself, – though some opine that he used the milder term buffoon. Anyhow, he is forced to withdraw the offensive and, of course, highly inappropriate expression in a rather dubious manner. The Treasurer is quite taken by surprise: it had never occurred to him before to regard himself in that light; so he rises some time after and says that he used to make jokes in the cradle, and he will endeavour to make them in the coffin, and that he really didn’t expect this from the hon. member, – an hon. member with an equal taste for humour, and to whom he has always behaved “with kindness, and even with civility.” The debate is dull, only sensation being when Coffee Calcalli, that “merry old soul,” gets up and instructs an English audience in the writings of an eminent Ashanti poet, called William Shakespeare, and fears that perhaps some of that audience may say, “What do dis niggah do heeyar?”

Thursday, May 22nd. The new President has not yet added punctuality to the list of his numerous virtues, so that when King Coffee and his umbrella come in at the half-hour, impatience as well as affection is answerable for the applause. Proceedings commencing, the [column 2] rising of the Great Unattached is awaited with breathless anxiety. Wild rumours have been current that the Treasurer sent him a challenge, and he sent back an invitation, and we want to know all about it. When he does rise, it appears that some one has been so ill-advised as to dream of hoaxing him. A peremptory official message had reached him that he must either send a written retraction, or be no more a member of that Society of which he is so festive a decoration. He fears that this is another "official joke" on the part of the Treasurer. But the Treasurer says No, it isn't. And then the Treasurer reads us a report from the Select Committee, and we shriek with laughter while he is informing us that Sir Stafford has cost us £100. Lots of hon. members have been to the Steward's room since, to amuse themselves by reading this hilarious report over again. And they find, with much disappointment, that it is not at all comic after all. And yet we believed it was. Long live so talented a Treasurer, and long may we be spared to enjoy at all events official jokes of this character. Now the Secretary gives us his views upon Mr. Gladstone. The force of virulence could no farther go; but for all that it was racy and amusing. Mr. Gladstone taking to literature in his dotage, in the vain hope of rivalling Lord Beaconsfield in at least one line, was not bad. And it is rather hard that the House, which was then bursting into unusual applause, and shouting "Good, good!" in all directions, should now be going about all over the place reviling the hon. member's speech. The member who followed spoke better than anyone had ever dreamed he could before; and then came the hon. member, who will be for ever remembered from his immortal speech about the Poor Laws, and the celebrated peroration in which he "dropped the jewel." Coming fresh from the contemplation and baptism of costermongers in Bear Lane, he reviews Mr. Gladstone's political life. And as he begins with Poland, there is a shout of Oh! So he turns round in his stateliest manner: – "Some honourable member, not having previously heard of that district, is moved to merriment. Mr. Gladstone, far from being moved to [column 2] merriment –," &c. Now this speaker is not a surprising piece of intellect nor an orator: but we have had masters in the art of "scoring," – *e.g.*, the Treasurer, and the President in the days of his Treasurership; – yet never was there any one who scored on the spur of the moment with the excruciating effect of this hon. member. After him the debate seems tame. "The hon. member from New" moves the adjournment of the House, and tries to speak without having prepared a speech, and fails. Finally, after a good deal, the House is adjourned, to the evident anguish of the President, whose sole revenge is that the private business, which he had deferred till after the public, falls through.

TRISTRAM

Hard Cases

The Editor, and the rest of those who *now* compose the Staff, are about to conquer their nervous agitation so far as to make a harrowing statement to the four corners of the world. In other words, to their readers. The Editor and Staff had ever encouraged, trusted, nurtured, and folded in their respective bosoms as individuals and in their collective bosom as an Editor and Staff, the baleful human being who is known to the public as “Excalibur.” When the Rounde Table was yet under the figurative hands of the metaphorical carpenter, “Excalibur” undertook, in full conclave, to supply “Hard Cases.” The Editor and Staff, having *never in their lives* heard of “Hard Cases” before, were very much interested, and anxious to hear all about them. The baleful human being told them, as they supposed, “all about them.” He stated that they were quite his own invention; and the specimens which he first produced were of such marked atrocity that the Editor and Staff saw no reason to doubt the truth of that statement. So “Excalibur” wrote the Introduction to the “Hard Cases” in the first number. Viewed, as it then was, [page 76] in “the bloom of young desire and purple light of love,” that Introduction appeared to the fond eyes of the Editor and Staff as not devoid of promise, and as breathing the artless candour of youth. Viewed in the lurid glare of Subsequent Events, that Introduction strikes the perhaps enfeebled minds of that same Staff and identical Editor, as on the whole the most fearful extant revelation of depraved humanity glorying in its crime. They will not trouble their readers to turn back to the first number; it will suffice to observe that in that Introduction the following announcements were made: – That the particulars of each question had been communicated in strict confidence, but that “Excalibur” had no doubt that this violation of good faith on his part would give an additional relish to the entertainment; and that questions of a revolting character would not be excluded, and he might add that the greater number would be of that description. This Introduction also contained a pun. It was such a very bad pun that the Editor and Staff were not aware that it was one; but Subsequent Events, which their above-mentioned and lurid glare, have put the matter beyond doubt. Such was the Introduction, and “Hard Cases” went on.

Nemesis did not set her foot down till the middle of last week; but she did so with such brilliant effect that the Editor and Staff were transferred with some precipitation into the middle of next. It fell on this wise. On Wednesday evening a statement was made before the conclave by the printer’s devil. That well-meaning though typographical fiend gave information that “Hard Cases” had been appearing for some years in something which he was understood to style

“Vanity Fair.” This intelligence was received with incredulity, not to say apathy. None of the Staff (and none of the Editor), had ever heard of “Vanity Fair,” or anything sounding at all like that. There was indeed one who recollected having read of a district of that name, or something approximate, in one of his nursery books, either Milton or Don Quixote; but the statement of the printer’s devil was regarded as in every way worthy of his non-printing namesake who is accredited with the parentage of lies. But at last a copy of a paper called “Vanity Fair” was abstracted by stealth from the premises of the Union Society by the Editor and Staff; and then the truth began to dawn. The effect can be better described than imagined. The Editor and Staff say this, because their confidence in their own powers of description is far more unlimited than their estimate of the imaginative power of their readers. They will, however, refrain from description, because every one of them would insist on describing in his own most telling style, and that would take up room. On the following morning a letter, dated from Australia, was received from “Excalibur.” The Editor and Staff do not hesitate to record their collective opinion that this letter was of a nugatory character unexampled in [page 77] history. It was principally composed of extracts from a poem of which it is sufficient to say the lines did not rhyme. The verses appeared from the context to be the production of an obscure writer designated as “our immortal Laureate.” The Editor and Staff being unacquainted with anyone of that name, and not having in their possession, as far as they were aware, any immortal article, beyond the present publication, did not expend an undue amount of mental energy in the perusal of this composition. The most striking sentiment was an opinion expressed by the writer that the moving isles of winter were shocking by night with noises of the Northern Sea. The Editor and Staff regarding this, in itself, as not improbable, were about to lay the letter aside, when they were arrested by the word “Excalibur.” It appeared that another individual of that name had been deservedly seized by an arm clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful, and brandish’d three times, and drawn under in the mere. The writer of “Hard Cases” expressed in his letter the opinion that he had been served worse; inasmuch as he had been brandished five times (*viz.*: in the five numbers of this Magazine) only to be drawn under at last. He also wished that he had been brandish’d with an apostrophe, instead of being brandished prosaically with an E. The Editor and Staff, not having heard any more of him, think it very possible that he expired in the perpetuation of this letter, at all events if it cost him as much to write it as them to read it. A princely fortune, the proceeds of the sale of this work, was immediately forwarded to the Editor of “Vanity Fair,” to compensate him for any loss he might have sustained; and the umbrella of the late Excalibur, which was the only piece of his furniture available, was on the point of cremation at the hands of the public hangman, when it was suddenly decided to present it to a distinguished Ashanti and carboniferous potentate in this University, as his

old one must surely be worn out with constant use. To myself, as the most intimate friend of the deceased, was deputed the duty of this presentation by the Editor and Staff, who authorise me to announce hereby the final cessation of “Hard Cases,” and to attempt to give the public some idea of the briny drop which now habitually rolls down their wasted but still intellectual countenances, and constantly necessitates a change of table-cloth on the Round Table.

Signed, *pro* Editor and Staff,
TRISTRAM

Ye Rounde Table I, June 22nd, 1878, no. 6, pp. 81-3.

Tempora Mutantur

Letter to the Editor of The Times, June 27th, A.D. 2078

[column 1:] *Oxford*

Sir, – The evening sun was now sinking over Shotover, when the learned and venerable Vice-Chancellor, Coffee Calcalli, heading a company of the rank and beauty of the land, and attired in his academical robes of strings of sea-shells, approached the interesting ruin of the Martyrs’ Memorial.

“This,” exclaimed the Vice-Chancellor, turning to the group, and gracefully opening his umbrella – it was an hereditary umbrella, manufactured by his ancestors on the Gold-coast of Africa, captured thence by Sir Cardinal Wolsey, Bart., who is said to have founded Christ Church at the very era when the reigning queen laid the first stone of the gorgeous theatre which bore her name, – which now, alas, – as the Vice-Chancellor once expressed it – has [column 2] left not a wrack behind, – his umbrella, worn once by his own great Predecessor in the Vice-Chancellorship – King Cole: “This,” exclaimed the Vice-Chancellor, “is the state of man! I allude to the Martyrs’ Memorial, not my umbrella.

This is the state of man: to-day he puts forth
The tender leaves of hope, and nips his root,
And when he fails, he falls like Lucifer
Into a lean and slippered pantaloon.

“I, ladies and gentlemen, am a lean and slippered pantaloon!”

It was here remarked by a by-stander, that the Vice-Chancellor had not got slippers, and certainly not a vestige of the other article of clothing mentioned. The by-stander, being of course an Undergraduate, was shortly after heard to

mention his name and college. The [page 82 column 1] Vice-Chancellor then proceeded to explain how the Martyrs' Memorial was erected to the memory of the martyred King, Charles I., who was barbarously beheaded on the same spot.

"Still," cried the Vice-Chancellor, lifting up his umbrella for a sounding board,

"There's a divinity doth hedge a King
Rough hew him how we will!"

"How true are these words of the immortal Bird. How wondrous the divinity that *doth* hedge every King, be his name Charles or Cole!" When the Vice-Chancellor had said this, he facetiously secreted himself behind the ruins, and emerged tattooed with a new pattern, and stained with woad, like an Ancient Briton: a race which inhabited this island some years before the victorious incursion of the combined New Zealanders and Ashantees. He had also flung some scarlet paint into one eye, intending, as he expressed it in the words of the Swan, to "make the green one red." He then slowly threaded his way through the prostrate bodies of that large majority of his audience which had been overcome by his last remark, and proceeded absently along the Broad, immersed in thought.

Two innocent New Zealanders, – extremely New, only about five years old, – were playing across his path. One of them was singing to the other, "Baa, baa, black sheep, have you any wool?"

"Plenty," replied the Vice-Chancellor, [column 2:] absently, mechanically raising his hand to his head. "On my head." And I am a Head. So that there is wool on me. Yet I am only a Vice-Chancellor. There is a Chancellor without a Vice. A Lord Chancellor. There is no wool on him. No: he is on wool. A sack of wool, in fact. Or in other words a woolsack. Ah, could I but get rid of my Vice, I might be on wool, and wool on me as well. I will make a conundrum out of that," said the Vice-Chancellor, and bring it out next Thursday at the Union, as a quotation from the Bard. But I forgot myself. I must dissemble!" The Vice-Chancellor was here observed dissembling for about a hundred yards. He dissembled mostly with his umbrella. As this prevented him from being able to see where he was going, he stumbled over some one who had succumbed to his last remark, and was now engaged in going to his long home in the middle of the pavement. It was the Senior Proctor. The Vice-Chancellor, seeing that he was coiling up in his last agonies, wished to shake hands with him, "Because," said he, "the Bird of Avon remarks that this mortal coil must give us paws." This turned out to be too much for the Proctor's vital spark of heavenly flame, and next morning friends were

requested to accept this intimation. The Vice-Chancellor immediately observed to the decorated official who habitually precedes him, –

“He was a man: take him for all in all
We shall not look upon his like again.”

The official, however, remarked that it was no good taking him for ‘all in ‘all, as ‘all had taken place at six o’clock that evening; though he had no doubt he could get him something cold out of the kitchen. The Vice-Chancellor has quoted the Bard less often since this. As I sat down, Sir, to write to your columns this faithful account of the [column 2] proceedings of the evening, I heard him observe in a faint voice that he was going to sleep,—perchance to dream. He then exclaimed that *there* was the rub. I looked out the window, but not seeing the rub, I posted my letter.

Your representative,
TRISTRAM

Ye Rounde Table I, June 1, 1878, no. 6, pp. 90-92.

Under The Clock

[column 1:] *Friday, May 29th.*

Capital Punishment in itself, goodness knows, is a dismal subject enough, but the abolition of Capital Punishment really is almost too dismal to think of. The consciousness that it is coming on, headed by a member who is prince of the class of heavy orators, seems to cast a gloom over our usually vivacious Private Business. The Librarian has not provided one of his sensational lists, the Treasurer merely smoulders, Coomassie is in collapse. The devotees of Private Business, who habitually walk out when the Mover begins, are understood to be dividing their attentions down there at [column 2:] the end of the room between gnashing their teeth and trying to keep their dogs outside the open window. Not with uniform success, in this last particular: but the failure solves at least one question. Hundreds of people have asked hundreds of others, – What becomes of Ex-Presidents? Of course it is generally understood that they turn up as Prime Ministers after fifty years or so, and then are hung round the walls of the Debating room: but what do they do meanwhile? Above all, what becomes of Ex-Presidents who are only just Ex? This question, as I said, has been much debated. But it is answered [page 91 column 1:] at last. *They are kept on the premises of the Union Society on debate nights to remove stray dogs with tenderness yet decision.* Beyond the slight incident which revealed this fact, nothing particular occurred.

Something had happened to the Great Unattached, as usual, but what it was I can't remember at this distance of time. So Private Business subsidises, and we begin to be Capitally Punished. The Hon. Mover speaks with his usual elevation of language and stature. Then Coomassie soars like the Phoenix from its ashes. This is a list of the writers Coomassie quoted: Aristotle, Cicero, Virgil, Bard of Avon, Pope, Tennyson, Swinburne, and the English translation of Isaiah. The hypercritical might have noticed that not one of all these quotations in the remotest degree bore upon the subject of Capital Punishment. But this is indeed a grovelling objection; and suppose it is true, was not every one highly delighted to lose sight of the dismal subject even for a quarter of an hour? The other grand attraction during the debate was the Unattached falling facetiously on the Hon. Mover, who felt very uncomfortable. He first tried to hide in all sorts of places out of the sight of the speaker, but finally gave it up in despair, and planted himself wildly in front of him, deluged with a detailed description of himself, mental and physical, beneath which, being unhappily *not* Unattached, he visibly quailed. And then after a sensible speech and frantic amendment [column 2:] from the Librarian, the House decided that it was rather too fond of Capital Punishment to part with it just yet.

Thursday, June 6th.

The Treasurer is actually himself again at last. It did seem as if the weight of office had taken it out of him, as he has been alternating between flatness and fatuity all through the Term; but it really does do one good to hear a display like his at the Private Business to-night. The suggestion, based on the recital of the experiences of an Ex-Librarian, that the missing *Church Times* was probably buried in the garden, and the tender anxiety to extinguish feelings of rivalry between the Union Messenger who whispered soft nothings to a fair one, and the hon. member who was interested in those proceedings, were really something like old times. The Librarian makes a very good speech, or rather what would have been a good speech if it had not been a still better essay. He thinks that the first half line of Macdermot's great lyric is one sign of approaching harmony between the child and the cockatrice, &c., and considers it "the one redeeming feature of an otherwise worthless production." Soon after out rushed the Great, – nay, on this occasion, the Gigantic Unattached. Being now engaged in going in for Smalls for the fifth time, he had thought it wise, for the elucidation of an obscure writer of verse in Greek or Latin, named Horace, to purchase a translation at once faithful and idiomatic, emanating from [page 92 column 1:] the prose of the celebrated Bohn. This was the result. First there came about five lines in a foreign language which no one in the House seemed to be acquainted with, and which every one eagerly asked the orator to translate. But we were too hasty.

The orator said “The translation is coming presently,” and went on. When the translation did come, it was this. “O fountain of Bandusia, more lustrous than glass, worthy of sweet wine not without flowers, to-morrow thou shalt be gifted with a kid,” – (much applause) – “to whom his brow swelling with budding horns foretells both Love and War.” The aptness of this masterly quotation to the question of the Abolition of War will be instantly perceived by all who can – shall we say, rise? – June – to the intellectual level of the hon. member. Then the orator soared above, and got among snakes and chrysalises and other reptile metaphors, and came to an end. Nobody else says or does anything much; and as War is not so deeply seated in our affectations as Capital Punishment, we consent to get rid of it, or to allow it to take itself off; and every one severally congratulates himself that we have actually got through a broadly theoretical debate on the subject, without having even once heard from the lips of a single speaker the fresh and startling intelligence that the war-drum is positively *wild* to throb no longer and the battle-flag feverously desirous to be furled, in the Parliament of Man, the Federation of the World!

[column 2:] *Thursday, June 13th.*

To-night is signalised by the most formidable irruption on record on the part of the One, the Only Coffee. The general public had indeed previously gathered that he had been wont to peruse the Bard of Avon in an Ashanti translation, while he was running down the golden sand along with Afric’s sunny fountains, before he took to clothing and theology: but that the acute barbarian should pose as a critic on points of English grammar, was an idea that had probably never entered into the wildest head. Yet to-night it came to pass. He had got hold of the account of Sir Stafford and the luncheon, and began to pull it to pieces. First he was of opinion that the punctuation of this document was subversive of—of—of its punctuation. Feeling that this was lucid, he went on. Mr. Strachan-Davidson had been cruelly bereft of his hereditary hyphen. The Ex-Lord Chancellor had become Lord Selbourne. There was a good deal more of the same kind. Finally “the printers had seen fit to put into the mouth of the hon. President language of a character which could hardly be termed English.” The President was in fact represented to have used a verb in the singular, governed by a good many nouns in the plural. No doubt it was just as well to lay this at the door of the printers: but those who have noticed how fearfully and wonderfully made are the President’s sentences, may well doubt whether it was *all* the printers. [page 93 column 1:] On other subjects too the President had rather a warm time of it. The hon. member who doesn’t like Capital Punishment (though really, to look at his ingenuous countenance, no one would have guessed that he had a personal interest in the subject) has also another objection. He objects to the practice of

canvassing for the Presidentship. At least, he calls it a “practice.” The President, very naturally, styles it a “custom.” He fancies the House rather likes it, and as (as is well known) his own predilections run quite in the same direction, he doesn’t see why it shouldn’t go on. By the bye, why is it that the New College candidate sets his face against the “practice” (ostensibly) while his friends keep up the “custom” by canvassing for him like anything? One doesn’t like to see an absence of harmony between a man and his friends. As for the motion, he makes a fair enough speech, with his hands behind him, and gets the applause he deserves [column 2] for having learnt his lesson so well. The Treasurer is a trifle more sensible than usual, if not overwhelmingly comic; and deals more in argument than is his wont: with very considerable success. Then the Wild Irishman, and among others a real live Indian, who created loud shouts of “Order!” at the entrance of the President by not taking off his fez. As, however, he was seen to be explaining to those immediately around him that it could not with justice be regarded as a hat, the House was lenient, and suffered it. He was very much astonished, he said, to hear how shamefully his countrymen were oppressed: he had never noticed it himself: didn’t feel as if he were oppressed: had previously fancied, to judge from what he knew of India, that the Maltese move was highly popular; but having heard such authoritative statements this evening to the contrary, really hardly knew what to think. An apathetic division seems to have confirmed his first opinion.

TRISTRAM

NOTE

1. I owe this identification to the kindness of Ian Jackson (Berkeley, California).

‘Star-defeated sighs’: Classical cosmology and astronomy in the poetry of A. E. Housman

by

John Cartwright

One the long nights through must lie
Spent in star-defeated sighs
But why should you as well as I
Perish? gaze not in my eyes
(*A Shropshire Lad* XV)

A.E. Housman is renowned as the scholar-poet who in his lifetime published two slim volumes of verse – *A Shropshire Lad* (1896)¹ and *Last Poems* (1922)² – a much larger volume of classical papers, and an edition of Manilius’ *Astronomica* (among other poets) that remains the definitive Latin edition to this day. Although Housman had little sympathy with Manilius’ stoical beliefs about the operation of divine reason in the universe, both the poems and the *Astronomica* share the sense of human beings playing out their lives in a cosmos where stronger impersonal forces are at work. Since *Astronomica* is an extended astrological text, this is, of course, to be expected; in the poems, the cosmological and astronomical references are more subtly exploited and are derived from other classical authors, such as Lucretius, and Housman’s own extensive knowledge of astronomy. Nevertheless, an awareness of such sources and references remains crucial for a fuller understanding of Housman’s poetic achievement.

The purpose of this article then is twofold. Firstly, and by way of setting a context for the second part, I seek to show briefly how Housman’s poetry can be read as part of a more general struggle (shared by writers such as Tennyson, Browning, Hardy, Swinburne and Meredith) that took place in Housman’s lifetime to confront the implications of advances in evolutionary theory, cosmology, and astrophysics, and to formulate a wider synthesis that integrated the objective facts of science with the subjective reality of human experience. Secondly, and primarily, I aim to show how an understanding of specific traditions in classical philosophy, and Housman’s own expertise in spherical astronomy (itself a necessary adjunct to his classical scholarship), considered in the context of Housman’s own worldview and his personal life, illuminates the reading of Housman’s verse.

The reconsideration of man's place in nature was a process that acquired a particular urgency in the second half of the nineteenth century. As Pamela Gossin observes in her similarly-intentioned treatment of the work of Thomas Hardy:

Victorian Culture was uniquely situated to integrate its knowledge of astronomical and cosmological history – ancient to near modern – with its own emergent and every more urgent attempts to understand and explain humanity's place in the cosmos. (Gossin (2007) 58)

This more general quest by Victorian writers has, of course, been the subject of numerous critical studies, but Housman has rarely been singled out as an exemplary figure in this regard.³ This may be due to his perceived status as a minor poet compared to say Browning, Tennyson or Hardy, or more simply because his confrontation with the implications of scientific materialism is less overt. Tennyson openly confessed in his poem 'Parnassus' to the two "terrible Muses" of Astronomy and geology that influenced much of his work; and Hardy explicitly deals with the challenges of geology, astronomy and evolution in such novels as *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873), *Two on a Tower* (1882) and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891). But the troubles of Housman's Shropshire lads and the more personal voices in *Last Poems* do not immediately lend themselves to an analysis in terms of scientifically-induced existential angst. Nevertheless, I would like to maintain that a careful reading of Housman's poetic output in the context of his classical studies, his personal life and contemporary debates concerning the validity of scientific materialism, shows that he was similarly engaged in the task of making sense of life (and his own life in particular) in a universe increasingly succumbing to scientific as opposed to theological explanation.

Housman recruited two disciplines in particular to his central poetic purpose: cosmology (primarily the ideas advanced by the Roman poet Lucretius) and astronomy. In his scholarly work, Housman was not primarily concerned with Lucretius as a classical author (although he did publish a few papers on the subject) but was clearly familiar with his writings. Moreover, as we shall see, Lucretius was a classical authority frequently invoked in nineteenth century debates concerning atomism and evolution. In astronomy, however, Housman had a longstanding amateur interest and, moreover, developed a mastery of spherical astronomy (i.e. the apparent movements of the planets and stars on the celestial sphere irrespective of the theoretical system designed to explain them) and the history of astronomy in order to assist with his work on Manilius and other authors. Both cosmology and astronomy were used to explore the position of man in the natural world. But to this mix we must also add a defining ingredient

of Housman's personal life: his unrequited love for Moses Jackson whom he first met as an undergraduate at Oxford – an attraction which Tom Stoppard neatly summarised as an “unremitting, lopsided, lifelong, hopeless constancy to a decent chap who was in no need of it, temperamentally unfitted for it, and never for a moment inclined to call upon it” (introduction, para. 9). Housman sent a copy of *Last Poems* to Jackson remarking in a humorous vein that “...you are largely responsible for my writing poetry and you ought to take the consequences” (quoted in Graves (1979) 189).⁴ It is this distinctive fusion of a materialist ontology and frustrated human desires played out under a sky where, as Tennyson put it “[t]he stars... blindly run” that provides one of the keys to understand Housman's poems and points to their essential philosophical and emotional coherence.

Housman and Classical Philosophy: the Stoics and Lucretius

Housman's most notable work of scholarship was his edition of the *Astronomica* of Marcus Manilius. It was a work that occupied him for over 25 years and one that finally appeared in five volumes (published at his own expense) between the years 1903 and 1930. Manilius was a Roman poet living during the early 1st century AD under the emperor Augustus (and possibly Tiberius) and is known to posterity only through his authorship of *Astronomica*. Whilst the *Astronomica* is largely concerned with astrology, the author also tries to advance his own Stoic beliefs whilst simultaneously attempting to discredit the Epicureanism of Lucretius. Housman was under no illusion about the talents of Manilius, regarding him a third rate poet and someone who was also confused in his astronomy. Despite Housman's masterly rendering of the text, the work has never held much interest for modern readers. When G.P. Goold (one of Housman's successors in the Latin Chair at UCL) published a version in English in 1977 this was the first complete English translation since 1697 and it remains the most recent.⁵

According to the Stoicism of Manilius, the universe can be divided into two states: passive matter and active reason or fate. Fate represents the working out of the Universal mind (or *logos*) that shapes the behaviour and destiny of things on the earth. In such a world, the proper virtuous response is to use reason to control the passions, to follow where Nature leads, and so achieve an inner calm. Stoicism also provided a philosophical basis for the acceptance of the truths and efficacy of astrology. In this system, the universe is orderly and rational and held together by the operation of the *logos*. The *logos* is equated to a divine fire, to be found in the stars and also the human soul. This stoic divinity is favourably disposed towards humankind (an idea that Housman would have

found hard to accept) and its intentions can be revealed through the study of astrology. Thus in Goold's translation we read Manilius arguing that by the recognition of our fate we free ourselves from worry and learn that "each one must bear his appointed lot" (1977, 225). Furthermore:

...God and all-controlling reason, then, derives earthy beings from the signs of heaven; though the stars are remote at a far distance, he compels recognition of their influences, in that they give to the peoples of the world their lives and destinies and to each man his own character. (*Astronomica* II.80-6, Goold (1977) 89).

Early readers of *A Shropshire Lad* were struck by what they took to be its inherent stoicism. Charles Sorley called Housman "startlingly stoical" (1919, 201); Haber (an astute Housman scholar) summarised the tenor of his poems as "[i]f the present hour offers no reward worth pursuing, Housman may counsel the refuge offered by stoicism" (1967, 138); and Nisbet, reviewing Ricks' *Collected Critical Essays* observed that "Housman's thought is Stoic" (1969, 321). The label is understandable if we inspect his verse. In *LP IX*, for example, we are told that

The truths of our proud and angry dust
Are from eternity, and shall not fail,
Bear them we can, and if we can we must.

Similarly, in *ASL XLVIII* we read how "earth and high heaven are fixed of old and founded strong" and how "high heaven and earth ail from the prime foundation"; the solution being to "[l]et us endure an hour and see injustice done". In *ASL LI* – a poem inspired by visiting the Greco-Roman statues in the British Museum – the stoic response to misfortune acquires a more personal dimension and seems to be informed by his repressed homosexuality. In the poem, a male statue from distant antiquity confides that he too has different thoughts to the majority of men: "I too survey that endless line / Of men whose thoughts are not mine"; concluding with the advice to Housman:

Courage, lad, 'tis not for long
Stand, quit you like stone, be strong."

But, as is often the case in Housman, the argument is subverted from within, and the price of such stoic resolve is the negation of manhood:

And light on me my trouble lay,
And I stepped out in flesh and bone
Manful like a man of stone

Whether Housman's characters in *A Shropshire Lad* are inherently stoic, however, is a debatable point; it is also questionable whether Housman himself is advocating a stoic response to life's travails. The crucial point is the identity of the voices in the poems and the realisation that the narrator in the poems is not necessarily Housman the man. Indeed, Housman had originally intended his first volume of verse to be called *The Poems of Terence Hearsay* and two poems in the collection (ASL VIII and LXII) refer to Terence by name. The title was possibly conceived to enable him to confound any identification of the poet with the Latin scholar A.E. Housman. It also gave Housman a poetic mask to wear to separate the voice in the poems from that of his academic writing. Even the surname "Hearsay" is a contrast to his scholarly work where nothing is accepted on hearsay but only on the basis of evidence and the exercise of sound judgement.⁶ But Terence is not the only character in the poems. The lad is variously conceived as the soldier, the innocent rustic, the adolescent coping with the onset of manhood, the sinner, and even the dead. Moreover the poems are often overlaid with an ironic countervoice or even, as Ricks observed, an inherent "tug of contraries" (1968, 169). Clarence Lindsay thought he could detect four voices in the poems: the "silly lad" with no ironic awareness; the speaker addressing the silly lad; the ironic commentator; and the "duplicitous voice where imagery and sense are at odds and perform an anti-romantic critique" (1999, 345). Amid this multiplicity of voices we might ask, "Could the real Housman stand up?" But the strength of his poetry, of course, is that he doesn't, and the separation of poet and persona is crucial to his art. Leggett goes so far as to argue that the private emotional life of Housman is not particularly relevant to understanding his poems, suggesting that "[t]he persona thus becomes a kind of Yeatsian mask or antiself, the opposite of all that the poet represents in his private life" (1976, 331).

It is this distinction between the poet and the personae of the poems that is crucial and undermines any attempts to read any coherent advocacy of Stoicism in the verse. Yet many did, forcing Housman to complain in a letter to J.B. Priestley that:

...I wish people would not call me a Stoic. I am a Cyrenaic, and for the Stoics, except as systematisers of knowledge in succession to the Peripatetics, I have a great dislike and contempt (quoted in Burnett (2007) II 571).

This was no off-the cuff remark for in another letter twelve years later he wrote to Houston Martin that "[i]n philosophy I am a Cyrenaic or egoistical hedonist" (quoted in Burnett (20067) II 527-8).⁷

On the basis of this evidence I think it fair to say that despite Housman's preoccupation with Manilius (which probably did not begin until a few years

after writing *A Shropshire Lad* anyway) and the response of some readers, Housman's verse is not first and foremost an exploration of Stoic philosophy, a tradition we must conclude for which Housman had little respect.

It is ironic that Lucretius, the very thinker whom Manilius tried to discredit, provides a more serious subtext to Housman's poetry than the stoicism of Manilius. Housman's familiarity with Lucretius has been well documented: Housman published four papers on Lucretius in his lifetime and a fifth was published after his death;⁸ and during the latter part of his academic career at Cambridge he gave lectures on Books V and VI of *De Rerum Natura*.⁹ Although the earliest paper, *Lucretiana*, was published in 1897, one year after the publication of *A Shropshire Lad*, it is clear that Housman was very familiar with Lucretius at the time of writing the poems.¹⁰ Although Housman could be mercilessly scathing about the scholarship of others, pouncing on any perceived lapse of judgement or technical error, he was fulsome in his praise for Munro's 1864 edition and translation of Lucretius, writing about him that:

In his Lucretius he produced a work more compact of excellence than any edition of any classic which has ever been produced in England (Cambridge Inaugural Lecture (1911) = Ricks (1961) 299).

Titus Lucretius Carus (c.94 BC – 55 BC) was a Roman poet and philosopher living during a period of turbulence and civil strife in Rome. His only surviving work is a long poem, *De Rerum Natura* (*On the Nature of Things*), addressed to his friend Gaius Memmius, a Roman statesman, tribune of the people, and, according to Ovid, an accomplished orator and the author of a number of erotic poems. *De Rerum Natura* was written, says Lucretius, to free humanity from fear and superstition, especially the fear of the gods and the fear of death. It attempts to do so by expounding the ideas of Epicurus and offering a purely naturalistic explanation of phenomena. The central tenets of Lucretius's Epicureanism (in terms of epistemology, ontology and ethics) are:

1. Empiricism: all knowledge is derived from the senses.

2. Materialism: the world is made up of only of atoms and the void. Even the soul is just an assemblage of atoms that disperse after death. The soul, therefore, is not immortal.

3. Hedonism: 'the good' is not an absolute ideal or a metaphysical abstraction but is to be equated with pleasurable sensations.

As soon as *A Shropshire Lad* appeared in 1896, Lucretian themes were noted by people who had no awareness that Housman was a Latin scholar (he was then a

Professor of Latin at UCL). An anonymous reviewer (though one seemingly of a Christian faith) detected the influence of the Greek atomists with dismay, saying of Housman that “he is a philosopher, a disciple of Democritus, and holds that we are not spirits as the best men have thought...” (quoted in Gardner (1992) 68). One remarkably prescient review of *A Shropshire Lad* came from the pen of William Archer. Writing for the *Fortnightly Review* in August 1898, Archer observed that:

Mr Housman is no Shropshire Burns singing at his plough. He is a man of culture... and I think he has an Elzevir classic in the pocket of his smock frock. But it is not Theocritus, not the Georgics or the Eclogues; I rather take it to be Lucretius (quoted in Gardner (1992) 76).

There are indeed numerous parallels between the philosophy of Lucretius and the general thrust of Housman’s poetry.¹¹ One of these is that the world was not fashioned for human comfort. In Munro’s translation Lucretius writes:

I would venture to affirm, and led by many other facts to maintain, that the nature of things has by no means been made for us by divine power: so great are the defects with which it is encumbered. (Lucretius *DRN* V.196-9, Munro *ad loc.*; see also *Lucr.* II.180-1).

Housman espoused similar sentiments. In a letter to Gilbert Murray, for example, he observed:

...do you think you can outwit the resourceful malevolence on nature?
...It looks to me as if the state of mankind always had been and always would be a state of just tolerable discomfort (Burnett (2007) II 120).

This theme is recurrent in Housman’s poetry (although for reasons noted earlier in the discussion of Stoicism it would be wrong to see in all the poems the voice of Housman the philosopher). In *More Poems* VIII (published after Housman’s death) we read of “The toil of all that be / Helps not the primal fault.”¹² *LP* XII is more explicit that the “laws of God” and “the laws of man” were alien to him:

And how am I to face the odds
Of man’s bedevilment and God’s?
I, a stranger and afraid
In a world I never made.

Similarly in *ASL* XLVIII we read that “...high heaven and earth ail from the prime foundation”.

The world may impede our happiness but Lucretius is concerned to allay our fear of death by arguing that we are as senseless in the state of death as we

were in the state of non-being before we were born; and since we do not fear the latter we should not fear the former. Lucretius writes that:

...death therefore to us is nothing, concerns us not a jot, since the nature of the mind is proved to be mortal... So now we give ourselves no concern about any self which we have been before, nor do we feel any distress on the score of that self. (Lucretius III.830-60; Munro *ad loc.*)

This is one of the consolations offered in *ASL XLVIII*: in the face of hardship we can “call to thought, if now you grieve a little / The days when we had rest, O soul, for they were long....Then it went when with me, in days ere I was born.”

Lucretius praises Epicurus for removing from men’s minds both the fear of death and enslavement to superstition (Lucretius I.62-145); he also argues that it is the fear of death that is responsible for evil (Lucretius III 31-93). In *LP III* (a poem originally intended for *ASL*) the young man who kills Hecate (the “Queen of air and darkness”) escapes his own fear of death. When Hecate curses that the slayer will die tomorrow the narrator of the poem replies:

O Queen of air and darkness
I think ‘tis truth you say,
And I will die to-morrow;
But you will die to-day.

A similar set of ideas helps elucidate *LP XXV* (‘The Oracles’). The first stanza declares that the oracles of Dodona and Delphi “where gods told lies of old” are now silent. The one source of truth however is the “heart within that tells the truth and tells it twice as plain”. This “truth” is that the soul is mortal, and yet it is one that can be borne just as the Spartan’s bore the news of Xerxes’ army approaching from the East: “The Spartans on the sea-wet rock sat down and combed their hair.”

Housman was not the only thinker of this period, however, to take a keen interest in the ideas of Lucretius. Frank Turner has shown how from about 1870 to 1910 interpretations of Lucretius served as one of many conflict zones for debates between scientific naturalism and Christian apologetics (Turner (1972/3) 335). Turner’s essential argument is that Christian thinkers, feeling marginalised by advances in science, were keen to suggest that the philosophical naturalism and materialism of such thinkers as T.H. Huxley, John Tyndall, Herbert Spencer and W.K. Clifford were really just re-hashed versions of the ideas set forth by Lucretius in the first century BC. This depiction enabled theists to attack scientific materialism as outdated and flawed. Another secondary advantage, according to Turner, was that the use of Lucretius as a platform for this debate pointed to the

continued relevance of the Classics at a time when classical education felt under attack from the demand (especially by Huxley) for a more science-based curriculum in schools and colleges.¹³ As Turner summarises: “Lucretius became a pawn in the struggle for cultural dominance between men of science and men of religion” (Turner (1972/3) 338).

John Holmes also considers the revival of interest in Lucretius from the 1860s and attributes it to three factors: better editions and translations (e.g. Munro’s 1864 edition); the growth of secularism; and the firmer establishment of modern atomic theory in physics and chemistry.¹⁴ I think we can add to this list the fact that Lucretius could be portrayed as a forerunner of Darwin, whose own reputation grew steadily from 1859 onwards. In an introduction to a volume of poems written by George Romanes, one of Darwin’s followers, Herbert Warren, then Professor of Poetry at Oxford, chose, for example, to comment on the writings of Darwin in the following terms:

There is no passage in the verse of his grandfather Erasmus so poetical as the concluding page of the ‘Origin of Species’, a passage which reminds the classical scholar of nothing so much as of Lucretius, even as Lucretius more than any other ancient seems to anticipate in some of his observations and generalisations Darwin himself (1896, x).

Like Darwin, Lucretius also speculated about the emergence of life on earth, even at one point coming close to an account of natural selection.¹⁵ But it is the sheer scope of Lucretius’ ideas that is impressive. *De Rerum Natura* is presented in a series of six books dealing with the following topics: matter and space; movements and shapes of atoms; life and mind; sensation and sex; cosmology and sociology; meteorology and geology. This is why it appealed to the movement of scientific naturalism in the late Victorian era: it gave historical precedence and classical kudos to the sense that scientific materialism could, given time and intellectual freedom, encompass and explain the working of the entire universe. In this respect Darwin added the final touches to the Lucretian project: the removal of teleology from the natural world and the location of life and the origin of humankind in material processes governed by natural law. Moreover, Lucretius had considered as a poet and a man what the implications of this world view were for human life. Like Darwin, he had looked into the abyss and not flinched.

For many Christians, however, the ideas of Lucretius were, understandably, anathema, and *De Rerum Natura* was frequently attacked. In 1868 Tennyson published his poem “Lucretius” in which he repeats the anecdote (probably apocryphal) first started by St Jerome that the cold-hearted Lucretius, for all his rationality, was driven mad by a love potion administered by his wife

and ended his life by suicide. As John Holmes has recently observed, Tennyson also uses the figure of Lucretius in this poem to explore the implications of Darwinism. As Holmes notes:

Through *Lucretius*, Tennyson pathologises Darwinism, presenting the Darwinian world view as misguided even to the point of madness” (2009, 246)

But by the end of his undergraduate days Housman had lost his Christian faith. In a revealing letter he claimed that he was “a deist at 13 and an atheist at 21” (Burnett (2007) II 328). In his writings Housman is never explicit about his attitude to the debates of his day concerning the scope and adequacy of scientific naturalism, but he probably had in mind the religious and philosophical implications of the work of Darwin, Spencer, Huxley and Tyndall, when he observed in his 1892 ‘Introductory Lecture’ that:

Man stands today in the position of one who has been reared from his cradle as the child of a noble race and the heir to great possessions, and who finds at his coming of age that he has been deceived alike as to his origin and expectations; that he neither springs of the high lineage he fancied, nor will inherit the vast estate he looked for... (*Introductory Lecture* (1892) = Ricks (1961) 272)

As I have shown elsewhere (see n.15), Housman also explicitly embraced Darwin as someone of a Lucretian frame of mind, referring to him in his 1909 Latin address from UCL to Cambridge University (written for the centenary celebrations of Darwin’s life) as someone who was fortunate “*rerum potuit cognoscere causas*” (‘who could understand the causes of things’) – the same phrase used by Virgil to describe Lucretius.¹⁶

Both Darwin and Housman were enthralled by the natural world and both sensate to its aesthetic pleasures whilst fully aware of its indifference to human suffering. Lucretius seems to hold a similar position and, although the majority of *De Rerum Natura* is about how gods are not responsible for natural phenomena, at the start of the poem he appends a hymn to Venus as the creative force behind Nature: “thou then are sole mistress of the nature of things” (Munro’s translation of I.21). This sense of a Lucretian and Darwinian Nature stripped of ultimate meaning and concern for human affairs, and yet, like Venus, irresistibly seductive is conveyed in one of Housman’s most popular poems: “Tell me not here, it needs not saying” (*LP XL*) in which he combines a frustrated eroticism with a repudiation of the pathetic fallacy. In this single graceful poem, Housman fuses together his intellectual conviction that Nature is “heartless, witless” and blind to human desires, with powerful erotic feelings of devotion (“soft Septembers”, “blanching Mays”) and the bitterness of betrayal and unrequited

love. This is one of several occasions where Housman overtly challenges the pathetic fallacy of a feeling nature (compare, for example, *LP XXVII*).

But it was the materialism of Lucretius that Housman seems to have found most compelling. For Lucretius the soul is a material thing that passes out of the body and disperses abroad at the end of life, and Housman's ontology is similarly materialistic (see *ASL XXXII*, *LP I*). Haber notes the "unending cycle of atomic dissolution and recombination in the poet's work" (1967, 164). Housman's disbelief in an afterlife is sardonically conveyed in *ASL XLIII* ('The Immortal Part'). The poem reverses the normal expectations of Christian dualism: the inner voice that speaks to the narrator in the poem comes not from an immortal soul but from the enduring bones – the part of the body that will last the longest. The bones point out that the soul will eventually be "slain / And the man of bone remain". The poem ends with a very Lucretian set of phrases:

Before this fire of sense decay,
This smoke of thought blow clean away,
And leave with ancient night alone
The steadfast and enduring bone.

Burnett (1997, 353) notes the similarity between this poem and Lucretius III.436-7, to which we can add III.596-8, which in Munro's translation reads: "the power of the soul gathering itself up from the inmost depths of body has oozed out and dispersed like smoke..."). Hence life, in *De Rerum Natura*, is merely a temporary manifestation of essential components (i.e. atoms). Lucretius speaks of

those seeds which constitute wind and heat, cause life to stay in the limbs. Therefore vital heat and wind are within the body and abandon our frame after death. (Lucretius III.126-8; Munro *ad loc.*)

This theme underlies one of Housman's most delightful, haunting and deservedly popular short poems, *ASL XXXII* 'From far from eve and morning', where the poet considers the place of human contact in a material universe.

From far, from eve and morning
And yon twelve-winded sky,
The stuff of life to knit me
Blew hither: here am I.

Now – for a breath I tarry
Nor yet disperse apart –
Take my hand quick and tell me,
What have you in your heart.

Speak now, and I will answer;
How shall I help you, say;
Ere to the wind's twelve quarters
I take my endless way.

The opening line suggest that the constituents of life have been temporarily gathered from across vast distances of space and time, with “from eve and morning” recalling perhaps the fall of Hephaistos from heaven in Milton’s *Paradise Lost* (itself a line evoking the immensity of the post-Copernican universe): ‘From Morn / To Noon he fell, from Noon to dewy Eve’ (742-6). The chaotic arrangement of the matter of life before it assembles from all directions into a sentient being is further reinforced by the idea of the “twelve-winded sky”.¹⁷ The repetitions of the letter ‘f’ in “stuff of life”, followed by a parallel repetition of ‘h’ in “hither” and “here” and later “hand”, “have” and “heart” give a breathless sensation to the arrival (and survival) of life. The fleeting nature of life is enforced by the urgency that adheres to the word “Now” and the subordinate clause “for a breath I tarry...” set off between dashes. The narrator is metaphorically and literally pausing for breath in the brief interlude between the incoherent state of life’s components and their ultimate dispersal to the winds. Housman seems to explicitly identify life with the physicality of breath reaffirming what so terrified Tennyson in *In Memoriam* that “the spirit doth but mean the breath”.¹⁸ The brevity of life is further driven home by the injunction to “take my hand quick”, with the word “quick” echoing the very process of a temporary quickening of life. The last two lines foretell the dispersal of the stuff of life back into the chaos, a process that takes place in all directions (“the wind’s twelve quarters”) and one that is endless. The poem reflects the mutability of things as described by Lucretius but is also consistent with the Darwinian view of life as something impermanent and forever shifting.

Interestingly, Tennyson’s poem *Lucretius* envisages a similar scene of the endless clashing of atoms when Lucretius (the narrator in the poem) remembers a dream:

Terrible: for it seem’d
A void was made in Nature, all her bonds
Crack’d; and I saw the flaring atom-streams
And torrents of her myriad universe,
Ruining along the illimitable inane,
Fly on to clash together again, and make
Another and another frame of things
For ever.

In his insightful Darwinian reading of this poem, John Holmes shows how the disgust towards sexuality expressed by Lucretius in the poem is Tennyson's positing of the "moral and psychological challenge" of Darwinism (2009, 256). Tennyson's Lucretius realises that in a material worldview he is merely another type of animal subject to base and beastly sexual instincts that fill him with disgust, a conclusion that drives him to despair. Tennyson's own solution was to repudiate the notion that Darwinism could satisfactorily explain the origin and evolution of life.

In *ASL XXXII*, however, Housman reaches different conclusions, identifying redemptive qualities in moments of desire and affection. During the brief emergence of life from the clashing of atoms, the essential and necessary thing is to make human contact and attend to the heart's affections – "take my hand quick and tell me / What have you in your heart" – and to proffer help and solace: "how can I help you, say". As a theist, Tennyson was obliged to refute Lucretius whereas Housman embraced him.

Housman rejected Christianity but he composed one poem, *MP XLVII*, that superficially seems to have a religious theme. The poem is sometime erroneously given the title 'For my Funeral' but this seems to have been an instruction added to the poem by Housman and not a title. The funeral service was held in Trinity College Chapel on 4 May 1936, during which the poem was sung. Haber, however, considers the poem to be "a deceptive trap for the righteous" and "his final sardonic jest with God and man" (1963, 177). The jest is that although the poem reads superficially like a supplication to God to embrace his departed soul, the fact that "thou" and "thee" are not capitalised indicates that Housman is really writing to Nature, asking that she reabsorbs his compound elements into the ceaseless Lucretian atomic flux:

We now to peace and darkness
And earth and thee restore
Thy creature that thou madest
And wilt cast forth no more.

Evidence that Housman's thoughts may have lay in this direction is provided by his poem '*Parta Quies*' ('rest is won'). Although not published until after Housman's death (as the last poem, *XLVIII*, in *More Poems* assembled by his brother Laurence), Housman wrote this as early as 1881 for an Oxford magazine.¹⁹ It is a poem that melds a biblical view of the Apocalypse with a Lucretian view of death as a final state of non-being:

When earth's foundations flee,
 Nor sky nor land nor sea
 At all is found,
 Content you, let them burn:
 It is not your concern
 Sleep on, sleep sound.

Mackenzie suggests that Housman uses this device to “subordinate the Christian vision to the Lucretian” (2007, 162). The fleeing of “earth’s foundations” suggests a final destructive act. Lucretius himself had no doubt that the earth was finite and one day would be destroyed:

With good reason therefore all things perish, when they have been rarefied
 by the ebb of particles and succumb to blows from without... In this
 way the walls too of the great world around shall be stormed and fall to
 decay and crumbling ruin. (Lucretius II.1141-8; Munro *ad loc.*; see also
 Lucretius VI.100-10)

This same sense of final destruction is found in *ASL L* (“Where doomsday may
 thunder and lighten / And little will matter to one”) and in *MP XLIII* (“...on
 through night to morning / The world runs ruinward”).

Housman and Astronomy

The other science that Housman drew upon in his poems was astronomy. Throughout the Victorian period astronomy was a branch of science that had a strong popular and amateur following. Housman’s own interest began at an early age. In a letter to Maurice Pollet, written towards the end of his life in 1933, he noted how in his school days he eagerly he read a “little book” on astronomy he found in his parents’ house, and how thereafter astronomy became a life-long interest (Burnett (2007) II 328). In his recollections of Alfred Housman, his brother Laurence recalled how the three brothers played a game on the lawn in their garden at Bromsgrove, forming a sort of human orrery with Laurence the sun, Alfred the moon and Basil the Earth.²⁰ When Housman was fourteen he wrote a poem for a school competition about Sir Walter Raleigh. In it he reflects on the idea that travelling brings other constellations into view (an idea he exploited in his later verse, especially *LP XVII*):

He flies to other lands afar
 The lands beneath the evening star
 Where fairer constellations rise... (Burnett (1997) 193)

Housman's impressive knowledge of astronomy at a professional level is demonstrated in his later classical scholarship where he applied his sound understanding of the history of astronomy and the movements of the heavenly bodies as they appear to earth-bound observers (sometimes called spherical astronomy) to the exegesis and emendation of classical texts. Housman could be merciless in correcting the errors of his peers. In a withering comment on an article by an American scholar J.E. Harry (who had interpreted lines in Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis* as a description of the stars and planets in the dawn sky) Housman gleefully pointed out that:

His description of dawn is a description of what never happened even in Kentucky, and shows that his attention was chiefly fixed, as it naturally would be, on the squirrels ('*Aster Seirios* in Eur. IA. 6-7' (1914), *Classical Papers* 886)

Having impaled his victim on a technical error, Housman proceeds to dismember him, showing that Professor Harry had made both astronomical and textual errors in attempting to identify the star referred to by Agamemnon in the play as Aldebaran, whereas it could only have been a planet.

An even more impressive display of erudition is to be found in his commentary on the editing of a poem (number 678) previously examined by various scholars and included in the *Latin Anthology* edited by Alexander Riese in 1869. Housman demonstrates that the attempts of Riese and others ("these well-intentioned but ill-informed editors") to understand the period of revolution of the planets in the poem is flawed by an improper understanding of how the revolutions would have appeared to an ancient observer using a geocentric system. According to Housman, Riese and others made the error of using heliocentric figures for the periods of the revolutions of the planets, which were obviously anachronistic.²¹

It would seem natural therefore that Housman should use astronomical imagery, with all its long history of resonance between the microcosm and macrocosm and its flexible metaphorical qualities, in his verse. The place of astronomical concepts in Housman's verse has been touched on by earlier critics but never with the thoroughness the subject warrants. In examining the influence of astronomy on Housman's verse, Haber observed that many of Housman's poems unfold and conclude in a circular manner, reflecting, he maintained, the crucial importance of apparent circular motion in astronomy (1954, 154). Haber noticed that the last line or two in Housman's poems were typically echoes of the opening lines in terms of key words, thoughts or even whole phrases. Perhaps the most striking example is ASL XXXVI which even deals with the poetic conceit

that on a spherical earth walking in a straight line will eventually bring the observer back to the starting point – although the poem itself is about love and separation. Given the central metaphor of the poem, one might object that in this case the circularity is hardly surprising, but Haber estimates that about one in three poems have this form. An obvious example is the well-known *ASL II*, which starts with “Loveliest of trees the cherry now” and ends with “To see the cherry hung with snow”. Haber attributes this device of Housman to his preoccupation with astronomy, suggesting that he transposed the concepts of cycles, circles and revolution, so crucial to spherical astronomy and astrology, to the structure of his poems. I suspect here that Haber may have uncharacteristically overstated the case: some of the examples he gives do not so convincingly fall into this form and the very nature of poetry often invites circular closure.

Whether the poems have inherent circularity or not is a moot point, but one thing many of the poems do convey is a strong sense of the earth’s diurnal motion. In poetry generally, of course, dawn, evening and dusk can all take on symbolic connotations, but this is especially evident in Housman. In *LP XXXVI* (‘Revolution’) the poem’s most vivid image is the shadow cone (“The vast and moon-eclipsing cone of night”) formed by the interruption of the sun’s light by the bulk of the earth. The poem ends with the observation that at midday the shadow cone crosses the nadir and menacingly “begins to climb”.²² ‘Revolution’ is placed near the end of *Last Poems*. Significantly, the very last poem (*LP XLI* or ‘Fancy’s Knell’) also concludes with the approach of night: “The lofty shade advances”. ‘Fancy’s Knell’ is an appropriate poem to stand at the end of the last volume of verse Housman published in his lifetime. Although the village mentioned in the poem (Abdon-under-Clee) does exist, he did not wish to claim topographical accuracy for the verse.²³ The location, like most venues in *A Shropshire Lad*, is part of a mythic landscape onto which the drama of his poetry is projected. The final verse suggests that the song, the poet and “Fancy” itself share a common fate in their absorption into the elemental forms of earth and air:

The lofty shade advances,
 I fetch my flute and play:
 Come, lads, and learn the dances
 And praise the tune to-day.
 To-morrow, more’s the pity,
 Away we both must hie,
 To air the ditty,
 And to earth I.

I think, however, that the circularity in Housman’s verse has a deeper resonance

than merely some echo of Astronomical circular motion, and the clue lies again with Lucretius. Lucretius argued for the ceaseless recycling of matter: atoms cohere temporarily and then disperse into space to cohere again somewhere else. This theme of endless cycling is found in numerous poems (e.g. *ASL XXXIV*). But it is not just matter that is cycled: in *ASL XXXI* ('On Wenlock Edge'), for example, we have the recycling of both matter and troubled thoughts. Here the narrator of the poem, contemplating the ancient Romans who inhabited Uricon (Wroxeter in Shropshire), reflects that "The tree of man was never quiet / Then 'twas the Roman, now 'tis I". So although "To-day the Roman and his trouble / Are ashes under Uricon" both matter and grief are recycled.²⁴ The processes go on endlessly: hence, we have the "endless way" of *ASL XXXII* and the "endless road" of *ASL LX*. People die and are replaced by other people fulfilling the same role, having the same experiences. In *ASL LV* ('Westward on the high-hilled plains') we read the narrator noting ruefully that "in newer veins / Frets the changeless blood of man", and later that new lads "Tread the mill I trod before" and have "thoughts that were once mine". In *ASL XXVII* ('Is my team ploughing?'), the main speaker of the poem is the ghost of a dead ploughman. The answers to his questions show that things are just as they were before: 'No change though you lie under / The land you used to plough'; even the dead ploughman's sweetheart is now comforted and bedded by another man. This circularity and recycling is enforced in Housman's poetry by numerous references to night and day, dawn and dusk. In effect, Housman is providing his own poetic response to the problem set by the Greek pre-Socratic philosophers: how can we explain change by reference to that which is stable and unchanging? For philosophers such as Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes and Heraclitus there was one underlying substance that remained constant but appeared in different guises. For Leucippus, Democritus, Epicurus and then the Roman Lucretius, these unchanging entities were the atoms. Housman takes Lucretian atomism one step further and identifies the underlying stability of enduring psychological entities such as love, friendship, joys and disappointments, beneath the chaos and mutability – the Heraclitian – flux of human experience.

In Housman's poetry the dead disintegrate into their component elements and merge again with the circular flux of things. Circular motion is observed too in the fact that the spinning of the earth on its axis gives the appearance of the stars and the planets revolving around the celestial pole (the Pole Star in the northern hemisphere). Housman uses these ideas with powerful effect. In the poem 'Astronomy' (*LP XVII*), for example, we are made acutely aware of how life and death are played out under a dome of revolving stars. The poem was written in memory of Housman's brother, George Herbert Housman, who was killed in

action on 30 October 1901 fighting the Boers in South Africa, and is worth quoting in full:

The Wain upon the northern steep
Descends and lifts away.
Oh I will sit me down and weep
For bones in Africa.

For pay and medals, name and rank,
Things that he has not found,
He hove the cross to heaven and sank
The pole-star underground.

And now he does not even see
Signs of the nadir roll
At night over the ground where he
Is buried with the pole.

The “Wain” refers to the constellation of the Plough or Ursa Major. The Plough would descend in the sky as an observer moves south and this is just what George did in travelling to Africa. But since this is Housman responding to the news that his brother has been killed, the intended image is more likely one of the Plough, as a circumpolar constellation, sinking towards the horizon and rising again as the Earth turns. The sudden change in the first stanza from “Wain” to “Africa” suggests the revolving constellations calling Housman’s brother to mind. The fact that “he hove the cross to heaven” has clear overtones of Christ’s sacrifice but in this context also refers to the fact that travelling south of the equator brings the Southern Cross into view as the Pole Star sinks below the horizon. The metaphor works well: George Housman has laboured like Christ to raise his own cross and prepare for his own destruction, whilst his own native polar constellation (the Plough) sinks into the ground as he does into his grave. The pointlessness of it all is emphasised by the fact that those things he sought “he has not found”. The “signs of the nadir” are the constellations of the southern hemisphere, alien stars to George Housman and ones to which he is now insensible. Burnett (1997) dates the poem to after the death of George in 1901; it was published in an anthology in 1904 and in *Last Poems* in 1922.²⁵

There are obvious parallels with Hardy’s poem ‘Drummer Hodge’, first published in November 1899. Like George Housman, Drummer Hodge lies below a set of strange stars: “And foreign constellations west / Each night above his mound.” To emphasise this point, in each stanza of Hardy’s poem the stars are

either “strange”, “foreign” or “strange eyed”. The last verse ends:

Yet portion of that unknown plain
Will Hodge forever be;
His homely Northern breast and brain
Grow to some Southern tree,
And strange-eyed constellation reign
His stars eternally.

Both poems stress the pathos of loss and the dislocation of death made more acute by the fact that the body rests separated from home and friends in unfamiliar ground. The separation of the dead from the grieving is thereby emphasised by a reference to the geographical and astronomical space that separates them. Housman’s poem was almost certainly written after Hardy’s, but it is not clear if there was any direct influence. Housman met Hardy for the first time in June 1899,²⁶ and also accepted an invitation to visit Hardy at Max Gate in August 1900.²⁷ There are letters between Hardy and Housman suggesting admiration for each other’s verse, although neither ‘Astronomy’ nor ‘Drummer Hodge’ are mentioned. It is possible that they did not talk much about poetry. In a letter to Richard Purdy, for example, Housman recalls: “I do not remember talking with him on poetry, except that we were both very fond of William Barnes’s Dorset poems” (Burnett (2007) II 84). He repeated this point in a later letter to Houston Martin: “Hardy and I never talked about my poems” (Burnett (2007) II 495).

Housman’s poem could also be a veiled comment on Britain’s imperial ambitions: the stars are “strange” to George Housman raising the question about what he was doing in the southern hemisphere. The late nineteenth century was a period of imperial expansion and consolidation for Britain: the first Boer war took place in 1880 and 1881 and the second (in which George was killed) over the years 1899-1902; Egypt was occupied in 1882; and Burma annexed to the Empire in 1885. The opening poem of *A Shropshire Lad* which purports to celebrate the golden jubilee of Victoria in 1887 is ambiguous at best and there are similar critical allusions to foreign wars and the soldiers who die to “save the Queen”. The poem also relies for effect on a similar geographical incongruity, in this case Shropshire names read in Asia, and lads reared by the Severn lying dead by the Nile:

It dawns in Asia, tombstones show
And Shropshire names are read;
And the Nile spills his overthrow
Beside the Severn’s dead.

Housman's dead are reunited with the earth and turn with it like the rest of matter. In *LP XX* the loss of a friend is placed in a cosmic framework of the diurnal motion of the earth:

The night is freezing fast,
To-morrow comes December;
And winterfalls of old
Are with me from the past;
And chiefly I remember
How Dick would hate the cold.

Fall, winter, fall; for he,
Prompt hand and headpiece clever,
Has woven a winter robe,
And made of earth and sea
His overcoat for ever,
And wears the turning globe.

"Dick" of the poem resembles his pastoral namesake in *Love's Labour Lost*: "When icicles hang by the wall / And Dick the shepherd blows his nail" (902-3). Numerous scholars have noticed the similarity to Wordsworth's 'Lucy' poem: "A slumber did my spirit seal" (e.g. Wain (1968), Marlow, (1958)). Wain claims that *LP XX* compares unfavourably with the 'Lucy' poem but his comments miss intended and crucial differences. In *LP XX*, Dick, seemingly, has escaped the privations of winter by cleverly turning death into a release. But whereas Wordsworth shows how his complacency in his love for Lucy makes the finality of death even more tragic and painful, Housman is reflecting on the process of memory bringing grief to mind and tries vainly to seek some consolation. The first verse suggests a linear progression of time – the night is freezing and tomorrow it is December – only to be thwarted by the reminder that there have been previous winters. But one thing that cannot return is Dick – a friend whose value was such that he becomes the chief memory of this moment. "How Dick would hate the cold" adds a colloquial touch befitting the name "Dick", but the past tense of "would" immediately signals to the reader that Dick is no more. In the second verse Housman, in the spirit of Lucretius, asks us to consider death as a release where the grief of the death of a friend is mitigated by the idea that death is not to be feared since a state of nothingness no longer has any bearing on life. But, as often found in Housman, there is an added twist. What Dick hated was "the cold": now he is dead he has turned the earth and sea into an overcoat, the "winter robe". Note that it is not just a small patch of ground (his grave) that Dick wears but the whole expanse of earth and sea – an idea that emphasises the

gulf between the narrator and his friend and elevates the scale to the global or cosmic. But this is also doubly ironic: firstly that death has been turned to Dick's advantage; secondly because in reality he can do no such thing since as a non-being he cannot feel the cold or the warmth of his new robe. Housman here is playing sardonically with what Korg has called the "problem of metaphor" in Victorian verse. For the metaphysical poets, despite the dislocation wrought by the Copernican Revolution, the natural world could still be seen as a repository of instructive analogues: few doubted that man and nature were strongly connected through the doctrine of correspondences. As Korg also observes, even as late as the Romantic Period the power of metaphor was sustained by the "premise that man and nature share common moral and spiritual values" – a suspected affinity sustained by natural theology (Korg (1985) 141). But the images presented by mid-nineteenth-century science: the vastness of space, the eternity of time, and the mutability of species made it difficult to relate the physical world to a human scale and see in it any reflection of or correspondence to any sort of human striving. Applying this insight, we can see that in *LP XX* Housman effectively subverts the Wordsworthian view of nature (as he did in *LP XL* with the phrase "heartless witness nature"). The idea of the earth and sea as an overcoat is a deliberately preposterous metaphor: following the decline of natural theology it is empty and in a material universe meaningless. Despite what the naïve narrator tries to express, death has no such consolation and this realisation makes the grief seem more acute.

The identity of "Dick" in the poem is not clear. It may just have been an exercise by Housman, or given that he seems to have written a draft of the poem in 1922, at a time when he knew his dear friend Moses Jackson was dying of stomach cancer, he may have had in mind a real friend. We noted earlier how in *A Shropshire Lad* there are several voices or narrators and that these served as masks functioning to distance the poetry from the poet. There were good reasons for Housman to disguise or transmute some of his feelings. Much of *A Shropshire Lad* was written in 1895 and it was on 3 April of that year that Oscar Wilde's failed libel action against the Marquess of Queensbury opened in London, to be followed by Wilde's arrest and his own trial on 26 April, culminating in his conviction on 25 May. Masks, however, are difficult to sustain indefinitely and Housman's love for Moses Jackson is one area where his use of astronomical and cosmological imagery bears the signs of the turmoil in his personal life. This is especially evident in *Last Poems* – a copy of which Housman sent to Moses Jackson as he lay dying in Canada in 1922. Housman's later poems – ones that were assembled by his brother Laurence for *More Poems* and *Additional Poems* – were deemed by Housman, either because of their literary merit or their personal tone, unfit to

be published in his lifetime. So in these two later collections we might also expect to find a more personal voice.

Housman met Moses Jackson as an undergraduate at Oxford and his deep affection for him lasted for the rest of his life. It survived an apparent argument in the autumn of 1885 (when Housman disappeared for a week), Jackson's move to India, his marriage, and his subsequent emigration to Canada. As noted earlier, Housman's interest in astrology was purely academic and sustained to help him prepare his edition of Manilius and make other commentaries on classical literature. Indeed, the Stoic idea that the stars deal us our fate, metaphorically or otherwise is hardly present in *ASL*. But a fairly conventional use of the notion of astral influence appears in the 'Epithalamium' that Housman wrote for the wedding of Moses Jackson in December 1889. As Sparrow (1934, 247) and Burnett (1997, 394) point out, the opening bears a strong similarity to a famous epithalamium written by the Roman poet Catullus, whose work Housman greatly admired. Like Catullus, Housman introduces the god Hymen, son of Urania, the muse of astronomy. But unlike Catullus, Housman calls for a beneficial celestial influence, most notably in lines 33-6:

And the high heavens, that all control,
Turn in silence round the pole.
Catch the strong beams they shed
Prospering the marriage bed. (*LP XXIV*)

Like any good poet, Housman was perfectly capable of extracting multiple metaphors from a single concept. His uses of "wind" for example are manifold: signifying human passion (*ASL XXXI*); death and dissolution (*ASL XLII, XXXII*); healing (*ASL XXX*); geographical isolation (*ASL XXXVIII*); memory (*ASL XL*); and the hostility or indifference of nature (*LP IX, XXVII*).²⁸ Similarly, stars, constellations and planets can signify a variety of ideas: the seasons turning (*ASL X*); sacrifice, alienation and loss (*LP XVII*); astrological influence or blessing (*LP XXIV, AP XVII*); and foreboding (*LP XXXVI*). But, as is often the case in Housman, the sense of unfulfilled desire is never very far away and astronomical ideas are accordingly yoked into service. In the 'Epithalamium' noted above (*LP XXIV*), although "starry beams" are invited to "prosper the marriage bed", the first stanza suggest that as the "groomsman quits your side" the bride's gain is his (i.e. Housman's) loss:

Friend and comrade yield you o'er
To her that hardly loves you more.

The use of astral imagery to convey both intimacy and separation is also found in the Latin dedicatory epistle to Moses Jackson that Housman prefixed to the *Astronomica* of Manilius. In the poem, Housman refers to the constellations that shone above them when they enjoyed evening walks together (presumably in Oxford and London). The intimacy is suggested by the fact that they both saw the constellations rise together and they shone on both equally. However, since Jackson was in India when Housman composed the work, he refers to Jackson as someone who has followed “Eastern stars”.²⁹ The stars can also suggest separation since, as we saw in an earlier analysis of ‘Astronomy’ (*LP* XVII), different constellations will be visible in different parts of the world. The use of stars as objective correlates for unfulfilment and separation is also found in *MP* X and XI, two poems that are imitations and developments of a fragment of verse attributed to Sappho. The original fragment of Sappho’s verse (as translated by J.A. Symonds in 1883) reads:

The moon has left the sky
Lost is the Pleiads light
It is midnight
And time slips by
But on my couch alone I lie.³⁰

In *MP* XI Housman links the Pleiads with Orion: “The rainy Pleiads wester / Orion plunges prone.”³¹ Housman’s two poems convey the same sense of desolation to be found in Sappho but he develops the theme in *MP* XI by invoking the never-to-be-fulfilled desire of Orion pursuing the Pleiads as the heavens turn as well as the idea, found also in *LP* XVII ‘Astronomy’, of the constellations visiting others on another part of the globe:

The rainy Pleiads wester
And seek beyond the sea,
The head that I shall dream of,
And ‘twill not dream of me.³²

According to Burnett’s dating of the manuscripts, the first draft of this verse can be dated to about 1901, a year when Moses Jackson was in India (Burnett (2007)). When he finished the final draft in 1922 Jackson was in Canada.

Another use of the movement of the constellations is to be found in *ASL* X (‘March’). The first two stanzas are:

The Sun at noon to higher air,
Unharnessing the silver Pair

That late before his chariot swam,
Rides on the gold wool of the Ram.

So braver notes the storm-cock sings
To start the rusted wheel of things,
And brutes in field and brutes in pen
Leap that the world goes round again.

Archie Burnett identifies a possible influence of Manilius here, noting that the “silver pair” refers to the pair of fishes in the last winter zodiacal constellation of Pisces, a reference also found in Manilius *Astronomica* (II.192-3) and that the “gold wool of the Ram” is similar to a line in the same work (I.263). He also suggests a possible influence of Dryden (Burnett (1997) 327). Both are, of course, possible: Housman seems to have first read Manilius around 1894 (Page (1983) 168), the poem was written sometime in 1893 or 1894, and Housman is known to have admired certain passages of Dryden – including one about spring that he cites in his lecture subsequently published as *The Name and Nature of Poetry*. The sense of a new year beginning and nature stirring as the sun moves around the ecliptic is, of course, something of a commonplace and is also found in the opening lines of Chaucer’s *The Canterbury Tales* and Housman may also have had these lines in mind:

WHAN that Aprille with his shoures soote
The droghte of Marche hath perced to the roote,
... and the yonge sonne
Hath in the Ram his halfe cours y-ronne...³³

Housman’s poem like Chaucer’s conveys the awakening of desire, but in Housman’s poem the narrator ends on a note of thwarted desire: “Ah, let not only mine be vain, / For lovers should be loved again.”

Housman’s feelings of being an outsider are forcefully captured in *LP XII*. Manuscript drafts show this poem was conceived between August and December 1894 during the period of heightened emotion that produced *A Shropshire Lad* (Burnett (1997)). In the poem he rails against the laws of God and man: “And if my ways are not as theirs / let them mind their own affairs”, but notes, strangely, that flying to another planet is not an escape option:

...since, my soul, we cannot fly
To Saturn nor to Mercury,
Keep we must, if keep we can,
These foreign laws of God and man.

The allusion to Saturn and Mercury is not entirely clear. Carol Efrati suggests that these are mythological types that hark back to a classical world where homosexuality was tolerated (1996, 61). She takes Saturn to represent Greece and Rome and Mercury the option of suicide (since Mercury was thought to be the guide of the dead to their resting place – see Housman's *ASL XLII* where Mercury, as Hermes psychopompos, guides the souls of the dead to the underworld). But there are other readings: Mercury was also the trickster or turncoat, possibly Housman is indicating that he cannot change his nature. Housman may also have had in mind Cicero's *Dream of Scipio* which describes a fictional dream journey of the Roman general Scipio Aemilianus in which the planetary spheres are described.

In the science of astronomy and the cosmology of Lucretius, A.E. Housman found a fruitful set of ideas. Like many intellectuals of the late nineteenth century, Housman was forced to confront and re-imagine a universe increasingly revealed as indifferent to human affairs and stripped of any prospect of Christian redemption. Bertrand Russell expressed similar concerns, not in poetry but memorable prose, when he wrote in his essay *A Free Man's Worship* (1903):

That Man is the product of causes that had no prevision of the end they were achieving; that his origin, his growth, his hopes and fears, his loves and his beliefs, are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms; that no fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought and feeling, can preserve individual life beyond the grave; ...that the whole temple of Man's achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the debris of a universe in ruins — all these things, if not quite beyond dispute, are yet so nearly certain that no philosophy which rejects them can hope to stand. Only within the scaffolding of these truths, only on the firm foundation of unyielding despair, can the soul's habitation henceforth be safely built. (48)

The painful reality of a world deserted by the gods, as advanced by Lucretius and confirmed to many by Darwin, must have seemed all too obvious to Housman – a man forced to suppress those very feelings whose expression may have brought some measure of personal happiness. In the bucolic but mythic landscape of Shropshire, Housman found a flawed Arcadia for the thoughts and passions of his characters. Within the wider framework of the sidereal motion of the heavens and the restless cycling of matter he found fitting concepts to craft his unique blend of poetry from his own unyielding despair.

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NOTES

1. Subsequent references to poems in this volume are abbreviated *ASL* followed by the number of the poem.
2. Subsequent references to poems in this volume are abbreviated as *LP* followed by the number of the poem.
3. In addition to other works cited here, see, for example, G. Beer, *Open Fields* (Oxford, 1996), T. Cosslett, *The Scientific Movement and Victorian Literature* (New York, 1982), J.A.V. Chapple, *Science and Literature in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1986), J.R. Dove, 'Thomas Hardy and the Dilemma of Naturalism', *Die Neuren Sprachen* 16 (1967), 253-68.
4. The actual letter was recently sold at Sotheby's as Lot 41 of their Books and Manuscripts Sale, New York, 18 June 2010.
5. G.P. Goold, *Manilius Astronomica* (Loeb Library, London, 1977).
6. It may be significant that the Roman playwright Terence was brought to Rome as a slave and hence an exile from his own land. Possibly, Housman saw parallels with his own sojourn in London as an exile from his native Worcestershire. Thankfully, Housman accepted the advice of his friend Arthur Pollard and *A Shropshire Lad* was born.
7. The philosopher Aristippus that Housman claimed to admire so much, was born around 435 BC and hence was a contemporary of Socrates. His Cyrenaic school of philosophy was named after his native town of Cyrene. For Aristippus the

goal of life was immediate sensuous pleasure, a position that outraged such contemporaries as Plato and Xenophon. In Aristippus' own life the pursuit of this goal seems to have taken the form of sleeping with courtesans, enjoying fine food and wine, and the avoidance of troublesome political responsibilities. Significantly, Aristippus followed these desires even at the expense of transgressing the conventional morality of his time. In epistemology (which may also account for Housman's admiration), the Cyrenaics bore some similarity to Protagoras and his followers; namely, they were sceptical empiricists who avoided making claims about the nature of what they regarded as an unknowable ultimate reality

8. See Haber (1963).
9. See Housman's letter to R. Bridges of 31 Dec 1927 (Burnett (2007) II 48).
10. See Naiditch (1995).
11. See Haber (1967).
12. A.E. Housman, *More Poems* (London, 1936). Poems in this volume are subsequently referred to as *MP* followed by the number of the poem.
13. See Huxley (1880).
14. See Holmes (2008).
15. See Cartwright (2009).
16. Cartwright (2009)
17. The idea of twelve winds has puzzled many readers (see Westhead (2010)). However, twelve winds are sometimes found on medieval maps (see <http://usm.maine.edu/maps/exhibition/8/3/sub-/where-the-winds-blow>) and Pliny the Elder refers to 12 winds at II.46 of his *Natural History*.
18. See Alfred Lord Tennyson, *In Memoriam* (1850), Section 56, l. 7.
19. See Burnett (1997) 146 with 462-3.
20. See Graves (1979) 8. Subsequent parenthetical page references refer to this text.
21. See A.E. Housman, 'Anth. Lat. Ries. 678', *Classical Quarterly* 12.1 (1918) 29-37 (= *Classical Papers* 950-9).
22. Marlow (1958) attributes the "cone of night" image to one of the better emendations made by Bentley to Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Bentley had changed Milton's "car of Night" to "cone of night". Although Housman generally disparaged Bentley for meddling with Milton, this is a possible source. Another previous usage is with Shelley where he used the phrase "cone of night" in his poem *The Triumph of Life* (l. 23). There is also a suggestive passage in Manilius' *Astronomica* (I.221-6) where there is a discussion of how the earth's shadow falls on the moon.

23. See Housman's letter to G. Bullett of 22 April 1933 (Burnett (2007) II 340).
24. See also Womack (2000).
25. See also Gasser (1978).
26. See Naiditch (2005).
27. See Housman's letter to Hardy of 11 July 1900 (Burnett (2007) I 122).
28. See also Page (1983) 195.
29. For a translation and commentary see Harrison (2002).
30. See <http://www.sacred-texts.com/cla/usappho/sph49.htm>.
31. The mythological and Astronomical contexts are fairly straightforward. The Pleiads (also known as the Seven Sisters or the Pleiades) were the attendants of Artemis pursued by Orion but then rescued by the goddess who turned them into a flight of doves and then stars. Artemis later killed Orion and placed him in the sky as a constellation forever pursuing the Pleiads.
32. In a letter to his colleague A.S.F. Gow concerning the meaning of a passage in one of Theocritus' *Idylls* (VII.54) Housman refers to the "matitudunal" (i.e. morning) setting of Orion and the Pleiads as a sign to the Greeks of forthcoming storms when the sea would be unfit for navigation (Letter to Gow of 5 Nov 1925 (Burnett (2007) I 599).
33. The Roman year began in March, and in the middle ages the Catholic Church recognised a year as beginning around 25 March 25 with the Feast of the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary.

Muriel Herbert: ‘Loveliest of Trees’ a long-forgotten setting

by

John France

Introduction

Any composer who deigned to set A.E. Housman’s well-known poem ‘Loveliest of Trees’ deserves attention – even if this is simply to write off the song as second rate, derivative or a downright travesty of the poet’s intention.

A brief glance at *Musical Settings of Late Victorian and Modern British Literature* (Gooch, Thatcher & Long ed., 1976) reveals a considerable number of settings that have been made of this poem. Many of them have disappeared into a possibly well-deserved oblivion. Some have become justly famous and a few are no doubt waiting to be discovered by performers looking for a ‘new’ take on the poem.

Muriel Herbert may have heard three or four settings of ‘Loveliest of Trees’ before she took up her own pen. Almost certainly she would have known George Butterworth’s from *Six Songs from A Shropshire Lad* performed in 1911. It is likely that she would have been aware of Arthur Somervell’s early offering from 1904. It is possible she may have known the attractive song to this text composed by Janet Hamilton in 1919. More problematic would be the version by C.W. Orr, which appeared in 1923, the same year as Herbert’s own setting. Since this time other composers have made excellent songs from this poem, including E.J. Moeran, Humphrey Proctor Gregg and Graham Peel.

Brief Biography & Musical Achievement

Muriel Emily Herbert was born in Sheffield in 1897 and grew up in Liverpool. The household was a musical one, mainly it seems on the mother’s side. Her mother ran a church choir in Liverpool. Yet it was Muriel’s brother Percy who had a huge influence on her. He was some ten years older than she was and, importantly, played the piano. He taught his sister to play from an early age and to write down any musical ideas that came into her head. Muriel thought that she was destined to become a concert pianist, but by 1913 she had abandoned this aspiration and had begun to write music – exercises for the piano and song settings of Herrick, Browning, Bridges and Christina Rossetti.



She entered the Royal College of Music in 1917 and under the auspices of composers and teachers such as Roger Quilter and Charles Villiers Stanford she began to develop her own musical voice. Herbert was well read in poetry and had an especial fascination for W.B. Yeats, Thomas Hardy and James Joyce. She also knew and loved the poetry of Housman. For a time, she earned money by teaching before her composing career ‘took off’ – in a somewhat limited way. Roger Quilter was impressed by her songs and arranged for a number of them to be published. John Barbirolli included her *Two Violin Pieces* in a concert in the 1920s. She gave broadcasts of her music on the BBC. All this came slowly to an end when she married in 1928 and began to raise a family. Unfortunately, from the early 1940s Muriel Herbert wrote virtually no music, although

there were a few recitals and she still taught music and composition. The memory of what had been was largely forgotten: it was rarely discussed with her children. Her confidence as a composer had been lost as new styles of music began to permeate the concert halls and recital rooms.

Muriel Herbert tended to specialise in songs and set a large number of well-known poets from a wide chronological time span. These include her masterpieces such as John Masefield’s ‘Tewksbury Road’, her setting of Thomas Hardy’s ‘Faint Heart in a Railway Carriage [Train]’ and three important James Joyce poems, ‘Goldenhair’, ‘I hear an army charging’ and ‘She weeps over Rahoon’. However, her musical achievement was not limited to songs. There are a number of chamber works including an attractive *Rhapsody* for violin and piano, and the slow movement to an otherwise lost sonata for the same forces.

Loveliest of Trees

Loveliest of trees, the cherry now
Is hung with bloom along the bough,
And stands about the woodland ride
Wearing white for Eastertide.

Now, of my threescore years and ten,
Twenty will not come again,
And take from seventy springs a score,
It only leaves me fifty more.

And since to look at things in bloom
Fifty springs are little room,
About the woodlands I will go
To see the cherry hung with snow.

A.E. Housman wrote 'Loveliest of Trees' between May and July 1895: it was the second poem in *A Shropshire Lad*, the collection of sixty-three poems published in 1896 by the London firm of Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Company.

'Loveliest of Trees' is possibly his best-known poem from this collection. It is often interpreted as *carpe diem* – 'seize the day'. This is derived from the Latin poet Horace's *Odes* 1.11, *Carpe diem, quam minimum credula postero*, 'Seize the day, trusting as little as possible in the future.'

It is fair to suggest that Terence, Housman's *alter ego*, is a little precocious for his years. I guess few twenty-year olds are conscious of anything other than an unending life. Yet the poet muses on the fact there are only fifty more springs left out of his biblically derived threescore years and ten (Psalms 90:10). However this intensity of thought may have been exaggerated. In an unsigned review in *The New Age* (16 April, 1896), the author suggests that 'here [in this poem] is a thought, perhaps nothing so definite as a thought, a poignant emotion rather, that we have most experienced at one time or another when alone with the vision of beauty that each recurrent springtime evokes.' Housman's achievement is to express this emotion in simple language with a 'swift unfaltering touch of a master's hand.' The final word may go to J.B. Priestley, writing in *The London Mercury* (7 December, 1922) when he notes that Housman 'cannot write even a little song in praise of Spring without the sharp shadow of death falling across the sunlit blossom...'

Any setting of this poem must recognise the disparity between principal ideas in this poem. The first verse is largely a description of the landscape: the last two stanzas are a philosophical (or, perhaps for some, a theological) reflection on this topographical imagery.

Muriel Herbert's realisation of this text is masterly. Her solution is to create a balance between a melody that is straightforward and an accompaniment that appears on paper to be quite complex. However both are held in equilibrium,

each being a perfect complement to the other. The poem is written in rhymed couplets and the metric quantities are typically iambic tetrameter – that is four stresses per line. Herbert has decided to follow the regular nature of this poem with a strophic melody. However, she has added a degree of interest and uncertainty by setting the first line of each strophe to a different melody.

The accompaniment constantly echoes both the singer's melody and 'itself'. The harmonic devices are not complex but do lead to instability. In spite of some slippery 'Delius-like' progressions here and there, the balance of the parts is excellent. All in all, this song is a perfect miniature. 'Loveliest of Trees' was published by Augener in 1923 and is now only available in libraries, although there are plans to publish some of Muriel Herbert's songs in an album and possibly also online.

Reception and Review

Muriel Herbert's daughter, the historian, Claire Tomalin told me that her mother had been extremely fond of 'Loveliest of Trees'. The poem itself was a favourite and she recognised that her own setting was excellent. It turned out to be one of her most successful and popular songs. Tomalin wrote that this was 'partly because she responded to the natural world almost ecstatically – fields and woods, wild flowers and blossom all spoke to her, and Housman had put such a response into a perfect poem'. As a composer Muriel Herbert lacked great confidence in her abilities, so the success of this song 'may have seemed a justification for giving her life to composition'. Interestingly, there is a note on the sheet music of 'Loveliest of Trees' that insists that the text to this song must not be printed in Concert Programmes. In fact Claire Tomalin has suggested to me that the reason Muriel Herbert did not make any other settings from *A Shropshire Lad* was that she was 'deterred by Housman's well-known reluctance to have his poems set'. It is a loss to English music.

In an unattributed newspaper cutting dating from around 1924, a reviewer noted that 'Miss Muriel Herbert's newly published song, "Loveliest of Trees"... is the best thing this promising young Liverpool composer has given us in song form. Miss Herbert has the root of the matter in her – a genuine feeling for song which makes voice and piano an integral whole.' He further suggests that 'the harmony is occasionally disagreeable, but the song flows admirably'. It is certainly difficult to see what the reviewer objected to in the harmonies of the accompaniment; however it may be that the nods to Delius were not everyone's cup of tea. Another reviewer (undated) suggested that Herbert's setting of Housman was as good as George Butterworth's, in fact he suggest that it is actually more 'singable' and more effective.

In 2009 ‘Loveliest of Trees’ was included in a recording of thirty-six of Muriel Herbert’s songs. Ailish Tynan and James Gilchrist along with their accompanist David Owen Norris gave impressive and committed performances. The CD was well-received. Andrew Clements, writing in *The Guardian* (29 May, 2009) wisely suggested that ‘...if her music is innately conservative, her harmonic palette and melodic invention are individual; these songs linger in the memory.’

Finally, Claire Tomalin told me an attractive anecdote about this song. She recalled her mother singing ‘Loveliest of Trees’ as they walked through woods in springtime. Tomalin considers that ‘even without the accompaniment it is a fine song, and I confess I sometimes sing it to myself in spring even now.’

In considering Muriel Herbert’s setting of ‘Loveliest of Trees’ there can be a tendency to compare it to the great achievements of the masters: in this case George Butterworth and C.W. Orr. It would be possible for critics to belittle the song and suggest that it is totally derivative. However, the truth is that this setting is fresh, imaginative and fundamentally different from the competing examples. There is no way that Herbert’s song is going to usurp the better-known versions; however it deserves to have its own life in the canon of Housman settings for it surely comes close to interpreting the poet’s intention.

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- P. Blevins, ‘Muriel Herbert’ in *Signature: Women in Music* (journal of the Maud Powell Society) III.1 (Summer 2010)

DISCOGRAPHY

- The Songs of Muriel Herbert: Ailish Tynan (soprano), James Gilchrist (tenor) & David Owen Norris (piano) LINN CKD 335.
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The Will of the Reverend Robert Housman, 1837

by

Julian Hunt

Few documents throw more light on the Housman family background than the will of A.E. Housmans's great grandfather, the Rev. Robert Housman. The will was proved in Lancaster in 1838, but at this time, there was little property for the executors to administer. A vast inheritance, which the Rev. Housman had been expecting for twenty years, had still not materialised and would come to the testator's estate only on the death of an elderly spinster then living in Bristol. It was not until 1854 that the money finally came through, causing the Rev. Housman's will to be proved again at the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, in London. It seems that the promise of great wealth had cast an evil spell over the Housman family, akin to the psychological ills which afflict many present-day lottery winners. The curse of great expectations may partly explain the disreputable business careers of three of the Rev. Housman's sons, Robert, John and William, the strange property dealings of his grandson Edward Housman, and even the nervous breakdown suffered by A.E. Housman whilst at Oxford in 1880.

The will of the Rev. Robert Housman is reproduced below, but to understand its contents, we need to review some of the key events in his life. He was born 15 February 1759, the son of Robert Housman, a Lancaster maltster. In 1780, he went up to St John's College, Cambridge. There he developed a friendship with the leading evangelical of his day, the Rev. Charles Simeon, who was to help him found St Anne's Church, Lancaster. He also met Sarah Audley, whose family were supporters of the Independent Chapel in Cambridge. They were married at Holy Trinity, Cambridge, 30 December 1784. Sarah's brother, John Audley, a wealthy Cambridge woolstapler, was party to a marriage settlement which set aside £4,000 to support the children of the union.¹ In the event, there was only one son, Robert Audley Housman, born in Cambridge 25 October 1785. Sarah Housman died 'in child bed', 13 November 1785. She was buried at the church of St Andrew the Great, Cambridge, 16 November 1785. Her son, Robert Audley Housman was baptised at Holy Trinity, Cambridge, 27 November 1785.

Following the death of Sarah Housman, the Rev. Housman took up a curacy in Leicestershire. It was here that he met Jane Adams, the sister of John Adams, an ambitious Leicester hosier. They were married at St Nicholas, Leicester, 24 September 1788. Their three sons, John, William and Thomas, were all born in

Leicester and enjoyed the generous patronage of their uncle, John Adams, whose own marriage was childless. It was John Adams's move to Bromsgrove in the 1790's, to set up a worsted spinning mill, which brought the Housman brothers to Worcestershire. It was left to the Rev. Robert Housman to promote the interests of his son by his first marriage, Robert Audley Housman.

Robert Audley Housman was brought up first in Leicester and then in Lancaster, where from 1796, his father was incumbent of the newly built St Anne's Church. He was apprenticed to a draper, and then entered into a partnership with James Benson of Lancaster, wholesale and retail linen draper and haberdasher. This partnership was dissolved in 1809.² Robert Audley Housman next tried a career in the military. In 1811, he bought a commission in the 11th Regiment of Foot, based in Exeter.³ There he met Phillippa Ann, daughter of Robert Winston, of Exeter. The couple were married at St Lawrence, Exeter, 8 December 1811. Robert Audley Housman did not stay long in the West Country, for when his wife Phillippa died in 1813, probably in childbirth, she was buried in London.⁴ Their only child, Margaret, was probably reared by her grand parents.

Robert Audley Housman was in no position to bring up a child. In 1814 he was imprisoned for debt in Newgate, described as 'Robert Audley Housman, formerly of Exeter in the County of Devon, Ensign in the 11th Regiment of Foot, and late of Charing Cross in the County of Middlesex, no trade or occupation'.⁵ He applied for cash to all members of his extended family. One incident in 1816, illustrates the lengths to which he would go to raise money. When unable to pay the bill of Mr Beswick, publican, of Dale Street, Liverpool, he gave Beswick a note for £15, to be drawn on the London account of his uncle, John Audley of Cambridge. When this was not accepted, he endorsed it with the name of a more local friend, William Colton of Liverpool. Colton eventually paid the bill, but sent Audley the original note for £15 and a letter addressed 'Dear Nephew' signed 'Your Affectionate Uncle, John Audley'. Audley replied that both the note and the letter were forgeries. In a subsequent letter to Audley, William Colton suggested that the note and the letter were forged, not by Robert Audley Housman himself, but by a young man who had accompanied him from Lancaster:

I can assure you it would afford me the most sincere pleasure in being instrumental towards reclaiming my once valued friend and schoolfellow or preventing his procedure in that course of guilt which on mature reflection, I am still willing to hope, would affect his feelings – his heart was an excellent one and I cannot think it has yet become entirely callous.⁶

It must have seemed highly opportune when, two years later, the Rev. Robert Housman found that he and his family were to inherit half the estate of an

extremely wealthy relative, Charlotte Bateman, who died at Bath, 18 July 1818. The Rev. Housman immediately wrote to Miss Elizabeth Inman:

You will be surprised to hear that Mrs. Housman set off for London last Wednesday morning to attend the funeral next Monday of a very rich relation. She had no relation (except a brother about 90 years old and who wants nothing) nearer than Mrs. Housman, but as maiden ladies who have attained more than three score years and ten sometimes act rather whimsically, she has bequeathed her large property (perhaps £100,000 or £150,000) to two single ladies, but whether old or young we are not informed, probably rather ancient. If they should have no children, one half of her possessions after some legacies will become ours. Whether I am to be trusted as the Lord's Steward with the money, I know not: nor am I anxious.⁷

The maiden ladies mentioned in the letter were Sarah Flack and Margaret Phillips, who lived with Miss Bateman at the Royal Crescent, Bath. Unfortunately for the Rev. Housman, they were not as ancient as he thought. The longest living of the two, Sarah Flack, survived to a ripe old age and died in Bristol as late as 1854. Nonetheless, the Bateman bequest was to feature heavily in the will of Robert Housman, written 13 February 1837:

This is the last will and testament of me Robert Housman of Greenfield Lancaster in the County of Lancaster clerk made whilst I am of sound and disposing mind and understanding praise be to God for the same In the first place I order and direct all my just debts funeral and testamentary expenses to be paid and I charge therewith all my real and personal estate that I give devise and bequeath unto my two daughters Elizabeth the wife of Richard Williams Prichard and Agnes the wife of Robert Fletcher Housman all my seats or pews in St Anne's Chapel in Lancaster aforesaid and all my household goods and furniture plate linen and china and all other my personal estate and effects whatsoever (except the reversion of certain monies to which I am entitled in right of my late dear wife Jane under the will of Mrs Charlotte Baker late of the Royal Crescent Bath) to hold the same and every part thereof unto my said two daughters Elizabeth and Agnes as tenants in common and not as joint tenants and their respective heirs executors administrators and assigns for ever And as to the reversion of the said monies under the will of the said Charlotte Baker expectant on the deaths of Sarah Flack and Margaret Phillips therein named (subject to certain charges and incumbrances affecting the same pursuant to the deeds of assignment or other documents executed by me and my said late dear wife in her lifetime) I do direct that my executors hereinafter named shall out of the same monies when got in and received invest on government or other good and approved security such a sum as from the dividends or interest thereof will provide the sum of fifty two

pounds per annum which I direct shall be paid or applied to be for the use of my son Robert Audley Housman in such manner and form as to my said executors shall appear most fit for his benefit and advantage for and during the term of his natural life and subject to such annuity I give and bequeath all the residue and remainder of the said monies to which I am entitled as aforesaid unto and equally amongst my son Thomas Housman and my said two daughters Elizabeth and Agnes share and share alike provided always that in case my said son Thomas Housman and my daughters Elizabeth Pritchard and Agnes Housman or any of them should happen to die before me it is my will and mind that the share and interest of him or her so dying under this my will shall go and belong to such person or persons for such estate or estates and in such manner and form as he or she so dying shall by his or her will or testament or any writing in the nature of a will or by any deed or deeds to be executed by him or her (not withstanding the coverture of the said Elizabeth Pritchard and Agnes Housman) direct limit or appoint give or devise the same and in default thereof I direct that the share or shares of him or her so dying shall go to their respective child or children if more than one equally amongst them and their respective heirs executors and administrators and I constitute and appoint my said son Thomas Housman and my sons in law Richard Williams Prichard and Robert Fletcher Housman executors of this my will thereby revoking all former and other wills by me at any time heretofore made In witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand and seal this thirteenth day of February in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and thirty seven

Robert Housman

Signed sealed published and declared by the said testator in his presence at his request and in the presence of each other have hereunto subscribed our names as witnesses

Leond Willan
Mary Knills
Jane Hull

It is clear from the will that Robert Audley Housman's affairs were never settled. The spendthrift obviously remained in contact with his family for the Rev. Robert Housman expected his executors, in particular his youngest son, the Rev. Thomas Housman, to continue giving Robert Audley Housman a handout of one pound per week as long as he lived. His death has not been traced.

The Rev. Robert Housman hesitated to mention in his will an outstanding debt incurred by his son John Housman. On 15 June 1837, he added the following codicil to his will:

This is a codicil to my last will and testament Whereas I some years ago gave a promise to George Burrow and Thomas Housman Higgins of Lancaster cotton spinners to pay them a debt of five hundred pounds owing by my son John Housman to them now I do hereby direct my executors named in my said will to pay to the said George Burrow and Thomas Housman Higgins the said sum of five hundred pounds in fulfilment of my engagement to them for that purpose In witness whereof I the said Robert Housman have hereunto set my hand and seal this fifteenth day of June in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and thirty seven

Robert Housman

Signed sealed published and declared by the said testator Robert Housman as and for a codicil to his last will and testament in the presence of us who in his presence at his request and in the presence of each other have hereunto subscribed our names as witnesses

Leond Willan

Jno Maychill

From the codicil to the will, it is apparent that John Housman, the eldest of the Rev. Robert Housman's sons by his wife Jane, born in 1792, had also been a financial burden. John Adams, after whom the boy was probably named, had seen to his education and found him a trade as a woolstapler in Bromsgrove.⁸ The large sum of £500 owed to George Burrow and Thomas Housman Higgins of Lancaster, cotton spinners, was however, guaranteed by his father. In 1838 came the collapse of another of the son's business ventures with the bankruptcy of John Housman of Halton, near Leeds, indigo manufacturer, dealer and chapman.⁹ There was evidently a link here with John Adams, who was manufacturing extract of indigo at Bromsgrove. By this time, John Housman was a married man. He and his wife Hannah had a daughter Margaret born in Manchester in 1840. They were living in nearby Broughton and he was in partnership with John Woodcock of Pendleton, Lancashire, as a manufacturer of Maltby's Patent Concentrated Extract of Logwood. The partnership was dissolved in 1842.¹⁰ John Housman was left nothing in the 1854 will of his uncle John Adams 'because he has already received from me much more than an equitable share of my property'. John Housman died at 5 Rosemount, Oxtou, Cheshire, 7 December 1875.¹¹

William Housman, the second son of the Rev. Robert Housman by his wife Jane, was born in Leicester in 1793. He was bankrupt in London in 1821, in Salisbury in 1837, and in Brighton in 1851. His life insurance policy for £1,000 with the Promoter Life Office was auctioned at Brighton in June 1851.¹² He received

no mention in his father's will of 1837. John Adams, making his will in 1854, explained 'I do not make any provision for my said nephew William Housman owing to my sense of the great impropriety of his conduct'. There is a Housman family tradition that William Housman subsequently went to America. The claim that he was accompanied by an actress is unlikely, as he was by this time in his 60's and without the necessary means to attract a younger woman. The date and circumstances of William Housman's death have still not been traced.

As A.E. Housman grew up in Bromsgrove in the 1860s and 70s, these scandals would gradually emerge from the family closet, especially in 1873, when his father married as his second wife, Lucy Agnes Housman, the daughter of the absent bankrupt, William Housman. How ashamed he must have been when the local man who had lent his father money on the security of Perry Hall foreclosed on the mortgage in 1875 and the family home was auctioned at the Golden Cross Inn. How shocked he must have been when his father enlisted a family friend to bid for the house in a highly illegal fashion. With different members of the family fighting over their property in the courts (Housman v. Housman was not resolved until 1879), is it any wonder that the young poet's career at Oxford ended in 1880 with his failure to get a degree?

NOTES

1. Cambridgeshire Archives K132/B/70.
2. *London Gazette* 17 June 1809.
3. *London Gazette* 9 March 1811.
4. *Buried Battersea*, Surrey 22 April 1813.
5. *London Gazette* 25 January 1814.
6. Cambridgeshire Archives K132/B/75.
7. Pugh, John *Bromsgrove and the Housmans*, 1974, p. 7.
8. *Housman Society Journal* Vol 35 (2009) pp. 77-86.
9. *London Gazette* 26 January 1838.
10. *London Gazette* 30 August 1842.
11. *Liverpool Mercury* 9 December 1875.
12. *The Times* 23 June 1851.

THE BOOK OF MOSES
Housman, Manilius and M.J. Jackson¹

by

Neil Hopkinson

SODALI MEO

M. I. JACKSON

HARVM LITTERARVM CONTEMPTORI

<i>Signa pruinosa uariantia luce cauernas noctis et extincto lumina nata die solo rure uagi lateque tacentibus aruis surgere nos una uidimus oceano.</i>	1
<i>uidimus: illa prius, cum luce carebat uterque, uiderat in latum prona poeta mare, seque memor terra mortalem matre creatum intulit aeternis carmina sideribus, clara nimis post se genitis exempla daturus ne quis forte deis fidere uellet homo.</i>	5
<i>nam supero sacrata polo complexaque mundum sunt tamen indignam carmina passa luem, et licet ad nostras enarint naufraga terras scriptoris nomen uix tenuere sui.</i>	10
<i>non ego mortalem uexantia sidera sortem aeternosue tuli sollicitare deos, sed cito casurae tactus uirtutis amore humana uolui quaerere nomen ope, uirque uirum legi fortemque breuemque sodalem qui titulus libro uellet inesse meo.</i>	15
<i>o uicture meis dicam periturene chartis,</i>	20

*nomine sed certe uiuere digne tuo,
 haec tibi ad auroram surgentia signa secuto
 hesperia trado munera missa plaga.
 en cape: nos populo uenit inlatura perempto* 25
*ossa solo quae det dissoluenda dies
 fataque sortitas non immortalia mentes
 et non aeterni uincla sodalicii.*

For my comrade M. J. Jackson, who has no respect for these studies

The heavenly signs that with their light adorn the vault of frosty night and the bright stars born at the close of day – together we saw them rise from the ocean as we wandered through the deserted countryside and the fields silent far and wide. We saw them; long before, when we were both yet unborn (‘when we both lacked the light’), a poet had seen them setting in the Latin sea, and, mindful that he was a mortal born from mother earth, he applied his poetry to the immortal stars. He would provide for later generations all too clear a reason not to put trust in the gods; for his work, dedicated to the sky above and embracing the whole universe, suffered unworthy damage, and although it survived like a shipwreck to our times (‘swam ashore shipwrecked to our land’), it scarcely preserved its author’s name.

I <however> have not resolved (‘endured’) to trouble the stars which disturb our mortal lot or the eternal gods, but moved <instead> by a love for manly virtue soon to fall I have wished to seek fame with human help and, a man myself, have chosen a man, a brave and brief companion, who would be willing to stand at the head of my work. O you – should I say that you will survive or perish in my pages? Your name, to be sure, makes you worthy to survive – to you who have followed the rising stars to the east I send this gift from a western shore. Take it; a day is coming that will carry us off to the world of the dead and give to the earth for

dissolution our bones, and our minds not destined to be
immortal, and the bonds of our not everlasting comradeship.

The dedicatory poem for his edition of Manilius is the only substantial piece of Latin verse published by Housman.² His polemical engagement with other scholars consciously evokes the more robust rhetoric of the age of Scaliger and Bentley;³ elaborate dedications, in both prose and verse, are similarly characteristic of an earlier time.⁴ It was usual in such pieces for an author to emphasise his recipient's learning and culture. Housman begins by wittily disappointing expectation with the word *contemptori*: Jackson is quite unsuited to receive a work of scholarship, and is unlikely even to read it. The poem reveals that what makes him a suitable dedicatee is the dearly valued friendship he once showed Housman and the propitiousness of his name: if he lends his name to the work, it may survive in spite of his own disrelish.

In their dedications, seal-poems and programmatic passages, Roman poets range from the mock-modest to the triumphalist, from Catullus' *qualecumque* to Horace's *monumentum* and Ovid's *uiuam*. Housman, though himself a poet, here dedicates not a book of poetry but a scholarly work. His poem unites himself, Jackson and Manilius and, while celebrating comradeship, draws attention in terms uncharacteristic of Roman writers but highly characteristic of his English verse and prose, to the transience of even close friendship, the certainty of death,⁵ and the uncertainty of reputation.⁶ The dichotomy between Housman as poet and as Classical scholar is easily overstated. The same fastidious sense for the *mot juste* informs the prefaces and poems written in English, the Latin commentary on Manilius, and the self-confident *diuinatio* of the textual critic.⁷ The elegy to Jackson uniquely distils these aspects: in an original Latin composition which links his passion for Jackson with his claims to fame as a scholar,⁸ Housman the student of Propertius discreetly displays both his learning and his love.

Non ego at the mid-point of the poem marks a clear break as Housman contrasts his own hopes for lasting fame with those of Manilius. The two halves are linked by repeated words and ideas. The constellations which Housman and Jackson saw together are those which Jackson 'follows' to the east (1, 23 *signa*); the stars and gods on which Manilius relied are rejected by Housman (8 *sideribus*, 15 *sidera*; 7 *mortalem*, 15 *non... mortalem*; 10 *deis*, 16 *deos*); the undeserved damage suffered by Manilius' poem may be avoided by Housman's reliance on a name that deserves to survive (12 *indignam*, 22

digne; cf. 14, 18 *nomen*); the imperishable stars form a sad contrast with short-lived friendship (8 *aeternis*, 28 *non aeterni*); and, most notably, the final word, *sodalicii*, echoes the opening of the epigraph, *sodali meo*, so that the whole poem as it were embraces and makes present the absent Jackson.

The opening lines link love and landscape, typical themes for Housman,⁹ with observation of the stars. This shared experience brings together Housman and Jackson as comrades and Housman and Manilius as poets, since the Roman formerly observed those same constellations. The everlasting cycle of their rising and setting (2 *extincto ~ nata*) mocks the best efforts of mortal man to gain immortality, even through poetry: Manilius' poem barely survived, and his name was almost lost. Housman by contrast has entrusted his survival to a friend, whose propitious name may help to save his work from the shipwreck of oblivion: Jackson has sailed far away towards the stars' eastern rising,¹⁰ but the poem and the book can travel in Housman's stead. The closing lines gloomily predict the two friends' imminent dissolution; Housman's *Manilius*, it is implied, may survive longer, and with it this record of their friendship.

Moses John Jackson

Jackson was a contemporary of Housman's at St John's College, Oxford; he graduated with First Class Honours in science, and was a keen sportsman. He shared accommodation with Housman during their final year at Oxford and subsequently in London, where both worked for the Patent Office. In 1885 a disagreement, perhaps caused by Housman's revealing his love, led to their living apart. In 1887 Jackson took up the post of a college principal in India. He married in 1889, and returned occasionally to England for extended periods of leave. Housman tried unsuccessfully to have him made headmaster of University College School in London, and was godfather to his fourth son. He retired in 1910 to British Columbia, and died in 1923.¹¹

Antecedents

1. Horace, *Odes* 4.7. This ode, which Housman once revealed was in his opinion 'the most beautiful poem in ancient literature',¹² and of which he produced his own translation,¹³ has the same number of lines as the poem to Jackson and in metre is as close to elegiacs as an ode can get. It contrasts

nature's yearly renewal with the single brief span of human life and the inevitability of death; similarly, Housman's poem contrasts the enduring presence of the stars with the mortality of those who observe them. Horace's closing lines, *nec Lethaea ualet Theseus abrumperé caro | uincla Pirithoo*, where *caro* probably implies no more than 'dear friend', are echoed in *non aeterni uincla sodalicii*,¹⁴ and are translated by Housman 'And Theseus leaves Pirithöus in the chain | The love of comrades cannot take away' (27–8), where 'love of comrades' has distinctly Whitmanesque homosexual overtones.¹⁵

2. Ovid, *Ex Ponto* 2.10. Stephen Harrison has discussed the dedication to Jackson in relation to this poem of Ovid's exile.¹⁶ Ovid addresses the poet Aemilius Macer and remembers wistfully their pleasant foreign travels together and their long conversations (for the allusion to Callimachus' epigram on Heraclitus in line 37 *saepe dies sermone minor fuit* see 3–4 n.). The places which they saw contrast with Ovid's place of exile, where he can only commune with his friend *gelido... sub axe* (48). That detail is adapted by Housman to characterise his walks with Jackson; and the exile of Ovid is associated with Jackson's absence in India.

Similar is *Ex Ponto* 2.4, addressed to Atticus, another reminiscence about shared experiences which echoes the same passage of Callimachus (11–12 *saepe citae longis uisae sermonibus horae, | saepe fuit breuior quam mea uerba dies*) and which ends with the injunction *constantique fide ueterem tutare sodalem* (33).

The idea that only a poem or letter can bring friends together is of course pervasive in Ovid's poetry of exile.

3. Matthew Arnold, *Dover Beach*. Housman approved of Arnold as both poet and critic.¹⁷ *Dover Beach*, published in 1867, begins with an invitation to a shared experience of nature ('The sea is calm tonight, ... Listen! you hear the grating roar | Of pebbles which the waves draw back... Come to the window, sweet is the night air'); in the second stanza Sophocles is said to have been moved by the same sounds ('Sophocles long ago | Heard it on the Aegean, and it brought | Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow | Of human misery'),¹⁸ and the conclusion, now that the 'Sea of Faith' is in retreat, is that the two lovers should cleave to one another in the face of confusion, doubt and ignorance ('Ah, love, let us be true | To one another!'). These passages are similar to Housman's evocation of shared memories of watching the stars rise from the sea, Manilius' view of the same scene, and Housman's reliance on Jackson's love and friendship in the face of doubt about the survival of his book.

Metrical features

1. *Caesura at 4w, 5w in the hexameter.* Two of the fourteen hexameters have a weak caesura in both the fourth and the fifth foot (5 *cum luce carebat uterque*, 19 *fortemque breuemque sodalem*), a very rare rhythm in elegiac verse.¹⁹ Housman will have been taught that this rhythm, because it produces a ‘false ending’ (*luce carebat, fortemque breuemque*), was to be avoided in epic and elegiac hexameters alike.²⁰ In both cases, however, the effect is mitigated by a sense-break at the main caesura; and in line 19 repeated *-que* makes the phrase *fortemque breuemque* cohere.²¹ That Housman had no reservations about this rhythm is shown by his having rejected *cum non essemus* in line 5.

2. *Polysyllabic endings in the pentameter.* Housman has three in fourteen lines (21%). Among the elegists such endings are most characteristic of Propertius;²² but in at least one of these cases Housman incorporates an allusion to Catullus (4 *oceanò n.*; cf. 28 *sodalicii n.*). Moreover, polysyllables at the end of poems are used for climactic effect by Martial.²³

3. *Elision.* In twenty-eight lines Housman has only one light elision (23 *haec tibi ad auroram*). In this respect he is more sparing than Ovid²⁴ and Martial, and much more sparing than Propertius. His avoidance of elision may perhaps be related to the fastidious metrics of his poetry in English.

4. *Periodic construction.* Housman punctuated the poem so that it consisted of six periods of 4, 6, 4, 6, 4 and 4 lines respectively. Although periods of these lengths are not unusual in the elegists, the effect of six together is much closer to the construction of Catullus’ long elegiac poems than to Propertius, Tibullus or Ovid.²⁵

5. *Short open final vowel at end of pentameter.* Housman has three in fourteen lines, that is 21%. Propertius has 4%, Ovid 1%.²⁶ *Mare* (6) occurs occasionally in Ovid, *ope* (18) often,²⁷ but *homo* (10), which Housman must have scanned as a pyrrhic,²⁸ is found in final position only in Catullus (93.2 *nec scire an sis albus an ater homo*), and in fact occurs only once in total in the elegists.²⁹

The poem is not aligned with a single Classical model but uses metrical features and phraseology from a variety of sources to express sentiments closer to those of Housman’s English verse.

Commentary

SODALI MEO: cf. Hor. *Odes* 3.7.5 *Pompei, meorum prime sodalium*, from a poem welcoming back a friend from abroad.

HARVM LITTERARVM CONTEMPTORI: the witty yet poignant idea that his dedicatee would not care to read the edition was important to Housman, and before promoting it to the epigraph he had twice included it in earlier drafts of the poem: his first thoughts for *qui titulus libro uellet inesse meo* (20) were *cui non lecturo munera parua* (or *docta*) *darem*, and two lines later the first draft contains part of a line, not developed subsequently, *uisne [] numquam lecturus amici*, in which Jackson was perhaps to be asked whether he could bear to accept so uncongenial a gift.³⁰ That Jackson either despised or consistently and heartily affected to despise learned studies is well documented,³¹ and the dedication is, as Naiditch observes, ‘partly a reaction to the custom of dedicating books to influential teachers and classics’.³² The best that Housman could hope for was that Jackson might relish the ‘slashing style’ of his introduction, written in English. In his envoi, published in 1930, he disingenuously observes, ‘Of each volume there were printed 400 copies; only the first is yet sold out, and that took 23 years; and the reason why it took no longer is that it found purchasers among the unlearned, who had heard that it contained a scurrilous preface and hoped to extract from it a low enjoyment.’³³ Jackson then in a sense stands for the general reader ignorant of textual studies. Fame in scholarship is restricted. The work which Housman hoped would be his lasting monument not only ran the risk of gradual encroachment of oblivion common to all such editions; it suffered from the disadvantage that it treated an author largely neglected even by scholars.³⁴ An entertaining introduction intelligible to lay readers would gain for the book a wider audience.

1–2 pruinosa: an adjective characteristic of Ovid and of no other writer. It refers to the chill or frost common in the middle of the night. As Harrison notes, the phrase *pruinosa... noctis* occurs in a fragment of Ovid’s translation of the *Phaenomena* of Aratus (fr. 2.3, pp.308–9 Courtney).³⁵ Of the six further Ovidian occurrences, the three from his amatory works are perhaps relevant for the tone of Housman’s poem: at *Am.* 1.6.65 and 2.19.22 (*longa pruinosa frigora nocte pati*) Ovid speaks as *exclusus amator* (‘locked-out lover’), and at 1.13.2 he is frustrated at having to leave his mistress. This last passage has other verbal similarities to Housman’s opening: 1.13.1–2 *iam super Oceanum*

uenit a seniore marito | flaua pruinoso quae uehit axe diem. (*Pruinosus* also at *Met.* 4.82, 5.443, *Ex P.* 1.2.54.)

uariantia alludes to Manilius' proem, which begins *carmine diuinis artes et conscia fati | sidera diuersos hominum uariantia casus, | caelestis rationis opus, deducere mundo | aggredior* (1.1–4); that is, the stars bring about the great *variety* of events on earth. In line 2 *sidera*, Housman's first thoughts, would have provided a further allusion.

cauernas | noctis: the vault of the night sky. The expression is modelled on *caeli / aetheris cauernas* (*Lucr.* 4.171, 391, 6.252, *Cic. Aratea* 254, *De cons. suo ap. De diu.* 1.17 = fr. 10.5, p.160 Courtney, Varro, *Sat. Men.* fr. 270.2 Astbury).

3–4 The countryside was deserted (*solo*) and the sounds of nature were stilled (*tacentibus*). Only the stars looked on as the two men walked: *aut quam sidera multa, cum tacet nox, | furtiuos hominum uident amores* (*Cat.* 7.7–8; the allusion would have been more obvious if Housman had retained *sidera* in line 2).

solo rure: for the expression cf. Ovid, *Fasti* 1.398 *amnes solaque rura deae*.

lateque tacentibus aruis: dependent, like *solo rure*, on *uagi* (and not an ablative absolute). Cf. Virg. *Aen.* 6.265 *loca nocte tacentia late*, Ovid *Fasti* 1.545–6 *uagantur | incustoditae lata per arua boues*. The word *aruis* is more dignified than *agris* of the first draft; for the wistful tone cf. Virg. *Ecl.* 1.3 *nos patriae finis et dulcia linquimus arua*.

uagi, often used of planets (*OLD* 1c), perhaps suggests a formal contrast between the two men's roaming and the fixity of the stars.

nos una: a reminiscence of ἀμφοτέροι in Callimachus' epigram on Heraclitus, perhaps the most famous evocation of past friendship in Classical literature: ἐμνήσθην δ' ὁσσάκις ἀμφοτέροι | ἥελιον λέσχηι κατεδύσαμεν (*AP* 7.80.2–3, 2 Pf., 34 G–P) and cf. Ovid, *Ex P.* 2.10.23, 31 (5–6 n.).³⁶ In Callimachus the setting sun may symbolise his friend's death, but the poem ends with the triumphant survival of Heraclitus' work. Housman ventures only a 'dubitation of immortality' (21–2 n.); his dedication begins with the darkness of night and closes with the inevitability of the grave: *una* (4) is undone in *dissoluenda* (26). Virgil in his ninth *Eclogue* has Moeris combine reminiscence of Callimachus with nostalgia for his past as a singer: 51–3 *saepe ego longos | cantando puerum memini me condere soles. | nunc oblita mihi tot carmina...* (where *memini* both evokes ἐμνήσθην and points to a literary 'reminiscence').

4–5 oceano: the long opening sentence is closed by a stately polysyllable; so too the long closing sentence (28 *sodalicii*). For *oceanus* at this position in the pentameter cf. *Cat.* 66.68 (Bootes) *qui uix sero alto mergitur Oceano*,

115.6 *usque ad Hyperboreos et mare ad Oceanum*, Prop. 2.9a.30 *aut mea si staret naus in Oceano*; for *surgere* with *Oceano* cf. Virg. *Aen.* 4.129 = 11.1 *Oceanum interea surgens Aurora reliquit*.

For *exstincto... die... una uidimus* cf. Cic. *Arat.* 402 (Engonasin) *quem nocte exstinctum atque exortum uidimus una*, where however *una nocte* = ‘in a single night’.

5–6 uidimus... uidimus: on this type of anaphoric repetition see Wills (1996) 174–8; usually the second occurrence is followed by *et*. Repetition of this verb is common (ibid. 176 n.6), but note in particular Ovid, *Ex P.* 2.10.23, 31 *uidimus... uidimus ambo*.

cum luce carebat uterque: the sense is not that found in Latin poets, who use *luce carere* of death: Lucr. 4.39 *simulacraque luce carentum* (borrowed by Virgil for his description of Erebus at *Geo.* 4.472; cf. ibid. 4.255, Ovid, *Met.* 15.531 *uidi... luce carentia regna*). Earlier drafts have *cum non essemus*. The play on *luce* in line 1 perhaps continues the conceit of Housman and Jackson as wandering planets (4 *uagi* n.); cf. Ps.-Plato, *AP* 7.669 = ‘Plato’ 1 Page ἀστέρας εἰσαθρεῖς, ἀστήρ ἑμός· εἴθε γενοίμην | οὐρανός, ὥς πολλοῖς ὅμμασιν εἰς σὲ βλέπω, Call. fr. 67.8 καλοὶ νησάων ἀστέρες ἀμφοτέροι; it may be relevant that *lux* can be a term of endearment (*OLD* 6b).

uiderat... poeta: as often in Latin poetry, the repeated action is emphasised by an allusion, in this case probably to the Sophocles of Arnold’s *Dover Beach* (see above). A similar point, that past and present are united by their experience of the natural world, is made in ‘On Wenlock Edge, ...’ (*A Shropshire Lad* XXXI, Burnett (1997) 32–3), e.g. 9–12 ‘Then, ‘twas before my time, the Roman | At yonder heaving hill would stare: | The blood that warms an English yeoman, | The thoughts that hurt him, they were there’; cf. Keats, *Ode to a Nightingale* 63–7 ‘The voice I hear this passing night was heard | In ancient days by emperor and clown; | Perhaps the self-same song that found a path | Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home, | She stood in tears amid the alien corn.’

prona poeta: there is much assonance and alliteration in the poem: cf. 11, 13, 17, 19, 23–4, 26.

prona ‘sinking’, moving towards their setting (*OLD* 5b): *More Poems* XI.1–4 (Burnett (1997) 121) ‘The rainy Pleiads wester, | Orion plunges prone, | The stroke of midnight ceases, | And I lie down alone’ (with similar alliteration in ‘plunges prone’); Ovid, *Met.* 11.257–8 *pronus erat Titan inclinatoque tenebat | Hesperium temone fretum*.

latium mare: the *mare Tyrrhenum* to the west of Italy. The phrase *mare Latium* seems not to be used by any classical writer. Shackleton Bailey asks,

‘what made [Housman] deprive *Latium* (adj.) of its customary capital, which he himself uses in his texts?’³⁷ The poem has an initial capital and no others; perhaps Housman found the uniformity of lower case pleasing.

7–8 Mindful that he was a mere mortal, he hoped to achieve immortality by associating his name with the imperishable stars. In a long ‘purple passage’ in Book 1 (483–531) Manilius reflects on the contrast between transient human affairs and the ageless heavens: 515–21 *omnia mortali mutantur lege creata, | nec se cognoscunt terrae uertentibus annis | exutas uariam faciem [uariantque uicem AEH] per saecula ferre. | at manet incolumis mundus suaque omnia seruat... | idem semper erit quoniam semper fuit idem.*

seque memor... creatum: cf. Ovid, *Fasti* 3.553 *seque memor spretum.*

terra mortalem matre creatum: cf. Lucr. 3.884 *hinc indignatur se mortalem esse creatum*, Ovid, *Met.* 2.553 *prolem sine matre creatam*, 756, *Trist.* 3.14.13, Man. 1.428, 515 (quoted above). (The *clausula matre creatum* recurs in Housman’s epigram on Jacob, *Manilius* I, p.xxi:³⁸ *at sua nunc illi criticus te matre creatum | effecit tantum carmina digna fera.*)

intulit aeternis carmina sideribus: another allusion to Manilius’ proem: *carmine... sidera... deducere... | aggredior primusque nouis Helicon mouere | cantibus* (1.1–5). For *aeternis* cf. Man. 1.369 *aeternis... in astris*. The word *sideribus* closes a pentameter at Prop. 1.3.38.

9–10 A prosaic couplet contrasting with the grand aspirations of lines 7–8.

clara: often used of stars by Manilius.

exempla daturus: cf. Juv. 10.49 *summos... uiros et magna exempla daturus.*

11–12 sacrata: Manilius in his proem adapts the familiar image of the poet as priest of the Muses (for which see Mynors on Virg. *Geo.* 2.476) and claims that he is *hospita sacra ferens nulli memorata priorum* (1.6): he is the first to devote verse to the subject of astrology. The participle has concessive force.

complexa ‘covering’, ‘including’: *OLD* 8a.

13–14 Time has taken its toll: Manilius’ poem survived, but in a damaged state (providing opportunity for emendation), and the very name of its author was imperfectly preserved. Housman discusses the various forms of the poet’s name recorded in the manuscripts at *Manilius* I, pp.lxix, 90–1. The imagery of shipwreck is perhaps continued in line 14: ships, though they probably did not have their names written on the hull, normally bore an identifying device on the prow (*insigne, παράσημον*): see Casson (1995) 344–60.

ad nostras enarint naufraga terras: cf. Virg. *Geo.* 3.542–3 *litore in extremo ceu naufraga corpora fluctus | proluit*, Cat. 68.3 *naufraga ut eiectum spumantibus aequoris undis*; and for the general context (including the admonition in line 10) Lucr. 2.552–8 *sed quasi naufragiis magnis multisque*

coortis | *disiectare solet magnum mare transtra cauernas* (etc.) | *ut uideantur et indicium mortalibus edant*, | *infidi maris insidias uirisque dolumque* | *ut uitare uelint, neuē ullo tempore credant*. The imagery is perhaps suggested by *oceano* (4) and *mare* (6), and it anticipates the fate of Moses' ark alluded to in lines 21–2 (q.v. n.).

naufraga... uix tenere: cf. Ovid, *Ars* 1.411–12 (when to stop loving) *tunc bene desinitur; tunc, si quis creditur alto*, | *uix tenuit lacerae naufraga membra ratis*.

tenuere 'have retained', 'preserved'.

15–16 The second half of the poem begins with a sort of *recusatio*: Manilius' editor will not rely for immortality on the stars, but on human aid. At the beginning of his third book Manilius lists the types of poetry he will not write: for *non ego* cf. 3.5–9 *non ego in excidium caeli nascentia bella... | ...referam* (Tib. 2.4.15–20 *ite procul Musae, si non prodestis amanti: | non ego uos ut sint bella canenda colo*, | *nec refero solisque uias et qualis, ubi orbem | compleuit, uersis Luna recurrit equis. | ad dominam faciles aditus per carmina quaero: | ite procul, Musae, si nihil ista ualent*). With the 'elegiac' rejection of grand themes comes an expectation that the poet loves his addressee.

mortalem... sortem: Ovid, *Met.* 2.56 *sors tua mortalis: non est mortale quod optas*, *Trist.* 3.11.67–8 *humanaeque memor sortis, quae tollit eosdem | et premit*. The phrase is common in prose.

uexantia, 'buffeting', continues the nautical imagery: cf. Virg. *Ecl.* 6.76 (Scylla) *Dulichias uexasse rates*, *OLD* 1a.

aeternos... deos: cf. Man. 1.521–3 (the *mundus*) *idem semper erit quoniam semper fuit idem. | non alium uidere patres aliumue nepotes | aspicient. deus est, qui non mutatur in aeuo*; for *aeternos... deos* in the pentameter cf. Tib. 2.3.30, [4.]4.14, Ovid, *Rem.* 688, *Fasti* 3.804, 4.954, 6.322 (all with the adjective before the medial diaeresis).

tuli 'have endured' (*OLD fero* 20b). The action taken by Housman is emphasised by the central position of the first-person verb here and in lines 18 (*uolui*) and 19 (*legi*).

sollicitare: cf. Man.1.93 (the skill of seers) *sollicitare umbras inumque Acheronta mouere*. The word provides a formal complement to *uexantia* (15).

17–18 cito casurae: cf. Juv. 11.13 *cito casurus iam perlucēte ruina* (of a spendthrift whose decrepit house signals his imminent ruin).

Here the future participle perhaps has concessive force, 'short-lived though it may be'. Such participles are commonly used by the elegists with a variety of nuances, and Housman has four others in this short poem: 9 *daturus*, 21 *uicure... periturene*, 25 *inlatura*.

tactus uirtutis amore: cf. Hor. *Epist.* 1.16.52 *oderunt peccare boni uirtutis amore*, Stat. *Theb.* 4.128 *pulchraeque docet uirtutis amorem*, 12.177 *femineae subitum uirtutis amore*, and for the common Ovidian linking of *tangere* with *amor* see McKeown on *Am.* 2.1.6. The following lines suggest that *uirtutis* refers to Jackson; but Shackleton Bailey (2003) takes it to be the ‘passion and genius for scholarship’ of Housman himself, which Jackson may be able to protect from ‘inevitable evanescence’. The sequence of thought is thus neater (Housman’s apprehension of oblivion – his resolution to find someone to aid survival – his choice of Jackson), but at the expense of a reference to his love for Jackson.

humana... ope: a common phrase in prose, often contrasted with divine intervention (*OLD ops* 5a); in verse cf. Virg. *Aen.* 12.427 *non haec humanis opibus, non arte magistra | prouenit... maior agit deus*.

19–20 uirque uirum legi: an ancient Italian method of levying troops was for one soldier to choose another, and each would naturally choose as comrade the man he trusted best. See Livy 9.39.5 (*cum uir uirum legisset*), 10.38.12 (*ut uir uirum legerent*), Oakley on 10.2–13; further Suet. *Aug.* 35.1, 54.1, Tac. *Hist.* 1.18.2. The Virgilian line-ending *legitque uirum uir* (*Aen.* 11.632) is a close verbal parallel, though it refers not to recruitment but to warriors selecting an opponent in battle.

fortemque breuemque sodalem: Housman’s preferred companion bears some resemblance to the well-known preference of Archilochus (fr. 114 West): ‘Not for me a big, long-shanked, well-groomed general; let me have a man who is short (σμικρός τις), bow-legged, foursquare, full of courage (καρδής... πλέως)’. But Jackson was not particularly short (Naiditch (1995) 133 n.2), and *breuem* probably refers to the brevity of life described more fully in lines 25–8; for this meaning cf. Hor. *Odes* 2.14.24, where *breuem dominum* means ‘the master whose control will last for only a short time’. Harrison takes *breuem* to refer to their brief friendship, ‘the past intimacy of the 1880s that cannot now be recovered’,³⁹ but ‘short-lived’ seems to contrast well with the eternal gods and stars.

fortem ‘staunch’, often linked with *amicus* (e.g. Cic. *In Verr. Act. pr.* 23), but appropriate also to the imagery of the conscript.

titulus: the name that stands at the head of Housman’s commentary is one which lends his work fair hopes for survival, as the next couplet makes clear. Jackson’s companionship supported Housman in their former life (lines 1–4); now, united once more as author and dedicatee on the first pages of the edition of Manilius, they set out in good heart into an uncertain future.

uellet inesse: cf. Ovid *Am.* 1.14.32 (*comae*) *quas uellet capiti Bacchus inesse suo*. Echoing *uolui* in line 18, *uellet* emphasises the voluntary nature of the action.

21–2 Among the reviewers of *Manilius* I only J.P. Postgate makes mention of the dedicatory poem, and he singles out this couplet for special notice: ‘Before [the edition] stands a dedicatory poem to a friend who is described as ‘harum litterarum contemptor’ from which we cull the following dubitation of immortality [quoting lines 21–2]’.⁴⁰ The phrase ‘dubitation of immortality’ suggests that Postgate views the poem as a pessimistic complement to Wordsworth’s ‘Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood’. His tone seems to be ironical, but whether it is the sound of the couplet (*-urene* being very unusual)⁴¹ or its sentiment that he finds objectionable is not clear. He may have thought the ‘dubitation’ unclassical; certainly it is typical of Housman, and it distinguishes his dedication from similar passages in Latin poetry: Mart. 7.44.7–8 *si uictura meis mandantur nomina chartis | et fas est cineri me superesse meo* (*si* = ‘if, as is indeed the case’), 1.25.7–8 *post te uicturae per te quoque uiuere chartae | incipient*, Phaedrus 4 *epil.* 4–5 *uir sanctissime, | Particulo, chartis nomen uicturum meis*,⁴² Hor. *Odes* 4.9.30–4 *non ego te meis | chartis inornatum sileri, | totue tuos patiar labores | impune, Colli, carpere liuidas | obliuiones*, Cat. 68.45–6.

For the twin vocative future participles cf. Ovid, *Met.* 3.579 ‘*o periture tuaque deis documenta dature | morte*’ *ait*; for *periturus* with *charta*, Juv. 1.18 *periturae parcere chartae*.

uicture... uiuere: in the strong sense ‘survive’, as at the end of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*.

uiuere... nomine digne tuo: Jackson’s first name is propitious: Moses means ‘saved from the waters’ (cf. 13 *naufraga*). Housman’s *chartae* are figuratively the ‘ark of bulrushes’ that preserved Moses (Exodus 2.3): Jos. *Ant. Iud.* 3.220 μηχανῶνται πλέγμα βιβλινον... ἐντιθέασι τὸ παιδίον καὶ κατὰ τοῦ ποταμοῦ βαλόντες εἶασαν ἐπὶ τῷ θεῷ τὴν σωτηρίαν αὐτοῦ; Exodus 2.4 ‘And his sister stood afar off, to wit what would be done to him’ (= *uicture... periturene*); he is taken up by Pharaoh’s daughter; Jos. *ibid.* 228 καὶ αὐτῶν τὴν ἐπίκλησιν ταύτην τῶν συμβεβηκότων ἔθετο εἰς τὸν ποταμὸν ἐμπεσόντι· τὸ γὰρ ὕδωρ μὲν Αἰγύπτιοι καλοῦσιν, ἐσῆς δὲ τοὺς σωθέντας· συνθέντες οὖν ἐξ ἀμφοτέρων τὴν προσηγορίαν αὐτῷ ταύτην τίθενται;⁴³ cf. *Contra Apionem* 1.286 τὸ δ’ ἄληθές ὄνομα δηλοῖ τὸν ἐκ τοῦ ὕδατος σωθέντα, Exodus 2.10 ‘And she called his name Moses: and she said, Because I drew him out of the water’ (Vulg. *quia de aqua tuli eum*; Vulg. has *fiscellam scirpeam* for the ark, *carectum* and *papyrio* for the reeds in which it was placed.)

nomine... digne contrasts with the *indignam... luem* suffered by Manilius' poetry. For the phrase cf. Ovid *Trist.* 5.7b.45 *uix sunt homines hoc nomine digni*, Mart. 3.34.1 *digna tuo... nomine*, 9.49.6 *auctoris nomine digna sui*; for *uiuere digne*, Mart. 8.77.2 *Liber, in aeterna uiuere digne rosa*, Ovid, *Met.* 10.633 *uiuere dignus eras*, *Eleg. in Maec.* 1.4 *longius annoso uiuere dignus auo*.

sed certe: Prop. 2.12.14, Ovid, *Met.* 5.616; common particularly in Cicero's letters.

23–4 Cf. Virg. *Aen.* 7.605–6 *tendere ad Indos | Auroramque sequi Parthosque reposcere signa* ('standards'), 8.52 *signa secuti* (Lucan 2.531, 9.281, 10.10, Stat. *Theb.* 10.832, Sil. 17.561), Man. 3.297–8 *cum liceat certis surgentia signa | ducere temporibus propriasque ascribere in horas*, 3.219. The union of stars, gifts and the east is perhaps a distant echo of the journey of the Magi: Matthew 2.1–11 *ecce magi ab oriente uenerunt... dicentes... 'uidimus... stellam... in oriente...' et prouidentes adorauerunt eum et... obtulerunt ei munera*. Jackson is in India.

hesperia... plaga: Virg. *Aen.* 6.6 *litus in hesperium*; cf. 3.186, Ovid, *Met.* 2.142, Lucan 3.47–8.

trado munera: Harrison detects an allusion to Catullus 101, 'the elegy for the tomb of the poet's brother in Asia, in which both poet and poem similarly come all the way across the world to present an elegiac tribute: *trado munera* (24) recalls Cat. 101.8 *tradita sunt tristi munere ad inferias*'.⁴⁴

25–8 The last sentence, like the first, occupies two couplets and ends with a polysyllable. In lines 1–4 the main verb, governing two direct objects which take up the first couplet, comes at the end. Here, by contrast, the main verb is at the beginning of the sentence, and the two direct objects occupy the final couplet, a dying fall. Line 2 ends *die*, line 26 *dies*.

25–6 en cape: Sil. 7.192 '*en cape*' *Bacchus ait* (sc. *munera dei*), Apul. *Met.* 8.5; but for the poetic context cf. Virg. *Ecl.* 6.69 '*hos tibi dant calamos, en accipe, Musae, | Ascraeo quos ante seni*' (*accipe* was in Housman's first draft).

populo... perempto: cf. Ovid, *Her.* 6.35 *terrigenas populos ciuili Marte peremptos*; but there is perhaps an allusion to Lucretius' satire on the fear of death: 3.884–6 *hinc indignatur se mortalem esse creatum* (cf. 7–8 n.) | *nec uidet in uera nullum fore morte alium se | qui possit uiuus sibi se lugere peremptum*, where *peremptum*, reflecting the point of view of the man who fears death, has the usual overtones of violence which seem less appropriate in Housman's line.

ossa: Shackleton Bailey 'cannot help wishing that human anatomy to be dissolved in death... had not been represented by *bones*';⁴⁵ and it is true that

bones are often said to survive when flesh decays.⁴⁶ Housman considered and rejected *corpora humo* for *ossa solo*, attracted perhaps by the ‘etymologising’ assonance of *ossa solo* with *dissoluenda*.⁴⁷ For the juxtaposition *ossa solo* cf. Prop. 2.22.8 *tu nullo miseri contegis ossa solo*, Ovid, *Ex P.* 1.2.58, Sil. 6.159–60 *semesa iacebant | ossa solo*.

dissoluenda dies: cf. Tib. 1.7.1–2 *hunc cecinere diem Parcae fatalia nentes | stamina, non ulli dissoluenda deo*, 40 *pectora laetitiae dissoluenda dedit*. The dactylic scansion is found only at these two places in elegy,⁴⁸ but often in the fifth foot in Lucretius, with whom *dissolvere* is a favourite term (15 times in Book 3 alone).

27–8 fata... sortitas: cf. Virg. *Aen.* 3.375–6 *sic fata deum rex | sortitur uoluitque uices*, Sen. *Phoen.* 244–5 *fata quis tam tristia | sortitus umquam?*, [Sen.], *H.O.* 902.

non aeterni inverts the cliché of ‘undying friendship’ (e.g. Cic. *De am.* 32 *uerae amicitiae sempiternae sunt*). Both *non aeternus* and *non immortalis* seem scarcely to be attested in classical Latin writers.

sodalicii: cf. Cat. 100.4 *fratrum uere dulce sodalicium* and Ovid, *Trist.* 4.10.46 *iure sodalicii quo mihi iunctus erat*, where the relationship between Ovid and Propertius is described. There is also an echo here of Cat. 109.5–6 *ut liceat nobis tota perducere uita | aeternum hoc sanctae foedus amicitiae*. Housman’s poem thus closes with allusions to passages which describe love, comradeship and poetry; and, if *pruinosa* in line 1 is indeed a reference to the *Amores*, allusion to love poetry reinforces the verbal repetition: see above on *uincla* and Horace’s *uincula Pirithoo*.

Translations

Translations into English verse have been published by Edmund Wilson⁴⁹ and Walter Shewring.⁵⁰

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VERSIO GRAECA
I. DIGGLE
VERSICVLORVM MEORVM OLIM CENSORI
GRATO ANIMO OBLATA

Σήματα μαρμαίροντα κατὰ κρυερῆς πτύχας ὄρφνης
καὶ φθιμένων ἀγῶν τείρεα γεινόμενα
σιγαλέους δι' ἀγρούς ξυνὴν ὁδὸν οἰοπολεῦντε
τελλόμεν' ὠκεανοῦ σκεψάμεθ' ἀμφοτέροι.
σκεψάμεθ' ἄλλα πάρος, πρὶν νῶ φάος εἰσοράσθαι,
κλινόμεν' ἐς πέλαγος σκέψατ' αἰοιδὸς ἀνὴρ,
εὖ δ' εἰδὼς θνητὸς γεγαῶς ἀπὸ μητέρος αἴης
ἔσφερ' ἐὴν σοφίην ἀστράσιν ἀθανάτοις,
τέκμαρ ἐὼν ἀρίδηλον ἐπιπλομένοισι βροτοῖσι
μή τις ἐπιχθονίων πίστιν ἔχησι θεοῖς.
δὴ γὰρ ὅλον θ' ὑδέοντα πόλον καὶ ὁμήγυριν ἄστρον
δέξατ' ἔπεα κείνου μοῖραν ἀεικελίην,
οἷα δὲ λείψανα νηὸς ἐφ' ἡμέας ἐκσωθέντα
οὐ σαφὲς ὕμνοπόλου τοῦνομα νῦν φορέει.
αὐτὰρ ἐγὼν εἴασα βροτῶν μύρῳ αἰνὰ φέροντας
ἀστέρας, οὐδὲ θεοὺς ὄχλειον ἀθανάτους,
ὠκυμόρου δ' ἀνδροτῆτος ἔχων πόθον, ἀνδρὸς ἀρωγῇ
προφρονέως πιθόμην ὄφρα λάβοιμι κλέος,
ἄνδρα δ' ἀνὴρ ἐλόμην ὀλιγοχρόνιον τ' ἀγαθόν τε
ὃς σταίῃ σελίδων πρόσθε γεγραψόμενος.
ὦ πέπον, ὦδ' ἐν ἐμῇς ζώοις σόος εἴ ποτε βύβλοις,
νημερτὲς ζωῆς ἄξιον οὔνομ' ἔχων·
σήμασι γὰρ πρὸς ἔω σπομένῳ περιτελλομένοισι
σοὶ τόδ' ἀφ' ἐσπερίης δῶρον ἔπεμψα πλακός.
ἀλλὰ, φίλος, λάβε τοῦτ'· Ἄιδόσδε γὰρ ἰζόμεθ' ἄμφω,
ὁστέα δ' ἐκλύσει γαῖα μέλαινα τάφῳ
καὶ νόον ἀνδρόμεον ζωῇ λάχος ἴσον ἔχοντα
ἦδ' οὐκ ἀθανάτης δεσμὰ συνημοσύνης.

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NOTES

1. The poem is edited with an extensive apparatus criticus by Burnett (1997) 289–91; there are notes, and a prose translation by L. Holford-Strevens, on pp.565–6. The very few other Latin verses by Housman still extant are briefly discussed by Butterfield (2009) 130.
2. By 1903, the year in which *Manilius I* appeared, Housman was well known as a writer of verse in English, but he had not published versions or original compositions in Latin or Greek. His moving directly from the Patent Office to a chair in London meant that he was never required to teach verse composition to an advanced level and to produce the ‘fair copies’ which the dons of Oxford and Cambridge would publish in collections; and his keenly emotional reaction to the best Latin poetry may have ruled out facile emulation. Gow (1936) 77 n.3 remarks of such work, ‘he had little taste for it himself.’ But his love of the Classics had been kindled by reading *Sabrinæ Corolla* (cf. Marlow (1958) 26–8), and his hero Munro had published many compositions.
3. Not that scholars of the nineteenth century were mild in print. The introduction to Munro's *Lucretius*, which served as a model for Housman, castigates several scholars; and Madvig too could be very severe.
4. Heinsius and Burman, for example, prefixed dedicatory elegiacs to their editions of Ovid. Among Housman's contemporaries such poems are uncommon. In 1876 Jebb had composed for his edition of the *Attic orators* an ode in Pindaric style lauding their immortal eloquence. Wilamowitz prefaced some of his editions with brief epigrams in Greek.
5. E.g. *Last Poems* III.11–12 (Burnett (1997) 74) ‘And I shall die to-morrow; | But you will die to-day’, XXV.7 (ibid. 93) ‘And from the cave of oracles I heard the priestess shrieking | That she and I should surely die and never live again’, XLI.37–40 (ibid. 109) ‘To-morrow, more's the pity, | Away we both must hie, | To air the ditty, | And to earth I’.

6. For the combination of doubt with self-assurance in a similar context cf. e.g. Manilius V, pp.xxxvi-vii: 'Perhaps there will be no long posterity for learning; but the reader whose good opinion I desire and have done my utmost to secure is the next Bentley or Scaliger who may chance to occupy himself with Manilius.'
7. See especially Manilius V, pp.xxxv-vi.
8. Housman was keen that Jackson should appreciate that he was 'an eminent bloke': Burnett (2007) I.516-17.
9. E.g. 'Bredon Hill' 6-10 'Here of a Sunday morning | My love and I would lie, | And see the coloured counties, | And hear the larks so high | About us in the sky' (A Shropshire Lad XXI, Burnett (1997) 22-3). The dedication to Jackson was first drafted in 1895 (Burnett (1997) 565), the year before A Shropshire Lad was published.
10. Jackson has gone away as if to a promised land, and has taken with him Housman's hopes for happiness in this life. More Poems II, which describes the exodus from Egypt, seems to move from the biblical Moses to Moses Jackson, concluding (17-20) 'I see the country far away | Where I shall never stand; | The heart goes where no footstep may | Into the promised land' (Burnett (1997) 115).
11. For a thorough account of what is known of Jackson see Naiditch (1995) 132-44; there is a convenient summary at Burnett (1997) 393-4. Tom Stoppard's play *The Invention of Love* dramatises the relationship.
12. Richards (1941) 289; cf. Burnett (1997) 427.
13. 'Diffugere niues', More Poems V, Burnett (1997) 118-19.
14. See Harrison (2002) 213. The similarity to the end of the poem to Jackson was noted by Wilkinson (1974) 44.
15. On this topic and on *uirque uirum legi* (19) see Douglas-Fairhurst (2007) 105-9; cf. Whallon (1988) 51.
16. Harrison (2002) 210.
17. Naiditch (1988) 145 n.43-32.
18. Probably an allusion to Soph. Ant. 586-93; cf. O.C. 1239-48, Trach. 112-21.
19. Platnauer (1951) 10, with n.2: 'In the three books of Ov. Am. there are only five cases and in A.A. only six'. In Books 3, 7 and 11 of Martial (762 hexameters) there are 15 cases (1.9%).
20. In the whole of *Sabrinæ Corolla* (4th ed.) and *Florilegium Latinum* I, for example, there are only eight instances; in Munro's *Translations into Latin* and

Greek verse, only two; and in H. Millington's *Translations into Latin verse*, a book vetted by Housman (pp.viii–ix), only one example in hexameters (p.25) and one in elegiacs (p.3 *seruata quid astra tulerunt*, ameliorated by the rhythm). Perret (1956) 154 points out that 'false endings' of the type *tria uirginis ora* (*Dianae*) are not avoided, so that the traditional explanation for the avoidance of amphibrachic words at line-end is perhaps insufficient.

21. For this rhythm in hexameter poetry see Austin on *Virg. Aen.* 1.188, 2.380, 4.58 (on the frequency of double -que in such cases), Norden on 6.140 (6th ed., p.176).
22. Platnauer (1951) 17.
23. In the 762 pentameters of Books 3, 7 and 11 Martial has 88 final polysyllables (8.6%), and of these 57 are in the final line; that is, 64% of the elegiac poems in those books end in this way.
24. Platnauer (1951) 72–90.
25. On the elegists' usage see Platnauer (1951) 27–33.
26. Platnauer (1951) 64.
27. *Ibid.* 65–6.
28. It is an iambus at *Hor. Sat.* 1.2.31.
29. Platnauer (1951) 51.
30. In inscribing a copy of *Manilius I* to Arthur Platt with the words *Arturo non lecturo* ('To Arthur, who will not read [it]'), Housman used the same idea with greater levity. See Carter & Scott (1959) 32.
31. Burnett (1997) 565 '...a perfect Philistine', Naiditch (1995) 136 with n.1. But Jackson had a decent knowledge of the Classical languages, and would probably have known enough Latin to understand Housman's commentary: in 1893 Housman wrote, 'his knowledge of Liddell and Scott's *Greek Lexicon* has often filled me with admiring envy' (Burnett (2007) 75).
32. Naiditch (1988) 208 n.62–6.
33. *Manilius V*, p.v.
34. Cf. Housman's remarks on Bentley's edition, *Manilius I*, p.xvi: 'His *Manilius* is a greater work than either the *Horace* or the *Phalaris*; yet its subject condemns it to find few readers, and those few for the most part unfit: to be read by *Dorville* and left unread by *Madvig*'.
35. Harrison (2002) 210 n.7.
36. Cf. Williams (1994) 44.

37. Shackleton Bailey (2003) 194.
38. See Burnett (1997) 291.
39. Harrison (2002) 211.
40. Postgate (1904) 63.
41. Lucretius and Propertius among others have -eque, but Virgil and Ovid avoid it. Butterfield (2009) 130: ‘most contemporary judges, even accepting Propertius as Housman’s closest Classical model, would not have welcomed his periturene: there is no parallel for -urēne in Classical dactylic poetry... In Housman’s own interleaved copy of Man. I... there is evidence that he had later become aware of this infelicity, for he noted alongside the line “II 479 audireque / Cic. n.d. 1 uarietate / carm epigr. 251.2 uenerandeque”’. Perhaps his annotation (and there are no others of a similar type) reveals that Housman felt this was what had offended Postgate. But the fact that another version of this line was O periture tamen mecum reditureque numquam suggests that he was not much concerned about the matter at the time of composition.
42. See Harrison (2002) 212. The nearby lines are discussed by Housman in his review of Postgate’s OCT Phaedrus, CP 1009 = CR 34 (1920) 123.
43. In the Preface to the fourth volume of the Loeb Josephus (London & New York, 1930), p.xix, H. St J. Thackeray acknowledges Housman’s help on a point of astronomy (cf. pp.404–5).
44. Harrison (2002) 212.
45. Shackleton Bailey (2003) 194.
46. E.g. Prop. 1.22.8, A Shropshire Lad XLIII (‘The Immortal Part’) 7–8 ‘The man of flesh and soul be slain | And the man of bone remain’, 15–16 ‘The immortal bones obey control | Of dying flesh and dying soul’ (Burnett (1997) 45).
47. At Hor. Odes 4.7.16 one ms (according to Bentley’s commentary) has puluis et ossa sumus, though at CP 178–9 Housman prints umbra without comment.
48. Housman had cause to remember it; he has fun with the passage in Classical Review for July 1903, the year in which Manilius I was published: ‘Thus does an author suffer when a stupid scribe thinks himself clever. Tibull. 7 39 sq. Bacchus et agricolae magno confecta labore | pectora tristitiae dissoluenda dedit. So the MSS. “Muretus, Passeratus, Guietus, Heinsius, omnes malebant laetitiae.” But Heinsius and Muretus and the rest of them are dead and gone, and Tibullus is datus tristitiae dissolendus’ (CR 17 (1903) 309 = CP 594). (Those who retain tristitiae must take it improbably as a genitive of separation, but Housman’s joke assumes it to be dative.)

49. 'Those starry signs that freak with light | The frosty caverns of the night, | Sea-born and bright when daylight dies— | Together we have watched them rise, | Late wandering, where fields lay wide, | The lone and silent countryside. | So once, while still our place was blank, | The poet watched them where they sank, | Setting below the Latin sea; | And, mindful of mortality, | Earth-sprung nor spared from earth for long, | He looked aloft and launched his song | Against the everlasting stars— | Alas! to leave, with many scars, | A warning, all too plain, of odds | Which mock the man who trusts the gods. | For, though to heaven dedicate, | With all the universe for freight, | His verses found misfortune fast | And, washed upon our strand at last, | Shipwrecked and battered, blurred and lame, | They scarce can tell their maker's name. | I have not plied, importunate, | The stars that harass human fate | Nor, begging guidance from above, | Besieged the gods, but, touched with love | Of mortal glory swift to fade, | Have sought a name through human aid | And, man, have chosen among men, | To stead no heaven-assailing pen, | A comrade, mortal-lived but stout, | Whose name shall bring my volume out. | —'O comrade', let me say, 'whose name | May perish with my pages' fame, | Yet worthy through thine own to live: | From human hand to hand, I give— | To thee who followest away | Those rising signs, to seek the day— | This present from a western shore: | Take it: tomorrow runs before, | With those whom life no longer owns | To lay our flesh and loose our bones— | To dull with all-benumbing thrust | Our wits that wake not from the dust, | Nor spare, with learning's lettered leaf, | The bonds of fellowship as brief'. (Richards (1941) 442–3, reprinted from *The Bookman*, October 1927.)
50. 'The glittering signs born with the death of day | To fret the concave of the frosty night – | We on the brooding countryside astray, | Have watched them over ocean heave to sight. | In times not ours, above a Latin sea, | The poet watched them so. Heir to the dust, | He praised the stars that should not die as he; | He trusted gods and taught men not to trust; | For the same verse that spanning world on world | Hymned the high heavens and universal frame | In piteous wreckage on our shores was hurled, | Flotsam that scarce had kept the master's name. | To stars that thwart us or to deathless gods | I looked not, I, to bind my labours sure; | I sought a man to friend a man at odds, | Chose a brave heart that could not long endure. | And such were you, good comrade of an hour; | Whence, on this forefront of the work I've made, | Your name's remembered. | Fade it here or flower | By its own right it should not early fade. | Dweller amid the signs at the eastern spring, | Take now this offering from the western coast – | Now, because you with me one doom will bring | To those that are not, and the vanished host, | When the same hour that gives our bones to rot | In the same clay to dissolution sends | Souls that eternity inherit not, | And that which leagued us, not for ever, friends.' Shewring (1984) 23.

The Importance of Housman's Lad

by

George Haynes

A.E. Housman's original title for *A Shropshire Lad* was 'The Poems of Terence Hearsay'.¹ Terence' (ASL 8, 62) may represent Terence, the Greek dramatist, who was brought as a slave to Rome where he lived in exile. References to Terence in *A Shropshire Lad* unify the cycle for just like Terence, Housman's lad, in ASL 37, is removed from Shropshire, a place of happiness and innocence (almost a pastoral idyll) to London. In exile he has divided memories about Shropshire; he sees it as 'the land of lost content' (ASL 40). In his mind his Shropshire is the place of crime and punishment - a place of betrayal; but when he remembers:

'Tis time, I think, by Wenlock town
The golden broom should blow;
The hawthorn sprinkled up and down
Should charge the land with snow[.]
(ASL 39 ll. 1-4,)

It is a place of retrospective longing. But he also understands and realises:

Oh tarnish late on Wenlock Edge,
Gold that I never see;
Lie long, high snowdrifts in the hedge
That will not shower on me.
(ASL 39 ll. 9-12)

There is no doubting the 'Shropshire' element in his title. But we can dismiss Housman's statement in his letter to Maurice Pollet that he did not know Shropshire well² because the anecdote from Percy Withers that Housman said, with a laugh and derision, he went to Shropshire to gain local colour,³ is testament to Housman's sense of irony. Withers understood that Housman knew Shropshire well. His knowledge was acquired not merely through visiting the county. According to Percival Graves, Housman gleaned information about Shropshire during his walks in London with Maycock and Eyre. The latter's mother was a Shropshire woman, and Graves tells us that Housman would ask about the area.⁴ However, when considering Housman's Shropshire, we should not follow blindly Ralph Franklin's example who, in his *MLQ* article in 1963 considers it to be a real place.⁵ Housman's Shropshire is partly a landscape of the mind; it is a place reminiscent of 'the Cambridge of Lycidas, [...] not exactly a real place'.⁶ Housman's

Shropshire presents a pastoral idyll not unlike Sir Philip Sidney's in *Arcadia* but it was never meant to represent the county that borders Wales. This is why references to Shropshire are both topographically accurate and inaccurate.⁷ They create the cycle's spirit of place; they help with its unity, and although they occur in approximately only twenty percent of the poems, Shropshire references help the collection's quasi authenticity.⁸ But we should not view Housman's 'Shropshire' like Hardy's Wessex. Whilst it is interesting to consider the topographical accuracy of the Shropshire references, and, perhaps, even argue for the cycle's historical accuracy, more important to understanding some of Housman's intentions in the cycle (and arguably more intriguing) is the 'lad'. What is his role in the cycle and what nuances are there in the word 'lad' and 'lads'?

Housman's title, *A Shropshire Lad*, suggests the subject matter is about the fortunes of a particular lad who either lives in, or comes from, Shropshire. Indeed, the first and third person narratives do explore a lad's interaction with those around him and record his observations about his environment. They are records of his relationships with, and advice to, others. If we accept this then the narrator of *ASL* 1 who watches the 'beacons burn' (*l.* 1, *ASL* 1) in 1887 and who remembers soldiers of 'the Fifty-third' who died fighting for Queen and country, must be the lad who advises the recruit to 'leave your home behind, lad,' (*l.* 1, *ASL* 3) and go off to fight because he will return a hero. He must be the lad who, when it is spring, urges girls to 'come out to ramble' (*l.* 1, *ASL* 29) and he must be the lad who looks out to the Isle of Portland and remembers felons who quarried stone (*l.* 4, *ASL* 59). But he must also be the lad who is told by a third party that what he has set down on paper about his experiences 'is stupid stuff' (*ASL* 62). But who *is* this Shropshire lad? Is he meant to be Housman? In any literary text, we cannot say that the 'I' narrator is the author. We cannot even say that what the text explores is accurate of the event it relates because in the interest of 'art' accounts and characters may have been dramatised, glamorised, romanticised, sentimentalised, or written about with authorial bias. Arguably, none of the poems in *A Shropshire Lad* have an historical basis, but what about the lad? He has a voice, but what does this represent?

Literary texts call upon the reader to think about them in terms of many voices.⁹ As the voices emerge, they cause a struggle within the text which begins a three-way dialogue between the writer, the text and the reader. Initially, the purpose of the voice is to engage the reader so that he becomes involved with the text and so enlist a response from him. But poetic voices also have things to say about what voices are and how we might or might not hear them.

Invariably, a text contains more than one voice, even if it is a matter of a voice ostensibly just talking or responding to itself. Voices can suggest the bias or persuasion of the writer, such as his political or non-political intentions, his engagement with the text, his humour or his seriousness. But, through the use of 'level tones', Housman's text deliberately confounds ideas about voices. Archie Burnett lucidly argues how the level 'tone', or composure in Housman's poetry, works against the strong, if understated, emotional element of the text's subject matter.¹⁰ But, as in the early poetry of Thom Gunn where he uses formal structures to constrain his emotional energies and disguise his poetry's homo-erotic content, the same may be true of Housman's decorum. His work's emotional intensity can be seen as constrained within the tightness of form and irony so that the poetry has an ability to interact on different levels. Some of the things that help hold all this together are the image of the lad, Housman's addressing youth as a 'lad' or 'lads' and the effects these have on the text, the author and the reader.

We cannot necessarily agree with Housman's comment to Maurice Pollet, 'Very little in the book is biographical'¹¹ because we do not know what he meant by 'biographical'. Nor can we agree with him when he says 'The Shropshire Lad is an imaginary figure' because Housman confessed the lad had something of his 'temper and view of life'. Surely this is biographical and so important? After reading 'Farewell to barn and stack and tree' (ASL 8), I doubt whether Housman had ever heard a murderer's confession. Similarly, I doubt whether he was susceptible to female enchantments, as in ASL 21, but there is a great deal about the narrator's temperament that seemingly echoes Housman's. The subject matter the 'lad' presents as narrator is simple; his tone is introspective and his delivery, though cold in manner, is passionate in temperament. Like Housman's personality, the lad's is enigmatic and burdened by private grief. Mature for his age, the lad's comments seemingly embrace the ironic statements of the classicist who says one thing whilst meaning another; he is also the Romantic ironist whose statements, as Harold Bloom notes, possess 'a keen sense that meaning breaks under the strain of the irony of irony'.¹² After reading the cycle, the overall impression left is that the 'lad' is disillusioned, taciturn and full of the world-weary cares of an older man.

In the Preface to a 1954 edition of *A Shropshire Lad*, Laurence Housman advanced the argument that the Shropshire Lad was his brother, Alfred. He realised that having invented this 'fig-leaf of a fictitious character, he pretended was not his own, Alfred was able to let himself go'.¹³ Terence Hearsay, therefore, became a distancing tool to prevent the reader from associating him 'with the Professor of Latin from University College, London'.¹⁴ Speaking through the persona of the Lad removes Housman's inhibitions; its impersonality detaches

Housman emotionally from his work, and enables him to explore situations beyond his experiences. However, whilst doing these things, as Housman's alter-ego, the persona, whilst presenting situations that are overtly heterosexual, allows him to be covertly homosexual. Through the persona of the lad and the irony associated with it, Housman appears to be exorcising something he feels unable to openly confront, and it is within this scenario that the text's three-way struggle begins. Central to this struggle is how the word 'lad' or 'lads' are used and the implications such addresses have for our understanding of the text.

The accepted definition of a lad is 'a young boy, a youth'; but 'young man' and a 'young fellow' are also included in the definition. Within the diction of pastoral poetry, 'lad' is used to denote a young shepherd. The ironical use of the word 'lad' should not be forgotten and it can be used to describe a male of any age. In a wider sense, 'lad' is also used endearingly or in a familiar way. If someone showed spirit or vigour, one might say he was 'a bit of a lad'. Housman probably included all of these suggestions in his definition of lad, but I think we should summarise his meanings as referring to men of any age belonging to a group sharing common working, recreational, or other interests such as social drinking, sport or other activities that are male orientated. 'Lad(s)' has a strong implication of comradeship and equality, perhaps, even, one belonging to a particular social group. However, Robert Burns used lad to mean 'sweetheart',¹⁵ and from the paper presented by Housman in 1892, despite the caustic comments toward its end that 'Burns was not a great poet',¹⁶ this demonstrates that he was more than familiar with the poet, and, arguably, his peculiar use of lad.

A reason why Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson admired *Last Poems* was because he realised 'what they [the poems] say appeals to something deep in me. And deep calls to deep.'¹⁷ He realised there was a double structure to the poems: the first, and overt, allows readers to enjoy them on one level but to achieve a more satisfactory understanding one needed to understand the second, covert structure. The second structure explores the depth of emotion and experience in what was said. I suggest Housman began this process of personal depth in his work not with *Last Poems* but with *A Shropshire Lad* and central to that is the meaning of 'lad' and 'lads'. The structure of *A Shropshire Lad* suggests a quasi-pastoral idyll populated by youth. But this overt structure is a glass barrier: it gives the illusion of a single structure which shows the reader what is visible but simultaneously creates a barrier which denies the viewer (the general reader) full access. In *A Shropshire Lad*, part of the overt structure is Housman posing as an omniscient, heterosexual narrator who describes and observes heterosexual activities. This disguises a second, more personal, structure where the narrator's identity is homosexual and his statements are potentially homo-

erotic.¹⁸ A fuller understanding of what Housman meant when he wrote 'lad' or 'lads' helps expose the second structure and from this the reader begins to understand the poems' more personal meanings.

Within the overt structure of *A Shropshire Lad*, Time is the enemy. It creates and ends experience; it brings the realisation that life is transient and short and it blights youth. A youth has the rest of his life before him; the flush of youth soon fades but it can also be cut short. Playing the omniscient narrator, Housman, now in middle age but posing as a lad, represents the sage-like, experienced, individual who understands time. In his role, he proffers advice: youth must seize the moment. As he extols *carpe diem*, 'lad' and 'lads' become words of encouragement (ASL 4, 6, 11, 25, 51, 56), but he knows that youth can be reckless. His sense of awareness is demonstrated when he addresses the youth who commits suicide as 'lad' (ASL 53), or when he moralizes as he exposes the folly of lads' actions (ASL 49), or when he explores the motives of the opportunist whose interest lies in seduction (ASL 5). However, as omniscient narrator, he also knows certain professions hold danger. Soldiers are men paid to die (ASL 1, 3); they do so receiving a 'bullet to the brain' (ASL 56). Within the overt structure, to arrest the reader's attention, alluding to soldiers as 'lads', heightens their plight. They are like the lad who possesses a better character than some free men (ASL 9) but because of circumstances is facing the noose. Calling these men 'lad' or 'lads' demonstrates their sense of comradeship. In these poems, because they die bravely, 'lad' or 'lads' suggests Housman's respect. Such simple words of endearment also enlist sympathy; they evoke the tragedy of a situation, they demonstrate the futile loss of life or the situation (ASL 27, 55, 59) and they explain how, compared to this lad or these lads, Housman feels unworthy (ASL 9).

But, when we move beyond this structure and consider the cycle of poems' covert structure, we realise that as the narrator/lad, Housman has addressed himself to 'lads' that are 'manly' types: soldiers (ASL 1, 3, 4, 22, 35, 56), the sportsman (ASL 17, 19), rustics, farm hands and working-class labourers (ASL 23). Such men were believed to be favoured by both overt homosexuals and those men with covert homosexual inclinations. John Addington Symonds, a near contemporary of Housman's, recorded in his diary for 23 March 1889 how tantalising working-class labourers could be.¹⁹ Unlike Symonds, Housman's desires are repressed yet he explored them in his poetry. This is what is concealed within the poetry's second structure and seeing the fuller implications of what he meant when he wrote 'lad' and 'lads' help expose this. Soldiers were known to supplement their income through homosexual activities. Havelock Ellis noted the primitive indifference to homosexuality amongst Guardsmen;²⁰ Addington Symonds was fascinated by Guardsmen and saw himself suffering from 'scarlet

fever'²¹ and, at the Wilde trial, Max Beerbohm wrote, 'It was horrible leaving the court day after day having to pass through the knot of renters (the young Parker wearing Her Majesty's uniform, another form of female attire)'.²² Jeffrey Weeks in *Sex, Politics and Society* (1989) argues that there is no such thing as homosexuality. He argues that homosexuality presents itself in different forms, including through one's language. Consequently, he presents the case for homosexualities. This being the case, we can test his ideas against *A Shropshire Lad*. Doing this, we realise the importance of the poems' second structure is to hide the poetry's potential homo-erotic content. When he describes his lads as 'lightfoot' (ASL 54), or 'lovely' (ASL 35) and realises they are part of his 'golden friends' (ASL 54), the language used is very sensuous. When he instructs them to 'reach your friend your hand' (ASL 3), or to 'Call me, I shall hear you call' (ASL 24), his language betrays him. We realise he is more than emotionally involved with his addressees. He says, 'I wish one could know them' (ASL 23). The verb 'wish' includes a desire to have something one knows cannot (or probably will not) happen. What he is wishing for relates to these 'lads' and the inferences of what is meant by 'friends' and 'fellows' (ASL 38). It is this, and the unspoken bond between them and him that is the centre of his desire. This is probably best explained in the glance given by the 'single redcoat' who turns, as he passes, and looks at the narrator Housman (ASL 22). Jean Cocteau explained how 'homosexuals recognise each other – the way Jews do. The mask dissolves, and I would venture to discover my kind between the lines of the most innocent book.'²³ In Housman's poem, the two men are total strangers, yet the redcoat has singled out the lad/narrator because he recognises they have something in common. Within the overt structure, the statement is deliberately general and vague. The lad speaks of 'thoughts at heart'. However, reading the statement within the context of the covert second structure, the casual reference to the 'heart', when combined with the mutual eye contact and a telling stare, begins to create a different scenario. Despite being forcibly hidden within each man, the presence of 'these thoughts' is still known. It could be an emotion, or a temperament, or a secret like that Housman tentatively explored in ASL XV when he declared:

Look not in my eyes, for fear
 They mirror true the sight I see,
 And there you find your face too clear
 And love it and be lost like me.

(ll. 1-4)

Regardless of whether it is a real or an imaged incident related in *ASL* 22, in the light of Cocteau's belief and Dickinson's statement, they allow for the soldier's gesture to the watching Housman as lad to be one of deep knowledge. The strong sense of empathy between the two parties may be read as the mutual recognition of their sexual orientation. Overall, although successfully hidden from society, when 'deep calls to deep' it becomes like Hamlet's conjecture that guilty creatures sitting watching a play that re-enacts their crime will speak 'with most miraculous organ' (Act II: ii). Likewise, the chemistry displayed in the mutual glance of the marching soldier and Housman as lad produces the same effect. We realise, therefore that when Housman addresses his subject as either 'lad' or 'lads' it contains sentiments beyond mere terms of endearment. It incorporates the homo-erotic and we realise that through 'lad(s)' Housman is implying an unspoken bond between them. For this reason I cannot agree with William Wallon's judgment of Housman's characters.

In his article for the *HSJ* 14 (1988)²⁴ Wallon maintains Housman's characters are implying nothing specifically sexual in the love between men. He cites *Last Poems* 24, ll. 7-8 as his example; he also cites Addington Symonds's *Studies of the Greek Poets* (p. 67). However, he ignores Symonds's letter to Whitman where he asks whether Whitman's 'Calamas' poems were calculated to encourage ardent and physical intimacies between men. Symonds asks, 'in your conception of comradeship, do you contemplate the intrusion of these semi-sexual emotions which no doubt occurs between men'.²⁵ Wallon ignores how Housman disguises the full implications of his meanings of 'lad' through obscurity. Within obscurity, death has long been a metaphor for sex, and even the *OED* gives as a definition for death 'to experience sexual orgasm; to languish; to be consumed with longing or desire'. Housman's allusions to death, and to his lads sharing the same fate together means we can not only see his occasions as reminiscent of Whitman's idea of manly comrades and the love that engenders, but such allusions to 'lads' also demonstrate a strong craving for masculine company. Because Housman is addressing manly types as 'lads' this makes his tone not merely empathetic, it becomes one of desire. The occasions of the poems, their obscure imagery of death, their ends with the protagonists' deaths (or the fantasy of death) induce a degree of fulfilment in Housman. But, arguably, Housman also employs these scenarios because death is a place of safety. He may be an appealing 'lad' but a dead soldier, like a dead farm hand, cannot hurt; he is no longer a sexual temptation. He will not lie with his comrades (with all the implications of 'lie') and a suicide victim will lie alone (*ASL* 44). When these facts are put together, and accepting that the character of the Shropshire lad can be read as Housman's alter-ego, we realise the deliberate identification of them as 'lads'. The statements Housman

makes are acceptable to the general reader, but they also contain a subliminal homo-erotic association which allows him to explore his sexual fantasies. Then, through his characters' deaths, he is able to exorcise his sexual lust and sometimes the poems become no more than fantasies of psychological masturbation.

Arguably, the use of 'lad' in *ASL* 44 is the most tantalising. This 'lad' is a soldier who, because of his sexual orientation, commits suicide. Here, Housman's specific language and pointed use of 'lad' demonstrates the poem's real purpose. Laurence Housman and J. M. Nosworthy²⁶ have both provided historical data for this poem, and Housman's language almost sets it in its historical context. Within the overt structure of *A Shropshire Lad* here is another poem that explores the mutability of life. Time changes fortunes and man is powerless. Suicide becomes an acceptable means of defeating time. But it also stops the ills of time: the disgrace of changing fortunes (*ll.* 15-16). Originally Housman wrote a 'wreath of verse',²⁷ a line he changed to the more appropriate, 'here's the wreath I've made' (*l.* 26). Within the theme of time, the wreath may be read as a token of victory for here is a 'lad' who has triumphed over adversity and conquered time. But the poem as an artefact is also a wreath. It is a permanent statement; it is something that is not subject to the wear and tear of time so what is written becomes a permanent testament to the lad's action. The language chosen, with its emphasis on the Biblical, reflects the cadet's suicide note but it seemingly echoes the Bible-thumping attitude the Victorians had towards sexual inverts. From the tone, this would seem to include Housman for he condones the lad's actions, his courage and bravery. Twice he is called 'a man' (*ll.* 20, 26). Housman, the 'heterosexual' moralist – as if to say, 'we cannot have that sort of thing here' – applauds the cadet. 'Oh that was right, lad, that was brave: / Oh, you had forethought, you had reason' (*ll.* 2, 5). Finally, despite the cadet being a Londoner, as a soldier and suicide victim, he fits the tenor of the poem about Shropshire lads.²⁸

However, there are clues that suggest the circumstances that occasioned this poem are more personal to Housman. In other poems 'my lad' or 'lads' are used to describe how youths or young men are dear to him (*ASL* 24, 27, 37, 54). In *ASL* 44, however, he uses 'oh lad'. Once we understand that 'ill' (*l.* 3), 'household traitor' (*l.* 11) and 'The soul that should not have been born' (*l.* 12)²⁹ are encoded allusions to homosexuality, the 'oh lad' (*l.* 20) becomes more pertinent. The exclamation 'oh' (which features in the first three stanzas) rather than being an exclamation of surprise is indicative of disappointment. The poem really explores the similarity, if not closeness, of Housman's and the cadet's situation. The times and its social attitudes towards sexual inverts mean he feels obliged to live through a façade that suggests heterosexuality. Like the cadet, he is a man who

can confide in no-one, and like him, he lives a divided life. After reading a copy of the cadet's suicide note which he kept with the poem, Housman must have understood how the cadet's tortured existence for it mirrored his own. He must have understood how the cadet felt trapped and he must have understood that the only way the cadet could explain himself and his situation was in a last letter. But, unlike the cadet, Housman, a poet, through his verse, without being direct, has a chance to express himself and his pity for the cadet. Although the poem's structure is formal with regular four-line stanzas and simple rhyming scheme suggesting Housman's voice is tightly under control, this is far from true. His voice is far from constrained. The poem does not condone the cadet's actions; it is a speech in praise that is full of sympathy for him. The immediacy of the opening line:

Shot? so quick, so clean and ending?

gives way to a wealth of irony. What unfolds is a poem full of tension, warmth and understanding. 'Oh lad' is full of tenderness; it shows not just sympathy with the youth who is trapped and feels unable to escape, it conveys real empathy. The comradeship Housman has with the dead cadet is not that he professes with the soldiers who die with their regiment. They are fantasies. This comradeship goes beyond fantasy. Housman is genuinely moved by what the cadet felt he needed to do; it has hit a raw nerve. The poem is, therefore, full of emotional excitement and vibrating with sympathy. Consequently, far from suggesting a condemnation of homosexuality, the Biblical language becomes ironic. It looks back on line 12 ASL 11 and prepares the reader for Housman's statement in *Last Poems* 12:

The laws of God, the laws of man,
He may keep that will and can
(ll. 1-2)

and makes ASL 44 a perfect encomium. Unlike the landscape of the mind that is Housman's Shropshire and its questionable historical and topographical accuracy, there is more to his use of 'lad' and 'lads' and we should realise that the regaining of identity is the framework of all literature.

NOTES

1. Richard Perceval Graves, *A. E. Housman: The Scholar-Poet* (London, 1979), p. 101.
2. Henry Maas, *The Letters of A. E. Housman* (London, 1971), p. 328.

3. Percy Withers, *A Buried Life* (London, 1940), p. 67.
4. Graves (1979), p. 73.
5. Ralph Franklin, 'Housman's Shropshire', *MLQ* 24 (1963), pp. 164-171.
6. C. Clemens, 'Some unpublished Housman Letters', *Poets Lore* LIII (1947), p. 262.
7. ASL 9. The third stanza is accurate. The railway is in close proximity to the prison and so condemned men would hear the engine's groans as they await their fate. See J. L. Bradbury, 'Poetry and place in A. E. Housman,' *HSJ* 5 (1979), p. 13. The reference to Hughley church's steeple being a 'far-known sign' (ASL 61), is inaccurate. Hughley is in a valley; it has no steeple and never has had one. See, Laurence Housman, *A.E.H: A Memoir* (London, 1937), p. 76.
8. Of the 63 poems, only 13 contain references to Shropshire's topography (ASL 1,3,7,9,23,28,31,37,39,50,58,61,62). ASL 8 mentions only 'Severn shore' and Bredon Hill (ASL 21) is in Worcestershire.
9. What Roland Barthes calls polyphony. Roland Barthes, 'What is Criticism', *Critical Essays* (London, 1972), p. 262; or what M. Bakhtin calls heteroglossia. Patricia Waugh, *Literary Theory and Criticism* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 229-230.
10. Archie Burnett, 'Housman's "Level Tones"', Alan W. Holden & J. Roy Birch (eds.), *A. E. Housman: A Reassessment* (London, 2000), pp. 2-17.
11. Maas (1971), p. 328.
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15. Robert Burns, 'Ye royal Lasses dainty, Heav'n [...] gie you lads a-plenty'. 'Dream', xiv.
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17. Page (1983), p. 3.
18. The *OED* defines homo-erotic as pertaining to, or characterised by, a tendency for erotic emotions to be centred on a person of the same sex; or of pertaining to a homo-erotic person, the concentration of erotic impulses on a person of the same sex.
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22. Richard Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde* (London, 1987), p. 437.
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25. P. Gay, *The Bourgeois Experience: Freud to Victoria. Volume II: Tender Passion* (New York, 1986), p. 229.
26. Larence Housman, *A Memoir* (New York, 1938), p. 103. J. M. Nosworthy, 'A. E. Housman and the Woolwich Cadet', *Notes & Queries* (1970), pp. 351-353.
27. Line 26 of *ASL 44* originally read, '<take> / the wreath \ <of verse> / I've made:> D2. See Archie Burnett (ed.), *The Poems of A. E. Housman* (Oxford, 1997), p. 48.
28. The Cadet was really a Worcestershire lad. He came from Storridge and was buried in Cradley, in the Malverns. Housman is therefore returning the lad from whence he came.
29. The Victorians saw homosexuality as a sickness of the soul.

The Women's War Will Bring You Peace

by

Lucy Cuthbertson

'Lysistrata' by Aristophanes, adapted by Laurence Housman, was performed by Kidbrooke School¹ at Greenwich Theatre in March 2011, and the main space at Riverside Studios in July 2011.



In the spring of 2010 I was looking for an anti-war play to stage with students at the school where I have worked for the last eleven years, a comprehensive in what is considered a deprived area of London. Despite these challenges, Kidbrooke School and its theatre company have received unprecedented attention and praise nationally for the standard of its theatre productions.

For a number of reasons, I decided on *Lysistrata* by Aristophanes as the choice of play, not least because it is currently a set text for the Edexcel GCE Drama & Theatre Studies course and was likely to attract Post-16 audiences. One major drawback, however, was that I found much about the exam board's chosen translation uninspiring. It was by a wonderful chance that I came across Laurence Housman's adaptation, passed to me by my friend, the writer Ali Smith, shortly after I mentioned the project to her. She came across a copy in the Cambridge Amnesty International charity bookshop where she volunteers one afternoon a week and although she was not familiar with the author she thought the adaptation looked 'political and interesting'. She was right and it was the start of a real enthusiasm for the play and a huge admiration for Laurence Housman.

Influenced by his sister Clemence with whom he lived, Housman was hugely involved with the Suffrage movement, one of the few men prominent in the campaign. He recalls in his autobiography, *The Unexpected Years* (1937) how the work on *Lysistrata* came to be commissioned:

She asked me [of Gertrude Kingston who ran the Little Theatre] if I would do a free (but not too 'free') translation of Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*. I jumped at the opportunity; the Women's Suffrage agitation was then in full blast, and here was a play of feminist propaganda which offered lurid possibilities. Even if this was also censored (as well it might be) it would still be good material for publication as an aid to the women's cause. (p.247)

As Housman had used *Lysistrata* as a vehicle to promote the Suffrage movement, I decided that, in turn, we would take his script and use it to emphasise an anti-war message. As a significant peace campaigner himself, it felt a fitting tribute to Housman's work, in addition to the exciting fact that our production would be performed exactly 100 years after the première at The Little Theatre.

Housman's adaptation was perfect for our purposes. In the basic plot of *Lysistrata*, the protagonist of the same name, sick of the endless war between Athens and neighbouring states, gathers the women from the warring factions together to carry out a joint plan to end the fighting: a sex-strike. The men's



sexual frustration intensifies until they finally agree to the women's demands and peace is established. In a faithful version of Aristophanes' play one of the main sources of humour is the increasingly oversized erect phalluses 'worn' by

the younger male characters to visually indicate the extreme effect the women's sex-strike action is having on them. In ancient Athens this was clearly top comedy. In some recent productions it is still pretty funny, if rather relentless, but often Aristophanes' visual humour is just too unsubtle and explicit for contemporary tastes. The language of more faithful translations is similarly crude and bawdy.

Not that our school has a reputation from shying away from controversial and sexual subject matter, having produced, in recent years, *Beautiful Thing*, *Cloud 9*, *Bent* and *Angels in America*, to name but a few. But this play was different: the second half, to put it plainly, is all about erections; the cast would include some students as young as Year 7, and it would not be appropriate. Erections were also the aspect of the plot that least interested me. *Lysistrata*, in my opinion, is more about war, less about sex.

Yet, in choosing to stage Housman's script, much of the work on adapting Aristophanes' play to suit a school-aged cast had already been done. Edwardian sensibilities and censorship meant that his adaptation is all language full of restraint and innuendo. As Housman explained:

I finished my paraphrase (one could hardly call it a translation) in three weeks; Miss Kingston accepted it, and after its production The Women's Press published it. It was so discreetly worded that the censor passed it... (p.247)

Many of the older members of our cast who were studying GCE Drama & Theatre Studies at the same time as rehearsing Housman's *Lysistrata* became very familiar with the Edexcel exam board translation by Alan Sommerstein, a much more *lurid* version, to use Housman's word, containing modern swear words and phrases, no doubt chosen by the exam board, as a closer reflection of the tone and atmosphere of the original. I had some anxieties that they would prefer this translation and start to resent the choice I had made for our production but my fears were completely unfounded. After being so immersed in Housman's poetic Edwardian language, by contrast, the students found Sommerstein's translation crass and rather embarrassing. Laurence Housman's writing had a new, young fan-club.

To give an example of the difference in language, when the character of Lysistrata first proposes the sex-strike idea and is met initially with unanimous resistance from the women, her response to them in Sommerstein's translation is:

I didn't realize that we women were such a total lot of nymphos. The tragic poets are right about us after all: shag, calve and dispose of, that's the way we live. (p.19)

Compare this to the poetry of the character's response in Housman's adaptation:

Oh, wretched race, which makes all Greece its grave!
Women be vessels driven by wind and wave –
In nothing steadfast...

In the same way that I intended to draw out and highlight the anti-war message in our production, I especially enjoyed the parts of Housman's script where he made explicit reference to the Suffragette cause. When the younger female characters, for example, called together by Lysistrata, are arguing over the feasibility of her plan to persuade the men to stop fighting, Lampito, a Spartan, states that it will be easier for her and her fellow Spartan women than the Athenian women:

LAMPITO: [given a Glaswegian dialect in Sommerstein's translation to indicate the 'otherness' of the Spartans] Guid, then we'll see that our men mak peace and keep it faithfully. But this Athenian riff-raff [*indicating the audience*] – how will ye ever induce *them* tae see sense?

Here in Sommerstein's translation, with the term 'riff-raff', there is simply an implication that the Athenian men are less sophisticated, less civilised and will be harder to win over to the idea of peace. Housman, in the same section of dialogue, takes the opportunity to make a more specific political point:

LAMPITO: Each to persuade her lover or her mate?
Easy for us! But here you have a State
Governed by party – babblers without brain.

The message is still that the Athenian men are stupid, but that the system of governance in Athens is the bigger problem, compared to the equality the women in Sparta claim to enjoy. Clearly Housman is including this as a direct dig aimed at the British parliament and its constitutional sexism that made women second-class citizens.

The next interchange is even more pointed. Lysistrata challenges Lampito after the dialogue above with 'Each much persuade her party' to which Housman has Lampito fire back the retort:

Nay, 'tis vain
Voteless you cannot'.

I like to imagine that this last line of Lampito's received cheers, jeers, or at least

some polite applause from the audience at The Little Theatre in 1911.

Another character, Committee Man (in other translations, he is Magistrate), a misogynist archetype, representing the establishment, politics, warmongering, and the power of men, is given a line in Housman's adaptation, which directly references the activities of the Suffragettes. He complains about

the women that, by this point in the play, have taken over the Acropolis:

There they combine, call themselves "comrades", "sisters" – Rebels and lawbreakers and tax-resisters!"



This particular line to my knowledge does not appear in its equivalent form in other translations or adaptations so I like to think Housman added it in as a blatant Suffrage-specific reference and particularly in honour of his sister Clemence, whose many activities as a suffragette included tax resistance for

which she was briefly imprisoned.

I toyed with actually setting the whole production in 1911 and portraying *Lysistrata* and the other female characters as part of the suffrage generation but while the restraint this historical era would place on the characters' sexual behaviour appealed, given school play context, ultimately it felt too far in the distant past to make the statement about modern war that I was aiming for, especially with younger audiences. I wanted female characters that were contemporary, strong, conservative and traditionally seen as rather asexual (most productions of *Lysistrata* portray the women as stereotypically sexy, their interest in sex and initial dismay at the thought of a sex-strike is no surprise. I wanted to subvert this as much as possible by giving the same emotions to the type of female characters not normally considered by society to be sexual. It was also funnier.). The Women's Institute started to become an influence, women who we could

believe suddenly find themselves behaving in an unprecedented way for a political cause, perhaps the kind of women who automatically see 'Helping our Heroes' as the proper, patriotic thing to do, or who turn out at the Wootton Bassett rituals, *until* the whole notion of war itself is questioned. There is such a strong and delightful connection between the women in Aristophanes' play and those who involved themselves in the suffrage movement. Both groups of women, both fictional and real, experienced incredible personal and collective journeys, realising their potential and finding a voice in fiercely patriarchal societies. Housman in his autobiography describes the transformation of the Suffragette women around him and it is easy to see how he immediately saw the echoes in the plot of *Lysistrata*:

And when the form of its militancy [the suffrage movement] became more wild and extreme, there was still in it the same extraordinary personal courage and determination, carried to the *nth* degree by women who had never done anything daring before, not even to the extent of being unconventional. (p.271)

Back to the issue of sex and the school play, cross-gender casting emerged as one solution. This convention distanced all the performers from the nature of the sexual frustration they were portraying and at least on one half of the casting was faithful to staging conditions of Ancient Greece theatre given that all original roles were portrayed by male actors. The erections were there, I put them back in regardless of Housman's censored adaptation as it wouldn't be *Lysistrata* without them, but they were symbolised by weapons, increasingly larger sub-machine guns strategically held, serving also hopefully to communicate ideas about testosterone and the war impulse. The boys had the acting challenge of playing 'real' women, no 'drag performance' allowed, whereas the girls had free rein to create male characters down the far end of the Neanderthal spectrum.

We threaded the anti-war message throughout the production. Towards the end of the play, *Lysistrata* brings out a character Peace, in Housman's adaptation 'a beautiful young woman' (a beautiful *naked* woman called Reconciliation in most versions), a moment of magic realism, whose purpose is to induce further levels of sexual frustration in the warring male factions, encouraging them to lay down arms sooner rather than later. Instead, we had Peace represented by a small girl, bloodied from a bomb blast with horrific injuries, 'collateral damage' brought face to face with the soldiers who caused it, a more pressing reason, we wanted to believe, to stop the violence. It was a surreal but powerful moment, as if a character from a Greek tragedy had stepped over into a Greek comedy, a reminder of the reality of war, a knowledge never far, one imagines, from the

minds of Aristophanes' original Athenian audience, in the middle of a drawn out war themselves.

One of the most enjoyable and unforeseen aspects of this whole project was the opportunity to become familiar with the work and life of Laurence Housman and then to bring this to people's attention. When the most widely read person I personally know, Ali Smith, who passed me his adaptation in the first place, was unaware of exactly who he was, then understandably I came across precious few people during the rest of the process who had ever heard of him. Those people well acquainted with Laurence, including Housman Society members and the staff at Housman's bookshop, for example, were not familiar with his adaptation of *Lysistrata*, again, not a surprising fact as there are no records of it having been produced since 1911 and similarly his extensive body of other dramatic works rarely get performed.

I became something of a Laurence Housman evangelist bore, extolling his virtues to anyone who would listen and the truth is I felt a real connection to the man, a rare experience to have with a person long deceased whom I never met. Who would you have at your dream dinner party? Well, definitely Laurence and his sister Clemence would be on my list.

Everything about Laurence Housman impressed me – his life choices, writing, involvement with the Suffrage movement, peace activities and campaigning efforts around his sexuality. Laurence Housman was a gay man at a time when to live openly and honestly was impossible. Through his membership of the British Society for the study of Sex Psychology plus a secret society, The Order of Chaeronea, he made an early contribution to the fight for equal rights, by starting to identify and organise with other gay men. At Kidbrooke School we honoured him in assembly, alongside the production of *Lysistrata*, as part of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered Month 2011, an annual educational event that schools can participate in to draw attention to the struggles and achievements of LGBT individuals. In all his political work concerned with suffrage, peace and sexuality rights, I consider Laurence Housman a role model of progressive thinking, a real unsung hero worthy of much wider recognition and respect. I felt immensely proud and privileged to be producing his work and wanted it to succeed as a contribution towards his legacy, however small, as much as any other motivation. It was a seriously nerve-racking day when several members of the Housman Society made the trek from Bromsgrove to Greenwich Theatre to see the show on a schools' matinee but their enthusiasm for the production was overwhelming.

To return finally to our actual interpretation of *Lysistrata*, the most drastic directorial decision made was to undermine the whole premise of Aristophanes' plot, which had never quite sat comfortably with me. The original ending, a peaceful happy-ever-after scenario, was too simplistic, hopeful and fantastical – as the dance of the male and female choruses, united, came to its climax, we had *Lysistrata* emerge, transformed into Goddess Athena on a chariot, literally turning the bombs and weapons around with her power as the people of Greece, united, danced in a frenzy, a peace cult. Then she woke up. Back at a cake stall, where she'd been at the beginning of our production. The little bomb blasted child reappeared, unharmed, but then an air raid siren starts up, they turn around as the Acropolis takes a direct hit engulfing them in flame. Not quite what Aristophanes wrote or Housman adapted but what I feel certain will keep happening in this world as long as men hold political power. As somebody so involved with the peace movement, I hope Laurence Housman would have appreciated the point we were trying to make with the production and would forgive me taking a few liberties with his script for the sake of a political cause in much the same way he saw the potential in Aristophanes' play to speak for the Suffragettes. In Housman's words, so evidently written by a man who spent much of his life surrounded by strong, political women, spoken by the female chorus, just before they lock themselves into the Acropolis:

The women's war will bring you peace.

NOTES

1. Kidbrooke School was the first comprehensive school in the country opening in 1955 as an all-girls' school. As of Sept 2011, it has become Corelli College the first London Cooperative Academy school.

<http://www.kidbrooke.greenwich.sch.uk/index.php>.

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Jacksoniana

by

David McKie

Andrew Jackson has rendered a great and, even in this day, courageous service to the cause of Housman studies through his publication in this journal, with fine and sensitive commentary, of the last exchange of letters between his grandfather and A.E. Housman.¹ The contents in particular of the letter written from his hospital bed by the dying Moses Jackson in acknowledgement of receipt of *Last Poems* ('Mo's last letter'), now finally revealed on leaving the family archive, allow rich insight into the human motivation behind Housman's poetry and open up a wide field of further enquiry. The purpose of this article is to give preliminary study to some few of the areas now placed intriguingly before our eyes.

1. The hand and style of M.J. Jackson

The letter, however, contains many oddities. Let us start with one.² At 12.5-7 Moses writes: 'But it would be fine to see you here, though no chance of the old amenities. No 15-mile walks to a good pub to consume old ribs of beef 10" thick...'. The walks taken by the two correspondents in earlier youth are nostalgically recalled, together with the food and beer which the stimulation of their healthy appetites invited. But the prospect of 'old ribs of beef' seems somehow, thick though they may have been,³ to be less than ideally appetising. Who would walk fifteen miles for that?⁴ Cold ribs, however, would be a different matter. And that, doubtless, is what Moses either wrote or meant.

Here it becomes relevant that the letter Moses wrote underwent a curious process of production.

It was written, rather faintly, with a blunt pencil on ten quite compact pieces of paper (8" x 5").⁵ Later the pencil writing was overtraced in ink. It is part of the myth surrounding this letter that this tracing was done by Housman himself, eager to preserve each one of his friend's last words. It will, however, be a main contention of this article that this is a false inference made by Laurence Housman, sentimentally ascribing the action to his brother, when he discovered the letter amongst the papers for which he became responsible after the death of Housman in 1936. Laurence Housman is in fact the sole original source for the assertion. Writing in his *A.E.H.: Some Poems, Some Letters and a Personal*

Memoir by his Brother (London, 1937) at p.62, he says:

[Jackson] died in Vancouver in 1923; and on going through my brother's correspondence after his death, I found an envelope endorsed, 'Mo's last letter'. The letter had been written faintly in pencil, in the hospital where Jackson died soon after; and above the faint writing, the better to preserve it (keeping the form of each word carefully), Alfred had himself gone over the whole in ink.⁶

But it is hard to think that Housman would ever have done this. It runs counter to every scholarly instinct he possessed. One who has spent a lifetime painfully recovering the words of antiquity will not superimpose his own version of a text when the very words and form of the words of the author himself survive.⁷ Besides, if emotion is argued to have triumphed in this one case over instinct, there is, as we shall find in due course, evidence on more than one level likely to indicate that the overtracing could not have been done by Housman.

But first let us return to the oddities. For they are what the overtracing has either preserved or, more critically, may perhaps even have created.

At 16.1 the overtracing gives us 'publishes', which would in the context be a clear error.⁸ 'publisher' is what is needed.⁹ Did the overtracer mistake an 'r' for an 's'? Or was it always 'publishes'?¹⁰

12.3-5, 'At home I wear boots of canvas & rubber composition, known as snagproof, as your choice is for an absolute sinecure': 'as' should be 'so'. The same considerations hold as in the preceding instance. Less certainly is this the case at 9.1-3 'I am going on fairly well in this hospital, but I will come out of it pretty soon now, well or ill, and finances won't run to these expenses', where 'and' should really be 'as', though 'and', more loosely, has some chance of being intended. Similarly less certain is 15.2-3 'this musical thing': 'the' would read better, though Moses could write as if he had the newspaper before him.¹¹

One feature of the dialogue between Housman and Moses is the reversion to a type of schoolboy or undergraduate banter in which a younger, cleverer, partner plays up for morsels of respect from the older partner he admires,¹² – 'Please to realize, therefore, with fear and respect, that I am on an eminent bloke (Housman),¹³ 'I thought of heaping sarcasms on your brain products, as usual (Jackson).¹⁴ In Moses Jackson this leads, on top of a certain Woosterish jocularity ('the missus', 'the old woman', 'bosh-writers', 'musical thing', 'some aesthetic magazine') to a sort of straining after rather high-placed words as a semi-humorous means of preserving the charade of occupying the intellectual upper ground ('your egregious poems', 'your emanations'). Such, for the

purposes of the letter, is the play of MJJspeak, as it were. But it creates a number of oddities still more curious than the errors we have so far observed:-

2.1-3, 'But who is going to labour at collecting your Juvenilia from the "Round Table" & elsewhere, and to exploit acute inaccuracies about them in the not far distant future?'. What could Jackson mean by 'exploit acute inaccuracies'? Would he not better say 'explore' or 'expose' or 'explicate'? Are the inaccuracies really 'acute' or might they not rather be 'arcane'? And if, as is obvious, he is parodying Housman's profession of the minute textual criticism of long-corrupted ancient texts,¹⁵ why does he say 'not far distant future' and not 'far distant future'? Then at 16.3 he talks of well-known English books being 'curtailed' with only a Yankee publisher's name on the title page. Could he mean 'detailed'? And what of the 'extraordinary exhibition' at 12.1-2? Could he mean 'expression' or 'exposition' or 'effusion'? At 15.4 'commentaries' is strange for 'reviews'. Was he thinking of 'commentators'?

These oddities may well all be features of style, but again we are forced to consider the chance that the action of overtracing could have obscured words which had originally been written.

That leads directly to the question, Who was the overtracer? Here there is an apparent clue in Housman's reply of 4 January 1923 (printed by Andrew Jackson, pp.46-7). He says that Moses' letter had arrived on New Year's Day, and continues: 'As you threaten to leave the hospital well or ill, I suppose I had better direct this to Applegarth, though I understand it is empty now, rather than to bed 4. I was sorry to hear that Mrs Jackson had had a sort of breakdown.' Here are two pieces of information which he could not possibly have learnt from Moses' letter, for the reason that they were never in it. Evidently he had received further news at (or nearly at) the same time. 'Gerald', he then continues, 'writes to me sometimes.' And it was his son Gerald to whom Moses ended by saying (17.1) he intended to give his letter to post. Did Gerald (or Rosa), thinking that godfather (or husband's friend) would have difficulty reading the faint pencilling, trace over the letters before posting, with Gerald adding his own enclosure?

That question we are able to begin to answer from the plethora of new pieces of evidence which have come to light. Contrary to Laurence Housman's twice-given statement that 'Alfred had gone over the whole in ink', we learn from a footnote of Andrew Jackson's (p.53, n.24) that a 'portion of the letter' was 'originally in ink'.¹⁶ That is an unexpected revelation. But it is not all. Though Moses' letter passed on 18 June 2010 into new, currently anonymous, ownership, the Sotheby catalogue has left us with an illustration of the envelope together

with, behind it, portions of the first page.¹⁷ On the envelope we find three different hands writing in three different inks. To the top left, unmistakably in Housman's hand, using a somewhat brown shade of ink to be seen in his other letters in the photograph, is his immortal inscription 'Mo's last letter'. The address ('Prof. A.E. Housman / Trinity College / Cambridge' with 'England' to bottom left corner) is written in what would now be considered a rather elaborate, certainly traditional, Victorian hand using a mid-black/greyish ink. Both the hand (compare especially the letters 'r' and 's' and the Hous- of 'Housman' with 'My dear old Hous') and, to judge from the photograph, the ink seem identical with the hand and the ink of the overtracing. There begins the indication that it was not done by Housman, who could never have both overtraced the letter and have addressed it in Canada to himself. Finally, in between the inscription and the address, stands, in a much blacker ink, the notably misleading information

Inked in at beginning and end by A.E.H.

Found by Laurence Housman among his brother's papers

This third hand might initially be presumed to be that of Laurence Housman, the note being added when he passed the letter over to the Jackson family after Housman's death. As is easily ascertained, however, from the many examples of his script in the archive of letters assembled by Andrew Gow and now in the Library of Trinity College, Cambridge,¹⁸ this is not the case. Nor is the hand that of Gerald.¹⁹ Our best guess must be that the note has been added by a different member of the family, conceivably – for there can in reality be no other possibility – one of Gerald's at that time two surviving elder brothers.²⁰ The evidence of the note will continue to be of importance to us. Let us observe for the present, however, that it does nothing to alter the unitary status of the source of the assertion that Housman was responsible for the overtracing: the compiler of the note, with no other means of knowing, acts on information received, and this will have been (doubtless in a covering letter) from Laurence Housman.²¹

Most crucially of all, however, the addressing of the letter takes us one step closer to tracking the identity of the overtracer. As things stand – although, as we shall see, it is far from being the only solution – the overtracer could have been Moses Jackson himself. For the hand of the address on the envelope, employing his letter-forms and written in ink, can only be his own. There is then nothing to preclude – and the ink would appear to support – the possibility that he has himself traced over the letters he had earlier pencilled.

If so, this gives us a dual perspective on his activity: there are first the oddities of grammar or of expression which could be inherent in his act of composition, and secondly further errors introduced when overtracing through

misreading or misremembering words he had originally himself written. For the letter – begun in pencil, continued in ink, resumed in pencil, then overtraced in ink – was two full weeks in the making. It is dated 23 Nov., but para. 6 refers to the 30th, para. 9 subsequently opens ‘1 Dec.’, and the postmark, we can see, is 11 p.m., 7 Dec. Moses, it is clear, wrote as and when he was able.

So protracted an effort was brave, and sincerely motivated, for, as is equally clear, his state of mind was not evenly good when he did write. The signature ‘M.J.J. Jackson’²² and, as early as para. 2, the blemished repetition of ‘seems to me’ (2.4 and 6), clearly unintended and escaping correction later, are adequate formal testimony to his. There is a confused reference (6.1) to haggis and whiskey (so spelt) on 30 November, St Andrew’s day, but usually – and properly – applicable to that other day of Scottish celebration, 25 January. When his thoughts return (para. 12), naturally enough, to memory of the rich or solid food which the cancer of his stomach doubtless denied him, he may, though hardly intentionally, have written ‘old ribs of beef’ (12.6) as perhaps a false mental repetition of ‘old amenities’ earlier in the line.²³ But the ribs, at 10 inches, can only have been long, not thick.

Thus it would not be surprising if, labouring as he did, and slowly, in the later stages of a fatal condition, some at least of the mistakes and oddities of his letter were pure slips or a choice of words which a clearer state of mind would have corrected.²⁴ In the absence, however, of precise knowledge at present as to which portion of the letter was originally written in ink, and given our current inability to compare the shades of ink, it is difficult to draw a distinction between original errors and those which could have been introduced at the stage of overtracing. When, under happier circumstances, the letter emerges into full light, these questions may prove to be easily answered.

But there can be no proof that Moses did carry out the overtracing. Even if the ink of the tracing is, as it appears to be, the same as in the address which he did write,²⁵ there is nothing to show that he himself held the pen. He may well have felt he was not up to the fineness of hand involved. Certainly, however, he is found to have had the volition to see his letter in ink, as is witnessed by his own writing of the central portion (perhaps the product of a better day or increased confidence) as also by his writing of the address.²⁶ Given also the established epistolary etiquette of the day – still not entirely extinct even now – that personal letters should properly be written in ink, he may well have been moved by the wish that the completed version of the letter, even in the circumstances of his condition, should pay the full social respect which it is more than likely that he felt was owed to his friend. In other words the overtracing may have been done

not by Moses but for Moses. We must return to the earlier suggestion that a member of his family could have been responsible.

Here the course of our inquiry has put us in a better position to narrow the field. Gerald (or either of his brothers)²⁷ is now ruled out. For, had any of the three carried out the overtracing, family knowledge among the brothers would not have allowed the compiler of the note on the envelope to write what he did. Rosa, however, as we have seen,²⁸ died before the likely time of the return of the letter. She must therefore, sitting at her husband's bedside, remain a possibility. But the possibilities do not end there. We shall find in section 4 that two of Moses' sisters, Agnes and Irene, are known to have been living in the late 1930s in Mission, B.C., a town not more than thirteen miles away from Moses' farm, having, it is certainly to be presumed, earlier moved to Canada to join him. They too will have been visitors at the hospital. Nor need the overtracer have necessarily been a member of the family. A nurse could have taken time to carry out the inking. Or use could have been made in the long hours of the services of a fellow patient in the ward or a neighbouring bed.²⁹ When Moses ended his letter in pencil with the information that Gerald would be up presently to post it, there may still have been time for the overtracing.³⁰ Or Moses may himself have decided to delay longer.

What becomes increasingly less likely amongst the many possibilities which exist is that Housman is to be thought of as having carried out the overtracing. Not only is it improbable that he would run the risk of importing errors into a faint script but such errors as we think may have been imported by the act of overtracing are scarcely such as he would have been capable of committing. Above all, the scenario envisages him carefully tracing over the words – 'the better to preserve them' – of his own poem in a version (and a title) which, as we shall find in section 3, he knew to be erroneous. That, in a poet punctilious to the point of ferocity, if not obsession, in the accuracy of every last comma, requires some imagining. Far greater is the chance that the letter as it exists is in the same form in which it left Canada, and Moses' final action for his friend would, after the overtracing, have been to write the address and to seal the envelope.³¹

It is time to draw such conclusions as we can. All, however, must remain uncertain and provisional, anticipating the day when finally the full evidence, at which at present we can only guess, becomes available:-

The oddities of grammar and expression which we see may be endemic in Moses Jackson's mode of speech or otherwise attributable to his physical

condition at the time. Some, on the other hand, may owe their origin to the act of overtracing which the letter has undergone. As to the overtracer, it is to be taken as hardly conceivable, as ink may perhaps help to confirm, that this should have been Housman. Most properly, Moses will have undertaken the inking-in himself, but, under the circumstances of his physical condition, the hand is at least as – if not to that extent more – likely to be that of another, acting in accordance with his wishes.

Speculative as all of the content of this section must necessarily at present be, one aspect which emerges forcefully from the letter, and most particularly from its likely slips and oddities of language, is a far fuller insight than has ever been given to us before of the cast of mind – the very style – of ‘my friend Jackson, the man who had more influence on my life than anyone else.’ Occasionally faltering, and even in parts semantically unsure, mind and style reveal in the letter a generous and noble-hearted personal response to the position in his nation’s poetic history which its writer had not sought – and would never have sought – himself.

2. Miss Patchett’s and Larry

One of the most arresting pieces of incidental information included in the new influx is the mention made by Housman in his response to Jackson of ‘Miss Patchett’s’:

I never was more astounded at anything than at your reproducing my contribution to *Waifs and Strays*. I remember your reading it at Miss Patchett’s, and how nervous I felt. If I had known you would recollect it 42 years afterward, my emotions would have been too much for me.³²

Is it too obvious to think that this could refer to the lodging-house in St Giles’ occupied across the road from their college by Housman, Jackson, and Pollard in the – for one of them – fateful academic year of 1880-81? It is not too obvious, for, as is easily confirmed, it was exactly that.³³

But first we may wonder whether the idea is ruled out by Miss Patchett’s marital status. Would undergraduates reside in the house of an unmarried female at that time? The living-out pattern familiar until very recently both at Oxford and at Cambridge was for a male college servant (a porter or other senior domestic staff) to be in charge of a university-licensed house (usually the property of a college) managed by his wife. But that concern, it will be seen, is entirely overturned by the facts of this case.³⁴

Sarah Ann Patchett, born in Birmingham in 1834 or 1835, ran, as is shown

no less by street directories than by census returns, the lodging-house at 58 & 59 St Giles'³⁵ on its west side opposite St John's College from 1876 until her retirement, aged 65 or 66, in 1900. With the numbers in St Giles' running continuously (from south to north on the east side, from north to south on the west side), first at the south corner of the intersection with St Giles' of the then appropriately named Alfred Street (renamed since 1926 as Pusey Street) stood no. 57, a large house given over to business use. Then, to the south of this and before a small private girls' school located at no. 60, came a lower-lying three-storied house, faced in stone and with, distinctively, three low gable-ends to the side of its roof fronting the street. Originally built as two dwellings, it had been reunited as one in 1875, but, again distinctively, retained its two front doors.



Nos. 57-59 St Giles' (1889)

This, then, is the 'picturesque old house on St Giles', nearly opposite the college, now long ago displaced by academic buildings' attractively recalled by Pollard in his 1936 recollection of Housman.³⁶



*Corner of the same site today
(Pusey House Chapel)*

In fact Pusey House, first established in a small way in 1884 at no. 61, came to occupy the whole site up to and including no. 57, and this was all rebuilt from 1911 to 1914, the original location of no. 57 (including part of the pair 58 & 59) becoming the east end of Pusey House Chapel. In 1981 St Cross College acquired by long lease use of all of the Pusey House buildings with the exception of the chapel. A fine photograph taken in 1889 and showing nos. 57 to 59 as they were survives as No. 28011 in the Oxfordshire County Library and, by kind permission, is reproduced below.³⁷ The 1881 census records Sarah A. Patchett, of unmarried status, as head of the household at nos. 58 & 59.³⁸ She had one elderly spinster listed as her boarder and one 22-year old female servant, born locally.

Such was the household across the road to which nightly after dinner in college, Housman, Jackson, and Pollard would repair. After coffee in the upper sitting room on the first floor (one of the five rooms they occupied), Pollard would habitually retire to work in their second sitting room on the ground floor, leaving Housman and Jackson to while away the later hours upstairs.

It is a feature of the census that Housman (listed, perhaps inevitably, as Houseman) appears not under the address of nos. 58 & 59 St Giles' but, as one of eight undergraduates, under the address of the college. This is a matter of some significance. It is not to be taken as a sign that the lodging-house, hardly distant from the college, fell essentially under college jurisdiction. The census regulations, then as well as now, made clear distinction between separate addresses. That so small a number of undergraduates were present in college is explained by the fact that the night of 3 April, the point of time relevant for the census-taking, fell outside the period of university term required for residence purposes. Housman had moved back into college for the vacation.

Of this he himself gives separate corroboration. For on the next day, 4 April, he wrote a high-spirited letter to his sister Kate (Burnett, *Letters*, I.52-3) exuberantly describing various imagined shenanigans to do with the taking of his details.³⁹ Interestingly enough, these follow in very nearly the same order six of the seven headings under which his details were soberly and, except in the matter of his name, correctly transcribed into the official register. When it came to heading 2, Relation to Head of Family, says Housman, "My relations with the President," replied I, "are, I regret to say, rather strained. He makes me go to chapel every day now I am in college, & I do not like it. No," I continued, taking out my handkerchief & howling, "I can't abear it. I think I had better fill up that column with down-trodden slave'." There, in 'every day now I am in college', is the evidence. By contrast, Jackson and Pollard were both listed as being that night beneath their parental roofs.⁴⁰

It is thus an element apparently missed in the biographies of Housman⁴¹ that he spent the vacation before his final exams alone and undisturbed in Oxford with the ability to work on the subjects, ancient history and philosophy, which, however less congenial to his mind than the criticism of poetic texts, formed the twin staples of Greats.⁴² When, at the end of the following month, he declined to offer contest with his examiners in either area,⁴³ it seems that it will not have been for want of opportunity to have caught up any ground he had so far let slip. Indeed, it may have been that very opportunity which served to highlight to him the gap between what he could and what he could not achieve in those subjects. It was perhaps in that last vacation that the path of his counter-trajectory came,

by force of his nature, to be set: where excellence could not be attained, its place would better be taken by nothing.

But who was Larry? Here is the curious passage of Jackson's letter in which he appears (12.1-5):

I haven't your last letter here, but remember an extraordinary exhibition about blacking boots! My most presentable boots are brown, requiring no blacking, Larry old chap. At home I wear boots of canvas & rubber composition, known as snagproof, as your choice is for an absolute sinecure.

The writing at this point (in the original ink) is, we are told, somewhat unclear, and Andrew Jackson admits to some uncertainty. The words could also, he reports (p.53, n.24), be taken as, after a full stop, 'Lazy old chap'. This is unlikely to be right. Since Housman had no knowledge that Moses no longer wore black boots, his offer to black them could hardly be reproved by Moses as a sign of laziness. Better would be 'Lucky old chap': at 7.2 Moses wryly quotes (in unintentionally altered fashion) *LP* XXVIII.5 'Little is the luck I've had', and he ends in 17.1-2 with 'So here is to continued luck'. But even this will not do. Idiom – where forms such as 'Lazy / Lucky chap!', 'Lazy / Lucky you!', 'Lazy / Lucky old you!' would answer more nearly – is against both versions. 'Larry old chap' indeed points to a name.

Surely we would be better advised to look in the direction of a person not known to us but known to both of the correspondents, to follow, as it were, the rhythm of hidden personal quotation marks.⁴⁴ Was Larry then a staircase scout well known to Housman and Jackson when they lived as undergraduates in college? Or a shoeblick on the streets of London close to their residence in Talbot Road, Bayswater, or to their place of work at the Patent Office? Unfortunately there is a serious objection to thoughts of this kind: such servants both inside and outside the house were never in Victorian times (and for long after) known or referred to by anything other than their surname.⁴⁵

But a second possibility exists. Strictly though the convention of formal nomenclature was applied to manservants of grown maturity, such as a college servant would be, this would not be the case in the instance of one who was younger. Though the period of their shared residency in Bayswater is not to be ruled out, there is something of a link between Moses' mention of Larry in his letter and Housman's mention of Miss Patchett's in his reply. Could Larry have been a boy, of perhaps early teens or less, employed by Miss Patchett before and after school to black the young gentlemen's boots before they rose and to bring

in the coal for the household? If so, how successfully, we can see, would Moses have parried the embarrassment he undoubtedly felt at the intensity of Housman's devotion (the 'extraordinary exhibition') by playing up not just the meniality but also the sub-maturity of the position Housman espoused.

Thus the boy Lawrence (or Laurence), if such he be, would leave only a faint glimpse of himself in Housman studies. He did not live in, so as to be listed at 58 & 59 St Giles' on 3 April. The Jackson household in Ramsgate, far larger an establishment as a school of 20 resident pupils,⁴⁶ differed: it employed for general tasks a fourteen-year old, himself no longer in school, and he did live in.⁴⁷ With Larry, however, we are left to guess. But there was only one appropriate Lawrence in all of Oxford in 1881: Lawrence Wyatt, the eleven-year old son of Isaac Wyatt, cab driver, of 15 Paradise Street, still at school and still at home, but doubtless already inured, according to the habit of the day, to outside work in the early mornings and late evenings. And Paradise Street, its humble cottages now long ago displaced by flats and commercial buildings, lay little more than 800 yards away by foot from the site of Miss Patchett's in St Giles'. Coincidence? Who can say?

3. *MP XLVIII*: text and title

The high point for Housman of Moses Jackson's letter was, we have seen, his quotation of the early poem *Parta Quies*. This cannot of course retain for us the same evocative resonance, but it does at least immediately and simply resolve a long-standing mystery concerning the text of the poem evident from the time of its first posthumous publication. But not all of the mystery, as we shall find.

Housman had published the poem in March 1881.⁴⁸ It was Laurence Housman who added it, not inappropriately or ineffectively, as the closing item in *More Poems* published in October 1936 (*MP XLVIII*). But the text and the punctuation which he gave – to say nothing for the moment of the title – were both surprisingly different. Let us compare the two:

Waifs and Strays (1881)**Parta Quies**

Good-night; ensured release,
 Imperishable peace,
 Have these for yours,
 While sea abides, and land,
 And earth's foundations stand, 5
 And heaven endures.

When earth's foundations flee,
 Nor sky nor land nor sea
 At all is found,
 Content you, let them burn: 10
 It is not your concern;
 Sleep on, sleep sound.

MP XLVIII (1936)**ALTA QUIES**

Good-night. Ensured release,
 Imperishable peace,
 Have these for yours,
 While earth's foundations stand
 And sky and sea and land 5
 And heaven endures.

When earth's foundations flee,
 Nor sky nor land nor sea
 At all is found.
 Content you; let them burn, 10
 It is not your concern:
 Sleep on, sleep sound.

The change in the text, straightaway apparent in the first stanza, comes in lines 4-5.⁴⁹ In place of 'While sea abides, and land, / And earth's foundations stand,' in 1881, the 1936 version gives 'While earth's foundations stand / And sky and sea and land'. This is a simplification. It creates a parallelism with 7-8, the first two lines of stanza 2: in the cases both of 4-5 and 7-8 'earth's foundations' now lead off in the initial line, followed in the second by the three elements of 'sky', 'sea', 'land' (but 'sky', 'land', 'sea' in line 8). In 1881 there was, quite differently, a chiasmus: 'sea' and 'land' (two elements only) led off in line 4, with 'earth's foundations' in line 5, followed in 7 by earth's foundations' (reprise) and, to complete the outer ring, the expanded triad of 'sky', 'land', 'sea' in 8. Not only this but in the 1881 version the three verbs in lines 4-6, 'abides', 'stand', and 'endures', are all connected to separate and clearly defined nouns as their grammatical subjects. In 1936, however, line 5 'And sky and sea and land' has no verb. Does it require 'endures' from line 6? But that, in the singular, is impossible. For that verb can be governed only by 'heaven'. In which case, worse, the line requires 'stand' from the previous line, 4, giving 'And sky and sea and land [stand]'. Sense and poetry hardly concur.

As to punctuation, one change is found in line 1 and three more in the cluster of lines 10-11. None of these are vital. It is at the end of line 9, however, that a major, and disastrous, change occurs. The comma of 1881 becomes in 1936 a full stop, and the flow of the stanza is crucially altered. In the new version the grandeur of world-destruction is turned into a plain, somewhat trivialised,

statement consisting of a temporal clause in line 7, followed by a main clause in lines 8-9: ‘When earth’s foundations flee, / Nor sky nor land nor sea / At all is found.’ Gone is the expansive temporal clause of 1881 stretching over all three of the lines 7-9, ‘When earth’s foundations flee, / Nor sky nor land nor sea/ At all is found,’ followed by the main-clause imperatives of line 10: ‘Content you, let them burn:’ (running on in line 11 to the connected reason for the imperatives).

No wonder that John Sparrow perceptively concluded, immediately on seeing on the eve of publication an advance copy of the 1936 version, that Laurence Housman had ‘somehow got hold of a first draft’.⁵⁰

Now, however, the new information puts us easily in a position to see that this supposition, however cogent at the time, was far from being the case. It is plain that Laurence Housman has followed the version he found in ‘Mo’s last letter’: that is, no early draft but a version itself in all likelihood dependent on the 1881 version. Let us now compare these two:⁵¹

Moses Jackson (1922)

Ave atque Vale

Goodnight. Ensured release,
Imperishable peace,
Have these for yours
While earth’s foundations stand
And sky and sea and land 5
And Heaven endures.

When Earth’s foundations flee
Nor sky, nor land, nor sea
At all is found
Content you, let them burn, 10
It is not your concern.
Sleep on, sleep sound!

MP XLVIII (1936)

ALTA QUIES

Good-night. Ensured release,
Imperishable peace,
Have these for yours,
While earth’s foundations stand
And sky and sea and land 5
And heaven endures.

When earth’s foundations flee,
Nor sky nor land nor sea
At all is found.
Content you; let them burn, 10
It is not your concern:
Sleep on, sleep sound

‘It wants the poet to punctuate it’, ended Jackson after his quotation. It took, we now see, – failing the poet – the poet’s brother to punctuate it, and the source of that side of the 1936 deterioration is laid bare.¹⁴ So too, more fundamentally, is evident the origin of the 1936 version of lines 4-5, taken directly from Moses’ quotation.

But is it still possible, for all that, that Moses, despite his failing powers, quoted accurately from a first version read (and perhaps given to him) by Housman, which Housman then improved for publication in March 1881? That must be counted highly improbable. For it is hard to conceive that the artistic form of lines 4-5 and 7-8 given in the 1881 version were ever otherwise shaped, even at an early stage, in the poet's mind, and scarcely in the form given by Jackson. What Jackson has done, in what by any account must be considered under the circumstances a prodigious (and devoted) feat of memory, is most likely, by creating the false but grammatically unsound parallelism of lines, unconsciously to make the task of memorising the poem that much easier. The phenomenon is commonly found. In reality we would do well not to strive to look further for the differences between Housman in 1881 and Jackson in 1922.⁵³ The upshot is that Laurence Housman, clearly not having the *Waifs and Strays* version, has, in all good faith at the time, followed (and, as virtually invited to do so, has embellished) the poem of his brother's which he found in this form in Moses' letter among the remaining papers.

But we have still not answered the question of the title. How did that very great difference come about? Here the mystery deepens. And indeed we have now three, each very different, titles.

At this point the intervening history of the text becomes of importance. It is a well-known aspect of the creation of *More Poems* that Laurence Housman circulated to a panel of three Cambridge advisers whom he had chosen⁵⁴ a collection of typescripts of the drafts of the poems he had rescued from Housman's notebooks. The intention was that the advisers should, each in his own right, offer judgement as to which poems should be published and so give a form of collective guidance to the editor. In the event, as Gow ruefully acknowledged in a letter to the Librarian of Trinity written when presenting his own copy of the collection to the college in 1968, 'Our advice was of little use, for L.H. printed everything except no. 22...'.⁵⁵

Naturally the poem in the draft collection follows in all essentials the form and title of Jackson's quotation as punctuated (and divided into stanzas) by Laurence Housman.⁵⁶ But there are differences of punctuation at the end: there is not as yet a comma at the close of line 10,⁵⁷ and a full stop, not a colon, ends line 11. Above all, the totally deleterious full stop at the end of line 9 was not yet in existence: it was a comma:-⁵⁸

Ave Atque Vale

Goodnight. Ensured release,
Imperishable peace,
 Have these for yours,
While earth's foundations stand
And sky and sea and land 5
 And heaven endures.

When earth's foundations flee,
Nor sky nor land nor sea
 At all is found,
Content you; let them burn 10
It is not your concern.
 Sleep on, sleep sound.

The conclusion is inescapable that, between circulation of the draft of the poem and creation of a final text to be printed, Laurence Housman took the opportunity further to alter his punctuation, and – in respect of line 9 – altered it considerably for the worse.⁵⁹ It was in this same period, it is now argued, that he altered the title of the poem.

For there can be no doubt that, of the three versions of the title, the one originally given by Housman, *Parta Quies*,⁶⁰ is the sole version which coheres entirely and appropriately with the subject matter of the poem. It is a well-known quotation from Virgil.⁶¹ When Aeneas, in the course of his long travels in the *Aeneid* to found a new Troy, encounters the exiled Trojans Helenus and Andromache in Epirus, he blesses their condition with the words *uobis parta quies*, 'your rest is won' (*Aen.* 3.495). More profoundly, however (in Jackson's words) 'furiously unorthodox' it may have been, it was this concept which Housman applied in his poem to an untroubled, insentient, state of death.⁶²

The 1936 title, *Alta Quies*, 'deep rest', is also by a curious happenstance, a phrase used by Virgil,⁶³ though one of no established notoriety. At *Aen.* 6.522 the warrior Deiphobus describes the deep sleep which overtook him once Troy seemed safe as *dulcis et alta quies placidaeque simillima morti*, 'sweet and deep rest closest to the calmness of death'. This too has obvious connection with Housman's poem, but, given that the sleeper was shortly later in Virgil's story awoken to scenes of devastation and living woe, it hardly fits well with the underlying concept, or indeed the last line, of Housman's poem.

The third title, *Ave atque Vale*, 'Hail and farewell', the one given by Moses Jackson, would, if true, be a matter of high potency in Housmannian biography. As a Roman funereal invocation it had been put to its most famous poetical use by Catullus in an epigram (101) for a lost family member, his beloved brother. Speculation has been rife since the time of Graves' biography⁶⁴ that Housman's poem commemorated the death of his mother which had taken place ten years previously. Despite there being no evidence to support this idea within the poem itself (which instead concerns the nature of death, not a death), Jackson's title would clearly still have great poetical consequences. But its genesis in his mind, as we shall shortly see, turns out in all likelihood to have far more prosaic an explanation.

Something therefore led Laurence Housman to alter Jackson's title from 'Ave Atque Vale' in the circulated draft to 'ALTA QUIES' in the 1936 publication. What was it? It was perhaps a combination of two factors. Though it is clear that Laurence Housman did not know the true text of *Parta Quies*, he did have the opportunity to know of the poem, for there is evidence which ends by showing this. Writing to Gow on 13 July 1936 (TCC Add. MS a 71¹¹⁵), he says 'The poem 'New Years [*sic*] Eve' was published by Blackwell in an occasional publication called 'Waifs and Strays' (not a regular periodical) its date was 1881 I think. I have no copy of the paper.' In this he was right. Housman's second (and final) contribution to *Waifs and Strays*, entitled *New Year's Eve*,⁶⁵ was published in November 1881.⁶⁶ But how did Laurence Housman know this?

One answer lies in that 'engaging madman',⁶⁷ i.e. bibliophile, Houston Martin, who elicited a dozen replies to his enquiries from Housman in the period from November 1932 until April 1936. On 26 September 1934 Housman wrote: 'I am also deaf to fantastic requests that I should write my name in full or add special stuff for you. One thing I am prepared to do, which might gratify your depraved mind: if you like to send me *New Year's Eve* I can make and initial a correction which I was too late to make before it was printed. If I possess a copy of *Parta Quies*, which I do not know to be the case, I do not know where to find it.'⁶⁸ From this we learn two things, that Martin knew of, and had a text of, *New Year's Eve*, and that he knew of, but did not have a text of *Parta Quies*. In the event Housman received from Martin in the following month a typescript of *New Year's Eve* in which (along with two errors in the typing itself) he made the promised correction.⁶⁹ As to *Parta Quies*, Martin evidently had to content himself with having drawn a blank.

This enquiry of Martin's was certainly available as the source of Laurence Housman's knowledge of *Waifs and Strays*. For Martin sent him full copies of all

the replies Housman had sent him, placing him in as good a position of knowledge as we enjoy today.⁷⁰ Another, very closely contemporary, source could also have been Housman himself, for Laurence Housman records at *Memoir*, 114, his conversation with Housman two years before his death about the Swinburnian nature of *New Year's Eve*. At any rate it is certain that he knew in July 1936 of the Oxford publication, and could inform Gow with a certain degree of precision about *New Year's Eve*. *Parta Quies* can hardly have been far removed. It was perhaps therefore at this very point that Laurence Housman at length made the connection with the early poem which he had drawn from Moses' letter. For Moses' references to Housman's undergraduate poems in the 'Round Table'⁷¹ towards the beginning and again at the close of his letter, together with the vague but enticing mention of 'elsewhere' and of 'some aesthetic magazine' (2.2 and 4), could combine without difficulty to sow the seed later to germinate in Laurence Housman's mind that the poem he had turned up and the *Parta Quies* he encountered from Housman's correspondence or from Housman himself as being authoritatively referred to were one and the same, that 'Ave Atque Vale' was not its correct title and consequently needed changing. That is the first factor.

The second is that it will, once the connection was made, have immediately become clear to him why Moses' title was wrong. Moses makes reference to the 'Times critique' (1.3), a cutting which Housman had sent him to accompany the presentation copy of *Last Poems*. This will have been as well remembered by Laurence Housman as it would by any aficionado of Housman's poetry at the time. For the *Times* had made much of the return of 'The Shropshire Lad' to poetry in what was said by the author to be his final volume. Not only did it carry a laudatory review of the book ('Mr Housman's Farewell') in its issue of 17 October 1922 but also, in the same issue, applauded the author's return by according it the spectacular honour of a leader. This too Housman sent.⁷² The leader was headed, with fine suitability, 'Ave Atque Vale'. Moses, no Latinist, but conscious that Housman's poem went by a Latin title, had mentally appropriated the recent Latin tag.

Thus it will in all likelihood have come about that Laurence Housman saw the need to move at the last moment from the 'Ave Atque Vale' title which he had inherited (and had circulated) to *Parta Quies*. Clearly he was not minded, despite now being aware that the poem had earlier received a form of undergraduate publication, to lose altogether so effective a closing piece. Nor was there any reason why he should lose it, given its evident quality. But there is only one way in which – if the matter was textual – it is conceivable that, aiming for 'PARTA

QUIES', he (and only he) was responsible for fetching up with the 'ALTA QUIES' actually printed. In subsequent typescript or early proof ⁷³ 'PARTA' would first have become 'ARTA'. Like Moses, Laurence Housman was no Latinist, but he is known to have acquired a more than passing understanding of the language while at school,⁷⁴ though most of his detailed knowledge was doubtless later either forgotten or had become largely dormant.⁷⁵ But, in such an area, a little learning can be a dangerous thing, for he certainly had the residual ability, quite without reference to Virgil in Book 3 of the *Aeneid* and in any case oblivious of the consequences, to 'correct' 'ARTA', 'narrow' – a word without point in the context of sleep – to 'ALTA', 'deep'. Or again it is also conceivable that in a similar semi-Latinate way he carried with him between versions the misremembered title in the mentally simplified form of *Alta Quies*. John Sparrow expressed the opinion that a copyist would not have changed *Parta* to *Alta*. He had not, however, reckoned, whether the error came from visual carelessness or aural misremembering, on Laurence Housman as editor and copyist in one.

At the earliest stage, as we have seen, Sparrow raised the alarm over the text. This, in a letter written to Gow on 10 October 1936, first took the following form:⁷⁶

I have had a view of an advance copy of *More Poems*... I was able, through John Carter, of King's, who showed me the book, to communicate to Cape one or two small misprints which we noticed, as well as the fact that *Parta Quies* appears, in comparison with *Waifs and Strays*, to have been printed from an inferior MS. copy.

Gow, at this point in near-daily correspondence with Laurence Housman, immediately put to him Sparrow's view. His letter elicited a response on 14 October so totally astounding in its content that we must first for the moment put it to one side.

Having had the opportunity to consult (and to copy out for Gow) the original printed version of the poem, Sparrow next, on 16 October, wrote again:⁷⁷

Dear Gow,

I enclose a literal copy of the *Waifs and Strays* version. It is surely in every respect superior. What I cannot understand is the relation between the versions.

A copyist might have ruined the punctuation in the second stanza – but he would not have changed *Parta Quies* to *Alta Quies*, or [corrected from 'nor'] made the changes in the first stanza.

It still looks to me as if L.H. had somehow got hold of a first draft.

Evidently, to judge from his 'still' in the last sentence, Gow had transmitted to him the content of Laurence Housman's reply. In the margin of his own typescript copy he first entered Sparrow's findings by hand.⁷⁸ Then, sending Sparrow's transcript,⁷⁹ he again confronted Laurence Housman. The full reply, when it came (28 October), was an intriguing mixture of the sheepish and the defiant.⁸⁰

As regards the *Alta Quies* poem, I prefer the title *Parta Quies*, but I slightly prefer the M.P. version of the actual text, mainly because the second verse takes up *sky* again, whereas in the first verse of Sparrow's version *sky* is not mentioned. I think the best thing will be for me to give the alternatives in the bibliographical portion of my notes on the poems and notebooks when I do the finished memoir.

In this we note his 'preference' for the title 'Parta Quies'. This may well be disingenuous. For, if the process of change was such as we think it will have been, he will now have had little option but to prefer it.⁸¹ His dogged persistence, however, in sticking to the text he had given against what he somewhat slightly describes as 'Sparrow's version' evidently relies on a self-justificatory clutching at the straw of repeated 'sky' in the face of the many other, and real, difficulties of the version he had printed. Finally would it be wrong to see an air of retreat or contrition in his 'I think the best thing will be for me...', the sort of thing said when one is close to admitting, but will not actually acknowledge, that one has erred?

It would not be wrong, for the reply constitutes a considerable retreat from the answer he had first on 14 October given to Gow, to which we may now turn:⁸²

About 'Parta Quies'. I took my version from the typescript Blackwell sent me, which he assured me was accurate to a comma. (I had particularly asked him to be sure about punctuation). It is of course just possible that Blackwell made his copy from an office-file copy; and that some correction followed; but his letter conveyed no such suggestion.

In the face of what we have seen, this statement can only cause total surprise. It must now be up to each reader to decide for himself or herself whether to attribute any level of belief to it. Try as I may, I for my part cannot. For the version Laurence Housman printed in *More Poems* is, as we have found, far more the product of misrecollection than it could be a first draft by the author which Blackwell had transcribed, and the firm of Blackwell will hardly have kept copies of the original submissions to an ephemeral publication of over half a century before (the 'office-file' loosely, and perhaps hopefully, referred to by Laurence

Housman). Nor, as Sparrow saw, could they have produced from the printed copy, if such they used, the travesty of Housman's poem represented by Laurence Housman both in his circulated version and in his published version. His versions instead bear every resemblance to the text recollected in his letter by Moses Jackson. Nor was the Blackwell typescript as described by Laurence Housman, which easily he could have sent to Gow in proof of his case, ever seen.

Writing shortly afterwards to J.W. Mackail, who, though later than Sparrow, had written making the same points, Gow summed up the position thus:⁸³

The text of *Parta* (or *Alta*) *Quies* presents a puzzling problem for in spite of the discrepancies in *More Poems* L.H. said he printed from *Waifs and Strays*. Incidentally, I first saw the poem with the third title *Ave atque Vale*. I have asked L.H. to get this straight if he can.

He never did.⁸⁴

Eventually Housman's own copy of the 1881 printing of *Parta Quies* turned up.⁸⁵ But it is evident that Laurence Housman at no point in the history covered here had knowledge of it. Nor did he make effort – and perhaps by the stage when he came to know that he should, there was little time⁸⁶ – to track down the printed text or to make enquiries of those who might be expected to know it. Instead he maintained a sublime faith throughout in what he had extracted (and had himself edited) from Moses Jackson's letter.⁸⁷ Gow, until alerted by Sparrow to its earlier publication, would have had every reason to expect at the time that, along with the other poems, it had been found in Housman's notebooks and had been edited from there. Never did Laurence Housman admit that he had relied on the perhaps faulty memory of a man lying on a hospital bed in the last stages of disease. Nor did he, as he said he might, give information in his *Memoir* of the following year about the 'alternative' version of which he did now know. Tellingly, however, he raised no objection – how could he? – three years later to John Carter's reversion to the original 1881 text in the *Collected Poems* of 1939 (n.61 above), a position of supremacy which that version has naturally held ever since. The process of Laurence Housman's editing of *MP XLVIII*, revealed through Andrew Jackson's vital dissemination of his grandfather's letter, thus takes its place as a curious, short-lived, and, it has to be said, not entirely creditable, short-lived, byway in the history of Housman's text.

In entrusting to Laurence Housman the task of preserving his more intimate poetry, Housman may have had much to be satisfied with on the personal side, but he must at the same time have known of the risk he took in relying on his

brother's technical skills in the editorial domain. With what imprecations the air was filled, when Charon had finished rowing Laurence Housman over to the other side, will perhaps best be known to readers of Ovid's *Ibis*, the poem of virulence edited by Housman in 1894 – unless, that is, as may be true, the author of *Parta Quies* has been proved right, as was often the case in life, in his greatest conjecture of all.

4. Notes on the progeny of Moses Jackson the elder

In the *Housman Society Journal* of 1994 Robin Shaw published a fascinating group family portrait showing Moses Jackson senior surrounded by his children, his wife, and his mother-in-law.⁸⁸ It is reproduced here again, also by kind permission, in the pictorial insert, p.3. In it his two eldest sons, Moses and Adalbert, unmistakably to eyes familiar with Housman history, stand tall on either flank of three of their sisters in the back row. But the portrait poses the further challenge, not to my knowledge so far taken up, Who are each of the brothers and sisters of M.J. (and A.J.) Jackson, caught at that one brief moment of their family's history? It will not be my purpose here to offer full biographical details of the siblings,⁸⁹ but rather – since my sources are limited (and even, within these sources, my use of them limited) – to attempt, as an appendage to this study of Jackson matters relevant to Housman, to offer brief identification, indicating areas of uncertainty and leaving the field for further study open to those better qualified than myself in exploring the intricacies of family research and indeed of Jackson family details themselves.

First, let us tabulate, according to their position, the faces of those whose identity we seek:⁹⁰

[Add]	F1	F2	F3	[Mo]
F4		[Moses]		F5
[M-in-L]	F6	M2	[Ma]	F7
		M1		

Census returns have been of service in an earlier section of this article, and continue to be so here. From these it emerges that the elder Moses Jackson was father of eleven children – seven daughters and four sons. If we put together the returns Moses made as head of family in 1871, 1881, and 1891, we arrive at the following table of his offspring as of 3 April 1881, the age of each child being that attained on the anniversary of birth in the twelve months preceding the census:

Moses J.	22	Ida. C	10
Elizabeth M.	21	Victor H.	5
Ailsa L.	19	Robert O.	1
Adalbert J.	17	Agnes K.	1
Margaret A.	15	[Irene P.	-1]
Flora M.	13		

Since all eleven children are happily present and correct in the photograph, we may date it, with a reasonable degree of confidence, to the end of 1883, and quite possibly to December. Not only does this date account best for the development of the younger children but it gives a tentative answer to the question of when such a gathering of the family would have been possible. Given that the births of Moses' children stretched over 23 years (with the result that several of those already grown were no longer ordinarily resident at home), opportunities to gather his whole family together will have been few. This, with the additional presence of Mrs Jackson's mother,⁹¹ suggests a fixed family gathering of the year, and Christmas would seem to fit the requirement best. At that point in 1883 the younger Moses, now 25,⁹² had for two and a half years (since June 1881) been employed at the Patent Office, Housman, having completed his pass degree, had joined him there, and Adalbert had been two years matriculated (since January 1882) at University College, London. Now let us match names, in order of age, to the faces not yet known.

F3: is surely the eldest sister, Elizabeth Muirhead Jackson. With skill the photographer has placed against the black drop-curtain of his studio, as appearances support, the three eldest sisters between the male stalwarts, Moses and Adalbert, descending in age from the right. Born in or before March 1860, she is 23 at the time of the photograph.⁹³ Two years earlier, in April 1881, she was no longer at home but was a governess at a small school in Finchley. Later she married Frederick Cole, five years her senior and a teacher of Mathematics at Moses senior's school in Ramsgate, Vale Academy. On Moses' retirement⁹⁴ she and her husband took over the running of the school (renamed 'Vale College'). One of her two daughters became a Crawford by marriage, the mother of Neville Crawford, whose widow later provided Robin Shaw with our source, the family

portrait.⁹⁵ It is thus in all likelihood Elizabeth's personal copy, passed down through two generations, which now we cherish. At home amongst the family she went, with obvious connection, by the nickname 'Zoub'. But I know of no evidence to support Robin Shaw's indication that her middle name either was Mardi or could have been altered in similar familiar fashion to that, unless her French governessing – governesses in ladies' schools in those days were universally expected to be proficient in French – gave her some unfathomable affinity with Tuesdays.

F2: is Ailsa Louisa, born in or by December 1861. She too was no longer at home in 1881, but was governessing in Ealing. After a peripatetic career, she is found in 1901, at age 39 and unmarried, apparently caring for her now aged father, 79 and living in Whitchurch, Hants, his wife having predeceased him. The elder Moses himself died in 1907.⁹⁶

F1: is Margaret Adelaide ('Marg'), born in or by September 1865. At the time of the photograph she had turned 18. She it was who in 1936 compiled a short factual history of her brother Moses from the point of view of his friendship with Housman, of which on 3 July Gerald Jackson sent a typescript copy to Gow, in order to aid him in his biographical researches. It is now TCC Add. MS a 71²⁰⁵. In his covering letter Gerald refers to her as 'Miss M.A. Jackson of Ramsgate', showing that, having first lived with the family after their move to Tonbridge,⁹⁹ she had returned eventually to her native town.⁹⁸ Housman, writing to her on 25 May 1929,⁹⁹ ends with 'My kind regards to any of your sisters who are at Ramsgate'. The final paragraph of her history of her brother reads: 'M.J. Jackson was keen on all sport and was a fine athlete, distinguished at running, both at Oxford, and later in the Civil Service in London.' With regard to her last clause, there is an interesting survival in the library of Trinity College, Cambridge. Tucked between the pages (at present 152-3) of Housman's copy of Ellis's edition of Catullus (Oxford, 1878), Adv. c 20 10, is a postcard, used as a bookmark, dated 2 February 1885 and addressed to M.J. Jackson Esq. / 82 Talbot Road / Bayswater', from the honorary secretary of Ealing Football Club inviting him to play in the Fifteen against Rosslyn Park on the following Saturday. It is one of a known pair, and since the other (of 4 January 1885) is reported¹⁰⁰ as having been misplaced, it seems as well to reproduce the remaining survivor here.¹⁰¹ As the text of the book is much annotated by Housman and is likely to have been always in use by him, the bookmark would appear to have been a touching life-long memento – later memorial – of his friend.

[Add]: it may be helpful to confirm that Adalbert James was born in or by September 1863, and was thus 29 when he died at Sale in Cheshire on 12 November

1892. The 1891 census finds him practising his profession of classical master at a school there surprisingly similar in profile to that of the one run by his father.¹⁰²

F4: is Flora Marion, born in or by June 1867. She was 13 at the time of the census, 16 in the photograph. Since 21 is the required age at the time of the census for Elizabeth, Mrs Crawford's identification to Robin Shaw (n.88 above) of this sibling as the maternal grandmother of her husband Neville needs to be corrected.

F5: is Ida Caroline, born in or by September 1870, hence 10 at the time of the census and 13 in the photograph. She moved with the family to Tonbridge in 1890 on the elder Moses' retirement.¹⁰³

M1 (sitting cross-legged on the floor): is Victor Herbert, later to have a distinguished administrative career in universities in India, and consequently about whom much is known. Born on 21 December 1875, he would be exactly 8 in the photograph, if its time is correctly placed. Housman, replying on 25 May 1929 to Margaret Jackson,¹⁰⁴ who had – evidently belatedly – written to him about Victor's death (which had occurred on 18 January 1928 at age 52), recalled that 'He was 14 when I first met him at Ramsgate; he was deputed to show me the way to the station, and imparted to me a great deal of knowledge, as I believe was then his habit.' Since Housman's visit took place on 31 August / 1 September 1889, he errs slightly, forty years later, as to Victor's age but not doubtless as to his informative capacities. In the next year Victor entered Tonbridge School, along with his younger brother Robert, both as day-boys. This startling change in Jackson family educational arrangements is explained by Moses senior's retirement from his school in 1890 and move to Tonbridge, where the 1891 census finds him, aged 69, listing his (perhaps still active) status as magistrate of the Cinque Ports. The Tonbridge School Register erroneously enters Victor as 'Fourth son of Moses Jackson, J.P.'¹⁰⁵ Quite correctly, his *Times* obituary (2 February 1928) describes him as 'third son of the late Mr Moses Jackson J.P.'¹⁰⁶

M2: is Robert Oswald, born (twin of F6) in the first quarter of 1880, hence age 1 at the time of the census, 3 (approaching 4) in the photograph, and consequently of help in its dating. Though the twins' younger sister (F7) is perched on their mother's knee, he, one arm leant on his father, stands. Thus the elder Moses – further evidence of the photographer's skill – sits framed by a twin close-standing to each side of him. Interestingly, the Tonbridge School Register gives of Robert the information, 'Farming in Manitoba since 1904'. Was it the lead of his youngest brother which later took the younger Moses – as earlier he himself had been followed by Victor in the Indian Education Service – westwards

for the same purposes of farming in 1911?

F6: is Agnes Katherine, twin of Robert. Naturally both, at age 11, are later listed at Tonbridge with their parents in 1891. Subsequently, at least until 1911, she lived – first as a lodger, latterly as a governess – in the school of her elder sister and brother-in-law in Vale Square, Ramsgate. Such, however, was the lure of Canada in the family that she, *teste* Gerald Jackson in 1939, was described as one of his ‘two aunts in Mission, British Columbia’, the other being known from elsewhere to have been her yet younger sister, Irene. Given the proximity of Mission to Applegarth, as we have seen in section 1, the purpose of the emigration of the sisters can hardly have been other than to join their brother Moses there.⁶⁹ The death of Frederick Cole in 1917, followed in the next year by that of his wife and thus signalling the end of Vale College, was doubtless a determining factor.

F7: is Irene Phoebe, born in the third quarter of 1882, the final child of Moses and Martha Jackson. In the photograph she is rather clearly of more than first walking age, usually coincident with the first birthday. Both her size and her hair growth are consistent with a child approaching 1½ years of age. This has application to a curiously misinterpretable reference by Margaret Jackson to the fact that Irene spent an evening in 1884 with Moses, Adalbert, and Housman in Bayswater. Out of context, this might appear to place her among her elder sisters.¹⁰⁸ Such information as we now have, however, may lead us instead to infer that her enquiries as to the progress of Mr Housman’s emendations of the Greek tragic poets may not on that occasion have run especially deep. In 1901 she was, aged 18, still at home with her father, Moses, then in his last listed place of residence at Whitchurch (see under F2 above). In between Tonbridge and Hampshire, Moses had evidently moved his family to Croydon, for Housman, again in his letter to Margaret of 25 May 1929,¹⁰⁹ records having last met Victor when ‘he was an undergraduate and your family were living at Croydon’. Victor read Natural Science (Physics) at Balliol, Oxford, from 1894 to 1898.¹¹⁰ In this last view we have in 1901 of the elder Moses Jackson, he has staying with him in Hampshire Rupert Jackson, Hector Jackson, Oscar Jackson, his grandsons (aged 10, 9, and 6), the first three sons of Moses, his son, Gerald, born recently (1900), was yet in India. But that takes us to a different generation, where the story, now beginning to be told, belongs to others.

As has been seen, the sources used in this section produce a Victorian history with gaps, at best imperfect in its flow. The records, here taken only so far, doubtless have more to yield. So too must family knowledge and repositories.¹¹¹ Perhaps some descendant in the family or an enterprising member of the Housman Society, expert at tracing family history and adept at uncovering

material while material still exists to be found, will come forward to bring to fuller completion this particular aspect, intermittently shedding light on Housman, of Jacksoniana.

NOTES

1. Andrew Jackson, 'A Pivotal Friendship', *HSJ* 36 (2010), 34-53.
2. Throughout, reference is made to the paragraphs and lines of Andrew Jackson's transcription of the letter as printed in his article (pp.43-5). There are eighteen paragraphs, of which the third comprises Moses' recollection of *Parta Quies* (MP XLVIII) and the last the single word 'Goodbye'. The system allows easy and accurate identification of passages both long and short.
3. See further below.
4. We are unlikely to be dealing with the niceties of 28-day ageing or the like.
5. Catalogue note by Sotheby's (New York), sale of 18 June 2010, lot 41.
6. An account closely repeated in his 'A.E. Housman's "De Amicitia"', posthumously printed, with notes by John Carter, in *Encounter* 29.4 (October 1967), 33-41, at 34: 'No letter from Jackson to my brother remains, except the last, which I found in an envelope, on which in Alfred's handwriting were the words "Mo's last letter." It was the letter of a sick man written faintly in pencil, from the hospital where shortly afterwards he died. Above the faint writing, the better to preserve it, Alfred had gone over the whole in ink. It began, "Dear old Hous"; it ended, "Yours very truly"...'.
7. Seared on the collective memory of all classicists who have dealt, as Housman did, with Latin manuscripts is the damage irreparably wrought, with all the best intentions, by Angelo Mai to the Ambrosian palimpsest of Plautus in Milan in 1815.
8. It is reported by the Sotheby cataloguers (n.5 above).
9. Less likely, as more of a modern expression, 'publishers'.
10. The form could be ambiguous, for Andrew Jackson prints 'publisher'. The problem was one to which even Housman himself was not immune, as witnessed by the P.S. to his letter of 28 August 1911 to Grant Richards (Burnett, *Letters*, I.272-3): 'Because my hand is particularly good and clear, printers misread it whenever they can; but there is only one letter which they can misread, and that is the letter *r*. At the end of a word they pretend they think it is an *s*...'
11. Compare the looseness at 2.7, referring in 'that thing' (2.4) to Housman's poem but then to 'they' (where he means the lines).
12. '... a relationship in which it was possible for men in their sixties still, as it were,

- to roll together on the floor like boys', Norman Page, *A.E. Housman: A Critical Bibliography* (London, 1983 = 19962), 42 (one of many insights).
13. Letter of 19 October 1922, quoted by Andrew Jackson, pp.42-3 (=Burnett, *Letters*, I.516-18).
 14. 1.2.
 15. 'harum litterarum contemptor' to the end.
 16. Cf. the wording at the head of p.46: 'sections'.
 17. The Sotheby photograph is, by kind permission, reproduced here (unenlarged) in the pictorial insert p.1.
 18. See further section 3 (with especially n.50) below.
 19. As is fully evident from the inscription 'Written to my / father 10 days before / his death 14 Jan. 23. / G' in the top left-hand corner of Housman's final, but abortive, letter to Moses, plainly visible in the Sotheby photograph of lot 41. Letters from Gerald are also to be found in the Trinity material.
 20. Rosa died within five months of Housman in September 1936, too early in practice to have been involved in receipt of any of his effects.
 21. This is of course the same Laurence Housman who later in his writings, either through less than careful recall or by a wish rhetorically to magnify the action, described 'the whole' of the letter as overtraced by Housman. But we must also reckon with the possibility that Laurence Housman at no point saw (or later described) the distinction. It is entirely feasible that the compiler, seeing that a central portion of the letter was originally written in ink and had never been overtraced, intelligently drew his own conclusion and, adapting the information given by Laurence Housman that the letter had been overtraced by A.E.H., composed his note. His insight would give him the more reason to do so.
 22. See further n.29 below.
 23. So too in the same paragraph 'as' (12.4) might falsely repeat the 'as' of two words before.
 24. Let it not be said that the blunted circumlocution of 'disregard of all politeness towards possibilities in the unknown future' (2.5-6) belongs to this class, for there, whatever formal uncertainty of meaning the words contain, differences of religious viewpoint between the correspondents (cf. 'furiously unorthodox', 4.3) are at stake, and Moses steps, for all the clumsiness of his expression, delicately between them.
 25. When analysis of the ink is finally made, due attention will need to be paid to what may be the differing absorbency of the envelope and the paper used for the letter. Apparent differences of shading can result.

26. If his purpose in using pencil was – through lack of confidence in his strength of mind or hand (perhaps especially in his quoting of Housman’s poem) – to allow for the possibility of his making alterations to what he wrote, then changes may possibly lie under the ink. All the more, if pencilling was for him a provisional stage, would he wish the final version to appear in ink.
27. It is clear from para. 14 of Moses’ letter that Oscar was in Canada at the time, and so may be presumed, like Gerald, to be visiting his father in hospital. It is not certain whether Rupert, who is said by Andrew Jackson (p.50) to be living a year later in County Durham, could also have been present.
28. (n.20 above.)
29. Did the overtracer ink in ‘M.J.J. Jackson’? That might indicate a not altogether close acquaintance with the writer. Did the overtracer perhaps even create the error? Or did Moses himself sign (confusedly) in ink after the overtracing had taken place?
30. It would be rash to assume that the two sets of inking-in were carried out contemporaneously: the first could have served to bring the letter up to date before Moses himself began the central section in ink, leaving only a short final portion to be overtraced at the end.
31. Thus, to answer our earlier question, Gerald’s own letter to Housman will have been sent separately and most likely later (as events unfolded). Delay in the post gave plenty of opportunity between 11p.m. on 7 December 1922 and New Year’s Day 1923 (if not 4 January, the date of Housman’s reply) for the two letters to arrive with virtual simultaneity.
32. Paragraph 2 of his letter of 4 January 1923 (p.46 of Andrew Jackson’s article).
33. It is hoped that some at least of the details of this section are not already too widely known in Housman circles. The usual sources of modern biographical enquiry (to which reference will be made) are openly available. Housman’s *Parta Quies* (later to become *MP XLVIII*) was first published in *Waifs and Strays, A Terminal Magazine of Oxford Poetry* in March 1881. Since it must have been submitted at the latest by 28 January 1881 (Burnett, *Poems*, 462), it may, allowing for vacation, have been composed (and read to Jackson) in the Michaelmas term 1880, placing it exactly, as Housman does, 42 years before the Nov. 1922 date of Jackson’s quotation.
34. And, it will be seen, of others (n.40 below).
35. Then properly St Giles’ or St Giles’s (both forms are found) Street.
36. ‘Some Reminiscences’ in *Alfred Edward Housman, 26 March 1859: 30 April 1936* (Bromsgrove, 1936), 31-4, at 31.
37. It is accessible also at www.stx.ox.ac.uk, *The Record* 21 (2004), ‘Archivist’s Report’.

38. Street-directory evidence prior to Kelly's of 1899-90 shows the chief occupant as 'Mrs Patchett'. This is incorrect, as the 1881 evidence given both by Housman and by the census confirms. Phantom pursuit of a mother earlier in charge proves fruitless.
39. An exuberance not out of place towards a younger sister of whom he was fond, but shortly to be replaced at home by a period of, in his sister's word, 'stricken' remove.
40. Scattered examples exist in the census record of undergraduates who remained in their lodgings. As in the case of Miss Patchett, not all the heads of household are found to be male, and some of those who are female are listed as single.
41. Returns of the three subsequent censuses up to 1911 throw light also on his later lodging arrangements in London.
42. It cannot be said with certainty, working from the dates we have, that Housman spent the entire vacation in Oxford, but, with Easter falling relatively late that year (17 April), there were a substantial number of weeks to be filled after completion in the early part of March of the required period of residence, and his move into college cannot have taken place without academic purpose.
43. He did not, however, omit, somewhat incongruously, to pass the opening, and simple, paper in the Rudiments of Religion sat on 27 May (*Oxford University Gazette* XI (1880-1), 430, 575).
44. Such as happens with frequency in private letters never written with a view to publication. When Housman writes to Kate on 11 December 1930 (Burnett, *Letters*, II.221) 'Now there is nobody in the world who respects me as much as Noble did', it takes the commentator to infer – in this case not improbably – that Noble had been the family dog of their shared childhood (R.P. Graves, *A.E. Housman, The Scholar-Poet* (London, 1979), 247). Speculation in the *Housman Society Newsletter* of last year that 'Larry old chap' was a sort of catch-phrase (perhaps of the music hall) in the late nineteenth century has so far produced no results.
45. Wodehousians will recall the shock with which Jeeves' employer heard his servant being addressed by his first name: 'I froze in my chair, stunned by the revelation... It had never occurred to me before that he had a first name' (*Much Obligated*, *Jeeves*, Chap. 4). And what, in the same period, of Lunt, Germer, Wilcox, Plender, or a host of other faithful representations of the practice of the day? Nor would such surnames be given the familiarised forms of first names, and Larry as a surname is too rare to be likely to suit our purposes here.
46. Listed as still being in term on 3 April.
47. His name, ironically, was Pollard.

48. Details as in n.33 above.
49. In both versions line numbers have been added to facilitate reference. Conversely the elaborate Roman capital numeration of the stanzas (with points, as also the title was followed by a point) in the 1881 version has, again for convenience, not been shown. So too the initials 'A.E.H.'
50. Trinity College, Cambridge (TCC) Add. MS a 71²¹⁹, letter from John Sparrow to Andrew Gow (n.54 below) dated 16 October 1936. TCC Add. MS a 71 is an extensive file of personal correspondence accumulated by Gow in the wake of Housman's death and later presented by him to the library of the college. The file has been much used in general by biographers of Housman but still contains a great deal of further value in respect of more particularised enquiries.
51. Again the startling difference in title must be put aside for the present. The version given here of Moses Jackson's quotation follows exactly the form given by Andrew Jackson in his *HSJ* article, on which we all depend. (It corrects a version earlier given in the *Housman Society Newsletter* of September 2010.) Again, line numbers are added for ease of reference.
52. Changes in addition to punctuation: 'Good-night' for Goodnight' in line 1; lower-case 'h' and 'e' in 'Heaven' and 'Earth' in lines 6 and 7; indentation of lines 3, 6, 9, 12; division of the poem into its constituent two stanzas.
53. Unkindly we could point, as noted in section 2 above, to the imprecision of Jackson's quotation at 7.2 of *LP* XXVIII.5, adding a false poetic twist with 'Tis little luck that I have had' in place of 'Little is the luck I've had'. (It is possible that he did not have to hand his copy of *Last Poems*, for at 12.1 he says that the letter of Housman's which accompanied it was not with him in hospital.) And again, though eminently forgivably, 'Jones of Jesus' (a sort of unseen refrain) stands at 17.3 for the true sub-title of the poem, 'Jones His Repartee'.
54. A.S.F. Gow (Fellow of Trinity, and closest classical associate of Housman in his later years), G.M. Trevelyan (Fellow, subsequently Master, of Trinity), F.L. Lucas (Fellow of King's, a classicist with interests in the then burgeoning academic area of English literature).
55. The collection is now TCC Add. MS b 120, with Gow's letter included. *MP* XLVIII was at that point no. 15 within the collection, in no sense appearing different in provenance from the others and not at that time selected to give closure to the whole. Laurence Housman found some (not unjustified) vindication of his judgement when he allowed himself to crow in a letter to Gow of 19 October 1936 (TCC Add. MS a 71⁸²): 'P.S. It gives me editorial satisfaction to note that most of the poems quoted in the Times today were marked for exclusion by some of the triumvirate, and *two* of them, I think, by all.' But, as we shall find, his satisfaction was soon not in all respects to be complete.
56. It retains the form 'Goodnight' in line 1, later to be 'Good-night' in the 1936

- version. In the title it gives 'Ave Atque Vale' rather than Jackson's 'Ave atque Vale'.
57. 'burn' had originally been omitted.
 58. Again, line numbers are added here for convenience.
 59. TCC Add. MS a 71⁹⁰, letter from Laurence Housman to Gow dated 11 September 1936: 'in a few cases I have made alterations from the text as you have it'.
 60. The notion was advanced by J.W. Mackail (TCC Add. MS a 71²²¹, letter to Gow dated 1 November 1936) that the title came not from Housman but from the editor of *Waifs and Strays*. However that may be, Housman was, as we shall find, himself later content to refer to the poem under its transmitted title *Parta Quies*.
 61. This was first publicly noted by John Carter, *The Collected Poems of A.E. Housman* (London, 1939), 249.
 62. Virgil's second, if less well-recognised, use of the words, *mihi parta quies*, used by King Latinus of himself not far from death at *Aen.* 7.598, may no less aptly also have governed Housman's choice.
 63. As was first noted by Ruth W. Brown, *The Classical Journal* 37 (1942), 225.
 64. (n.64 above), 51.
 65. Burnett, *Poems*, 159-61.
 66. During, it may be noted, that strange, isolated, term of his fifth year as an undergraduate when he returned to Oxford to read as a 'passman'. The poem had been written in his second or third year (Burnett, 478).
 67. Housman's description (Burnett, *Letters*, II.395).
 68. Burnett, *Letters*, II.442.
 69. Burnett, *Letters*, II.444 (17 October 1934).
 70. TCC Add. MS a 71⁸⁹, letter to Gow dated 29 September 1936: 'I find in copies which I have seen of Alfred's correspondence with a young American that he actually sent him a corrected version of *New Year's Eve*, and would also have sent him another if he had had a copy.' (to be read with TCC Add. MS a 71⁸³ of 14 October 1936: 'a series of answering letters, which Martin has copied out for me'). We must note how, in his use of the word 'another', Laurence Housman conspicuously falls short of naming *Parta Quies*, though evidently the title was known to him.
 71. For *Ye Rounde Table*.
 72. Letter to Moses of 19 October 1922, p.42 of Andrew Jackson's article.
 73. Not at page-proof stage, where, to judge from the silence of editors, his annotated

- copy (now at Bryn Mawr) contains nothing on the matter. He himself refers to the 'revised proof' (TCC Add. MS a 71⁹⁰).
74. Graves (n.44 above), 58-9, recounts the story, relevant to the difficult year 1882, of his being commended, if testily, by Housman for his 'excellent' translation of a passage (though hardly an 'ode') of Ovid. According to Laurence Housman himself (TCC Add. MS a 71⁴⁷) the lines came probably from 'The Death of Tibullus' (i.e. *Amores* 3.9) in a book of selections.
 75. Letter to Gow dated 23 October 1936 (TCC Add. MS a 71⁷⁷): 'I sit and look at your Latin inscription to my brother's memory, and I try to pretend to be able to translate some of it.'
 76. TCC Add. MS a 71²³⁷.
 77. TCC Add. MS a 71²¹⁹.
 78. Sparrow's handwritten transcription of the poem maintained, as is to be expected, the highest standards of accuracy (including the Roman numeration of the stanzas), almost all of which detail Gow meticulously followed. At line 4, however, he appears to waver between 'earth' and 'Earth'. This comes down to a curiosity of Sparrow's hand: he has a habit of occasionally joining the last letter of one word with the first of the next. Here the ascender of the 'd' in 'and' ends with a downward stroke towards which the 'e' of 'earth' rises in order to meet it. But it did not make the letter a capital.
 79. On 23 October Laurence Housman writes: 'I return the portion of Sparrow's letter which I had from you...' (TCC Add. MS a 71⁷⁷). The transcript had been made on a sheet of notepaper separate from the letter itself.
 80. TCC Add. MS a 71⁷⁸.
 81. And the reluctance he showed on 29 September to refer to *Parta Quies* by name (n.70 above) now seems perhaps better explained.
 82. TCC Add. MS a 71⁸³.
 83. TCC Add. MS a 71²²⁰, letter of 2 November 1936.
 84. It is nearly unparalleled to find in the file a copy kept by Gow of a letter he had sent. If this is, as seems likely, something he wished to have on record, the day against which he counted would seem to have arrived.
 85. It is now in the Lilly Library at Bloomington, Indiana.
 86. Lucas complained to Gow in a letter included in TCC Add. MS b 120 of the haste required of the advisers. Laurence Housman was clearly anxious that public interest in the memorial volume of his brother's verse which he knew he could provide should be satisfied within the shortest possible time following his brother's death.

87. His belief in Housman's inking-in of the poem perhaps gave him further faith in it as a textual source. It becomes a matter of some final irony that the inscription he composed for the tablet to commemorate the burying of his brother's ashes at Ludlow made use of the poem's first line as he knew it in Jackson's, not Housman's punctuation: 'Goodnight. Ensured release / Imperishable peace / With these be yours' (TCC Add. MS a 71¹³⁷).
88. Robin Shaw, 'Moses and Adalbert', *HSJ* 20 (1994), 22-3. The photograph was reproduced after p.54. As to the mother of Mrs Jackson, see n.91 below.
89. P.G. Naiditch in n.1 to p.134 of his *Problems in the Life and Writings of A.E. Housman* (Beverly Hills, 1995) – as indeed throughout that chapter 'Notes on the life of M.J. Jackson' (to which my section-title here pays tribute) – succinctly gives detail (which I have gratefully adopted) of what in some individual cases is known. Much of the information nonetheless remains capable of being supplemented, leading to revision of ages and order of birth, and even to reassignment of details amongst the subjects they apply to. In particular the number itself of children is found to stand in need of correction.
90. F = female, M = male; square brackets indicate those whose identity is known or falls essentially outside the scope of this inquiry. 'Add' and 'Mo' follow Housman's known abbreviations of the brother's names. 'Ma' = Moses' wife, Martha Jackson, 'M-in-L' her mother, grandmother of the teeming brood.
91. It may well be asked, whose mother was she – Moses' or Martha's? But in April 1881 Moses was 59 and his wife 44. Allowing even as little as twenty years for a generation gap, the mother (she is clearly a family member) is, some two years later, more obviously 66 than 81.
92. Born 14 April 1858.
93. Birth-months given here are sourced from Thanet registration records, compiled by quarterly periods in arrears and thus only accurate within three months. Precise dates of birth may be ascertained from birth certificates. The records usefully give second names, of which only the initial is shown in census returns.
94. See further under F1, F5, and M1 below.
95. Intriguingly Robin Shaw reveals at p.23 of his article that the portrait he published was one of two then extant in Mrs Crawford's possession.
96. He was Scottish by birth; his wife, who died in 1898, came from Huntingdonshire.
97. Where she is listed in 1891.
98. 'Vale Court' (*uel sim.*) is given as her address by Naiditch (n.89 above). Since Vale Academy occupied a position in Vale Square – at its corner with Crescent Road, according to information gathered by Page (n.12 above), 214 *ad* 41 –, her roots were probably very closely returned to. The move may have been connected with the return to England of her brother Victor (M1 below), whose address was

- given as Vale Court at the time of his death in 1928.
99. Burnett, *Letters*, II.129.
 100. Naiditch (n.89 above), 135 n.5.
 101. See p.4 of pictorial insert. Reproduced by kind permission of the Master and Fellows of Trinity College, Cambridge.
 102. Indeed Adalbert may, on graduation, have first taught at home. Small, privately-owned, Victorian academies functioned very much as extensions of the family, relying on outside assistance only as required. The school of Moses senior had, we have seen in section 2, twenty pupils in 1881. They ranged in age from 10 to 17. But demand could be variable and the nature of education was undergoing change: in 1901 the Coles had only twelve pupils, aged 8 to 14, still fewer (and similarly aged) in 1911. The triumph of securing a place at Oxford in 1877 for the younger Moses belonged not to Vale Academy alone, for two years were first needed at University College, London, at that time either a stepping-stone to higher academic achievement or, in the main, a finishing process provided at considerably below the standard of the ancient universities for those destined for careers in business. Such was the sort of teaching Housman inherited (but did not nineteen years later bequeath) in 1892.
 103. Described under M1 below.
 104. N.99 above.
 105. H.D Furley (ed.), *The Register of Tonbridge School from 1861 to 1945* (London, 1951).
 106. The error of the Register has, however, done untold damage, creating an apparent need to insert a further son between Adalbert and Victor. No trace of such a son having otherwise survived in the records, rumours of his birth would seem to have been somewhat exaggerated. Thus Naiditch (n.89 above) was led to search for twelve children, and Andrew Jackson (n.1 above, at p.34) – dependently, it would seem – to aver the existence of five boys and seven girls. Havoc is necessarily also played with the dating of the photograph (which would then need to predate the birth of the twelfth sibling) with implications, still more problematically, for attribution of gender to one or other of those listed here as sisters.
 107. As valuably noted by R.B. Todd, ‘M.J. Jackson in British Columbia: Some supplementary information’, *HSJ* 27 (2001), 107-10, at 110 n.3.
 108. Naiditch (n.89 above).
 109. N.99 above.
 110. The move helps to explain the ending, earlier than is to be expected (aged 15), of Robert’s education at Tonbridge School in 1895.
 111. Cf. n.95 above.

A French Antecedent of ‘Bredon Hill’?

by

Gaston Hall

There appears to be a French antecedent of ‘Bredon Hill’, *A Shropshire Lad* XXI. It is ‘*Pauvre Jane*’, a poem allegedly recalled by Anatole France in one of the earliest autobiographies of childhood, *Le Livre de mon ami* (1885), in a chapter entitled ‘*La Révélation de la poésie*’ in a section with the equally suggestive title ‘*Nouvelles Amours*’. I take the reading ‘*Jane*’ from the eleventh edition (1889),¹ the earliest I have managed to see, because it may just possibly suggest (but clearly does not prove) an English origin possibly obscured in the current standard Pléiade edition from which I quote below, retaining ‘*Jane*’ in later references to the title of the poem and in translation.² France does not indicate whether ‘*Pauvre Jane*’ was a printed or a manuscript poem read aloud or a poem recited from memory.

Pierre, as Anatole France refers to himself under a further pseudonym in *Le Livre de mon ami*, states that he wept when as a lad of about eight at the little school conducted by a Mlle Lefort he heard her tap the table, cough, announce “*Pauvre Jeanne!*” and begin: “*Des vierges du hameau Jeanne était la plus belle*” (“Of the village maidens the fairest was Jane”). The recollection (if that is what it is) continues in prose:

Jeanne était fiancée; elle avait engagé sa foi à un jeune et vaillant montagnard. Oswald était le nom de cet heureux pasteur. Déjà tout est préparé pour l’hyménée, les compagnes de Jeanne lui apportent le voile et la couronne. Heureuse Jeanne! Mais une langueur l’envahit. Ses joues se couvrent d’une pâleur mortelle. Oswald descend de la montagne. Il accourt et lui dit: « N’es-tu pas ma compagne? » Elle répond d’une voix éteinte: « Cher Oswald, adieu! Je meurs ! » Pauvre Jeanne! Le tombeau fut son lit nuptial, et les cloches du hameau, qui devaient sonner pour son hymen, sonnèrent pour ses funérailles (I, 490).

(Jane was engaged. She had agreed to marry a young and valiant mountain man. Oswald was the name of that fortunate shepherd. Now everything was ready for the wedding. Jane’s friends bring the veil and the crown. Lucky Jane! But a languor invades her. Her cheeks are covered with a mortal pallor. Oswald comes down from the mountain. He runs up and says, “Are you not my betrothed?” She replies in a hushed voice, “Dear Oswald, goodbye. I am dying.” Poor Jane! The tomb was her marriage bed; and the village bells, which should have rung for her wedding, rang for her funeral.)

The whole thing, France continues, seemed so sad and so beautiful that upon hearing it he felt “*un frisson nouveau; le charme de la mélancholie m’était révélé par une trentaine de vers*” (“a new thrill. The charm of melancholy was revealed to me in about thirty lines of verse”) (I, 490). Coincidentally, the seven ‘Laura Matilda’ stanzas of ‘Bredon Hill’ add up to thirty-five lines, all somewhat shorter than the French alexandrine cited.

The story line of ‘*Pauvre Jane*’ in some respects so closely anticipates that of ‘Bredon Hill’ that it may interest in a variety of ways and not least because *Le Livre* also suggests a link to similar pathos in Sophocles’ *Antigone* and to Heine, to say nothing of a tradition of French Romantic poetry from which one remembers lines like these, respectively from Lamartine’s ‘*L’Isolement*’ and de Musset’s ‘*La Nuit de mai*’: “*Un seul être vous manque et tout est dépeuplé*” (“Absent an ‘only one’, absence alone is left”) and “*Rien ne nous rend si grand qu’une grande douleur*” (“Nothing makes us so great as one great grief”). But that doubtless is a different story. The link to *Antigone* is explicit in chapter X of the same section of *Le Livre*. France recalls discovering the poetry of misfortune (“*la poésie du malheur*”) in *Antigone* by the light of a chestnut-roasting stall, citing from that tragedy: “*O tombeau! ô lit nuptial...*” (“O tomb! O marriage bed...”), which I venture to translate somewhat more fully: “O tomb, O bridal chamber, O grave inhabitable forever” (ll. 891-2).

Without the explicit reminiscence of *Antigone*, ‘*Pauvre Jane*’ would be closer to ‘Bredon Hill’. Nor does Housman’s lover arrive to find his fiancée dying on their wedding day. ‘*Pauvre Jane*’ also lacks at least two key poetic features of Housman’s poem: contrasted seasons and contrasted bells. The contrast between love “In summertime on Bredon” and death during “the snows at Christmas” suggests rather a condensed, intensified and much simplified reminiscence of *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*, in which Goethe begins the love story with happiness in May and ends it with suicide in December. I shall return to the contrast between “bells” and “one bell only” in ‘Bredon Hill’ and mention of bells only in ‘*Pauvre Jane*’ in concluding these remarks. However, despite such significant differences, ‘*Pauvre Jane*’ is closer to ‘Bredon Hill’ by content than any of the poems – all in various ways pertinent – mentioned by Archie Burnett in his commentary on the poem in his edition of *The Poems of A.E. Housman*.³

In this indispensable edition Burnett dates the MSS of ‘Bredon Hill’ between “July 1891”, written by Housman at the end of the first draft, and February 1893. However, in *The Westerly Wanderer* Jeremy Bourne assigns composition of ‘Bredon Hill’, “the first great love poem of *A Shropshire Lad*,” to the pivotal year 1885, a period from which surviving letters are scarce.⁴ It is all the more interesting that *Le Livre de mon ami* was first published in Paris early in that year.

The publication was well publicised. In *Anatole France 1844-1896* E.P. Dargan notes that the first section, '*Le Livre de Pierre*', had appeared serially in *La Nouvelle Revue* 1-15 February 1883 under the title '*Le Petit Bonhomme*' and that the book itself had been announced as *Les Aventures de Pierre Nozière* in *L'Univers illustré* and extracts published between 10 January and 7 March 1885⁵. I do not know whether '*Pauvre Jane*' featured in one of the extracts, but an eleventh edition of the book itself four years later attests a very considerable publishing success. The book was evidently widely read. In *Anatole France, un sceptique passionné*, M.-C. Boucquart warns: "*Peu d'autobiographies sont aussi trompeuses...*" ("few autobiographies are so deceitful...")⁶ – not a problem in the current context, because our focus is not the author, but the story of the poem. Ten years later in another book, also entitled *Anatole France*, Boucquart accepts that, however problematical *Le Livre* may be as an autobiography of France, "*le héros, ou plutôt l'anti-héros, est une projection de lui-même*".⁷ In context, it is the duality of perception separating the erudite author Anatole France as narrator from the innocent Pierre as a sensitive auditor of '*Pauvre Jane*' who senses sadness in his spinster teacher's life, which distances and confers irony on a text which would otherwise suffer from excessive sentimentality, as Romantic poetry certainly sometimes does. Arguably it is precisely that duality of perception which may have attracted Housman.

It is therefore all the more interesting that Anatole France links *Le Livre de mon ami* to Heinrich Heine: not to the *Buch der Lieder*, an admitted inspiration for some of Housman's poems, but through detailed reference to Heine's *Mémoires* in chapter II of '*Nouvelles Amours*'. The peculiar blend of pathos and wit in Heine's best writing, which Housman also evidently appreciated, is easily lost when the latter is sacrificed to the former. Pathos is also tempered by irony or wit in Anatole France's narration of Pierre's tearful encounter with '*Pauvre Jane*'.

Evidence other than 'Bredon Hill' itself that Housman was ready and able to adapt a poem involving disappointment, death and love from a French source is not entirely lacking in the few surviving letters and elsewhere. Bourne quotes his cheerful witty letter dated 10 June 1885 to Lucy Housman relating his service to a Coroner's Jury which, having sat on five bodies, left him fully acquainted with and undismayed by death just before mentioning the mysterious disappearance which so alarmed Moses Jackson and may relate to disappointment in love.⁸ Housman's no less witty letter to Elizabeth Wise dated 30 July 1890 shows him fully in command of French phrases.⁹ Between those two letters, on 26 February 1887 he writes to congratulate Katherine Housman on her engagement, stating: "Being in love and engaged is the best thing that ever happens to any one in the world, and it makes them good as well as happy."¹⁰ Or

not, as 'Bredon Hill' suggests with such poignancy.

As an epigraph to this and other poems in *A Shropshire Lad*, Housman's epistolary comment to Katherine could also remind us, by way of contrast with the outcome of 'Bredon Hill', of a strong traditional motif in the poetry of misery or misfortune: "That a sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things," recalled by Tennyson's spokesman in 'Locksley Hall'. So let me briefly follow up Tennyson's allusion to Dante's story of Paolo and Francesca, who in *Inferno* V reflects (in Longfellow's translation):

There is no greater sorrow
Than to be mindful of the happy time
In misery, and that thy Teacher knows.

Dante's Teacher in this context, of course, is Virgil, whose "*Dulces exuviae, dum fata deusque sinebat*" ("Sweet relics, as long as destiny and Jupiter allowed") at Dido's suicide for disappointed love must have been well known to Housman. Dante's story of Paolo and Francesca also reverberates through the nineteenth century not only in poetry, but in other genres from the Gondolier's song in Rossini's opera *Otello* to Rodin's famous sculpture of 'The Kiss'. It caught a mood of poignant loss arguably also captured by 'Bredon Hill', the story line of which is so much closer to that of the somewhat ridiculous '*Pauvre Jane*'. Housman's art is to have achieved such an effect partly through adaptation to a Worcestershire setting so skilful that foreign sources are not suspected and partly through metrically complex poetic diction the apparent simplicity of which elevates and intensifies the narrative.

Finally, a cultural difference between French and English bell ringing may underlie the poetic success of Housman's shocking line: "They tolled the one bell only" contrasted with the "bells" of other stanzas and (I suggest) the bells in '*Pauvre Jane*'. I am not sure what is added by knowing it was ordered in Ludlow in 1717 that upon the burial of any person who received alms from the parish "the fifth bell only shall be tolled".¹¹ The scene of the poem is not Ludlow. Nothing suggests an alms-assisted funeral, and the tolling of a single bell must have accompanied many an English funeral, whether in Ludlow or not. On the other hand, in English literature there can scarcely be a more awesome reference to a single bell for funerals than the exhortation in John Donne's *Devotions*: "...never send to know for whom the *bell* tolls; It tolls for *thee*." Or consider the second line of Edgar Allan Poe's 'Lenore' (1843): "Let the bell toll! – a saintly soul floats on the Stygian river." Housman's "one bell only" is more poignant than the altered ringing of the bells in '*Pauvre Jane*' because English tradition allows him

to offer, in contrast with the bells heard on Sunday and wedding bells, an ‘auditory correlative’ of the solitude, not only of dying, but of bereavement and depression.

NOTES

1. A. France, *Le Livre de mon ami* (Calmann Lévy, Paris, 1889), II, 5. Whether (like France) Housman knew Ernest Renan’s *Souvenirs d’enfance et de jeunesse* (1883), which contains his famous ‘*Prière sur l’Acropole*’, is a question to which I have no answer. Anatole France, however, is not alone amongst French Academicians in relating grief to a pathetic story heard in childhood, to cite only Marcel Pagnol’s recollection of tears upon hearing the story of the Little Match Girl in *Le Temps des secrets* (Paris, 1988), pp. 101-2. I have to thank St John’s College, Oxford, and the Taylor Institution for gracious assistance with this paper.
2. Anatole France, *Œuvres* (Gallimard: ‘Bibliothèque de la Pléiade’, Paris, 4 vols., 1984-94). Housman might have appreciated the fact that an early separate edition provided such a curious variant.
3. A. Burnett (ed.), *The Poems of A.E. Housman* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1997). There is now no doubt that the shallow-domed Bredon Hill in Housman’s native Worcestershire, 961’ high and commanding extensive views, is the hill he meant. Housman himself says so in a letter to H.E. Butler dated 3 January 1930: “Bredon is the Worcestershire hill... The poem is one of the earliest, written before I knew the book would be Shropshire.”
4. J. Bourne, *The Westerly Wanderer: A Brief Portrait of A.E. Housman* (The Housman Society, Bromsgrove, 1996), p.49. Whatever difficulties may linger in dating the composition of ‘Bredon Hill’ do not affect our comparison with ‘Pauvre Jane’, which was available at the earliest date proposed.
5. E.P. Dargan, *Anatole France, 1844-1896*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1937, as indexed.
6. M.-C. Boucquart, *Anatole France, un sceptique passionné* (Calmann Lévy, Paris, 1984), p.132.
7. M.-C. Boucquart, *Anatole France* (Juillard, Paris, 1994), p.22.
8. *Op. cit.*, p.49.
9. A. Burnett (ed.), *The Letters of A. E. Housman* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 2 vols, 1999), I, 64.
10. *Ibid.*, I, 60.
11. *The Handbook to Ludlow*, 1886 edn, p.142, quoted by Burnett (as n.3), p.336.

Worcester's Roman Name, Buildwas, and Uricon

by

Andrew Breeze

The three notes below concern West Midland places, all of them located on the Severn and all variously associated with A.E.H. The first discusses the British-Latin name of Worcester, county town of his native shire. The second and third deal with Buildwas and Wroxeter or 'Uricon', both figuring evocatively in *A Shropshire Lad*. It is argued that Buildwas, in a poem on fighting between English and Welsh, is itself evidence for that struggle, since the form can be shown to be Celtic (not English). As for Uricon, this was noted by a Welsh bard a century before A.E.H., and so supplies comparative material on poetic responses to its ruins. Relating to poetry, philology, and the classical past, what follows may thus be an appropriate tribute to a scholar-poet's memory.

1. I Was Born in Worcestershire

'I was born in Worcestershire, not Shropshire, where I have never spent much time', wrote A.E.H. in a letter of February 1933.¹ This note deals with Worcestershire's county town and its British-Latin name, *Vertis*. Nobody has ever made sense of that. Yet a textual emendation, which one hopes that the poet's shade will approve, apparently brings meaning to it.

British-Latin *Vertis* is recorded in one place only, the eighth-century Ravenna Cosmography, which is both the most extensive source for ancient British toponymy and the most unreliable, for it has suffered gross textual corruption. The most detailed account of *Vertis* was given by Rivet and Smith. They rejected the etymology proposed by Sir Ian Richmond and O.G.S. Crawford and preferred to give none, since they considered the reading 'almost certainly corrupt'. But they thought it might contain the intensive prefix *uer-* 'very' and locative plural *-is*. They also believed that the form was curiously short, probably by one syllable. Despite that, they ruled out a link with *Verteris* 'at the summits' or the Roman fort by Brough, near Kirkby Stephen in south-east Cumbria.² Since then, no progress. The new Cambridge dictionary says merely that Worcester's British-Latin name was apparently *Vertis*, which can have no link with *Worcester*.³ *Vertis* appears as such in Professor Koch's atlas.⁴

At this point we turn to descriptions of Worcester. Lees-Milne stated that the place was fortified by the Britons on 'a steep promontory over the eastern bank of the River Severn'. He adds that the Romans called it Vigornia, which is

untrue.⁵ *Vigornia* is not a classical form but the medieval and modern Latin for 'Worcester'. Nevertheless, his remark on that 'steep promontory' is significant. It is echoed in a more professional account by Sir Nikolaus Pevsner. He said this:

The site of Worcester has been occupied for more than two thousand years. The first settlement, on a ridge of sand and gravel overlooking an ancient ford close to the present cathedral, dates from the early Iron Age, the fifth or fourth century BC. Later in the Iron Age the village was defended by a massive bank and ditch, which followed the line of the later Roman defences.

After giving details of the Roman settlement, including a moat 'nearly a hundred feet across' dug out in about AD 200, and a third-century ironworks (which left behind thousands of tons of slag), he added that, according to the Ravenna Cosmography, 'Roman Worcester is called Vertis, but there is no corroborative evidence for this name, and no apparent connection between it and *Weogornacaestra*, from which 'Worcester' derives.' He also mentioned the seventh-century minster of St Peter and the late Anglo-Saxon and Norman defences. An aerial photograph suggests how, from its rise, the cathedral dominates the eastern horizon for cricketers and others on the Severn's farther bank.⁶

This conspicuous ridge, which provided a defensive site for Celt, Roman, Anglo-Saxon, and Norman, suggests an emendation for 'Vertis'. Let us go back to *Verteris* or the Roman fort near Brough, Cumbria. The toponym means 'at the summits' (with locative *-is*), the point being proved by Middle Welsh *gwarther* 'summit', deriving from British **uertero*-.⁷ This Cumbrian fort was sited on an eminence overlooking a river-crossing where a major Roman road (now followed by the A66) descended from the Pennine moors. So well-chosen was the ridge that William Rufus built a castle at the spot, obliterating most of the Roman fort in the process (though not a slab in honour of Septimius Severus, which is kept in the local church). Welsh *gwarther* 'summit' was a toponym in medieval Wales, being used of four places, one on the mainland and three in Anglesey. The first was by Nanhoron (SH 2831) in the Llyn Peninsula of Gwynedd, the others by Llantrisant (SH 3484), Bodwrog (SH 3977), and, as Werthyr (SH 4192), the town of Amlwch.⁸ All are situated on or near a hillock. These four Welsh locations, together with the elevation in Cumbria, allow a solution for Worcester's ancient name.

A common scribal error is haplography or the unintentional writing of letter(s) or word(s) once when they should occur twice. (Those familiar with A.E.H.'s critical work will know his own corrections of such mistakes.) On that

basis, we can emend 'Vertis' to *Verteris* 'at the heights, at the summits', used of the British stronghold on a headland above the Severn, and then the Roman fort and town after it, all now lying under the busy streets and traffic of Worcester. This modest correction of the Ravenna text will accord with local topography, as well as the place-names quoted above from Cumbria and Gwynedd.

A.E.H. was probably the greatest poet born in Worcestershire, and certainly the greatest scholar born in Worcestershire. Unrivalled as a textual critic, he also had a penetrating awareness of English landscape and place. It would be cheering to think that both these gifts find a correspondence in emendation of 'Vertis' to *Verteris* 'at the heights'. It would represent unrecorded and reconstructed British *uertero-* (a Celtic form giving Middle Welsh *gwarther* 'summit'), treated as a Latin noun with the plural locative suffix *-is*, as which, it would appear, the county town of the poet's native shire was known in the Latin of Roman Britain.

2. When Severn down to Buildwas ran

We start with lines from 'High the Vanes of Shrewsbury Gleam', where the heading 'The Welsh Marches' clarifies its theme of ancient fighting.

When Severn down to Buildwas ran
Coloured with the death of man,
Couched upon her brother's grave
The Saxon got me on the slave.

The verses are pessimistic. Housman depicts Shropshire, not as the country for easy livers, but as the battlefield of Celt and Teuton, with the former paying the price of defeat. The context of this would repay study. Housman may have known early Welsh poems on Llywarch the Old, set in a Powys under attack by the English. He certainly knew the Celtic political and cultural revival of the 1890s, with David Lloyd George's (brief) courtship of Welsh nationalism. The stanza reveals as well something of Housman's obsession with violence and the poor. Yet our present concern is innocent. We discuss merely a place-name. Even if Housman confessed that he hardly knew Shropshire at first hand, he still employed its toponyms with skill to create landscapes of the mind.⁹

Buildwas is a small place ten miles downstream from Shrewsbury. It is famous for ruins 'of great simplicity and nobility' from its Cistercian abbey, located on a site that is 'peaceful and in harmony with the surrounding landscape'.¹⁰ The Severn here flows through meadowland (past a farm called Leachmeadow)

between wooded hills, which narrow two miles below Buildwas to make a gorge at Ironbridge. Despite the presence of disused railways and a coal-fired power station, it is a beautiful spot. The scenery has a bearing on its name, which is odd-looking, its outlandishness perhaps being why Housman chose it. It appears in Domesday Book as *Beldewes*, and thereafter as *Billewas* in 1158, *Buldewas* in 1169 and c.1180, and *Byldewas* in 1248. The second element is from Old English *w æsse* ‘marsh’. The first has been obscure, although Ekwall related it hesitantly to Old English *bylða* ‘builder’ or *gebylðu* ‘building’.¹¹

More elaborate is discussion by the late Margaret Gelling, who referred to the ‘great meanders’ here of the Severn’s flood-plain, where the ‘flooding and draining of the meadows’ by them ‘occurs with dramatic swiftness’. Then with unwavering but (we shall argue) quite misplaced confidence she stated that the first element here must have been unrecorded Old English *bylde* or *byldan*, which she related not to ‘build’ but to the verb *bielðan* or *byldan* ‘to encourage’ and the noun *bylðu* ‘boldness, confidence’. On this basis she concluded that the meaning would be ‘swelling marsh, surging marsh’, alluding to the movement of flood-waters.¹²

Yet her insecure verbal edifice is supported neither by English language nor English place-names. There is no evidence for her Old English adjective form meaning ‘swelling, surging’; and such a meaning has no parallel in other names for marshes, where water comes not with a rush, but footing slow. Another explanation thus seems possible. Buildwas lies in a zone of Celtic place-names, some of them figuring in *A Shropshire Lad*. Two miles north is the Wrekin; five miles north-west are the remains of Roman Wroxeter or ‘Uricon’. Nearer to Buildwas are Much Wenlock and Little Wenlock, neither of which was a ‘white monastery’, despite what the books say, but which may be called after an ancient local chieftain. Six miles downstream from Buildwas and east of the Severn is Ewdness, where textual corruption has imposed itself on pronunciation, since early records show that the form means ‘old’ (=Welsh *hen*) plus ‘stronghold’ (=Welsh *dinas*). The settlement will have been the court of a pre-English magnate.¹³ Surrounded by British toponyms, amongst hills where English incursions came late and native populations persisted, Buildwas might also have Celtic origins.

If so, the first element of the form may be explained by early Welsh *Buellt* ‘cow-pasture’. This is a familiar expression. The most obvious example is provided by the small Powys town of Builth Wells, which Welsh-speakers call Llanfair-ym-Muallt ‘church of St Mary in Buallt’. Here ‘Builth’ or *Buallt* ‘cow pasture’ refers to a district that was once a Celtic sub-kingdom, then a medieval cantref, and is

now (from Henry VIII's time) a hundred. It is attested as *Buellt* in 1100 x 1103, *Buelth* in 1176 x 1188, *Buelte* in 1304 x 1305, and *Byellt* in about 1566, the elements being Welsh *bu* 'cow' plus *g(w)ellt* 'grass'.¹⁴ These appear elsewhere. North of Cardiff near Taff's Well is the river Buellai 'cow-pasture (stream)'. More surprising are the rivers Beult (formerly pronounced 'Bult', but now 'Belt') and Bewl of south-west Kent. Both have puzzled philologists, but are surely equivalents of Builth in Powys and the Buellai in Glamorgan.¹⁵

With early Welsh *Buellt* and Kentish *Beult* in mind, let us look again at *Beldewes*, *Billewas*, *Buldewas*, and *Byldewas*. There is the persistent B + L + dental. The second of these would have been heard by Anglo-Saxon settlers as *l*, since the voiceless liquid *ll* of later Welsh (the famous Welsh 'll') did not then exist. The voicing of original *t* to *d* is presumably due to combination with Old English *wasse* 'marsh'. As for the first vowel, this would be a Brittonic *u*, shown to this day in Welsh spelling, although it was raised to varieties of [i] in all Welsh dialects during or after the fourteenth century. Hence the twelfth-century spelling *Buldewas*, where *u* would go back to a borrowing from Celtic some five centuries previous.

Yet there is an objection. Jackson derived Old Welsh *Buelt* from British **bougelt*.¹⁶ For a borrowing as early as the seventh century, when the Wrekin area was occupied by the Anglo-Saxons, one might expect on that basis to see evidence of *g*. Yet we may reply by noting how Welsh *g(w)ellt* 'grass' has also been derived from the root **uel-* 'hair, wool' (of which English *wool* is itself a cognate), which did not give *gw* in Welsh before the eighth century, after our borrowing would be made.¹⁷ Even Old Welsh *Buelt*, attested in *Historia Brittonum* of the early ninth century, shows no trace of internal *g*. So lack of *g* in English attestations does not rule out links between Buellt in medieval Powys, Buildwas in Shropshire, or the Beult in Kent.

We can hence dismiss attempts to see Buildwas as having an English name meaning 'builder's marsh' or 'surging marsh'. Marshes attract ducks and those who shoot them, but not builders, whose constructions there fall down; and while one might have a 'residence by a marsh' (as with English places called Marston), a 'marsh by a residence' is unlikely. We may see the first element as instead corresponding to early Welsh *buellt* 'cow pasture', as evidenced by an ancient Welsh kingdom with namesakes in Glamorgan, north Powys, and Kent. Buildwas was the 'marsh of a *buellt*, cow-pasture marsh'.

The parish of Buildwas has broad meadowlands, with ample pasture for cattle. Perhaps the strangeness of its name attracted Housman when he wrote

the brutal stanza quoted above, although he would also know of the beauty of the place, in a green valley with the Severn flowing by. If, however, the form is a hybrid, being itself in part Celtic (like the speaker of the verse), then Housman's feel for words will be most curiously vindicated.

Finally, two matters that came to notice after the above was written. Geoffrey Plowden pointed out to the writer a translation of the verse discussed here.

Quand la Severn vers Buildwas coulait
Tente du sang des morts,
Allongée sur la tombe de son frère
La Saxonne m'a pris pour esclave.¹⁸

So we must state the unsavoury truth that the Saxon is male, the slave is female and Celtic, and *got* has its older sense of 'begot, procreated'. Besides misunderstanding of verse is misunderstanding of another Shropshire place-name. Margaret Gelling compared Buildwas with Bolas, situated eleven miles north on the banks of the Tern. It is recorded in 1198 as *Belewas*, in 1199 as *Boulewas*, and thereafter as *Boulwas*, with the first element described as 'of uncertain origin', but perhaps from unattested Old English *bogel* 'little bend'.¹⁹ Because Bolas is situated by damp river-meadows, there is no need to invoke any unrecorded Old English word here. If we again take the first part as corresponding to Old Welsh *buelt*, with loss of dental (as in the Glamorgan hydronym *Buellai*), we shall again have a British-English hybrid meaning 'cow-pasture marsh'. It will again be proof of Celtic survival in post-conquest Shropshire: the very subject of 'High the Vanes of Shrewsbury Gleam'.

3. When Uricon the city stood

Housman's 'On Wenlock Edge' begins with a storm, moves to thoughts of Uricon the city, and ends with tempest and passion both spent:

The gale, it plies the saplings double,
It blows so hard, 'twill soon be gone:
Today the Roman and his trouble
Are ashes under Uricon.

The lines have stirred many with a sense of the past. Sir Nikolaus Pevsner described Viroconium, once Britain's fourth largest city, as possessing ruins with 'the ability to move and impress the imaginative spectator, much as they

impressed A.E. Housman when he visited them during the course of an early series of excavations', his experience prompting 'the celebrated poem' in *A Shropshire Lad*.²⁰

Yet Housman was not the first scholar-poet to respond to Wroxeter's vanished glory. He had a precursor in Goronwy Owen (1723-69), a Welsh classicist, *poète maudit*, and impoverished cleric, whose misfortunes and taste for drink wrecked his chances of giving Welsh literature an epic comparable to *Paradise Lost*. He ended his days as a tobacco planter in Virginia, where he is buried.²¹ Despite that, he left some excellent short poems in Welsh and Latin that display his admiration for Anacreon and Horace. (He also translated a dialogue of Lucian into Welsh, but no text survives.) In addition to his poems are letters, with criticisms of Greek, Latin, Welsh, and English verse that were long influential in bardic circles; and one of the letters deserves notice as giving a poet's view of Wroxeter a century before Housman. In 1752 Owen was a headmaster at Donnington, eleven miles east of the Roman site, where he was well situated to report on archaeological finds. Writing on 8 December 1752 to the Welsh botanist and customs officer William Morris (1705-63), he said this:

We have here in this parish of Wroxeter some very curious pieces of antiquity lately found. They are three Roman monuments, set up, as appears by the inscriptions (which are very plain and legible – the stones, too, being entire), about the time of Vespasian [AD 69-79]; one being for Gaius Manlius, – a Praetorian legate of the twentieth legion; and another for Marcus Petronius, an ensign or standard-bearer of the nineteenth legion. Wroxeter was once one of the finest cities in Britain, though now but a poor village, as appears by the ruins that are now to be seen, and are daily more and more discovered, and by the vast number of Roman coins that are yearly and daily found in it. It was called by the Romans 'Uriconium' and 'Viriconium', perhaps from *Gorygawn* or *Gwrogion*, and probably destroyed by the Saxons; for we have here a tradition, that it was set on fire by a flight of sparrows that had matches tied to their tails for that purpose by the enemy.²²

The inscriptions are 293, 294, and 295 in the standard catalogue, which refers on them to a letter by Dr Nicholls (an associate of Owen) of 28 November 1752 to the scholar Peter Newcome (1727-97), and an article of 1755 by John Ward (?1679-1758). So they were known early on. They can be read as follows:

1. GAIUS MANNIUS GAI FILIUS POLLIA TRIBU SECUNDUS POLLENTIA MILES LEGIONIS XX ANNORUM LII STIPENDIORUM XXXI BENEFICIARIUS LEGATI PROPRAETORE HIC SITUS EST, 'Gaius Mannius Secundus, son of Gaius, of the Pollian tribe, from Pollentia [=Pollenza, near Turin], a soldier of the

Twentieth Legion, aged 52, of 31 years' service, *beneficiarius* of the governor, lies here.'

2. MARCUS PETRONIUS LUCI FILIUS MENENIA TRIBU VICETIA ANNORUM XXXVIII MILES LEGIONIS XIII GEMINAE MILITAVIT ANNOS XVIII SIGNIFER FUIT HIC SITUS EST, 'Marcus Petronius, son of Lucius, of the Menenian voting-tribe, from Vicetia [=Vicenza, near Padua], aged 38, a soldier of the Fourteenth Legion Gemina, served 18 years, was a standard-bearer and lies buried here.'

3. DIS MANIBUS PLACIDA ANNORUM LV CURAM AGENTE CONIUGE ANNO XXX [...] DIS MANIBUS DEUCCUS ANNORUM XV CURAM AGENTE FRATRE, 'To the spirits of the departed; Placida, aged 55; (set up) under the charge of her husband in the 30th year (of marriage)'; 'To the spirits of the departed; Deuccus, aged 15; (set up) under the charge of his brother.'²³

The monuments, now at Rowley's House Museum in Shrewsbury, were (as Owen notes) found in good condition. Two of them figure continually in textbooks on Roman Britain, and we here set out accounts of them, so as to deepen our understanding of how Wroxeter was perceived by a Welsh poet-classicist and an English one. We begin with another Welshman, Sir John Edward Lloyd (1861-1947) of Bangor. He thought that the second monument commemorated a soldier 'of the Fourteenth Twin Legion', with Wroxeter being 'the permanent station of that corps' in the early days of occupation. When the legion withdrew in about AD 70, Wroxeter was handed over to civilians, and Lloyd gives a stately account of the 'straggling town', which yet had 'public buildings of some pretensions, including a large town-hall and a complete set of bath-houses.' He went on to mention how a 'multitude of small objects discovered during the process of excavation, lamps, earthen and glass vessels, finger rings, brooches, statuettes, door-keys and workmen's tools, bears ample witness to the busy and many-sided life of this half Roman, half British community.' He concluded that that life 'underwent no eclipse until the end of the period of Roman occupation', as proved by finds of coins from the late fourth century.²⁴

Collingwood took the monuments of Mannius and Petronius, one at least of which he dated to Claudius' time (and so before AD 54), as evidence for an early double fortress at Wroxeter, which would have been built in about 48, when Ostorius was preparing on assault on the Degeangli of north-east Wales.²⁵ Charlesworth likewise believed that the XIVth and XXth legions perhaps reached Wroxeter by AD 50.²⁶ But Sir Ian Richmond saw events differently. He described the Fourteenth Legion as being stationed at Wroxeter until AD 66, when it was

drafted to the Continent for Nero's abortive Eastern campaign. It made a brief return in 69-70. Yet he thought it uncertain that the Twentieth Legion was based at Wroxeter. All we know is that from 84 it was at Chester, where it remained for centuries. The monument of Gaius Mannius might commemorate 'a man seconded to a special appointment away from base', although we cannot be sure of that.²⁷ Revisionism appeared too in a pamphlet on the site. It stated (on the basis of excavations) that the XIVth Legion, advancing from a permanent base at Wall, near modern Lichfield, built a camp at Wroxeter in about AD 58. (No basis, then, for Collingwood's dating any tomb there to the days of Claudius.) The XIVth Legion, withdrawn from Britain in 69 on Nero's orders, was replaced at Wroxeter by the XXth Legion, who had established themselves at Gloucester in about AD 50. Except when on campaign with Agricola in North Britain, the XXth remained there until it moved to Chester in about 78. Wroxeter then became a civilian settlement. That would be the context of the monuments to Petronius and Mannius.²⁸ There is no talk now of a double legion. The inscription of the first will date from between 58 and 61, with the second presumably later, but not after 78.

Further comment on them is given by Sheppard Frere. The fortress at Wroxeter cannot be as early as Ostorius (about AD 48), as early writers believed, since no pottery of his time has been found there. Yet it certainly existed by AD 61, as shown by the tombstone of Marcus Petronius of Legio XIV, which lacks a cognomen (an early phenomenon) and the legionary title *Martia Victrix*, dating it to before the defeat of Queen Boudica 'She Who is Victorious' (compare older Welsh *buddig* 'triumphant') that year, when Legio XIV bore the brunt of the fighting. As for Gaius Mannius, Frere regards him as a *beneficiarius* detached from normal duty to serve on the governor's staff. He is sure that the fortress was never a double one, and says that we cannot know if Legio XIV returned there in 69-70.²⁹ The monument to Marcus Petronius is illustrated in a popular guide, with the comment that it predates the campaign against Boudica.³⁰ Salway, mentioning it as proof for an early garrison at Wroxeter, thinks it most unlikely that Legio XX was ever stationed there.³¹ Gaius Mannius would probably have been there on secondment. The epitaphs seen by Goronwy Owen now appear in a useful handbook. That on Petronius proves that the Fourteenth Legion was based at Wroxeter; that on Mannius is seen as evidence that, when Nero withdrew the Fourteenth, the Twentieth Legion was moved north to take its place; while those on Placida and Deucus tell us not of imperial policy and strategy, but merely a family's private sorrow.³² Most recently, James Fraser has no doubt that Legio XX was at Wroxeter when Agricola arrived to lead it on memorable campaigns in North Britain.³³

So the above offers varied opinion on these epitaphs, described by Goronwy Owen when the earth had scarcely been cleaned from them.³³ They confirm his awareness of their significance, but correct 'Manlius' and 'Nineteenth Legion' in the printed text of his letter (if this accurately represents his original). Although the tomb of Mannius is to be dated to 58 x 61, Owen may have been correct in ascribing that of Petronius to the time of Vespasian (69-79), if Wroxeter was a military base as late as 78.

Now for his etymologies. Although Owen had the advantage of knowing Welsh, he gave no translation for his *Gorygawn* and *Gwrogion*, which is not surprising, since they mean nothing, as the larger Welsh dictionaries will confirm. But they provide an opportunity to sum up recent discussion of the question. The English Place-Name Society's dictionary relates *Viroconium* to a British personal name *Virico*.³⁴ It offers no meaning for that, yet at least moves in the right direction in relating the Roman town to the British stronghold four miles away on the Wrekin (a massif of archaic rock that shares the name of the town, if in different guise). The town would be called after the hill-fort, as elsewhere in Roman Britain. The fort would in turn surely be named from the Cornovian petty king who had it built. In a paper in this journal, the writer explained *Viroconium* as British-Latin for an unattested original British *Uergónon* 'place of Uergónos 'great fierce one' or, preferably, *Uregónon* 'place of Uregónos 'great active one'. This accords with cognate forms in Welsh and Cornish, though it has the poetical disadvantage of showing that Housman's 'Uricon' had two syllables, with stress on the latter; which ruins the poem.³⁵ Professor Sims-Williams of Aberystwyth, whose views on matters Celtic are regularly disputed by the present writer, relates *Viroconium* to the Celtic roots *vir-* 'man' or perhaps (with long vowel) *viro-* 'true'.³⁶ But neither can be so, as the Welsh and Cornish cognates show.

Finally, Owen's comment that the city was 'probably destroyed by the Saxons; for we have a tradition, that it was set on fire by a flight of sparrows that had matches tied to their tails for that purpose by the enemy.' This wild story cannot be blamed on Welsh folklore. The legend first appears in Old French and Middle English versions of *Historia Regum Britanniae* by Geoffrey of Monmouth (d. 1155), where they add detail to his account of the siege of Cirencester (not Wroxeter). Writing in the decades after 1189, Layamon tells how the Britons lost Cirencester as soon as English troops fastened shells packed with lighted tinder to the tails of sparrows. The birds went back to their nests in the eaves, the thatch of the houses caught fire, and the town fell to its attackers. The legend was still alive in the late fifteenth century, when William Worcestre declared that Cirencester was called *Civitas Passerum* after it was destroyed in a siege, when

its assailants sent birds flying over it with wildfire tied to their tails.³⁸ Goronwy Owen's images of devastation by the English go back to Gildas, writing twelve centuries before him. Gildas himself took the language of cities reduced to waste from the Books of Jeremiah and Lamentations. But modern archaeology rejects the notion that Wroxeter was stormed by Saxons. Reports of excavations point to the survival of Romanized government and society there as late as 520 or so.³⁹ They record no 'line of destruction' for Wroxeter in that period. Even more remarkably, they speak of an imposing building erected between 520 and 580 next to the *frigidarium* of the baths, which may by then have been converted into a church. This grand new edifice was perhaps the palace of the Bishop of Viroconium.⁴⁰ In short, no room for wholesale destroying and burning of Wroxeter by wicked Saxons (whether using fire-sparrows or not). The implication is instead of episcopal authority in Wroxeter, and of the mass said and Latin hymns sung between walls where, for centuries, pagans had splashed and shivered in cold water.

Owen's remarks on archaeological finds at Wroxeter have not been much noticed, partly because most of his correspondence is in Welsh. Yet we can share the excitement that he felt in discussing the three monuments, which time 'had kept close prisoners since the time of Claudius Caesar'. We may also sense his poet's wonder at how Wroxeter, 'once one of the finest cities in Britain', with ruins to be seen and vast numbers of Roman coins perennially being brought to light, was 'now but a poor village'. His view of Wroxeter parallels that of A.E.H., but has contrasts as well, revealing something of both poets. For the Welshman, the recovery of antique monuments was an opportunity for boasting, speculation on Celtic toponymy, and reflections on Saxon treachery. The Englishman is graver and more pessimistic, as if contemplating the *néant* of human achievement, with the Roman and his trouble now merely 'ashes under Uricon'.

NOTES

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12. M. Gelling, *The Place-Names of Shropshire* (Nottingham, 1990) 65-6. I thank Carole Hough of Glasgow for information here.
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16. K.H. Jackson, *Language and History in Early Britain* (Edinburgh, 1953) 437.
17. (As n.7) 1632.
18. D. Morris, 'The Problems and Pleasures of Translating A.E. Housman's *A Shropshire Lad*', *HSJ* 34 (2008) 84-91.
19. Watts (as n.3) 68.
20. Pevsner (as n.10) 328.
21. C. Davies, *Welsh Literature and the Classical Tradition* (Cardiff, 1995) 94-102.
22. J. Morris-Jones (ed.), *Llythyrau Goronwy Owen* (Liverpool, 1909) 22, and see also 87-8; cf. J.H. Davies (ed.), *The Letters of Goronwy Owen* (Cardiff, 1924).
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28. G. Webster, *The Baths at Wroxeter Roman City* (London, 1965) 6.

29. S.F. Frere, *Britannia* (London, 1967) 84, 91, 93.
30. M.G. Jarrett, 'Setting the Scene' in P.A. Clayton (ed.), *A Companion to Roman Britain* (Oxford, 1980) 9-35.
31. P. Salway, *Roman Britain* (Oxford, 1981) 95, 135.
32. S. Ireland, *Roman Britain: A Sourcebook* (London, 1996²) 52, 74, 256.
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34. Watts (as n.3) 642.
35. A. Breeze, 'Ashes Under Ureicon', *HSJ* 36 (2005) 37-40.
36. P. Sims-Williams, *Ancient Celtic Place-Names in Europe and Asia Minor* (Oxford, 2006) 124.
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An Apocryphal Tale about A.E. Housman

By

P. G. Naiditch

The tale seems first to appear in Solomon Katz's 'Even Classicists are Odd', *Classical Journal* 43.8, May 1948, p.478: 'It was perhaps to his Misses Brown, Jones, and Robinson that Housman is said to have remarked, 'There is in Africa a tribe which suffers from so grave a shortage of women that even the young ladies of University College would have no difficulty finding husbands there.' When the young ladies rose in wrath to leave the classroom, Housman wagged an admonitory finger, and said, 'Ladies, ladies, there is really no reason for haste; the next boat for Africa does not leave until Sunday.' The story, *se non è vero, è ben trovato*.'

(The reference to 'Misses Brown, Jones, and Robinson' is not properly historical; it comes from R.W. Chambers, 'A London Memoir' in *Alfred Edward Housman: Recollections*, K.E. Symons ed., New York 1937, p.53, where it subserved a similar purpose: to suggest Housman's female students at University College, London. Katz himself cites the names Brown et al. from Chambers's *Man's Unconquerable Mind*, London 1939, p.368.)

The basic elements of the story appear elsewhere: Douglas Ubelaker & Henry Scammell, *Bones: a Forensic Detective's Casebook*, New York: Edward Burlingame Books, 1992, p.17: 'In one famous story making the rounds at the time, the professor was approached before class by a Radcliffe student warning him that the women in his newly integrated anthropology seminar were going to rise up in a body and walk out the next time he exceeded propriety in his often graphic anatomical descriptions. [Earnest Albert] Hooton [1887-1954] listened politely, thanked the emissary, and proceeded to deliver the most conservative, cautious, circumspect lecture of his career – on a tribe of aborigines on a South Pacific island so remote that it was connected to the rest of the world only by a mail boat that stopped twice a year. Five minutes before the bell, almost as an afterthought, Hooton cited a remarkable effect of their isolation on the evolution of the male members, as it were, of this island culture: like Darwin's finches, this race of men had developed a spectacular adaptation, distinguished by – well – by the world's largest sex organs. Almost apologetically, the professor held up his hands to illustrate, and the distance between his opposing palms was truly awesome. As promised, the women in the class arose as one and headed angrily for the exit. 'Please, ladies, please,' Hooton called after them. 'I can appreciate

your enthusiasm, but this haste is unnecessary; the next mail boat doesn't leave until August.'

In answer to my query, Mr Stephen O. Saxe kindly wrote: 'A close parallel to that anecdote was current at Harvard in the 1950s, about Clyde Kluckhohn, the anthropologist. The young ladies were Radcliffe students. And the remarks were a bit more physical.' (e-mail EXLIBRIS-L 7 Nov., 2010). Kluckhorn was born in 1905 and died in 1960.

In a collection of anti-feminist jests I note: 'A professor told dirty jokes in class and the women wanted to protest it. So they decided that in the next time that the professor will start with these kind of jokes they all will leave the class as a protest.

Somehow the professor heard about the plan.

In the next lecture, in the beginning of the lecture he said: "In Sweden a prostitute makes \$2000 per night."

All the women stood up and started to leave the class. So he shouted after them: "Where are you going? The plane to Sweden doesn't take off until the day after tomorrow.'" (<http://standyourground.com/forums/index.php/topic=18549.0> [20 March, 2011]).

Probably, other examples of this legend can be found.

‘The Welsh Marches’ (ASL XVIII): A Note

by

Geoffrey Plowden

Lines 15-16 of this poem

Couched upon her brother’s grave
The Saxon got me on the slave

depart from what we might expect, since the Saxon is defined by his race, but his victim by her status as slave. The poem is about the conflict of two races, but on the face of it there is nothing of this, nothing indeed to show that the slave was not Saxon herself. Yet under the surface the racial sense can be found, since the Anglo-Saxon *waelh*, from which ‘Wales’ and ‘Welsh’ are derived, also had the meaning of ‘slave’, so that working back from ‘slave’, so to speak, we come to ‘Welsh’. Housman needed only to have been curious about the origin of the English terms, so different from what the Welsh call their country and themselves, to discover this.

Classical Verse Translations of the Poetry of Housman

by

David Butterfield

Despite the fact that Housman himself was not a keen practitioner of that hallmark of Victorian and Edwardian education, the translation of English poetry into Greek and Latin in classical metres,¹ his own poems have been translated frequently by later (almost entirely British) hands into the languages and metres of ancient literature. Listed below are the published translations known to me; I would be grateful to learn of any other instance, in print or manuscript,² should a reader stumble across them.³

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NOTES

1. Although Housman famously professed that a copy of *Sabrinae Corolla* (the nineteenth-century collection of Salopian translations into Latin and Greek verse) given to him as a schoolboy at Bromsgrove first seriously turned his thoughts to Classical scholarship, he neither practised the art regularly himself nor held it in particularly high esteem: see further my comments in *A.E. Housman: Classical Scholar* (London, 2009) at pp.129-30. His opinion on the quality of the translations of his poetry into Classical verse would be interesting, if potentially withering, to hear.
2. There is no doubt that the very great majority of translations were produced in manuscript as exercises at school or university or for private leisure; an extreme case is that of Anthony Chenevix-Trench, who is known to have translated poems from *ASL* into Latin verse for comfort when working on the Burmese Death Railway during WWII.
3. A good start was made in collecting translations by the encyclopaedic G.B.A. Fletcher in Appendix VIII to G. Richards, *Housman 1897-1936* (London, 1941) 450-1. I am grateful to Hubert Picarda and Neil Hopkinson for providing me with a number of further references.
4. No translation of Housman's poetry seems to appear in the 'keys' to manuals of Latin and Greek verse composition, the majority of which were published before *A Shropshire Lad*. In W.J. Helmsley's and J. Aston's *Latin Elegiac Verse-Writing Modelled upon Ovid* (Glasgow, 1911) the first two stanzas of *ASL* XX ('Oh far enough are sky and plain') are printed "by permission" at pp.139-40 for translation into Latin elegiacs but no key of this work was produced.

Bromsgrove School Housman Verse Prize 2011

Thirteen

by

Alistair Aktas

I am the twisted, burning
Ass who carries books to
Class and comes back
Drained and Pained in
Lethargy.

And the endless line of fat,
Virile babies spouting
Loathsome, hollow hatred.
And I am the dead, dumb
Effigy.

Do you love me? Teacher,
Wincing behind syllabus
And ageing textbook written
With warbling pen in some strange, dead
Language.

But now I see all,
Like the colours in a
Stained glass window.
Awful, shrieking foetus
God.

In chapel, in prayer,
There is some ode,
Some dirge to kill
That inescapable fatigue and
Fervour.

Two years, two years,
To shape the heart agape
With mournful gait;
And deflating
Hate.

For of the world, you see,
There is a hopeful facture,
To remould, reshape
That head of yours that blooms in red
Plush.

You are an infant,
And you are the insatiable
God that yearns, and hates
And supplicates, to be
Free.

The Housman Verse Prize is one of the most prestigious competitions at Bromsgrove School, with the winner receiving their award and the acclaim of the school on Commemoration Day each year. Established in memory of the Bromsgrovian poet and classicist A.E. Housman, the competition is open to any member of the Senior School pupil body, and usually results in a range of thought-provoking verse from all year groups. This year's entry was especially well-contested as the winning entry will be placed, along with a variety of objects significant to young Bromsgrovians of 2011, in a time capsule buried somewhere in the foundations of the new boarding developments on the south campus, there to remain until it is brought to the surface once more, perhaps by the future builders of Bromsgrove.

The Menu for a Dinner of the Family

Hosted by Housman in 1929¹

Meursault
Goutte d'Or 1918

Huîtres de Whitstable

Oloroso
Steinberg Cabinet

Croûte au Pot Parisienne

Auslese 1921

Filets de Sole Walewska

Pommery 1921

Côtelettes de Mouton à la Nelson
Pommes de terre Noisette
Haricots verts au beurre

Romanée Conti, 1921

Bécasses rôties sur Canapé
Salade Flamande
Rocher de Glace Mocha
Petits Fours Secs
Moëlle au Madère

Cockburn 1878
Latour 1920

Fruits

Cognac Courvoisier 1869

Café

NOTE

1. This menu is reproduced from S.C. Roberts, *The Family: The History of A Dining Club* (pr. pr., Cambridge, 1963) 22-3. Housman joined the Family in May 1919 and dined with them regularly until his last appearance on 24 April 1936. His cellar was left to the society. Incidentally, Roberts notes (p.23) that it was recorded that at a meeting of the Family at Magdalene Lodge on 25 October 1929 'Professor Housman smoked a cigarette'. Roberts writes, '[n]o explanation is given of this unusual event, but it is believed that it was in response to a challenge.' The editor thanks Alan Bell for kindly bringing the existence of this material to his attention.

BOOK REVIEW

Marcus Manilius: *Astronomicon* (5 vols): edited by A.E. Housman: Grant Richards, 1903-1930 (Cambridge University Press reprint, 2011); lxxv+103 (vol. 1), xxxi+123 (vol. 2), xxviii+72 (vol. 3), xvii+130 (vol. 4), xlvi+199 (vol. 5). £65.00. ISBN: 978-1-108-157346 (paperback).

When A.E. Housman came in 1930 to pen the Introduction to the fifth volume of his (now) famous edition and commentary on Manilius, the 1st century AD hexameter poet of astronomy-cum-(especially)astrology, he wrote “only the first (volume) is yet sold out, and that took 23 years; and the reason why it took no longer is that it found purchasers among the unlearned, who had heard that it contained a scurrilous preface and hoped to extract from it a low enjoyment.” That preface is indeed justifiably well known, as is that to the fifth volume, but given that only 400 copies of each volume were printed (all at Housman’s expense), the work has become both scarce and expensive. This reasonably priced paperback reprint of the original edition is therefore more than welcome.

Housman’s interest in astronomy was of long standing, but that was only part of what turned his attention to someone whom he describes, more or less seriously, as a “tedious poet”: and true it is that really poetical passages, though not lacking, are few and far between. Far more important was the fact that the poet’s previous editors had included two great classical scholars, Joseph Justus Scaliger and Richard Bentley, who had made immense advances in improving the text; yet it was still far from perfect, and Housman was consumed (the word is no exaggeration) by his determination to show himself worthy to follow in their footsteps. This was to be his monument, and in due course another great scholar, Wilamowitz, came to acknowledge Housman’s pre-eminent position as a Latinist. Housman’s edition was preceded by the words *recensuit et enarrauit* (i.e. thoroughly examined and expounded) rather than the more usual *edidit* (i.e. edited), and this is precisely what Housman did. A reviewer would have to be superhuman to refrain from exemplifying Housman’s gifts as an emendator of a corrupt text: so consider Book 1, lines 422-3, where the manuscript acknowledged as the best gives the nonsensical: *tum di quoque magnos / quaesiuere deos; esurcione Iuppiter ipse*. (‘then the gods also sought for gods; [nonsense] Jupiter himself’). Another manuscript gave *dubitauit Iuppiter ipse*, which indeed made (uninspired) sense – ‘Jupiter himself was in doubt’ –, and so Housman initially printed it. But later came inspiration, and Housman, with solid palaeographical backing, corrected *esurcione*, the *vox nihili*, to *eguit loue Iuppiter ipse* (‘Jupiter himself stood in need of Jupiter!’) – as certain a correction as has ever been

made. Again, at 5.663, where we read that tunny fish are caught *macularum nomine* ('by that which we call meshes'), a distinctly curious phrase, Housman with equal brilliance surmised *macularum nemine* ('by a network of meshes', from the rare word *nemen*): yet he did not allow it into the text, or even the *apparatus criticus* of the *editio minor* (1932).

Here, a word of warning. The format of the *Manilius* has caused eyebrows to be raised, because, although the Introductions are in English, the commentaries are in Latin – stylish Latin, to be sure, and both pithy and pointed, but easy familiarity with the language is advisable. The style and, to some extent, the matter of the Introductions are reminiscent of H.A.J. Munro's Introduction to his distinguished edition of Lucretius, and indeed Munro was one of the few British scholars whom Housman admired; but Munro's commentary, like his Introduction, was in English. Housman's policy here remains unexplained, and perhaps it hardly matters – though it does give the reader plenty of opportunity to enjoy Housman's Latin: *qui ridere uolet, legat Fayum eiusue uerba mutuatum Wageningenum* ('If you want a laugh, read Fayus, or van Wageningen, who took over Fayus's note *verbatim*').

In the Introductions Housman deals with the manuscripts and, above all, the history of earlier editions, and their editors, often with highly opprobrious comments ("Elias Stoeber, whose reprint of Bentley's text... saw the light in 1767 at Strasburg, a city still famous for its geese"). It was regrettably the case that the violence of his language against other scholars, perhaps allied to his all-too-evident belief in his own superiority, and over-vigorously announced devotion to the truth, hampered the recognition of his qualities; and recent trends in classical scholarship have diverged sharply from Housman's approach to and style of editing (he never founded a "school").

Textual emendation is a demanding discipline, to which far fewer are suited than think they are: but whereas Housman's edition admits 220 emendations by Scaliger, and 238 by Bentley, these numbers on any reckoning (more than one has been made) are comfortably exceeded by Housman's own contributions – and he was working, remember, *after* those two great scholars (and others less gifted) had done their best; for *anchinoia* (sagacity, shrewdness) and *eustochia* (sureness of judgment) Housman has few equals. Recent dispassionate and detailed appraisals by scholars such as C.O. Brink (in *English Classical Scholarship: Historical Reflections on Bentley, Porson and Housman*, 1986, repr. 2010), G.P. Goold (in *A.E. Housman: A Reassessment*, 2000), and E. Courtney (in *A.E. Housman: Classical Scholar*, 2009) have done nothing to alter the perception that Housman's *Manilius* is one of the greatest works of English

classical scholarship – and it is often, perhaps *too* often highly enjoyable to read, especially for those who read Latin easily. ‘Literary criticism’ the reader will *not* find, except, of course, insofar as taste and sensitivity to an author’s language are essential factors in discerning what that author wrote and what he meant to convey.

The five volumes reproduce the texts of the original: thus, at the end of Volume 1, Housman’s conjectures on books II and III and IV are published unchanged (which may imply that, as A.S.F. Gow asserted, Housman had originally not intended to continue the work beyond the first book). Cambridge University Press has provided suitable astrological illustrations on the covers, which, although paperback, promise to offer a sturdy longevity.

Colin Leach

Biographies

Dr Andrew Breeze, FSA, FRHistS, was born in 1954 and has taught at the University of Navarre since 1987. Married with six children, he is the author of the controversial study *Medieval Welsh Literature* (Dublin, 1997), and co-author with Professor Richard Coates of *Celtic Voices, English Places* (Stamford, 2000). He has also published over three hundred research papers, mainly on English and Celtic philology.

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David Butterfield is a Fellow of Queens' College, Cambridge, where he directs studies in Classics. His academic researches primarily focus upon Latin poetry, textual criticism and the history of Classical scholarship. He was the co-editor with Robert Shorrock of the *Penguin Latin Dictionary* (London, 2007) and with Christopher Stray of *A.E. Housman: Classical Scholar* (London, 2009), and is currently working on the new Oxford Classical Text of Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*. He is also the editor of the *Housman Society Journal*.

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Lucy Cuthbertson is the Head of Drama at Corelli College (formerly Kidbrooke School) and an AST for Greenwich LEA. Over the past decade she has directed numerous critically acclaimed productions including *Hamlet* (SSF) and been asked to perform at the Duke of York's, West End; *Just* by Ali Smith, part of NT Connections, asked to perform in the Oliver Theatre; *Hotel World*, adapted from Ali Smith's Booker shortlisted novel (Greenwich Theatre and Edinburgh) winner Fringe Report award for Best Play 2008 and *Romeo and Juliet*. She is also co-director and educational advisor to Splendid Theatre productions.

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John France became interested in classical music after performing as a 'pirate' in a Grammar School production of *The Pirates of Penzance* in 1971. After hearing Down Ampney at church he discovered the world of Ralph Vaughan Williams

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Gaston Hall was born in Jackson, Mississippi, in 1931 and there attended Poindexter School, Enochs Junior High (except eighth grade in Asheville, NC), Central High and Millsaps College (B.A., 1952, honorary D.H.L., 2009), receiving further education as a Fulbright Scholar at the Universities of Paris and Toulouse and as a Rhodes Scholar at St John’s College, Oxford University (B.A. in Modern Languages, 1955, M.A., 1959). In 1955 he married Gillian Lund, who had completed a degree in English at Oxford; both continued their studies in the Graduate School of Yale University, where he was one of the first Lewis-Farmington Trust Fellows (Ph.D., 1959). He has just translated Heine’s poetry for the Society’s Housman and Housman book.

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George Haynes wrote his M.Phil thesis on Housman’s topography, characters and pastoralism under the supervision of Archie Burnett and John Bayley. In 2007 he returned to academic study at New College, Oxford, where he wrote a thesis on the early poetry of Thom Gunn. He taught English for many years and is a former Head of English at Seaford. Simultaneously he dealt in antiquarian books. He is now retired and lives in Gloucester.

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Ruth Padel has published seven poetry collections, most recently *Darwin - A Life in Poems*, and several books about reading poetry. She began as a classical scholar at Oxford, writing a PhD under E.R. Dodds. Her classics books include two on Greek tragedy and *I'm A Man: Sex, Gods and Rock 'n' Roll*, on Greek mythology and rock music. Her non-fiction includes *Tigers in Red Weather*. She is Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature and Zoological Society of London, a former Chair of the Poetry Society and Resident Poet at the Environment Institute University College, London. www.ruthpadel.com.

Geoffrey Plowden was born in 1929 of an Anglo-Indian family, with Shropshire Lad country roots. He was at school in England and Canada and read Greats at Balliol from 1947-51. He was a War Office Russian interpreter in 1953 and a civil servant in the Admiralty and elsewhere from 1953 to 1989. He published *Pope on Classic Ground* (Athens, Ohio, 1983), a study of previously unnoticed sources of the poet and of meanings revealed by his allusions to them.

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The Housman Society and Journal

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The Housman Society was founded in 1973, its main purpose being to bring together all those interested in the lives and works of the Housman family and to generate interest in literature and poetry. The subscription year starts on 1st May and the current annual subscriptions are:

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THE JOURNAL

The Journal, which is published annually and sent free to members, exists for the publication of critical researches related to the poetry, prose and classical scholarship of A.E. Housman and the works of other members of his family, and for the review of books concerned with the same. It also exists for the publication of documentary evidence relating to the family.

The 2012 Journal will be published in late November of that year. Articles intended for publication, or books for review, should be sent to **David Butterfield, Queens' College, Cambridge, CB3 9ET**. If possible please send as an attachment to an e-mail, preferably in Microsoft Word, or as a file on a CD-Rom. E-mail: <djb89@cam.ac.uk> Proof copies will be sent by PDF.

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Otherwise payment is possible by £ sterling drafts or money orders, but as exchange costs levied on other currencies are high, £6.00 should be added to all prices quoted before calculating the non-£ sterling equivalent.

NOTES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

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Articles submitted to the journal are preferred in digital form (ideally in Microsoft Word format and double-spaced throughout) and should be sent either as an attachment to the editor's email address or as a file on a CD-Rom to the editor's postal address. If submission is only possible in hard copy, articles must be typed, double-spaced and paginated. Italic, which should be employed for titles of books and articles, and for quotations and words in languages other than English, is indicated in typescript by underlining. Quotations from other languages, from whatever source, should be enclosed within single inverted commas; quotations should be enclosed within double inverted commas. Greek quotations may be included in articles: if submitted digitally, contributors are asked to state the Greek font they have used; if in hard copy, Greek should be written clearly by hand.

Lines of poetry quoted within a sentence should be indicated by the siglum |: e.g. I to my perils | Of cheat and charmer | Came clad in armour | By stars benign.

Numbers of poems, where appropriate, should be in upper case Roman numerals: e.g. ASL II (not ASL ii)

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