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Rassegne

CAROLINA ROSSI

GENETICA DEL TESTO E FUNZIONE AUTORIALE IN H.W. GABLER

📖 H.W. Gabler, *Text Genetics in Literary Modernism and Other Essays*, OpenBook Publishers, 2018, pp. 402, £ 23.95, ISBN Paperback: 9781783743636

Quando si parla di *genetica testuale* ci si riferisce generalmente a un ambito di ricerca nato in Francia negli anni Settanta che introduce nello studio dei testi un'attenzione specifica alla dimensione temporale. Tuttavia, nel presentare questo volume, occorre forse riconoscere che nel corso della seconda metà del secolo scorso non furono solo i genetisti di scuola francese a studiare il lavoro dello scrittore in quanto processo creativo, tenendo conto delle fasi che ne scandiscono l'evoluzione dal concepimento dell'opera alla sua pubblicazione. A partire dagli anni Novanta, infatti, - tralasciando quella che in Italia dal 1987 con Dante Isella prende il nome di *filologia d'autore* - si intensificarono i rapporti tra gli esiti della *critique génétique* di Daniel Ferrer e gli interessi di ricerca della *Society for Textual Scholarship*, in una partecipazione di prospettive e intenti confermata dal comune riconoscimento di una testualità che, calata nelle dinamiche di trasmissione proprie della modernità, si caricava non solo di un nuovo statuto ma anche di una sostanziale *instabilità*. Questo principio di precarietà, generalmente (o quasi) riconosciuto dagli studiosi di problemi testuali attivi negli ultimi decenni del Novecento, ha indotto a guardare al testo non come al prodotto finale di specifiche dinamiche autoriali ma fondamentalmente come a un *processo* o, con le parole di Contini, un'opera *in fieri*, segnata da una serie di agenti testuali (quelli che Peter Shillingsburg definirebbe "*atti di scrittura*") attivi nel *continuum* cronologico e geografico della sua genesi, della sua trasmissione e della sua ricezione.

Hans Walter Gabler, autore di questa raccolta di saggi edita nel 2018 per OpenBook Publishers, da filologo e critico avveduto rileva, a partire dal confronto costante con i testi, la fondamentale partecipazione

della *critique génétique* alla definizione di una teoria di *editing* che riconsideri alcuni dei principi posti alla base della tradizionale prassi ecdottica, superando così anche molte posizioni di colleghi anglo-americani. L'aspetto qualificante di questa pubblicazione risiede proprio nel fatto che l'autore privilegia, nella sua analisi, gli aspetti relativi alla composizione e alla trasmissione materiale dell'opera in una prospettiva metodologica e applicativa che non si esaurisce mai nel puro nozionismo. Con una competenza acquisita in oltre cinquant'anni di carriera accademica e di lavoro filologico attorno ad alcune delle opere più significative della tradizione anglosassone (tra le quali occorre ricordare la sua edizione critica e sinottica del 1984 dell'*Ulysses* di James Joyce), Gabler conferma con questa raccolta i risultati raggiunti negli ultimi vent'anni dagli studi sui testi e sulla loro tradizione.

Dall'esame particolareggiato dei diversi casi di studio affrontati, *Text Genetics in Literary Critics and Other Essays* – che seleziona sedici articoli pubblicati da Gabler tra il 2004 e il 2018 – si prefigge di esplorare, attraverso la critica genetica e testuale, le possibilità delle teorie di *editing* applicate a diversi contesti e autori: dalla musica di Bach alla poesia di Milton, fino a grandi nomi del *Literary Modernism* quali Woolf e Joyce, passando per Shakespeare, la natura performativa e collaborativa del testo teatrale, la storia culturale e il design delle edizioni. L'efficacia del volume è resa evidente dalla sua stessa impostazione: nonostante la sua composizione variegata, i casi di studio più monografici (dedicati a un autore o a un testo specifico) interagiscono agilmente con le argomentazioni di taglio più teorico dedicate allo *Scholarly Editing* e alla rappresentazione elettronica dei testi, così da facilitare una lettura ragionata e selettiva che non imponga per questo una dispersione dei contenuti.

I primi quattro capitoli sono dedicati, in particolare, a James Joyce, del quale Gabler è il più noto e recente – oltre che ampiamente discusso all'interno della comunità scientifica – editore. La riflessione si concentra sul binomio tra esperienza personale dell'autore e scrittura e prende le mosse dalla storia compositiva del testo per aprirsi a una serie di osservazioni di natura teorica sulle nozioni di testo, memoria e esperienza e sull'elaborazione dell'elemento autobiografico in una forma testuale. I capitoli successivi presentano un approccio più aderente alla critica testuale e spaziano dalla definizione del *Genetic Criticism* all'indagine delle potenzialità dell'edizione digitale, fino alla riflessione sulla dimensione visuale dell'edizione e sulle responsabilità dell'editore. Questi capitoli – a nostro avviso, i più significativi dell'intera raccolta – considerano le conseguenze della mutata percezione del testo nella sua forma

digitale alla luce dei concetti di errore e variante, che si delineano attraverso la lettura di Gabler come elementi vitali, indicativi della pluralità delle interazioni del testo con altri due fondamentali agenti alla base della sua riflessione: l'autore e il documento.

In questo senso, l'edizione critica non si declina semplicemente come una neutra e rassicurante restituzione del testo, quanto piuttosto come un vero strumento critico, un sistema che esprime discorsivamente lo stato fluido del testo con il quale il lettore è libero di misurarsi direttamente. Questo «explorative reading» (p. 119), che attraversa le testimonianze materiali della storia evolutiva dell'opera, trova la propria più coerente realizzazione nell'edizione digitale: non a caso, nell'ambito delle *Digital Humanities*, la rappresentazione elettronica di un testo tende comunemente a trascurare le dinamiche di produzione per concentrarsi – in linea con la riflessione di Gabler – sullo stato materiale del *documento* alla base della trasmissione del testo e sulla sua configurazione. Questa prospettiva “document-centered” aspira a rendere visivamente, nell'edizione digitale, quelle diverse fasce di apparato che, soprattutto per quanto riguarda le tradizioni più complesse, le edizioni cartacee faticano a integrare. Troppo spesso, del resto, l'apparato – ovvero la restituzione al lettore degli errori, delle varianti, ma anche delle postille d'autore e del commento critico – è visto come un rassicurante elemento accessorio dell'edizione, quando invece ne rappresenta una componente assolutamente vitale. La stessa edizione critica diviene allora, nella riflessione di Gabler, un meccanismo produttivo e dialogico, vero e proprio strumento per organizzare la conoscenza: una conoscenza mai compilativa ma diacronica, dinamica e trasversale, che superi definitivamente la tradizionale gerarchia dei saperi sulla quale si basa la dicotomia tra *scholarship* e *criticism*.

Nella seconda parte del volume, Gabler torna a riflettere sulla storia compositiva di un altro grande romanzo del modernismo – *To the Lighthouse* di Virginia Woolf – che, insieme agli studi su Joyce, giustifica il titolo della raccolta. Gli ultimi capitoli, infine, si declinano in una prospettiva interdisciplinare che coniuga allo studio numerologico della musica di Bach, il design e lo studio visuale di un'edizione, fino a una serie di ricognizioni generali sulla storia del canone letterario nella nostra tradizione culturale. Senza dubbio, *Text Genetics in Literary Modernism and Other Essays* testimonia il proficuo dialogo tra il suo autore e le questioni più recenti avanzate dalla comunità scientifica nell'ambito della critica testuale, fornendo al lettore una sintesi efficace delle prospettive di applicazione dello studio genetico dei testi, senza

mai retrocedere di fronte a una prospettiva dialogica che si nutre degli apporti da parte di diverse discipline. Del resto, sfogliando questo libro appare sin da dubito chiaro l'intento, da parte dell'autore, di fondare la propria riflessione su una filologia che non si riduca alla gratuita e sterile applicazione del metodo, ma si impegni piuttosto, a partire da una serie di *cases studies*, a dimostrare – con una chiarezza espositiva mai trascurabile quando si parla di un volume dall'intento divulgativo come questo – la necessità di ridefinire, in una prospettiva diacronica e evolutiva, i principi e le motivazioni alla base degli studi testuali e dell'allestimento di un'edizione critica.

Il contributo più notevole della raccolta risiede, a nostro avviso, nel riconoscimento di una nozione di testo non come prodotto ma, appunto, come *processo*, in quanto sempre basato sulla materialità della sua trasmissione, a partire dalla definizione che ci fornisce Gabler stesso nel capitolo «Editing Text - Editing Work» (pp. 111-120), opposta a quella dell'opera (*work*) intesa come concetto stabile e immateriale. Argomentando la propria posizione a partire da una sostanziale «primacy of the document», Gabler capovolge la gerarchia tra testo e apparato, riconoscendo nell'osservazione dello stato materiale (dunque variabile e incoostante) del testimone una serie di possibilità conoscitive, interpretative e critiche. L'allestimento di un'edizione critica non consiste allora nella semplice e diretta consegna del testo al lettore, quanto piuttosto nella riflessione da parte del filologo-editore a partire dalle sue testimonianze materiali. Si tratta di introdurre, in sede di interpretazione e critica del testo, non solo il concetto di materialità ma anche il concetto di *tempo*. L'attenzione al dato documentario e alla sua stratificazione storica si concreta poi nella resa dell'apparato, che diventa per questo motivo una parte essenziale della stessa edizione, in quanto unico strumento capace di restituire al lettore lo statuto tanto problematico quanto proficuo del documento, delle sue riletture e revisioni nel corso della storia evolutiva del testo.

La prospettiva genetica adottata struttura l'analisi secondo una serie di varianti e variabili che compromettono la stabilità dei principi su cui si è fondata a lungo la critica testuale. Uno di questi principi è sicuramente rintracciabile in quella che Gabler definisce l'*author-centricity* («Beyond Author-Centricity in Scholarly Editing», pp. 169-194): il riconoscimento di una volontà autoriale assoluta e arbitraria che legittima gli esiti dell'edizione, rispetto alla quale il filologo deve stabilire un testo quanto più stabile e finito. Questa prassi ecdotica è possibile dal momento in cui si parla di una storia testuale riconducibile a momenti

precisi e storicamente determinati; tuttavia, là dove le circostanze storiche e sociali che includono il testo in un sistema culturale legato ai concetti di produzione e consumo investano questo stesso testo di intenzionalità devianti e ulteriori, l'originario impulso creativo che doveva essere l'agente legittimante della qualità dell'opera non diventa altro se non una delle molteplici forze testuali in gioco. Naturalmente questa *plurivocità* intrinseca al romanzo non nasconde un principio di instabilità che ne condiziona la struttura. Riconoscere, come fa Gabler in queste pagine, che il testo è un elemento dinamico sempre soggetto, all'interno della tradizione, a dispersione e corruzione, significa allora non solo ripensare i termini di una disciplina, ma anche riformulare i principi su cui basare un'ipotetica edizione critica.

Rifacendosi alla posizione avanzata per la prima volta da McGann nel 1983 in *Critique of Modern textual Criticism*, Gabler dichiara allora il fallimento dell'"ultima volontà dell'autore" a favore di una nuova legittimazione del punto di vista critico dell'editore, che esercita la propria responsabilità rispetto alla forma del testo da presentare ai lettori. Questa attenzione alla dimensione testuale porta alla definizione di una "funzione autoriale" (categoria che Gabler adotta dichiaratamente da Foucault) che si concreta – attraverso riletture, revisioni, varianti – nel discorso espresso dal testo e che si distingue così dalla persona biografica dell'autore. L'autorialità, dunque, in quanto parte del discorso testuale, si carica di una qualità intrinsecamente processuale, rispetto alla quale l'editore, nella sua funzione di *mediatore*, deve saper orientare il lettore. Alla base dell'argomentazione critica di Gabler troviamo quindi una riconsiderazione e un superamento della prospettiva binaria articolata sulla differenza tra testo e apparato, versione emendata e errori. Questa "terza dimensione" a cui Gabler si riferisce più volte nel corso del volume rileva nella variantistica – e quindi anche nell'"errore" – un elemento vitale della tradizione del testo, indicativo del contesto con cui l'autore e il testo stesso interagiscono: non un'alterazione della norma da individuare e correggere, ma una *innovazione* rispetto alla norma che, parafrasando Contini, è resa percepibile allo sguardo critico dell'editore proprio in virtù della sua stessa anomalia. In questo senso, le scelte dell'editore alla base dell'emendazione del testo – che devono essere criticamente motivate e chiaramente espresse nell'*Introduzione* o nella *Nota al testo* – sono fondamentali per riconoscere e rappresentare al livello dell'edizione una variabilità della tradizione che prescinde dalla volontà originaria dell'autore – la cui centralità, del resto, è spesso arbitraria – arrivando anche, in alcuni casi, a eluderla, superarla o contraddirla.

La posizione di Gabler è, come si diceva, basata sul concetto di discorsività foucaultiano, per cui alla cognizione della fragilità dell'autore rispetto al discorso non consegue necessariamente il riconoscimento di agenti e intenzionalità ulteriori. Il testo è quindi calato all'interno della propria dimensione temporale e analizzato secondo i rapporti che intrattiene con il suo supporto materiale e documentario, ma non vive – a quanto ci dice Gabler – alcuna interazione con fattori *esterni* inerenti al sistema sociale, culturale e politico. Il grande escluso in questo senso rimane, inevitabilmente, il lettore, inteso non solo come diretto destinatario dell'edizione ma anche, nella sua ricezione *effettuale*, come soggetto di una specifica consapevolezza testuale dipendente dalle circostanze contestuali. Per quanto Gabler riconosca la natura dialogica degli elementi interni all'edizione (testo, apparato, commento) – e ne auspichi anzi la corretta riproduzione attraverso una ragionata edizione digitale – non possiamo che concordare con Paul Eggert quando, sulle pagine di questa rivista (*Ecdotica*, 10, 2013), affermava che il più grande limite della riflessione di Gabler risiede nella mancata concezione di un contesto più ampio entro il quale opera – incorrendo così in corruzioni di vario genere – il testo stesso. Questa concezione di un dialogo che superi il binomio tra testo e documento e si rivolga alle realtà ulteriori che orbitano attorno al testo (*in primis* quella produttiva-editoriale e quella critico-ricettiva) coincide con l'idea di un oggetto-libro che non attraversa mai la storia in senso biunivoco, tramandando il testo dalle mani dell'autore a quelle dell'editore, ma subisce spesso ramificazioni, frammentazioni e dispersioni di varia natura.

La stratificazione di varianti, revisioni e correzioni è un carattere proprio della tradizione dei testi moderni, per i quali si assiste a un definitivo «shifting of 'authorial intention' from an absolute position to a relative position» (H.W. Gabler in *Ecdotica*, 6, 2009, p. 129). A fronte di questa relatività dei principi alla base della disciplina, Gabler reagisce al fallimento della stemmatica tradizionale e della sua fedeltà all'ideale di un testo stabile e definitivo declinando il proprio studio in una prospettiva genetica che nega la nozione culturale di un testo stabile empiricamente prodotto dalla persona dell'autore senza tuttavia negare, allo stesso tempo, l'esigenza di storicismo alla base di un'edizione, ovvero la tendenza a identificare una discendenza, una linea evolutiva. In questo senso la *Text Genetics*, che giustifica il titolo di questa raccolta, riafferma un'idea di storicismo che non sia più rivolto alla soddisfazione del concetto astratto di "autorialità", quanto piuttosto fondato sul dato reale, sulle testimonianze materiali e sulla relazione formale che si viene a

creare tra i tre soggetti, i tre «coequal partners» (p. 381), alla base del discorso di Gabler: l'autore, il testo e il documento.

La prospettiva che si delinea dalla lettura di *Text Genetics in Literary Modernism and Other Essays* è allora fermamente incentrata da una parte sul documento testuale e sulla sua trasmissione, dall'altra sull'analisi del processo della scrittura e sulla variantistica che emerge dallo studio dei manoscritti. Questo attento esame dei supporti della scrittura, del loro stato materiale e della loro storia, corrisponde a una tendenza propria della *critique génétique* che vede nello studio analitico delle bozze e delle note compositive la reale testimonianza della natura più profonda di un testo. Il riconoscimento della relazione tra la dimensione temporale e quella materiale del testo non è mai neutro: «exploring variants critically as variation therefore means engaging in archeology of meaning» (p. 278) e questa «archeologia del sapere», con le parole dello stesso Gabler, rivela spesso esplicite conseguenze a livello critico.

Rispetto all'influenza della *critique génétique* sul lavoro di Gabler, occorre sottolineare che il valore aggiunto di questa raccolta di saggi risiede proprio nella disponibilità dell'autore a far dialogare tra loro metodologie diverse per provenienza e tradizione, coniugando gli studi di un genetista come Daniel Ferrer al rigore della tradizione filologica tedesca, per la quale le scienze umane devono necessariamente fondarsi su una base scientifica, costruita a partire dalla rigorosa definizione delle categorie metodologiche e degli ambiti di applicazione degli studi sul testo. Questo approccio, lontano dall'empirismo anglo-americano (Gabler, del resto, ha insegnato per tutta la vita alla Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität di Monaco e cita spesso i lavori di studiosi tedeschi di problemi testuali come *Texte und Varianten* di Hans Zeller e Gunter Martens), si basa sul binarismo «puro» tra testo e documento, che si attesta come prospettiva fondante dell'intera raccolta. In definitiva, Gabler risponde con lucidità e competenza ai recenti interrogativi della critica testuale, attraversando una serie di temi, autori, modelli e principi ecdotici anche molto diversi tra loro e permettendo così al suo pubblico – dal critico all'editore, dal filologo all'umanista digitale, fino al più giovane e curioso lettore – di ripercorrere facilmente l'itinerario dei suoi ultimi vent'anni di studi e ricerche in questo ambito.

JEREMY LAWRENCE

REFLECTIONS ON HOUSMAN'S LIFE AND WORK

📖 Edgar Vincent, *A.E. Housman: Hero of the Hidden Life*, Woodbridge, Suffolk (UK)-Rochester (NY), The Boydell Press, 2018, pp. 496, \$ 34.95, ISBN 9781783272419

Housman was a clerk and academic who spent his entire career at a desk: first processing patent applications, then proposing conjectural emendations to the texts of classical poets. His *magnum opus* was an edition of a 4000-line Augustan didactic poem on astrology that cannot have been opened in the last century, let alone read, by anyone other than a select band of specialists. On the face of it his life was wholly uneventful; he stubbornly refused to engage in any way with society or the events of his turbulent age, only venturing out of his college rooms to deliver his *ex cathedra* lectures, dine, or indulge in country walks and an annual tour of restaurants in France.

These facts present us with an enigma, for since his death aged 77 in 1936 Housman has been the subject of more intense biographical speculation than most men of deed and action. I count (leaving aside articles, theses, editions and critical studies of his works, *The Housman Society Journal*, etc.) over twenty full-length books dedicated solely to telling his life; and more remarkable still, a fine imaginative drama, Tom Stoppard's *The Invention of Love* (1997). They make him one of the most written-about academics of all time, certainly for the general reading public the most famous textual critic. However, few of these biographical works except Naiditch (1988) and Stoppard (see Lawrance 2006) examine in any depth the nature and motives of his scholarship. They have been prompted, rather, by the fact that in 1894-1895, in Housman's mid-thirties a couple of years after securing his first academic post as Professor of Latin in University College London, and then at occasional periods in later years, he wrote the 152 poems published in *A Shropshire Lad* (1896), *Last Poems* (1922), and *More Poems* (1936), which became popular best-sellers. It is speculation about the psychological motives and inspiration of these poems, and the apparent contradiction between the fictitious nostalgic pastoral *persona* Housman assumed in them and his very different disguise as Mosaic censor of rival scholars in the philological works (three critical editions, Housman 1903-1930, 1905, 1926,

and over 170 articles and reviews comprising 1238 pages in Housman 1972), that has driven this fervent scrutiny of the abundant but notoriously evasive *disjecta membra* of letters and notebooks.

In a curt review of John Carter's model edition of the scholar-poet's *Selected Prose* (Housman 1961), Housman's colleague A.S.F. Gow – author himself of the first biographical memoir (1936) – coined the term «Housmania» for what he called the «deplorable» disregard of Housman's «express desire» in his last will and testament (which he nevertheless wished «to be made as widely known as possible») that «none of my writings which have appeared in periodical publications shall be collected and reprinted in any shape or form» (Gow 1961). It is hard to believe that anyone who knew Housman could have been unaware that he hardly ever told the truth about what he meant, particularly when prefaced with an assertion that he meant it «expressly»; yet the coinage cannot help striking us as in some degree apposite. On the surface there does seem something manic about the aspiration, over almost a century, to delve into the «hidden» recesses of Housman's profoundly conformist life.

All the same, the character of that life does raise interesting issues for historians of scholarship. The latest addition to the biographical record, Edgar Vincent's 500-page *A.E. Housman: Hero of the Hidden Life*, succeeds in reminding us of this fact, and provokes us to ponder afresh Housman's moribund command to consign to the dustbin his *opera minora* – that is, the record of his only certain polestar, his only confessed and undenied passion: what he conceived to be the proper business of the classical scholar, textual criticism. Why did he end by wanting – or saying that he wanted – this work, of which he often expressed himself belligerently proud, to be left to rot?

We might suppose that, unconsciously, Housman was being evasive or insincere; and Vincent's book, with its endless notation of his pathological obsession with misprints and typographical minutiae in the publication of his works, further invites us to guess that some narcissistic contortion of his cultivated arrogance played a part: he did not trust anyone else to see his chiselled jewels through the press. But the story of his life points to more suggestive possibilities. The American critic Edmund Wilson wrote shortly after Housman's death:

The elegist of *A Shropshire Lad* deliberately and grimly chose Manilius when his real interest was in Propertius. There is an element of perversity, of self-mortification [...] poisoned in revenge by the instincts which it seems to be attempting

to destroy, so that it radiates more hatred for his opponents than love for the great literature of antiquity. (Wilson 1936, p. 91 / Ricks 1968, p. 19)

S.J. Heyworth (2009) questions this «poignant strand in the Housman myth». He shows that though indeed «Propertius had been Housman's first love» as a student (Gow 1936, p. 12), it was not because he thought the *Elegiae* great poetry – some scholars, he wrote in his precocious first paper on the subject, «award the poetry of Propertius commendation which I think too high» (Housman 1888, p. 33) –, but because their text was suitably corrupt. Proposing emendations to it would dominate the first part of his career (Heyworth, p. 11): some 240 in the first paper just quoted, written while still a clerk, and over 100 pages more by 1895. Even before this, on 11 December 1885, he offered a critical text of the *Elegies* to Macmillan, stating that he had started work on it in 1879 while still a student (Burnett 2007, I, pp. 58-59; Goold 1988, p. 27). The book was instantly turned down (14 December 1885, BL Add MS 55420/1458; Naiditch 1988, 41-42). Offered to Oxford University Press and Cambridge Pitt Press, the latter with a recommendation from J.P. Postgate (Cambridge, University Library Pr.B.13.9.59; Hopkinson 2009, p. 187 n. 21), it was again rejected. This was unsurprising, for Housman was only four years out of Oxford, where he notoriously failed his final examination. In 1891 he tried again, submitting a book on *The Manuscripts of Propertius* to the Cambridge Press. This too was rejected; but with the renewed support of Postgate, who at the same time was ensuring Housman's appointment to the Chair at London and preparing a Propertius edition of his own on which he consulted his young protégé (whom he supplied in return with readings from Napoli, Biblioteca nazionale ms. IV.F.20: Housman 1893-1894, [III], p. 124 n. 1), the study appeared in three parts in the *Journal of Philology*.¹ However, between sending

¹ Housman 1893-1894 (= 1892-1893); see Goold, p. 28; Naiditch 1988, pp. 74-91, at pp. 79-83; Hopkinson 2009. Between the appearance of the last of these three articles and mid-1894, Postgate sent him a proof of his own edition (1894a, 39 pp.; Housman's copy, inscribed by Postgate and with his own handwritten comments, Oxford, St John's College CLA / 660 / PRO). Housman's suggestions were incorporated in the published version, dated «Id. Sept. MDCCCXCIV» with a preface expressing thanks (Postgate 1894c, 45 pp.; p. vii «uiris doctis Arturo Palmer et Alberto E. Housman restat ut gratias debitas agamus qui, cum incohatas has curas inspiciendas eis misissemus, complura de emendandis iis monuerint et amice et utiliter»). Finally the text, with further acknowledgement to S.G. Owen, was sent to press on 28 October for publication alongside Housman's edition of Ovid's *Ibis* in the second fascicule of Postgate's *Corpus poetarum Latinorum* (Postgate 1894d, p. xv «complura de curis his emendendis monuerunt

Housman proofs of his edition and publishing it, Postgate issued *On Certain Manuscripts of Propertius* (1894b, described as «excussam» and «publici iuris» in September's 1894c, p. [iii]) announcing the discovery of new witness *L* (Oxford, Bodleian Library MS. Holkham misc. 36) and dissenting – quite rightly – from Housman's stemma. This prompted, a month or two later, a mystifyingly offensive retort from Housman (1895a), followed by an outraged reply from Postgate (1895a-b).

Housman's review of Postgate's edition appeared six months afterwards (1895b); it was measured, appreciative, and had almost certainly been written the year before.² He had asserted in the last of his four essays, the attack on Postgate, that, having «with some thought and pains [...] got this rather uninteresting garden of the Muses into decent order», he had hoped to have done with the matter «for a long time to come; for after all, Propertius' MSS are not the only things in the world» (1895a, p. 22). He only returned to the field one last time, he claimed, because

here is Dr Postgate hacking at the fence for no discoverable reason unless it is the hope of boasting “liquidis immisi fontibus apros” [Virg. *Ecl.* 2.59, listed as proverbial by Erasmus, *Adagia* III.vi.72 (2572)]. I feel it a hardship, but I suppose it is a duty, to withstand this inroad [...] to satisfy students not possessing my weary familiarity with the subject.

Whatever we may make of this claim to be bored of the topic, Housman then dropped Propertius, apart from a 4-page reproof – in part justified – of the «conservatism» of Butler's edition in 1905, and a neat but strained conjecture in 1914 on what Goold (1988, p. 29) thought an «intriguing crux» at III.9.33-34, where the only scholar subjected to a whiff of Housman's ponderous irony was the deceased Johannes Vahlen.³ Striking in both pieces is the absence of any mention of Post-

A. Palmer, A.E. Housman, S.G. Owen [...]. *Properti textus solidis typis excudendus typothetis redditus est a.d. V Kal. Nou. 1894*»).

² Housman's review was of his copy of Postgate 1894c (see n. 1, above; Heyworth, p. 15 §5b). It states that Postgate 1894d was the same book issued «simultaneously in a separate form» (though its preface varies and is shorter), so it must have been completed after the start of November; but by the time it eventually appeared eleven months later, the latter had already been reviewed in July's *Classical Review* (Jackson 1895).

³ On Butler, his successor at University College London and an Oxford man, Housman spoke of the «mixture of mirth and horror with which such notes [...] are likely to be read» (1905, p. 318), and ended by granting that it was «hardly what would be called a favourable review; [...] But after all, [...] he must long ere this have received the punctual praises of the *Scotsman*» (p. 320). On Vahlen (d. 1911) he was milder, saying only

gate; Housman studiously abstained from responding to the latter's follow-up to the dispute of 1895, with its mocking citations of *A Shropshire Lad* (Postgate 1901-1902, at (ii), p. 407; Hopkinson, p. 179), or any of the numerous contributions by others, such as M.R. James's demonstration (1903) of the twelfth-century date of the «Neapolitanus» MS N (Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek Cod. Guelf. 224), hence proving the invalidity of Housman's stemma (1893-1894, [I], pp. 102-103). However, Gow states that when enjoined in 1932 or 1933 after finishing Manilius to go back to «the projected commentary», «he replied that he was in fact thinking of putting together some annotations» (1936, 12-13). Vestiges of the old flame shot forth in a slashing review of Butler and Barber's edition (Housman 1934), so he may have been working on Propertius at the end.⁴ Yet – I come back to the starting point of these anecdotes – in obedience to his instructions Gow burned the fair copy of Housman's edition after his death in 1936.⁵

that he «undertakes its [II.1.37-8] defence without understanding what it is that he has to defend [...]»; and having established this point at unnecessary length (though length, to be sure, is always necessary when Vahlen is the writer) he plumes himself» (1914, p. 153). Goold 1990, p. 104 adopts Housman's implausible transposition of III. 9. 33-34 to II. 1. 38, as Richardson had done in 1977, but I find no other editor persuaded; most rest content with Volpi's theory of a lacuna – noted by Housman (p. 154) and the origin of his conjecture – : «v. 37. Videntur hæc hiulca esse atque ἀνακόλουθα [...]. Vide, lector, &, si vacat, considera. Fortasse post hoc distichon aliqua desiderantur» (Vulpius 1755, I, pp. 203-204).

⁴ One scrap of evidence is a handwritten marginal note opposite the words «common exemplar of AF» on p. 11 of his copy of Richmond's edition of 1928 (Oxford, St John's College CLA / 660 / PRO): «? see Ullman». This refers to Ullman 1911, where the historian of humanism showed that *A* was made for Richard de Fournival ca. 1250, and *F* Coluccio Salutati's copy c. 1390 of Petrarch's copy of (he thought) *A*, with marginal corrections by himself and Petrarch's executor Lombardo a Serico, thereby putting a last nail in the coffin of Housman's stemma – though the American scholar did not deign to mention him, and Postgate only twice in passing as the discoverer of *L* (on p. 284 n. 3 appearing to attribute Postgate 1895b to the paleographer E. Maunde Thompson), stating that Baehrens' edition of 1880 had «not yet found a successor» (pp. 282-283). Heyworth suggests Housman's note «reveals he did revise his views in the light of later research» (p. 17); it seems doubtful.

⁵ Gow 1936, pp. 12-13 «at his death there was found among his papers a complete transcript of the text, with apparatus, written in the exquisitely lucid script which he employed where special accuracy was required of printers», though «no traces of a commentary». In his will of 17 November 1832 Housman bequeathed all his books and manuscripts to his brother Laurence with instructions «to destroy all my prose manuscript writing in whatever language» (Naiditch 2010, p. 61). Gow does not say he burned this MS, but F.H. Sandbach saw him «stoking the fire» (Heyworth, p. 11; Hopkinson, p. 188). In Gow's defence (cf. Goold 1967, p. 69 «Pavlovian dog»; Naiditch 1988, p. 41), he

Evidently there is nothing in this story that smacks of «self-mortification» in the poetic sense that Wilson intended. Nonetheless it provides matter for thought in regard to the character of Housman's scholarship. Why did he cease work on Propertius? James Butrica (1984, p. 8) speculates that «perhaps» Postgate succeeded in shaming Housman, as he hoped he might⁶. In contrast, G.P. Goold (1988, pp. 29-30) questions whether Housman «ever fully realized» his thesis «lay shattered», adducing the fact that as late as 1920 in a note to his Manilius, *Astronomica* IV.722 (Housman 1903-1930, IV, p. 94), he still cited his articles on Propertian manuscripts «without a hint that his evaluation of them had been discredited»; and so suggests «he was visited by a growing awareness that further progress with this difficult author would compel him to admit uncertainty», whereas with Manilius «he could gain secure triumphs». But earlier, D.R. Shackleton Bailey suggested that after the «juvenilia» on Propertius Housman «lost confidence» in the old slash-and-burn style of emendation involving such tactics as wholesale transposition, which

tended to deal with the vulgate as Omar would have dealt with the universe – first shattering to bits and then remoulding nearer each to his own heart's desire; a practice inaugurated by Scaliger during the six or seven weeks of convalescence which produced [...] the portentously transposed Propertius of 1577. [...] I do not know why else [Housman] should have given up his projected edition and ordered in his will the destruction of a completed text and apparatus.⁷

For the first guess there is little evidence. On one hand, Naiditch (1988, pp. 74-91) and Hopkinson (2009) show that despite the insults Postgate kept up relations with Housman, inviting him to contribute an edition of

persuaded Housman to let the 29 notebooks of classical lectures survive (Butterfield 2009a; Naiditch 2010, p. 63 n. 9).

⁶ Postgate 1895b, p. 180 n. 2 «Of the contumelious reference here [*i.e.* Housman 1895a, p. 28: «If it were not for the humour of the situation, I might well resent the tone of placid assurance in which I, who think before I write and blot before I print, am continually admonished by the author of this pamphlet»] I intend to make Mr. Housman ashamed».

⁷ Shackleton Bailey 1953, p. 10 (*cf.* FitzGerald 1872, p. 26, st. XCIX). More often cited is his 1959 talk for BBC radio, «A.E. Housman as a Classical Scholar» (*The Listener*, 61, 1959, 795-796), which watered down the idea for his lay audience, thereby rendering it inane: having been «deflected [...] in his early period», as clever critics «so often» are, by «excitement at [his] own ingenuities», Housman got back to doing what befits any scholar with a brain «capable of more delicate operations» (Shackleton Bailey 1997, pp. 317-323, at p. 321).

Juvenal to the second volume of his *Corpus poetarum Latinorum* in 1903 after publishing alongside Housman in a joint note on undergraduate E.O. Winstedt's discovery of a vital new Juvenal witness, eleventh-century Oxford Bodleian MS. Canon. Class. Lat. 41, in 1899. On the other, far from showing shame Housman chose to become ever more offensive.⁸

Goold's theory looks more persuasive; but in fact Manilius was at that time equally contentious, ever since Robinson Ellis set the ball rolling in 1890-1894 with a re-examination of MS M (Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional de España Mss/3678) which built on work in the 1880s by Loewe, Woltjer, Thomas, and Bechert, and was followed by Clark, Postgate (4), Krohn, Souter, Webb, and others in 1897-1899. Housman's first full article, very similar in form to his first on Propertius ten years earlier, appeared in 1899; there followed no less than four rival editions between 1900 and 1921 (Bechert in Postgate's *Corpus* 1900, Breiter, Garrod, Wageningen). It may have been gnawing resentment of Oxonian Ellis that steered Housman to Manilius, as it had to Propertius; more to the point, Manilius had been edited by his heroes, Scaliger and Bentley.⁹ One may add that though Housman had little interest in or understanding of literary criticism, history, or philosophy, still less of

⁸ Housman, Owen, Jackson, Postgate, & Duff 1899, commenting on Winstedt 1899; Housman returned to the topic in 1901-1903 (1972, II, pp. 489-491, 539-543, 602-610, 611-616), but began the preface to Housman 1905a, p. v: «A year ago I had no design of publishing or composing any such work as this. I knew indeed that the current texts of Juvenal [...] had suffered some hurt from the reigning fashion of the hour, the fashion of leaning on one manuscript like Hope on her anchor and trusting to heaven that no harm will come of it. [...] I ascribed it firstly to the sloth and distaste for thinking which are the common inheritance of humanity, and secondly to that habit of treading in ruts and trooping in companies which men share with sheep. [...] In October 1903, having been asked by Mr Postgate to undertake the recension [...], I began to gather from printed sources the recorded variants». In the Latin prologue to 1905b he thanked, among others, Postgate for collating tenth-century Cambridge, Trinity College MS O.4.10 for him (p. viii «aliquot lectiones beneuole enota[uit] a me rogat[us]»). The edition was complete by May (p. ix «typothetis sunt redditae a.d. VIII d. [= VII Id.] Mai. 1905»), so it took a mere year. Neither the above-mentioned articles and preface to 1905a, nor the sarcastic reply (Housman 1904) to Owen's rejoinder to a condescending review of his edition (Housman 1903b), evince the slightest sign that Housman was «ashamed» by the controversy with Postgate; rather the reverse, as we shall see.

⁹ Housman owned a copy of Ellis 1891 (Cambridge, Trinity College Adv.d.20.8) full of pencilled questions, exclamations, insults, and corrections, so he was already pursuing Manilius before the events of 1895. «The intellect of an idiot child», he tittered of Ellis in the preface to the last vol. of *Manilius* (1903-1930, V, p. xxiii), yet by his own count (p. xvii-xviii) he accepted 16 of Ellis's conjectures, more than any other editor since 1846 and exceeded only by Jacob (40), Bentley (238), Le Faye (24), Scaliger (220),

society or human nature, he had from boyhood felt a fascination for astronomy. In a letter to Robert Bridges of 25 September 1924 he said: «I adjure you not to waste your time on Manilius. He writes on astronomy and astrology without knowing either. My interest in him is purely technical» (Burnett 2007, I, p. 572; Vincent, p. 289). That is to say: the same interest as in Propertius, but with the added attraction of an opportunity not just to castigate rival scholars on what Haupt reckoned the third most corrupt text in Latin poetry (1875-1876, III, p. 43), but also to snipe at, as he put it, the «extravagantly» ignorant pseudoscience of that «liar», the «facile and frivolous» author himself (Haber 1954).

Shackleton Bailey's insight, then, that at some semi-conscious level Housman glimpsed that the days of the style of criticism at which he excelled – inspired guesswork, we may call it – were numbered, emerges as the more convincing theory. Even so, it does nothing to explain the tone of the attack on Postgate. The dispute was about Housman's placement of *N* in his stemma. Later accounts of the controversy tend to insinuate that by demoting it to the very foot of the tree he had set out to discredit this witness – the oldest and most valuable – merely to spite his hated rival, Ellis (1880); but as Goold (1967, p. 69) points out, the opposite was the case. Housman himself was constrained to spell this out in his skirmish with Owen ten years later:

When Mr Owen says I depreciated the Neapolitanus he is attempting to state the fact that I made the most elaborate defence of the Neapolitanus which is anywhere extant; when he says I appreciated four late MSS he is attempting to state the fact that I pulled down those four MSS from the elevation on which they had been placed by Baehrens. (Housman 1904, p. 228)

The nub of Housman's essay, which was to be repeated incessantly in all his later work, was an attack on what he saw as the new orthodoxy of «conservatism»: the pitiable deformation of Lachmann's method that consisted in sketching out a stemma... and then choosing and holding fast to a *codex optimus* («the reigning fashion of the hour», n. 8, above).

the fifteenth and sixteenth-century humanists (402), and of course himself (339, Courtney 2009, p. 33; 236 in Goold 1977, or 280, Shackleton Bailey 1979, pp. 160-161 and n. 4). Besides monographs such as Postgate 1897, nearly 30 papers on Manilius appeared 1895-1920 in *Classical Review* alone (5 each by Housman and Garrod, 4 each by Postgate and Ellis, etc.); people were «beginning to think of Manilius – said Garrod (1908, p. 127) – as the spoilt child of Latin Scholarship». A keyword search of JSTOR yields some 350 articles that mention the poet in that period.

In medieval studies this approach, which we call Bédierism, has its own intellectual rationale (real, not virtual texts), though to be sure it does not dislodge the arguments of textual criticism. But with ancient works, where often a millenium of silence intervenes between the author's original and our earliest reconstructible archetype, Housman knew that reconstituting that archetype can only be a first step; then conjecture must perforce enter in, even though it can never attain the status of proven certainty. Furthermore, he revealed a rare instinct – not quite knowledge, for his intellect was doggedly impervious to methodology – for the crux of Lachmann's great contribution, which few of his contemporaries grasped: namely, that text-critical science depends on detecting and tracking the transmission not of correct readings, but of errors.¹⁰ A moment's inspection shows that Housman's stemma was wilfully flawed, and that on this matter Postgate was right; but his central argument, that the variants of *NAFDV* and *fv* are all potentially relevant to reconstructing the archetype and that no «vulgate» can be based on a single one of them, was accurate and, for its time, necessary.

A further significant point is that the tone of the first three articles is balanced and serene. «His guns – observes Goold (1967, *loc. cit.*) – are trained on falsehoods, not personalities, [...] the treatise is devoid of the cruel polemic of his later work». It is here that I think Vincent's treatment of the explosion against Postgate sheds light (pp. 83-86). He starts with what should be the obvious point that it coincided exactly with that first spurt of poetic inspiration mentioned in my second paragraph: *A Shropshire Lad*, begun in late 1894, was published in February 1896. Basing his analysis on Housman's oft-repeated assertion that poetry always came to him unbidden at the prompting of some malady («a relaxed sore throat» was his usual name, but biographers have always been aware, as were several contemporaries, that this was code for a psychological turmoil, the «continuous excitement» mentioned in Housman 1922, p. 5), Vincent rehearses the standard views: anguished anxiety about his sexuality, disgust at Oscar Wilde's trial for sodomy in April 1895, horror at Section 11 of that August's Criminal Law Amendment Act criminalizing «any

¹⁰ Housman 1893-1894, [I], p. 111 «The fact is, though it looks a paradox, that [...] no number of true readings are proof positive of a genuine element in the MS [...]. But a deadly weapon would be this: [...] passages where O [subarchetype represented by AF] is corrupt and where N gives, not the true reading, but a corruption standing half way between the true reading and the corruption», followed by a list of 9 such significant common errors, and concluding irrefutably: «Here then falls to earth the system of Baehrens» (p. 113).

act of gross indecency between men», and so forth.¹¹ But he also picks up on a letter to *The Times Literary Supplement* of 10 November 1936 by Sydney Cockerell, director of Cambridge's Fitzwilliam Museum, recalling a conversation with Housman a quarter of a century earlier on 10 November 1911:

He told me [...] he wrote some of these poems in 1894, but the majority of them in the first five months of 1895 at a time of ill health, and partly perhaps as a reaction from a learned controversy in which he was then engaged.

Naiditch (1988, pp. 82-83) identified the «learned controversy» as the exchange with Postgate, but Vincent goes the needful extra mile. The «belligerent» aggression of Housman's attack (1895a) could not have sprung from anything in Postgate's pamphlet, which fulsomely praises the scholarly contribution of his «brilliant triad of articles» (1894b, p. 61; 1895b, p. 180); nor from his edition (1894c-d), which cites Housman some 160 times in the apparatus and accepts over sixty of his emendations. Even if Housman's critiques of Postgate's argument had been well-founded – but they were, in Goold's words (1988, p. 28), «fundamentally flawed, [...] almost totally wrong» – there could be no intellectual or moral reason for caricaturing his adversary's words and twisting his motives (n. 6 above). In sum, the anger was irrational and inexplicable. Vincent draws the manifest conclusion:

Housman had lost touch with reality, had forgotten that Postgate [...] had played a major part in the advancement of [his] career. [...] It was as though he had no understanding of what he said [...]. Something seems temporarily to have disturbed the balance of his mind. (p. 85)

In other words, the academic vitriol was, no less than the poetry, a *symptom* of the «relaxed sore throat» syndrome, not its cause. It was in

¹¹ Housman himself only once confessed his real diagnosis, in a handwritten dedication of *Last Poems* in 1926 to the dying Moses Jackson: «you are largely responsible for my writing poetry». But unrequited love was only a part of it. Though Vincent acknowledges the help of a friend psychiatrist in his Preface, he writes as an avowed amateur in this as in textual and literary matters (p. xx1), and ventures no analysis. Equally ignorant, I risk no guess as to whether the personality disorder was of type Cluster A (eccentric: paranoid, schizotypal), B (emotional: antisocial, narcissistic), or C (anxious: avoidant); but that it was a disorder, and seriously maladaptive, seems beyond doubt. To see that this was understood by contemporaries one need only peruse Garrod 1929, Auden (n. 16, below), etc.

that sense involuntary, an intermittent psychological rather than intellectual reaction.

The 1895 crisis marked a turning point. It seems Housman sensed thereafter, not that he had behaved badly, but that causing offence brought more notoriety and attention than critical acumen; at any rate, his subsequent work displays mounting efforts to court that attention which his subconscious craved but his personality repelled. However, the recurrent bouts of his condition (e.g. 1900-1905, 1917-1922) rendered him incapable of apprehending the boundary between needy self-promotion and what he imagined was entertaining sarcasm, which was then the expected currency of discourse in his subject.¹² Vincent returns to the question in a later chapter («XII. Last Things», at pp. 339-347), where he notes Housman's tirades concerning *other* critics' lack of control or concern for truth in his lecture «The Application of Thought to Textual Criticism»; lists insults – without highlighting the stunning lack of self-knowledge they betray – to Postgate, Wageningen, Merrill, Garrod, Ellis, and others; and observes that in the last volume of *Manilius* in 1930 he was «still playing up to his public image» with «low personal abuse» (p. 343).¹³ He deduces that «this massively egocentric parade» of invective

¹² The briefest of trawls in the literature shows that Housman, though arguably the most insensitive, was by no means the only blameworthy culprit of this infantile penchant for abuse. All studies deplore his behaviour, but they often fail to stress how conventional it then was. Hopkinson (2009, p. 190) notes, for example, the renewed hostilities with Postgate in 1919-1921 over a futile dispute on the scansion of *nihil/nil* in Ovid, an exchange of four insulting articles (see Housman 1972, III, pp. 1007-1011) of which Postgate's last rejoinder (1921) was singularly unpleasant, as bad as or worse than anything Housman wrote. The latter drafted a reply though, perhaps significantly, he did not publish it (Naiditch 1992, p. 88). Yet barely a year later he gave Postgate permission to reprint one of his war poems in an anthology, a favour he very rarely granted.

¹³ The first essay (Housman 1921) was in fact one of his more balanced works – it sprang from a course for undergraduates of 1913 (Cambridge, University Library MS Add.6874; Gow 1936, p. 42; Diggle 2007, p. 145). Though sprinkled with the usual amenities («editors find that some pretence of dealing with the subject is obligatory; and [...] apply, not thought, but words [...]»). It is only a minority of those who engage in this study who are sincerely bent upon the discovery of truth. [...] most of those who are not stupid are, consequently, rather vain», pp. 70-71; «it is easy to say, and to fancy that you think, what you really do not think, and even what, if you seriously tried to think it, you would find to be unthinkable. [...] The difference between an icicle and a red-hot poker is really much slighter than the difference between truth and falsehood [...]. It is therefore a matter of common prudence and common decency that we should [...] rigorously analyse our springs of action», p. 72; «one thing beyond all others is necessary; and that is to have [...] brains, not pudding, in your head», p. 84), the only arresting one is a lengthy passage on «a well-known scholar on a certain Latin writer»: «an ill-bred child interrupt-

was «pathological [...], evidence of a subterranean cynicism and violence in his emotional reactions», instancing (pp. 345-346) the mass of anonymous insults in his notebooks «apparently waiting a suitable victim» (as Laurence Housman deduced, adding that «he did greatly enjoy writing and saying bitter and contemptuous things»). Vincent justly concludes that the issue is not whether Housman's arrogance was «sincere» or justified by his pose as lone crusader of «truth and honesty»; for to impugn the motives of every scholar who disagreed with him «by definition could not be evidenced», and so «failed to live up to his own standards». The «unawareness and self-satisfaction» of the insults, though doubtless intensified by his «solitary and insulated» environment, seemed «to feed on its own eloquence, [...] a kind of possession», so that despite his endless jibes at others' writing without thinking («I, who think before I write and blot before I print» *versus* «the sloth and distaste for thinking which are the common inheritance of humanity», nn. 6, 8 above), the overriding impression given by Housman's work after the watershed of 1895 is of a man whose irresponsible style of debate periodically became, precisely in the sense he had in mind, both thoughtless and mindless (p. 347).¹⁴

ing the conversation of grown men» who «represented his opponents as saying the opposite of what they had said», and if they «removed a corruption by slightly altering the text, proposed to remove it by altering the text violently» (pp. 69-70) – Postgate again? As for insults, Vincent cites (pp. 341-344) Housman 1972, III, pp. 1007, 1012, 1047, 1090, but the revelatory moment comes from his last example (Housman 1903-1930, V, p. xxxv, quoted on p. 344): «To read attentively, think correctly, omit no relevant consideration, and *repress self-will*, are not ordinary accomplishments [...]. It may be asked whether I think that I myself possess this outfit [...]. I had rather be arrogant than impudent. I should not have undertaken to edit Manilius unless I had believed I was fit for the task» (my emphasis). Self-will, as we are seeing, was Housman's most besetting fault.

¹⁴ Similar is Sullivan's account (1962); rejecting the «English cult» of Housman, he argues (pp. 105-9/Ricks 1968, pp. 148-151) that the «disproportionate emotion» had nothing to do with truth, honesty being a quality «by no means obvious» in his work; it was to elevate his «tendentious [...] practice into an ideal», «rhetorical and not wholly sincere» as Housman later said of his 1892 London Inaugural (Martin 1937, p. 288) – not sincerely, of course, since in that lecture he could think up no apologia for the «minute and pedantic studies» that «afford Latin professors their only excuse for existing» except his own pleasure; a rare example of straight talking. Sullivan further opines (pp. 111-115/Ricks 1968, pp. 154-157) that Housman's «faulty» literary sensibility – distinctly of the «watery» amateur kind he affected to despise (weeping in lectures over Horace's *Diffugere nives*, etc.) – was «closely connected with the sort of poetry he wrote», of a Victorian sentimentality seemingly at odds with the age of Mallarmé and Modernism; but critics reckon that it too embeds ironies that call for deeper hermeneutic suspicion (e.g. Ricks and Zabel, in Ricks 1968, pp. 106-122 and 123-129).

A side-light on the fitful nature of the malady is cast by the striking episode (p. 339-340) of the publication in 1931 of Housman's «Praefanda» ('foul language', *lit.* 'things that require prior apology', Quintilian VIII. 3. 45), a minute exploration of obscene terms in Latin homoerotic literature. Biographers have suggested that this at last showed him opening up about his sexuality and appetite for pornography; the article is written in Latin, but under his own name (at least once he used a pseudonym, signing a Latin note as «D. Erasmus, from the Elysian Fields», Erasmus 1916; but not here). The tone, observes Jennifer Ingleheart (2018), is «playful» and «less than severely scholarly», though «bold» in its «challenge to [...] social mores». She argues that Latin had «a liberatory function for public school-educated men», noting that the «semi-private» innuendo in the article could only be «fully understood» by those in the know about homosexual practice; and speculates that this enabled Housman «to express his own radical Queer classicism». The article was accepted by the editor of *Classical Quarterly*, Reginald Hackforth. Perhaps, despite being a student of Plato, he did not belong to the group and failed to spot the innuendo; but after it was typeset the Board of Management did, and forbade him to publish it, so that Housman had to submit the piece to a German journal (Housman 1931)¹⁵. The point for our purpose is that in this late work where Housman's interest was focussed on the meaning, not the corruption, of texts, the tone is congenial. He mentions other scholars, but without abuse, scrupulously recording cases where he thought they were right and proffering no sarcasm where he thought they were wrong. Just a year after the poisoned pontifications of *Manilius* V, we find a Housman concentrated not on the imperious demands of his ego but on the matter in hand, enjoying the actual texture of ancient life and works.

The stated aim of Vincent's book is to present Housman as a hero, just like the subject of his previous biography, Lord Nelson (2003). He admits that, in the ten years it took to write, the subject gained his «sym-

¹⁵ Gow 1936, p. 76 n. 1; Jocelyn 1980, p. 44 n.2. D.S. Robertson, Housman's colleague throughout his time at Trinity College, said in his obituary of Hackforth in *The Times*, 13 May 1957 that he and Housman were friendly; certainly Housman's reply to Hackforth's informing him of the ban (12 March 1931, Burnett 2007, II, p. 239) is surprisingly peaceful. Vincent conjectures that «Praefanda» arose from certain corrections to Liddell & Scott's *Greek-English Lexicon* that Housman sent to H. Stuart Jones, who was then revising it (letter to Jones, 28 December 1930, in Burnett 2007, II, p. 228; red. from the Bodleian original, Jocelyn, p. 37). Perhaps it was the other way round; but however that may be, Jones too did not dare print the corrections in the revised *Lexicon*, even in Latin.

pathy, respect, [...] and liking» for his «unwavering resolve» to transmute «anger and frustration» into «achievement» (p. xxi). The intent is admirable, but it is hard to imagine two men less alike than Nelson and Housman; whereas Vincent's background in the Royal Navy gave him special insight into the former, his confessed lack of empathy for the subject of the latter's work makes the claim that he was an «embodiment of Man's unconquerable mind» (p. 442) hard to substantiate. By impartially allowing him «to speak for himself through his letters» (p. xxii) he reveals too much of Housman's real nature for us to accept at face value the claims that he was «generous [...] and always on the lookout for humour and fun, [...] detached and unsentimental» (p. xix); that his reckless insensitivity was «essentially part of his time-management» for focussing on scholarship (p. xxi); or that during the Great War he displayed a principled resistance to «self-promotion and self-advancement» by refusing to be involved (pp. 211-212) and callously insisting on his annual gastronomic holiday to the French riviera only a few hundred miles from the carnage where his nephew was killed in 1915, triggering a crassly pompous letter to his sister, the boy's mother, that even Vincent admits came «close to displaying a lack of awareness» (pp. 214-17). With undiminished insouciance Housman informed Maurice Pollet in 1933 that the Great War «cannot have made much change in the ~~mind-~~^{opinions} of any man of imagination» (Pollet 1937, pp. 402-4), and added:

I have never had any such thing as a “crisis of pessimism”. [...] I am not a pessimist but a peyorist [...]; and that philosophy is founded on [and that is owing to *Pollet*] my observation of the world, not on anything so trivial and irrelevant as personal ~~misfortune~~^{history} [not to personal circumstances *Pollet*] [...] my poetry, so far as I could make out, ~~had~~^{had sprang} chiefly ^{from} physical causes, such as a relaxed sore throat.¹⁶

¹⁶ Cited from the draft version with pencil corrections in Burnett 2007, III, p. 326. The final changes (deletion of «philosophy», «anything so trivial and irrelevant as», «personal misfortune → history → circumstances») are significant; they illustrate the conflict between self-absorption and what Pollet (p. 387) called Housman's «silence» («par tempérament, par principe, il s'entourait de silence, s'enfermait dans sa tour») – that is, furtive (and perhaps necessarily evasive) secrecy about himself. The revisions pinpoint both the truth and the insufficiency of F.W. Bateson's comment (1968, p. 143) on W.H. Auden's famous sonnet (1940, ll. 5-6 «Deliberately he chose the dry-as-dust, | Kept tears like dirty postcards in a drawer»): «did he perhaps have no tears to keep?». Auden was certain he did, but could not admit it to himself: the battle between conscious and unconscious was a kind of schizophrenia, «Jehovah Housman devoted himself to the emendation of texts of no aesthetic value and collected thunderbolts of poisoned invective».

Vincent's biography provides in painstaking detail (with several dozen new letters) abundant evidence such as this that must lead us to doubt parts of his portrait. More convincing seems that given by H.W. Garrod, a contemporary of much wider accomplishments than Housman and an acute critic of his work, the one who understood his character best and consequently – being also an Oxford man – a target of Housman's most resentful bile. Garrod praised his work highly, but in a later essay on his poetry he wrote:

There is an unhappiness in his scholarship, just as there is in his poetry. He edits poets in the manner of a man hating poetry. He criticizes critics with an inhumanity grounded on the fierce conviction that there is no truth in man [...], seeking from scholarship an anodyne for the wounds which poetry has wrought in him [...]. Life has done him some injury; the nature of which I am not curious to inquire. [...]

Mr. Housman hates poetry sufficiently, and he so little credits men in general with any genuine taste for the truth, that he will not be persuaded to take pains enough to deal truly with his material. [...]

But we are human creatures; and this enigmatic figure [...], lonely, irresponsible, setting us so many questions and answering none of them, crediting none of us with truth or intelligence, but allowing us to make what we can of the fire and ice [...] – it is his fault if we stare. (Garrod 1929, pp. 214-5, 220, 224)

«Ainsi que Socrate – as Pollet put it (1937, p. 389) –, il avait son démon». Vincent speculates (pp. 343-344) that Housman must have surmised that Garrod had guessed the secret of his sexuality when, a year later, he set about abusing him at length in the introduction to the last volume of *Manilius*.¹⁷ There is little evidence of any such access of self-awareness; in fact he enjoyed himself more at Wageningen's expense

tive in notebooks [...]; Satan Housman believed that the essence of poetry was lack of intellectual content» (Auden 1938); «The inner life of the neurotic is always projecting itself into external symptoms which are symbolic but decipherable confessions. The savagery of Housman's scholarly polemics, [...] his obsession with punctuation beyond the call of duty, are as revealing as if he had written pornographic verse» (Auden 1957).

¹⁷ Housman 1903-1930, V, pp. xxv-vi, e.g. «singularly cheap and shallow», «insolence [...] neither skilful nor careful», «interpretations so little pondered that he changed them in the course of his work without perceiving it», «so much error that the only readers who can use it with safety are those whose knowledge extends beyond. Mr Garrod's», «unconscious ignorance here and there exults too merrily, and it cannot be said that Mr Garrod's attainment in scholarship corresponds to his pretensions»; preceded on p. xxi n.† by «futile», «mistakes in fact and arithmetic», and only taking account of facts «when it happens to suit his purpose».

(six pages), and having commenced with serenely self-important buffoonery by remarking that the reason why his edition had sold at all was that «the unlearned [...] heard that it contained a *scurrilous* preface and hoped to extract from it a *low* enjoyment» (p. v, my emphases), he concluded the two-page outburst on Garrod with a sarcasm altogether too equivocal and revealing for his own good:

this seems to be a sort of English book which Germans admire [...]. There were no such bouquets for me; and perhaps the reader will do well to consider how far my judgment of Mr Garrod's performance may have been warped by the passion of envy.

Most likely his spite arose from Garrod's reviews (1908, 1913, 1917, 1921) of the previous four volumes of the edition, which unerringly sifted out the pretentious and bad from the useful and excellent in them.

What, then, are the lessons regarding the quality of Housman's textual criticism? We can dispose instantly of certain elements in his «cult»: for example, that he was a dedicated «apostle of truth», a notion springing, as Stephen Harrison (2010) says, from Housman's own «magisterial self-construction in print [...], honed over initial years of professional marginalisation and personal disappointment». Despite all the evidence showing that Housman's moral imprecations against the slothful dishonesty of everyone in the world except himself were a mask for tormenting self-doubt, Vincent accepts the myth, relying on the judgements of scholars who ought to know better; nevertheless, he makes a telling point when he suggests Housman was duped by «forensic» terms like «testimony», «witness», «integrity» (add the puerile Latinism «sincere» < SINCĒRU “unmixed”, of uncontaminated testimonia) into acting as if his «opponents» were felons to be tried by the specious procedures of a criminal court (p. 84). Naturally, Housman was no more – and doubtless no less – concerned with «truth» and «honesty» than any of those he insulted; simply a great deal less self-aware and more self-important.

But we can go further. Vincent's book shows – as we already knew – that though singularly wilful and headstrong, Housman was a very knowledgeable and accurate scholar; but also in certain respects a very limited and idle one. He admitted to Gow that the Oxford examiners had «no option» but to fail him at Finals (Gow 1936, p. 6); one lecturer declared that his answers were so «ludicrously bad» as to suggest «contempt» (Vincent, p. 36). It was not contempt, however, but a constitutional incapacity to engage with philosophy or history (the subjects of the second part

of the Oxford degree); and this early failure, argues John Wain, triggered a defence-mechanism of solitary, life-resisting «petrification»,

for his was not, in any broad sense, a strong mind. His stock of ideas was tiny, his human responsiveness, after early life, almost nil; his general intelligence, poor. (Wain 1957, pp. 115-116 / Ricks 1968, pp. 27-28)

Studies of the critical work confirm parts of this analysis. With the exception of his amateur interest in astronomy, Housman showed ever-increasing disdain for sustained systematic thinking on methodical subjects. Michael Reeve (2009) adduces telling evidence of the process. In his *Juvenal*, for example, Housman attempted to dress up slipshod methodology as some sort of superior intelligence and principle:

“Nothing,” I hear it asked, “about Nicaeus? Nothing about Epicarpus, nor Heiricus, nor the long-resounding name of Exuperantius?” No, nothing. The truth is [...] that I have no inkling of *Überlieferungsgeschichte*. And to the sister science of *Quellenforschung* I am equally a stranger [...]. It seems indeed as if a capacity for these two lines of fiction had been bestowed by heaven, as a sort of consolation-prize, upon those who have no capacity for anything else. (Housman 1905, p. xxviii)

The irrationality of this attitude was quietly but crushingly pointed out by W.M. Lindsay in his review (1905), and Reeve (pp. 141-142) suggests it was in response to this that Housman ratcheted up his indignant, ever more impotent declamations against Lindsay’s «new world of study» (Lindsay 1907, p. 188) and the «idle and pretentious game in which Lucan’s less serious critics find amusement, and which they call *Überlieferungsgeschichte*, because that is a longer and nobler name than “fudge”» (Housman 1926, p. xii-xviii, at xii).¹⁸ It was a pose that involved an increasingly perilous tight-rope act. In his Cambridge inaugural lecture of 1911 he attempted on one hand, with a mention of the «new fire from the altars of Lachmann», to assert that textual scholarship is «a department [...] not of literature but of science; and science ought to be scientific and ought not to be literary», since «departments of literature are also departments of lying» (1969, pp. 20, 26); but on the other, directly contradicting himself, that

¹⁸ On Housman’s battle with his exact contemporary Lindsay (1858-1937), a scholar of equal learning but broader scope and more solid method whom he came to see as a diabolic embodiment of the unwelcome future, see Butterfield 2009b. And yet, as with Postgate, Housman exchanged books and postcards with his rival (Godman 1978).

criticism and interpretation of the classical texts is not an exact science; [...] nothing is more foolish, nothing combines pedantry and thoughtlessness in a more untoward union, than solemn prating about the laws of criticism. [...] They are leading strings for infants, they are crutches for cripples and they are strait-waistcoats for maniacs. (*ibid.*, pp. 38-39)

Seven years later he was still thumping the same tub:

Professor Lindsay says [1917, p. 41] that with the help of the *thesaurus* Latin scholarship is now becoming easy, and that textual emendation will become equally easy when certain advances have been made in palaeography. No advance in paleography will ever make textual emendation easy, [...] Latin scholarship will never be made easy by any dictionary, much less by such a dictionary as this. (Housman 1918, p. 33 / 1972, III, p. 954)

The point is not whether advances in scholarship make science «easy», but whether they make it more scientific; and in fact Housman eagerly thumbed his copy of the *Thesaurus linguae Latinae* every day – one need only glance at the seven lines of references to it in the index of *Manilius* (1903-1930, V, p. 197), though he rarely cited it without some sneer at Teutonic enslavement to *Methode*. Meanwhile, he sent copies of his books to the *thesaurenses*, whose *Mitarbeiter* politely thanked him in Latin verse, then duly marked up the insults; and he even corresponded about MSS with one of the directors, Friedrich Vollmer, whom he elsewhere enjoyed mocking as an idiot.¹⁹ As time passed, Housman became ever more stonily reactionary:

It is supposed that there has been progress in the science of textual criticism, and the most frivolous pretender has learnt to talk superciliously about “the old unsci-

¹⁹ Keeline 2010 documents not only Housman’s «unending stream of vituperation» from *Manilius* I (1903) onwards – of over 120 mentions some 20 are not insulting, but only where *TLL* upholds his own view against another scholar – but also his «sustained» and «avid» use of it. In the Cambridge inaugural, having amused himself with remarks about «slave-labour», «the mental habits of the slave», «house of bondage», etc., he concluded that «the soul which is so fast in prison [...] commands no outlook upon the past or the future, but believes that the fashion of the present will endure perpetually, and that its own flimsy tabernacle of second-hand opinions is a habitation for everlasting» (1969, pp. 41-42). Rhetoric, but revealing; Housman was unable to comprehend the workings and purpose of any such collaborative project, conceiving scholarship purely as a one-man sport of self-display. Founded in 1894, the monumental *TLL* is still fully operational and now digitized, having completed *A-Regnum* by 2017, and planned to be complete *ca.* 2050.

entific days.” The old unscientific days are everlasting, [...] renewed perennially by the ear which takes formulas in, [...] and the mind which meanwhile is empty of reflexion and stuffed with self-complacency. (1921, p. 84 / 1972, III, p. 1069)

As evidence of advancing petrification, the culminating and most telling example comes in the last preface to Manilius:

My disregard of established opinions and my disrespect for contemporary fashions in scholarship made the ignorant feel sure that I was greatly and presumptuously in error and could be put down without much difficulty [...]. Not by paying any attention to any of them, not by swerving an inch from my original principles and practice, but by *the mere act of living on and continuing to be the same*, I have changed that state of things; and the deaf adder, though I can hardly say that she has unstopped her own ears, has begun to stifle her hisses [...]. 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. (1903-1930, V, p. xxxvi-vii, my emphasis)

He ended, then, not merely by repelling the brave «new world», but by identifying himself with the seventeenth-eighteenth century practice of free-floating conjecture. It is clear, indeed, that Housman’s *declared* concept of textual criticism had progressed little further than Richard Bentley’s well-known preface to his edition of Horace, in which he defined the critic’s true task as inspired *divinatio* by native wit, free of the trammels of history, commentary, collation of manuscripts, or any «low», «elementary», and «diffuse» apparatus of subsidiary knowledge.²⁰

²⁰ Bentleius 1711, «Praefatio ad Lectorem», Pt. I sign. C1^r-C4^v «institutum operis sic mihi definivi [...], ut cetera illa pluraque quae ad Historiam et Mores antiquos grandem illam Commentariorum silvam & instrumentum spectarent, prorsus praeterirem. [...] diffusa illa lectio & eruditio, veterisque totius Latii & Graeciae notitia [...] in hac Nostra partis duntaxat infimae et initiorum apparatusque locum obtinet. [...] est & peracri iudicio opus; est sagacitate et ἀγχινοία; est [...] *divinandi quadam peritia* et παντικῇ; quae nulla laborandi pertinacia vitaeve longinquitate acquiri possunt, sed *naturae solius munere* nascendique felicitate contingunt. [...] neque quidquam fere residuum est, nisi quod ex intima sententiae vi & orationis indole *solius ingenii ope* sit eruendum. Plura igitur [...] ex conjectura exhibemus, quam ex Codicum subsidio; [...] *sola ratio ac sententiarum lux necessitasque ipsa* dominantur. [...] Noli itaque Librarios solos venerari; sed per te sapere aude» (my emphases). That Housman based his ideas on this passage is clear from the many echoes of it in his writings; he was also fond of the famous comment on *Odes* III. 27. 15, «nobis et ratio et res ipsa centum codicibus potiores sunt» (Pt. II, p. 147), though to be fair he did not always forget, as those who approve it usually do, Bentley’s vital qualification, «praesertim accedente Vaticani veteris suffragio».

What then, Reeve fairly asks (p. 143), did Housman mean by insisting on applying the term «scientific» to his approach? Of his «utterly reckless» emendations Garrod likewise wondered whether he really knew «the difference between that joy which belongs to the discovery of truth and the exhilaration which attends the exercise of one's own abilities» (1913, p. 136). Was he driven by an «impatience merely to knock holes in the wall» (1917, p. 108)? No; Garrod concluded, more acutely, that Housman's self-righteous attitude was in essence a «fanatical» symptom of his petrified (in both senses) mentality: «this turbulent earnestness, this inspired egotism [...] hurts him more than it hurts its victims» (1921, p. 39).

The limitations of Housman's thought were further compounded by headstrong idleness in certain areas. Butrica, Heyworth, Reeve, and others observe that, despite intemperate mockery of rivals such as Ellis («he never in his life collated a MS nor even grasped the meaning of the word *collation*», 1920, p. 289 / 1972, III, p. 1019), Housman was an amateur, at times an exceedingly lazy amateur, in his dealings with manuscripts. He customarily relied on other scholars' collations, lifted from apparatus critici which he often then went on to mock as incompetent (Heyworth, p. 22 n. 39; Oakley 2009, p. 82), while scoffing at the task of what he called the «tedious scrutiny and comparison» of witnesses (Housman 1907, p. 293). When he did consult them, which was seldom, his readings could be careless; J.B. Hall (1990, p. 66 n. 22) remarks that his «errors of omission or commission» in reporting the three chief witnesses of Manilius *GLM* are «by no means few», a random search yielding 32 errors. If in the period before 1892 he could allege the excuse of having a day-time job, after that there was none; the duties of his academic posts were virtually non-existent. But his remarks on *M*, the Madrid witness of Manilius, tell us all we need to know. He was fully aware of its «inestimable» value (Housman 1903a), and stated in the first volume of his edition: «No collation has been published, but I have used the voluminous excerpts given by Robinson Ellis» (1903-1930, I, p. viii) – that is to say, Ellis's article (1893-1894) was entitled «Collation», but Housman thought it more amusing to mock it than use it. Not until March 1907 did he secure the loan for a few months, when it was «sent over to London, without shipwreck or seasickness», of Gustav Loewe's 1879 collation of the manuscript (Hartel 1887, pp. 418-419) pencilled in the margins of his copy of Jacob's 1846 edition (Göttingen, Niedersächsische Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek cod. Philol. 139); yet Housman still steadfastly resisted seeing the codex for himself, joking pathetically in an article on the subject of that year:

for the readings of M I depend on others. This MS is a bad sailor, and has not forgotten the Armada: it will travel to Germany and Italy, but to England it will not travel; it is also modest, and dislikes to be photographed; and I am not disposed to learn a fresh language with a poor literature, and undertake a long journey to an uninviting capital, merely in order to settle a question of so little practical importance as the question whether V is or is not a copy of M. (1907, pp. 291-292 / 1972, II, p. 704)

To which the only apt retort is: well, Loewe and Ellis managed it. That this refusal had nothing to do with «practical importance», however, is underlined by R.G.M. Nisbet's observation (1989, p. 286-287 / 2009, p. 47) that Housman's regular gastronomic tours to the French Riviera «did not lead him to the Pithoeanus at Montpellier, and he did not himself exhaust even the famous Oxoniensis» with its 36 unique lines (see above, at n. 9). Despite equally regular trips to Paris «to be in unrespectable company», as he informed E.M. Forster «with a twinkle» in 1927 (Forster 2008, p. 127), or visits to his gondolier companion in Venice, amply recounted by Vincent, there is likewise no evidence that he entered the Bibliothèque nationale or the Marciana to look at MSS; and he used the same specious excuses as for the Matritensis for not travelling to see German codices, though it could have saved him from the egregious error of placing Wolfenbüttel's *N* of Propertius at the foot of his stemma (23-year old Lachmann had done so in 1816, and correctly dated the manuscript, though he failed to draw the correct conclusion because he had *not* seen Groningen, Universiteitsbibliotheek HS_159: Butrica 1984, pp. 3-4). In the Addenda at the end of *Manilius* Housman asserts in passing that «before the publication of my second volume [1912] I obtained photographs of M» (1903-1930, V, p. 101), and Reeve has discovered (2009, p. 151 n.47) that he visited the splendid Biblioteca Malatestiana in Cesena to see its MS of Manilius on 11 April 1912 – the only record of his *ever* having done such a thing – ; but it is far from apparent that he paid much attention. Stewart 1931 still found confusions in the final volume, e.g. at V.70 *aquilonibus instat acutis* «*acutis GL, auitis M*», where the MS (fol. 45^v), though admittedly a little hard at first sight, clearly reads *acutis* with the others, as already pointed out by Stuart (1909) from inspection of the codex in Madrid.²¹

In Bentley's day paleography had just been invented (by Mabillon in 1681, the name coined in 1708 by Montfaucon) and there were no cata-

²¹ Facsimile <http://bdh.bne.es/bnearch/detalle/bdh0000100797>, frame 49, l. 5.

logues of manuscripts, let alone photographs; yet despite his pronouncements on *ratio et res ipsa* (n. 20, above) he made «considerable efforts to consult the best and earliest» witnesses of Manilius that he could locate (Lapidge 1991, pp. 18-20). Housman had no such excuses, despite his boastful rodomontade, and to this extent we must accept that his mind, so full of contradictions and special pleading, was far from «strong». Nevertheless, this does not contradict the fact that it could be remarkably sharp. We have seen that he instinctively grasped the fundamental principle of Lachmannian stemmatics, even though he could not apply it systematically (n.10, above); the early passage on «eclecticism, but [...] within scientific bounds» cited by Reeve (p. 146) to suggest he disdained Lachmann's method is characteristically combative, but in fact indicates the reverse.²² Despite his ravings to the contrary, his pages offer lengthy discussions, sometimes insightful, on *Überlieferungsgeschichte*; and he made numerous, sometimes persuasive inferences from paleography.

Housman's powers of ratiocination may have been faulty, then, and he was neither an original thinker nor quite what we should call a scholar; but his knowledge of detail was profound. He had an astonishing memory and, above all, intelligent instinct. He ended his late lecture on *The Name and Nature of Poetry* with a rumination on how he wrote verse:

Poetry indeed seems to me more physical than intellectual. [...] If a line of poetry strays into my memory, my skin bristles [...] accompanied by a shiver down the spine [...]. The production of poetry, in its first stage, is less an active than a passive and involuntary process, [...] a secretion. I have seldom written poetry unless I was rather out of health [...], the source of the suggestions thus proffered to the brain was an abyss [...], the pit of the stomach. (Housman 1933, pp. 46-50 / 1961, pp. 193-194)

Vincent's account of his life suggests (even if it does not set out to) that this was very likely also how the «first stage» of his textual conjectures

²² Housman 1893-1894, III, p. 128 / 1972, I, p. 347: «The student of an ancient text has two enemies There is the devotee of system who prefers simplicity to truth, and who having half learnt from Madvig and Bekker the great lesson of our century, *magnam et inconditam testium turbam ad paucos et certos esse redigendam, a quibus ceteri rem acciperint*, selects his few witnesses without ascertaining if they were really the informants of the rest [...]; and there is the born hater of science who ransacks Europe for waste paper that he may fill his pages to half their height with the lees of the Italian renaissance». Housman's most extreme vituperation of «method» was 1903-1930, I, pp. xxx-xL, too predictable to need quoting here; but even this was directed at the *codex optimus* fallacy, not at Lachmannism *per se*.

would flow into his mind; and then, as with the poetry, the gaps had to be «taken in hand and completed by the brain», a «laborious business» involving «trial and disappointment, and sometimes ending in failure» (*ibid.*, p. 50/195). In his «inspired guesswork», as I ventured to call it earlier, the element of inspiration was paramount, and often penetrating; perhaps as many as 5% of the guesses have struck subsequent scholars as not merely possible, but probable – an outstandingly high proportion. When brainwork took over, however, their plausibility tended to be vitiated by Housman's stubborn hostility to literary critique and incomprehension of the vast pragmatic distinction between expressive poetry and informative prose, which led him to try to justify his instinctive intimations with far-fetched «logic» or a furious smokescreen of invective – neither «true» nor «scientific».

The increasing shrillness of these arguments seems to indicate that at some level Shackleton Bailey was right (n. 7, above): Housman realized that the prescientific Scaliger-Bentley brand of instinctive textual criticism at which he excelled was in its death throes. He set himself to catch up, but the criticisms of his first effort at a stemma in 1893-1894 must have come as a devastating shock. He went on trying, but with less conviction; the systematic thinking required was simply not his forte. Meanwhile, however, he would publish occasional papers that, like the first twenty-six written while he was still a clerk and before his ill-fated venture into Propertian stemmatics (Housman 1972, I, 1-231), consisted merely of listing the «passive secretion» of conjectures, often without any «laborious» explanation (like Housman 1888, 1899). Their tone was relaxed and assured, his proposals illuminating, sometimes brilliant. For anyone wishing to comprehend the nature of his contribution at its purest, these essays are a place to start. Take, for example, the 4-page paper on a genre of text with which he is rarely associated, the eighth-century Italian uncial MS of two Vizigothic Latin glossaries, *Abolita* and *Abstrusa*, thought to have originated in the milieu of Isidore of Seville and Julian of Toledo, preserved in Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana Vat. lat. 3321 (Housman 1892).²³ The problems all spring from the

²³ The MS (facs. <https://digi.vatlib.it/mss/detail/Vat.lat.3321>), owned by Panormita and Fulvio Orsini, used by exiled Jesuit Faustino Arévalo for his great edition of Isidore in Rome 1797-1803, extracted by Angelo Mai in 1843, and declared the oldest Latin glossary in existence by Gustav Loewe in 1876, was edited, adducing variants from 17 other witnesses, by Goetz & al. (1889, pp. vii-xv and 1-198); Nettleship 1891-1892 offered conjectures on the latter in exactly the same format as Housman, as a bare list.

fact that the MS or its exemplar was made by scribes, probably from the Montecassino area, who could not read Vizigothic script, though fortunately they appear to have belonged to that stirling breed that try to copy what they see rather than indulge in guesswork to improve it. However, Housman bypasses all discussion of the date or paleography of the codex, all collation of variants from other MSS, all discussion of the tradition or history of the text, all argument about its form or reception; he simply delivers 39 conjectural changes to the emendations put forward by Henry Nettleship, in the following clipped and unusually focussed, unverbose style:

- 4 44 [Goetz, = MS fol. 3^r, l. 11] *absono absurdum uel prospero*. 'Read perhaps *absurdo uel aspero*' N[ettleship]. For *prospero* rather *praepostero*.
 12 18 [= fol. 9^v, last line] *aepas horientalis*. 'Read *eous*' N. Yes; but *aepas* is *aetas*, and these are the remnants of two glosses, <*aeon*> *aetas* and <*eous*> *orientalis*: compare 63 39 *aeon*, *aetas uel tempus*, followed by 40 *eous*, *lucifer*²⁴.
 17 40 [= fol. 15^v, l. 2] *angiportum androna uiformium uel callem*. 'Perhaps *angiportum callem*. *androna uirorum* [*aedes*]' N., rightly no doubt: *uiformium* however is not a corruption of *uirorum* but part of a third gloss, <*incipitium*> *biformium*.
 21 8 [not in the MS, but inserted by Goetz from Montecassino Ms. 439] *aruas demonas*. 'Read *heroas*' N. Read *l-aruas*, comparing 105 5 *larualis demoniosus*.²⁵
 22 22 [as the previous entry] *aufertice ablatiuus*. 'I can find no other instance of this bastard Greek term' N. It seems to be a mistake for *aferetice* = ἀφαιρετική,

and so on. Nettleship politely acknowledged his «great obligation» for the criticisms (1892); he opined that Housman was «certainly right» about *larvas* in 21 8 («confirmed by Gloss. Latino-Graec. [Goetz & al. 1888] p. 121 19 *larva δαιμόνιον, εἶδωλον*»), *aphaeretice* in 22 22, *dedecoratio* for *decoratio* in 53 12, *evitat* for *evirat* in 65 50, *phoenicium* (i.e. *fenicum*) for *fenium* in 75 54, *genesis initium*, *fons* for *gener initium foris* in 82 19, *libanus* for *licanus* in 108 32, and *pavitans* (rather than *palpitans*) for *papitans timens fiala* in 136 26; felt «less certainty» about others such as *praepostero* for *postero* in 4 44 above; and was «unable to agree»

²⁴ That is, MS fol. 51^r reads *Eoo horientali aut matutino uel solem | eou etas uel tempus | eous lux sibe lex | eois horientalis*; and Nettleship (I, p. 121) proposed «63 39 *Eou aetas vel tempus*. Read *aeon*. 63 40 *Eous lux sibe lux*. Read *Eous lucifer*, *lux*.»

²⁵ MS fol. 87^v *larbalis demoniosus*. | *larba uibra aut maleficus uel incantator*; Nettleship (II, 185) «*Larbalis demoniosus*. *larva vibra* (i.e. *umbra*) *aut maleficus uel incantator*. The words *aut maleficus* etc. should be added to *demoniosus*, forming part of the gloss on *larvalis*».

in nine cases (51 2, 62 24, 68 46, 75 21, 86 48, 94 26, 113 17, 118 41, and 143 23), rightly so in four or five. But in the last case listed, as with *pre-postero* (by any measure a most convincing emendation), we will prefer Housman's solution because it goes to the heart of the matter: what the original compiler of the glossary – a Hispanic native speaker of seventh-century Latin for whom the lemmata were no longer intelligible – might have written.²⁶ For linguistic historians this is the point; neither Nettleship nor Housman seems to have grasped it fully, as their disregard of the orthography of *larba*, *velba*, *etas*, *eon* (*eou*) and beside-the-point discussion of *emptorium/emporium* at 62 24 (fol. 49^v) show. In the argument on 65 41 (fol. 53^r) *estidram quam ueteres canapum nominarunt*, where Nettleship wildly offered «Perhaps *oestrum* (or *asilum*?) *quem veteres tabanum*», Housman rightly defends Loewe and Ellis's *excetram* ~ *canopum*; but the true question, unremarked by either, is the degree to which Vizigothic pronunciation of *estidra* and *excetra* differed... if it did (/ɛs-tsi-ðra/, /ɛs-tse-dra/?).

In this respect, responding to Housman's remark that he grudged the «profuse hospitality» with which new words were «made welcome to the lexicons», Nettleship made a telling point: that the preservation of otherwise unattested words and forms is precisely what renders glossaries such as this «really valuable». When he wanted, Housman could show he fully grasped the danger of circularity involved in emending what a MS transmits on the basis of «rules» of grammar or metre deduced from other MSS.²⁷ But he could not apply such insights to himself. «It is a point in which Bentley compares ill with Scaliger – he remarked in the preface to *Manilius* (1903-1930, I, pp. xvii-viii) – that his conjectures

²⁶ 143 23 (fol. 118^r) *pixtracxit uelba marina*. Hous.: «'Read *pistrices beluae marinae*' N. Read *piscatrix*, *belua marina*: the creature meant is the angler or sea devil described by Cicero n.d. II 49 125 and Oppian hal. II 86-98, τὸν βάτραχον τὸν ἀλιέα in Arist. *hist. an.* p. 620 B 11, the lophius piscatorius [...], Pliny's 'rana quae in mari *piscatrix* uocatur'. Nettle.: «I cannot agree with Mr Housman that *pix traxit* [Goetz, but one word in the MS] = *piscatrix*. The fish called *piscatrix* would more naturally [? – it measures 2 m., with huge jaws] have been defined *rana marina*: while Glossae *Affatim* p. 553 41 and Hessels' Glossary P 402 give *pistris belua marina*. So Servius Aen. 3 427 says, of the word *pistris*, *si de 'belua' dicitur* – all beside the point.

²⁷ Housman 1921, pp. 80-82 «The state of affairs is [...] paradoxical. The MSS. are the material upon which we base our rule, and then [...] we turn round upon the MSS. and say that the rule, based upon them, convicts them of error. We are thus working in a circle». An excellent perception, though it then lapses from «witnesses», «testimony» into the fallacious sophistry of «trial», «jury», «perjury», and «convicting» manuscripts of «falsehood».

often leave the MSS. too far behind»; he was «impatient, tyrannical, and too sure of himself». In this paper Housman proved acute in divinations such as *piscatrix*, but we also find entries such as:

29 37 [fol. 19^v, l. 3] *camba cauis*. 'Perhaps *cumba nauis*' N. One might also propose *gambae, calcis*; but nearer than either to the ductus litterarum [?] is *corbula, corbis*²⁸.

Yet if this was «impatient», instinct could often, as I have said, yield brilliantly simple, convincing results. Thus at 128 40 (fol. 106^v, l. 7 *obnixius humilissimusmissus*), his *obnoxius: humilis, summissus* summarily disposes of Nettleship's *obnoxius humilissimus; obnixus nisus*; as his «to me it looks like *olores, cycni*» at 132 16 (fol. 109^v, 4 ll. from the end, *oloser crini*) does of *holoserica*, though both men should have noted *olor cicngnus* | *olores cicnuscus idest cicones* only five lines later at the head of the next page. Others of Housman's conjectures may look too «tyrannical» at first, but can turn out to be the most convincing:

94 22 [fol. 78^v, l. 2] *indutia utilitas*. 'Perhaps *industria*' N. Does *industria* mean *utilitas*? I propose *indusia, tunicas*; for *tunicas* and *utilitas* are the same thing.²⁹

It is fascinating to watch young Housman, not yet appointed to a university post, breaking with such gay assurance into a field in which Lindsay was to make himself the leading authority over the next thirty years. The most important fact about the paper, however, is that all of his suggestions, even the least convincing, are thought-provoking. It is perfectly clear that, quite apart from not having consulted the original – pardonable, since at that moment he was in the literal sense what I called him above, an amateur – , he had not seen Goetz's edition either. He simply picked up Nettleship's article and went through it with a pencil, throw-

²⁸ In the light of *larva, velba* for *larva, belua*, and the preceding gloss *canuam canistrum*, one may wonder whether *camba* was not also an orthography for *canua* "basket", in which case *corbis* (**corvis*) could have been the origin of †*cavis*, though *canis[trum]* looks more likely. It is hardly necessary to stress, at any rate, that the word is alphabetized under *CA*-.

²⁹ The «same thing»? He meant paleographically; and though he had neither seen the MS nor had any notion of Vizigothic script, it happens to be cogent. Lewis & Short s.v. *indūsium* "petticoat" provides evidence for the spelling with *-t-*, and for "tunic": «Varr. L.L. 5, §131, written *intusium*; Non. 539 *indusium est vestimentum* [...], *quasi intusium* ["inner-clothes"]; Gloss. Philox. [Labbæus 1679, Pt. II, p. 91] *indusium, χιτωνίσκος*» (cf. Pt. I, p. 204 «χιτών, *tunica*»).

ing off ideas produced by his instinct. We have seen that at the end of his career Housman squared up to the question of whether he possessed the «outfit» to be a textual critic (n. 13, above). He concluded by stating that, in one respect at least, he did: «I think myself a better judge of [...] when to emend and how to emend than most others» (1903-1930, V, p. xxxv). Had he not felt the need to say so over and over, and attempt to prove it by specious diatribe, it would probably be true; and he knew Latin far better than anyone, given the parlous status of classical studies, is ever likely to know it again. But the radical excision between his instinctive approach and the new scholarship built on gathering and ordering evidence was growing ever wider. This is strikingly brought home by the fact that, as far as I can see, studies of Vat. lat. 3321 such as Lindsay 1917, 1918, Lowe 1921, and Lindsay & Thomson 1926 did not deign to let fall so much as a single mention of Housman's name (or Nettleship's, for that matter).

Vincent's very readable book helps show why it was that Housman could not make the necessary leap. We can see now that his final command to destroy and silence his works was a great deal more complex than it seemed. He must have been aware at some level of shortcomings; and with his more prominent career as poet and marked disposition – for «MSS are not the only things in the world» – to idle self-indulgence, he «collaborated to the full» with Cambridge's lack of «arduous duties» and tendency to «shut him off from life» (Wain 1957, p. 116 / Ricks 1968, p. 28). And yet the biography also suggests that his scholarly achievements, though far from being in any straightforward sense an embodiment of «Man's unconquerable mind», did indeed bear witness to some kind of heroic passion. For all his intellectual limitations, Housman believed without equivocation in the mission of textual criticism – to channel all his available skills, which were not inconsiderable, into attempting to give back their own words to the writers of antiquity. That is something from which we may surely take example.

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TREVOR J. DADSON

📖 Alonso Víctor de Paredes' *Institution, and Origin of the Art of Printing, and General Rules for Compositors* [Madrid: ca. 1680], edited and translated by Pablo Alvarez, with a foreword by Don W. Cruickshank, Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA, The Legacy Press, 2018, pp. xiv + 449, \$100 (Hardback), ISBN 978-1-940965-10-9.

This handsomely produced book, which translates for the first time into English Alonso Víctor de Paredes's *Institución, y origen del arte de la imprenta. Reglas generales para los componedores*, is a must-have for any scholar of printing and the history of the book. Paredes's little volume – it consists of only 96 pages –, likely printed in 1680, is one of the earliest (if not the earliest) printing manuals in Europe, predating the more famous and better-known Joseph Moxon, *Mechanick Exercises on the whole Art of Printing* by three to four years, though, if it is the case that Paredes began work on it some thirty years earlier (as he states towards the end of the book), then he must have «began writing the manual while he was in Madrid in the late 1640s; his time in Seville lasted from at least 1674 to 1677, and we can surmise that he began to print it then» (p. xi of the Foreword by Don W. Cruickshank).

Thanks to the detective work of the great and sadly missed Spanish bibliographer Jaime Moll, what was thought at the time to be a unique copy of this work was discovered in the Updike collection of Providence Public Library, Rhode Island. In 1984 Moll had the hitherto considered lost work published in the collection *El Crotalón*, directed by Pedro M. Cátedra and Víctor Infantes (another great bibliographer taken from us far too young). As the original was considered to be too fragile to provide a facsimile copy (which would have been the ideal solution), the editor and publishers decided to do a page by page reprint of the original copy, respecting the original layout in all respects. At the time, 1984, the publication of this extremely rare printing manual was seen, by his-

panists at least, as a major breakthrough, not least because it put Spain at the head of the list of such manuals, but it also showed, of course, that as regards printing, Spain was definitely not different! In 2002 Moll, along with Infantes and, now, Emilio Torné, brought out another edition of Paredes's work in Editorial Calambur. Again, it was a page-by-page reprint of the original, but the difference now was that there were two original copies to work from, since Torné had discovered another copy, held in the Biblioteca General e Histórica de la Universidad de Valencia. The differences between the two copies are minimal, but the Valencia copy does help to resolve a small number of problems of transcription that Moll found with the Providence copy. The existence, however, of, now, two copies does raise serious and interesting questions.

It had been thought that Paredes printed only one copy of this work, for his own use. He tells us, at the end of Chapter 11, that he had begun to print a copy in Seville, but that when he returned to Madrid he lost «the printer's copy, which I had cast off more than thirty years ago, leaving me only with some manuscript pages of the first sheet. It caused me great pain, as anyone might guess. And expanding it one day, and re-writing it another day, I came to find myself in this city with some spare time, and since I had to spend time writing it, I spent it, instead, setting the type and printing it myself so that it could serve me as a copy» (f. 46r-v). He then goes on to say that it «is badly printed due to the lack of a pressman; with mistakes, because, as I printed it only to be used as a record, I did not print any proofs, and I hardly corrected it» (f. 46v). He seems to hope that his little work will reach the hands of a printer: «If this printer's copy of mine reaches the hands of a printer, may he accept as an apology what I am saying, and may he forgive these defects». Though, finally, God willing, he hopes to be able to publish it himself: «Unless God disposes otherwise, I shall try to bring it quickly to light». That he did not would suggest that he died shortly after writing these words.

Paredes's own words would seem to suggest, very strongly, that he printed just one copy, for his own use; he had cast off a printer's copy some thirty years earlier but had lost it in his move back to Madrid, and thus had had to rewrite it, but rather than going through the painstaking task of rewriting the whole thing, he composed it directly; that is to say, he did not write out a hand-written or manuscript copy to use as his original but went straight to the press and set up type directly there. That in itself is quite some achievement. But it now seems that he did not print off just one copy; he must have printed at least two

copies, Providence and Valencia, with Valencia being the second one to be printed since it corrects a few mistakes in Providence. In other words, whilst he was printing off on his own (and he was not a pressman but a compositor) the Providence copy, he stopped the press and corrected some mistakes he must have noted, such as the correction of “Sieia” on f. 2v to “Siria”. He must therefore have been printing more than one copy of each gathering, and his words «I hardly corrected it» are true in that he did correct some of the text, if not all of it. That he should have printed more than one copy is not in itself surprising, given his earlier experience when he lost the only copy of the work that he had. To have a back-up copy as an insurance against further loss was clearly the sensible thing to do. The question that remains unanswered is, of course: how many gatherings did he print? How many more copies of this fascinating work remain out there, as yet undiscovered?

To turn now to Pablo Alvarez’s edition and translation of the *Institución, y origen del arte de la imprenta*. A short and illuminating foreword by the leading scholar in the British Isles of printing in Spain, Don W. Cruickshank, is followed by a relatively short introduction, some 22 pages, by Alvarez, which discusses the history of Paredes’s volume – especially how it came into the hands of Daniel B. Updike in the first place, how it was discovered in his collection by Moll and the two printings of it that Moll oversaw –, its contents and value as a printing manual, and then gives some information on the author (about whom little is in fact known). What is striking about the *Institución, y origen del arte de la imprenta*, given its key importance in the history of printing, not least because it was written by an actual practitioner, is how it has been continually ignored by Anglo-American scholars. Alvarez notes how «it has never been listed in the standard studies on European printing manuals» (p. 5) and that «the recent growing scholarly interest in Paredes’ manual has been manifested only through research done by hispanists» (p. 11). And it is not as if hispanists have not tried to make this little volume better known. In an article entitled «Setting by formes. The explanation of Alonso Víctor de Paredes (1680)» (published in *Ecdotica*, 8 [2011]) and which contained a preview of the volume under review – including Pablo Alvarez’s translation of chapter VIII of the *Institución* – Francisco Rico joined the debate over whether early modern books were indeed set by formes or were set seriatim. Using the evidence provided by Paredes, he was able to demonstrate conclusively that setting by formes was the norm at that period. Had Anglo-American scholars bothered to take note of the existence of Paredes’s book (available, as we have noted

above, from 1984) and read it, they would have saved themselves a lot of ink and wasted paper.

The bulk of Pablo Alvarez's volume is taken up with 1) a translation of Paredes's original; 2) facsimile reproductions of both known copies (Providence and Valencia). The translation into English is set against the Spanish original, page by page, with the original on the verso or even-numbered pages and the translation on the recto or odd-numbered pages. The disposition of the text of the original is faithfully followed. Similarly, the facsimile reproductions (of a very high quality, it has to be said) are set against each other, with Providence on the verso pages and Valencia on the recto ones. To have these reproductions is in itself a real boon, for now we are able to see Paredes's actual text as he set it out, something not available in the two Moll editions.

Pablo Alvarez's translation is a faithful and very readable rendering of the original Spanish, not an easy task given the complexity of some of the terms and concepts used. The glossary of terms, therefore, that follows the text (pp. 227-234) is extremely useful, and not just for novices in the art of printing.

This book is a wonderful achievement, a pleasure to have and read, and a source of constant knowledge. It is to be hoped that with Alvarez's excellent translation of Paredes's text into English it will now reach the wider audience that it so richly deserves. The editor/translator and the publisher are to be congratulated on having produced a book that Alonso Víctor de Paredes would have been proud to own, and on having turned into reality his final wish that «si Dios no lo dispone de otra suerte, yo procuraré sacarle con toda brevedad a luz».

GIORGIO MONTECCHI

📖 L. Chines, P. Scapechi, P. Tinti, P. Vecchi Galli (a cura di), *Nel segno di Aldo. Catalogo della mostra Biblioteca Universitaria Bologna, 29 ottobre 2015 - 16 gennaio 2016*, Bologna, Pàtron, 2015, pp. 220, € 28, ISBN 9788855533287

Brevissima è, a volte, la vita dei fiori: i loro colori e il loro profumo danno gioia all'esile respiro di un mattino, poi tutto svanisce. In natura ci sono frutti che ci fanno gustare tutto il loro sapore solo quando raccolti appena giunti a maturazione, poi perdono sapore. Ci sono, invece, fiori e frutti che protraggono nel tempo la loro bellezza, il loro profumo

e la loro fragranza, continuando così, più a lungo nel tempo, a rendere piacevole o meno triste la nostra esistenza quotidiana.

Non diverso è il destino delle mostre bibliografiche, in cui si presentano al pubblico i fiori e i frutti del lavoro editoriale. A volte esse hanno vita effimera e non lasciano dietro di sé nessuna traccia della loro esistenza: ne resta solo un sottile ricordo nella mente di quanti le hanno visitate nei giorni di apertura al pubblico e ne hanno, eventualmente, ammirato la sapienza e la bellezza, poi più nulla. Altre mostre, invece, come canestri pieni di fiori e di frutti più fortunati, trovano il modo di resistere al tempo e procrastinare la loro virtuale esistenza anche dopo la chiusura delle ultime bacheche.

Le celebrazioni che si sono tenute nel 2015, in occasione dei cinquecento anni dalla scomparsa di Aldo Manuzio, hanno dato origine a una gran quantità di mostre e di pubblicazioni: si trattava, del resto, di ricordare chi aveva portato a regime l'avventura iniziata con l'invenzione della stampa da parte di Gutenberg e giunta a piena maturazione, appunto, con la nascita dell'editoria moderna, frutto maturo dell'attività di Aldo Manuzio. Sono già state fatte ampie e dotte rassegne di queste celebrazioni che, accanto a mostre, a convegni e a volumi miscellanei con interventi dei più bei nomi della storiografia manuziana italiana e straniera, hanno spesso portato anche alla pubblicazione dei cataloghi delle edizioni aldine presenti nella gran parte delle nostre biblioteche storiche. Molte di queste biblioteche non hanno fatto altro che completare l'opera iniziata già vent'anni prima nella commemorazione, nel 1994, degli inizi dell'attività veneziana di Aldo Manuzio. Ed è a Venezia che, nel 2015 come già vent'anni prima, ha avuto inizio il concerto bibliografico delle celebrazioni. La lunga militanza milanese mi consenta di ricordare, almeno, che nel 1994 fu pubblicato, preceduto da una mostra bibliografica, il catalogo delle edizioni aldine della Biblioteca Braidense, mentre nel 2015 ha visto la luce il catalogo delle edizioni aldine della Biblioteca Ambrosiana a cura di Marina Bonomelli: siamo anche in attesa della mostra e del catalogo delle edizioni aldine della Biblioteca Trivulziana, che hanno subito uno slittamento a causa delle interferenze dell'Expo milanese di quell'anno.

Da Milano a Bologna il passo è breve: ed ecco, davanti a noi, un volume molto bello, nella fattura e nei contenuti, pubblicato nel quinto centenario della scomparsa di Aldo Manuzio: *Nel segno di Aldo*, catalogo della Mostra a cura di Loredana Chines, Piero Scapecchi, Paolo Tinti, Paola Vecchi Galli, Biblioteca Universitaria di Bologna, 29 ottobre 2015-16 gennaio 2016, Alma Mater Studiorum, Quarto Inferiore-Bolo-

gna, Pàtron Editore, 2015, 220 p. Mi si scusi la ridondanza bibliografica di questa citazione, ma non si tratta della semplice pubblicazione di un catalogo di mostra, ma di una vera e propria macchina comunicativa (carta, caratteri, immagini testi e *mise en page*) versata in un volume di più di duecento pagine in un formato di 26 cm per 22.

La mostra e il catalogo offrono nell'intitolazione e nella loro stessa strutturazione una chiave di lettura che distingue questa dalle decine di pubblicazioni apparse in questi anni su Aldo Manuzio. Protagonista ne è il segno. Il volume, dopo i doverosi saluti istituzionali, si presenta suddiviso in tre parti. La prima è dedicata a due saggi introduttivi di Paolo Tinti e Paola Vecchi Galli, che ci offrono gli elementi essenziali dell'identità aldina, trovata, appunto, nella maturazione del *signum* di Aldo e nel dialogo continuo con i lettori. La seconda parte ci offre, in quattro sequenze, l'itinerario della mostra: la nascita di un segno; il successo di un segno; il prezzo e il prestigio di un segno; Aldo e Bologna. Era questo il cuore della mostra e diviene ora la parte preponderante del volume che nell'impaginazione, nei testi (affidati a studiosi di alto livello che sanno presentare con scioltezza il loro sapere al pubblico), nelle didascalie e nelle immagini. Infine, il volume si chiude, con gli apparati, cioè con utili e indispensabili strumenti di ricerca, come la lista delle edizioni aldine presenti nella Biblioteca Universitaria di Bologna, gli indici (di autori, titoli, provenienze e possessori) e una nota bibliografica finale.

In anni di martellante richiesta di eventi e di iniziative culturali orientate quasi esclusivamente alla divulgazione e a una fruizione pubblica indiscriminata e indistinta, in cui il fine sembra essere non tanto quello dell'offerta di conoscenza e di crescita intellettuale quanto quello di una sorta di generica valorizzazione monetaria dei beni culturali, ci troviamo in questo caso di fronte a una mostra e a un catalogo che, al contrario, non tradiscono affatto né i fini propri di ogni esposizione aperta a un pubblico di non specialisti, né le esigenze specifiche della ricerca bibliografica. Anzi le fanno dialogare tra di loro e ne arricchiscono, così, sia la fruizione e il piacere della bellezza e della conoscenza da parte dei visitatori, sia il contributo alle indagini, aprendo nuove strade al dibattito in corso fra gli studiosi di Aldo Manuzio sull'approdo alla modernità da lui attuato in campo editoriale. A questo portano le riflessioni iniziali di Paolo Tinti sul segno di Aldo e sulla costruzione della sua identità editoriale «fondata sulla dimensione pedagogica, sullo studio della *gramatica*, sulla proposta degli autori greci ancora poco noti, se non del tutto inediti». Essa inoltre «si concretizzò anche nelle specifiche soluzioni tipografiche che lo distinsero nel

panorama del libro *in cuna*, rendendo riconoscibile quello aldino tra i tanti codici a stampa» (p. 17). A suggello di tutto ciò la marca dell'ancora e del delfino si è impressa nella mente di quanti hanno apprezzato le edizioni aldine nel corso degli ultimi cinquecento anni. A questo portano anche le osservazioni di Paola Vecchi sull'invenzione del lettore, che è sempre il principale interlocutore di Aldo Manuzio: infatti «la sua non è l'ottica di un mercante o di un semplice artigiano, ma appunto di un caposcuola che sa come l'oggetto libro sia il risultato di una miscela di aspetti materiali e intellettuali, di produzione e di fruizione, calibrati con *lunga diligenza e fatica per utilità* del lettore» (p. 33). Qui mi fermo per lasciare a quanti continueranno in futuro ad aprire questo volume il piacere di vivere, nella lettura dei testi e nell'ammirazione delle immagini, la bellezza della mostra tenuta a Bologna a cinquecento anni dalla scomparsa di Aldo Manuzio.

GIACOMO VENTURA

📖 *Atlante dei canzonieri in volgare del Quattrocento*, a cura di A. Comboni e T. Zanato, Firenze, SISMEL – Edizioni del Galluzzo, («Edizione Nazionale I Canzonieri della lirica italiana delle origini, 7»), 2017, pp. XLVIII-772, € 170, ISBN: 978-88-8450-757-0.

Già nelle prime righe del suo celeberrimo saggio «Secolo senza poesia» (*La Critica*, 30, 1932), Benedetto Croce sanciva che la produzione letteraria tra la fine del Trecento e l'inizio del Quattrocento «è una letteratura stanca, che vive di ricordi e di abitudini, incapace di rinnovare, capace soltanto di variare nelle parti materiali ed estrinseche, e più ancora di rendere inanimato quel che era animato, e rozzo e triviale quel che era fine e squisito»; aggiungeva poi che le cause di questo declino erano da ricercare «unicamente nel poco calore e nel poco amore che quei rimatori e prosatori portavano nei loro lavori, dalla loro poca o niuna ispirazione». Considerate queste premesse, si riteneva così superfluo ogni ulteriore scandaglio a largo raggio su questa multiforme congerie letteraria: se infatti un più approfondito scavo sulla lirica quattrocentesca avrebbe solamente confermato il giudizio negativo su quella letteratura, Croce sceglieva invece di concentrarsi su quelle pregevoli «arance fuori stagione», vale a dire quei rari componimenti che presentavano significativi elementi di novità e frattura rispetto alla maggior parte della produzioni del secolo e ritenuti per questo degni di essere portati in luce.

Le considerazioni che hanno portato all'ideazione e alla realizzazione del prezioso *Atlante dei canzonieri in volgare del Quattrocento* (che esce come settimo volume della prestigiosa edizione nazionale dedicata ai canzonieri della poesia italiana delle origini) si muovono chiaramente in direzione contraria rispetto alla posizione crociana. I curatori, Andrea Comboni e Tiziano Zanato, due autentiche *auctoritates* degli studi sulla lirica quattrocentesca, hanno invece ritenuto doveroso immergere le mani in questa vasta e complessa mole di materia poetica, animati dall'intento di creare una vera e propria mappa, fondamentale e imprescindibile per orientarsi lungo i non sempre agili sentieri della lirica del Quattrocento. Come emerge fin dalle prime righe della ricca *Introduzione* – un testo che sarà una pietra angolare di riferimento metodologico e critico per gli anni a venire e che ha soprattutto il pregio di mostrare al lettore alcuni importanti risultati emersi nella ricerca condotta trasversalmente ai canzonieri – il progetto dell'*Atlante* si configura come felice punto di arrivo di una fertile stagione di studi, inaugurata dalle indagini linguistiche e filologiche di Pier Vincenzo Mengaldo sugli *Amorum libri* di Boiardo dei primi anni sessanta – e arricchitasi, negli anni, dei contributi di Carlo Dionisotti, Domenico De Robertis, Antonia Tissoni Benvenuti, Guglielmo Gorni, Antonio Balduino, Marco Santagata –, che ha portato ad «un ampio recupero di autori e testi, molti dei quali inediti, fino allora poco studiati o a volte quasi sconosciuti» (p. ix). Manifesta è, dunque, la necessità di porre ordine e sintetizzare i risultati delle ricerche condotte fino ad oggi, soprattutto al fine di dare il *la* ad ulteriori nuove indagini.

L'approccio metodologico, che sorregge l'architettura dell'*Atlante*, è reso esplicito alle pp. x e xi dell'*Introduzione*: se da un lato è evidente il proposito dei curatori «di tentare una via di approccio selettiva all'interno della pletora di rime, raccolte liriche, miscellanee, libretti, canzonieri veri e propri, che il periodo compreso fra la morte di Petrarca e l'inizio del 1500 ci offre», d'altro canto è evidente come, per fare ciò, sia necessario guardare a questa ponderosa produzione letteraria da una specifica prospettiva, ossia considerando quanto il magistero petrarchesco abbia influenzato gli autori quattrocenteschi nella redazione delle loro raccolte poetiche.

A questo proposito, i curatori propongono una riflessione preliminare su un termine chiave del volume, ossia che cosa si debba intendere per “canzoniere”: prendendo le mosse dai contributi di Guglielmo Gorni (*Le forme primarie del testo poetico*, 1984), Enrico Testa (*Il libro di poesia. Tipologie e analisi macrotestuali*, 1983), Marco Santagata (*Con-*

nessioni intertestuali nel «Canzoniere» del Petrarca, 1975) e Niccolò Scafai (*Il poeta e il suo libro. Retorica e storia del libro di poesia nel Novecento*, 2005), si arrivano ad enucleare alcune caratteristiche essenziali. Innanzitutto per “canzoniere” si intende «una raccolta di rime di un autore in cui sia evidenziabile, a più livelli del testo, qualche intento di organizzazione interna della materia attribuibile all'autore medesimo» (p. x), e con “livelli di testo” si fa invece riferimento a undici elementi: *in primis* (1) vengono considerati gli “argomenti primari”, ossia i temi, presenti nei *Rerum Vulgarium Fragmenta*, che l'autore del canzoniere quattrocentesco fa propri, inserendoli in vario modo nella raccolta (ossia argomento amoroso ‘il Tu’, lirico ‘l'Io’, universale ‘gli Altri’, biografico ‘Io/Egli’ e di contesto). Il secondo e il terzo livello di testo sono invece legati alla presenza nella raccolta di un (2) incipit e un (3) explicit, ossia di componimenti che abbiano la funzione di presentare e dare una conclusione alla materia del “canzoniere”. Ulteriori livelli sono poi: (4) isotopie, «intese come ricorsività e non contraddittorietà di temi e motivi di carattere semantico, temporale, spaziale, di persona»; (5) titoli e rubriche; (6) partizioni interne; (7) connessioni intertestuali; (8) progressione del senso o del discorso («che - usando le parole di Testa - articolandosi nel lineare procedere dei testi, comporta un incremento di senso dell'intero libro», p. x); (9) caratteri della *dispositio* e della *elocutio* (vale a dire la presenza delle principali figure retoriche); (10) poesie di poetica (ossia «riflessioni metapoetiche») e (11) interdiscorsività (ossia «presenza di modelli»).

A partire da questa puntuale definizione, destinata a fare scuola, i curatori hanno elaborato una scheda-tipo che risponde tanto alla necessità di salvaguardare le specificità delle singole opere, quanto a quella di mettere in risalto gli elementi comuni e le evidenze trasversali al contesto e alla temperie culturale che le ha prodotte. La scheda risulta organizzata secondo questa struttura: al nome dell'autore corredato dagli estremi biografici (ovviamente quando ricostruibili: sono ben quattro i canzonieri anonimi e rimangono incerte alcune attribuzioni) segue in prima battuta il *Titolo* del canzoniere. Varie e molteplici sono le scelte degli autori quattrocenteschi: ai titoli che rimandano a indicazioni metriche – *Sonetti e canzone/i*, *Sonetti e capitoli* – si alternano alcune soluzioni originali – quali ad esempio *Naufragio* (Giovanni Aloisio), *Amori e Argo* (Giovanni Francesco Caracciolo), *Endimion a la Luna* (Cariteo), *Filenico* (Nicola da Montefalco), *Fior di Delia* (Antonio Ricco), *Silvano* (Tommaso Gambaro) – e titoli in latino che richiamano o meno i *Fragmenta* petrarcheschi, mentre il titolo *Canzoniere* compare solo raramente. Seguono poi preziosissime

voci, dal taglio strettamente filologico, dedicate ai *Testimoni principali* e a *Ragguagli sulla tradizione*, che hanno il pregio di sintetizzare con chiarezza e in poche battute la situazione stemmatica di ogni singolo canzoniere. Si tratta di affondi filologici particolarmente meritori anche perché del tutto diversificati sono, ad oggi, i traguardi dell'indagine testuale sulle singole opere, che risulta «a volte disperata, talaltra soffocante o asfittica»; a tal proposito, emerge, trasversalmente, un dato significativo: considerato l'intero *corpus* oggetto d'analisi (96 opere), un canzoniere su quattro è arrivato a noi o tramite manoscritti integralmente (15) o parzialmente autografi (1) o idiografi (9). Le sezioni successive, di taglio maggiormente interpretativo, si concentrano sul *Periodo di composizione* del canzoniere analizzato – rilevato attraverso dati cronologici interni (riferimenti nei testi ma anche nella lingua e nello stile) ed esterni (elementi codicologici) – e sul *Numero dei componimenti e forme metriche* che la raccolta ospita, ossia su informazioni che permettono di stabilire una prima relazione tra la raccolta quattrocentesca e il modello petrarchesco. A questo proposito è interessante rilevare alcuni elementi di frattura. Ad esempio, la maggior parte dei canzonieri analizzati sono, per usare la definizione di Claudio Giunta, “canzonieri di una giovinezza”, ossia ascrivibili agli anni della gioventù del poeta, e non “canzonieri di una vita” e inoltre, il numero dei componimenti è spesso lontano dai 366 dei *Rerum Vulgarium Fragmenta*; sono invece ricorrenti numeri come il 150 (è del resto il numero dei *Salmi* della *Vulgata*) o prossimi al 215 (le liriche petrarchesche nella forma Chigi). Del resto una certa distanza dal modello emerge anche nelle scelte metriche: se il sonetto risulta lo schema metrico più fortunato, alle forme impiegate nel *Canzoniere* petrarchesco si alternano nuove soluzioni come il sonetto caudato, la ballata in ottonari, il capitolo ternario, il sirventese, l'ottava e – in misura più sporadica – la canzonetta, la terzina lirica, il rimolattino, la decima rima, la frottola, l'ode saffica, il polimetro e il rondello. Nella sezione principale dell'*Atlante* (e quindi non nell'*Appendice*, di cui si dirà) lo scandaglio critico prosegue con l'individuazione nel canzoniere di un *Punto α*, ossia di un componimento proemiale (non necessariamente il componimento in apertura della raccolta) che introduce il tema del racconto amoroso del poeta o che fa riferimento alla raccolta poetica, e un *Punto ω*, vale a dire, una lirica – non sempre presente – che ha invece il compito di chiudere il percorso di senso, conducendo il lettore alla fine del macrotesto. La scheda dell'*Atlante* prosegue con le seguenti voci: *Articolazioni interne*, in cui si dice se il canzoniere analizzato è compatto, bipartito come il *Canzoniere* petrarchesco o se obbedisce ad altre ripartizioni; *Sequenze intermedie*, ove

si rileva l'eventuale presenza nella raccolta di raggruppamenti di liriche per tema o per forma metrica; *Tempo della storia* e *Testi di anniversario*, in cui troviamo i riferimenti puntuali a all'estensione cronologica e alle date della vicenda amorosa; *Testi di pentimento religioso*, ove si registra la presenza di liriche legate al pentimento del poeta e che rimandano al pentimento petrarchesco; *Isotopie spaziali*, in cui si determina la geografia, reale e/o immaginaria (*loci amoeni*) del "canzoniere". Viene poi riservato spazio alle isotopie di persona, vale a dire, alla presenza di un "Io" lirico e di un "Tu" lirico: se il primo si può facilmente individuare nell'autore della raccolta, è invece più arduo disegnare con chiarezza i tratti della destinataria – in rari casi vi è un destinatario – dal nome ora esplicito, ora occultato, ora reale, ora fittizio. È significativo che nella maggioranza dei canzonieri (80 su 96) compaiono *Testi con destinatari storici*, i cui nomi vengono riportati in una sezione omonima e inoltre, al contrario di quanto ci si potrebbe aspettare, un numero considerevole di raccolte presenta componimenti con *Contenuti non amorosi*, riservati invece a temi morali, religiosi, storici che permettono di dedicare particolare attenzione al ruolo svolto dal poeta nel contesto storico-sociale: entrambe queste evidenze danno conto della singolare e ricca pluralità di soluzioni della lirica quattrocentesca. La scheda-tipo presenta tre ultime voci, ossia: *Progressione del senso*, in cui vengono messi in luce gli sviluppi narrativi e tematici del canzoniere; le *Connessioni intertestuali*, ove si dà conto dei riferimenti interni alla raccolta e *Poesie di poetica*, in cui viene rilevata la presenza di una riflessione più o meno approfondita dell'autore sulla propria poetica. Ciò che non trova spazio nelle maglie della scheda-tipo viene riservato alla sezione *Altre ossevizioni*, a cui segue una fondamentale *Bibliografia*.

Le opere degli autori presenti nella corposa *Appendice* trovano ragione della loro collocazione nell'impossibilità di individuare in maniera definitiva un macrotesto e dunque nel non poter riscontrare, per ogni raccolta, un *Punto α* e almeno due voci tra *Punto ω*, *Articolazioni interne*, *Sequenze intermedie*, *Tempo della storia*, *Testi di anniversario*, *Testi di pentimento religioso*, *Isotopie spaziali*, *Progressione del senso*, *Connessioni intertestuali*, *Poesie di poetica*. La scheda-tipo delle opere presenti in *Appendice* risulta dunque meno articolata, ma non per questo meno ricca: un paragrafo di ampio respiro intitolato *Caratteri della raccolta* segue le prime cinque voci (*Titolo*, *Testimoni principali*, *Ragguagli sulla tradizione*, *Periodo di composizione*, *Numero dei componimenti e forme metriche*).

Secondo quanto si è cercato di mettere in luce, i meriti dell'impresa di Comboni e Zanato sono evidenti: *in primis* è necessario considerare

il carattere di novità e di esaustività di quest'opera, grazie alla quale è possibile avere a disposizione una vera e propria mappa della produzione lirica del Quattrocento: un ambito di studi che – come si è detto – è rimasto troppo a lungo in una condizione subalterna rispetto ad altri settori dell'Italianistica. Come ogni atlante, il volume, anche se non presenta «distinzioni spazio-temporali o suddivisioni per aree o regioni», crea una mappatura in cui Geografia, Storia e Letteratura si intrecciano armoniosamente e da cui emerge il fertile magistero di Dionisotti e del suo fondamentale *Geografia e Storia della letteratura italiana* (1967). Si rende così manifesta una geografia poetica del Quattrocento volgare che illumina non solo le città e i centri culturali più fervidi, bensì anche aree rimaste in un cono d'ombra nella tradizione degli studi: i 96 nomi dei poeti e dei canzonieri si collocano nella penisola e irradiano, a Nord, i grandi centri padani di Lombardia e Veneto (Milano, Brescia, Cremona e Mantova, Verona, Padova, Venezia), proseguendo, toccano le città emiliano romagnole (Ferrara, Parma, Reggio, Bologna, Ravenna, Rimini), molti centri toscani (Firenze, Prato, Pistoia, Pisa, Siena, Arezzo, Cortona), Perugia, il Montefeltro, Pesaro, Ancona, Roma e Napoli.

Ancora, come ogni "atlante", il volume si presta ad essere preso in mano e consultato più volte: sono del resto molteplici i percorsi di lettura che si possono intraprendere sfogliando e soffermandosi sulle schede curate da sessantatré studiosi che i curatori hanno saputo coordinare al meglio – aspetto non di poco conto – per creare un volume omogeneo e armonico in tutte le sue parti. Fondamentali sono in questo senso i paratesti, a partire dall'*Indice* generale in apertura del volume che rivela la struttura dell'opera, fino alla preziosissima sezione degli indici, che oltre all'indice dei nomi, ospita un intelligente indice dei toponimi, dei manoscritti, delle stampe e degli incipit citati.

In conclusione, è doveroso sottolineare che l'*Atlante* non costituisce solamente un punto cruciale per gli studi del Quattrocento, ma si configura sia come un modello di metodo filologico e critico, sia come risultato di una felice e fertile collaborazione tra studiosi, da cui prendere esempio per ridisegnare con maggiore accuratezza e precisione il panorama letterario italiano.

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