



**Sapsford, F. 2010. 'Review: David Butterfield & Christopher Stray (eds.).
2009. *A. E. Housman: Classical Scholar*. London: Duckworth' *Rosetta* 8:
125-129.**

<http://rosetta.bham.ac.uk/issue8/reviews/sapsford-butterfield.pdf>

David Butterfield & Christopher Stray (eds.). 2009. *A. E. Housman: Classical Scholar*. London: Duckworth. Pp. x, 288. ISBN 9780715638088. £50.00.

Reviewed by Francesca Sapsford

University of Birmingham

Celebrating the 150th anniversary of A. E. Housman's birth, David Butterfield and Christopher Stray present fifteen essays exploring different aspects of Housman's classical work. Housman has been the subject of countless biographies, most of which have looked at his sexuality, life and poetry, whereas comparatively few publications have looked at his work within Classics. The publication of his *Classical Papers* in 1972 have reminded scholars of the massive contribution Housman made to the study of Classics, and Latin poetry in particular, and in this volume an impressive number of expert scholars offer a detailed analysis of some of Housman's contributions.

After a brief, but detailed, introduction by Christopher Stray, the collection is then split into three sections: 'Housman the Scholar' which examines his contribution to the study of specific Latin authors, 'Housman's Scholarly Environment' looking at Housman's engagement with his contemporaries, and 'Housman's Legacy' in which there are three brief essays exploring Housman's influence on classical studies and textual criticism.

The first section, which is by far the largest, looks at Housman's contribution to our understanding of the works of particular Latin authors. Chapter One, by Stephen Heyworth, looks at Housman's work on Propertius. Heyworth provides a detailed look at Housman's work on Propertius, including both published works and unpublished marginalia preserved in ten separate volumes at Trinity College, Cambridge and St. John's College, Oxford, finding several comments which Heyworth says he wished he had known about before his Oxford Classical Text (OCT) edition of Propertius (Heyworth, 2007). Heyworth also briefly looks at Housman's ideas about the textual tradition, and is rightly critical of the complex and unhistorical approach he took. In Chapter Two Edward Courtney looks at Housman's work on Manilius, and again provides a balanced assessment. Manilius was the most consistent subject of Housman's work from the late nineteenth century up to the publication of the *editio minor* of the *Astronomica* in 1932.

Courtney shows how Housman's work on Manilius led to 339 instances of emendation in the course of his work, though rightly pointing out that, despite the edition's deserved status, many of these can, and should, be disputed. Courtney is also critical of Housman for the way he negatively commented about other scholars, especially for the way in which this 'is allowed to take on moral overtones where moral judgments have no place' (p. 32).

The next three chapters in this section look at Housman's work on Juvenal, Lucan and Ovid's *Ibis*. In Chapter Three, Robin Nisbet prefaces his chapter on Juvenal by saying that it is a shorter version of a previously published article, and helpfully lists changes in opinion he has had since then with regards to the texts and the suggestions made by Housman. The chapter itself begins by pointing out that Housman's approach to the manuscript tradition of Juvenal, while more or less correct, was not perfect. Nisbet follows by demonstrating some of the changes which should be contested; that there should have been more deletions, and that Housman should have engaged more with proposals made by other scholars. While stressing that Housman's text of Juvenal is still incredibly important for scholars, he does admit in his preface that 'I should have been more critical of [the text's] shortcomings' (p. 45). Chapter Four is Stephen Oakley's analysis of Housman's contribution to the text of Lucan and of Fraenkel's 1926 review of Housman's changes to the text. Oakley points to Shackleton Bailey's Teubner editions for any parts where scholars have later disagreed with Housman's judgement, though he does point out that there are relatively few passages where this is the case. He instead uses the majority of his chapter to show examples of Housman's changes to the text, and to also show how Fraenkel's review of Housman's edition 'made an additional contribution to the study of Lucan' (p. 68). Gareth Williams in Chapter Five focuses on Housman's work on Ovid's *Ibis*, one of the earliest texts Housman published on (Housman first published on the *Ibis* in 1883). He argues that while Housman's work is by no means perfect, it is preferable to those of Ellis and Owen of whom Housman was critical.

The final two chapters in the first part of the volume consider Housman more generally, with David Butterfield in Chapter Six considering Housman's contribution to the study of ancient metre, and Michael Reeve in Chapter Seven examining Housman's effectiveness at dealing with the textual tradition.

The second section of the book considers different aspects of Housman's scholarly environment. An unfortunate side effect of this is that there is considerable repetition of

details of Housman's private and scholarly life, both within this section itself and from the previous section. It seems to suggest that this is a volume expected to be consulted for certain chapters, rather than to be read through at once, as the repetition does become tiresome by the third recounting in succession of the same details.

The second section opens with an engaging chapter by Christopher Stray (Chapter Eight) chronicling the dispute between Housman and R. C. Jebb over the then recently discovered text of Bacchylides (brought to the British Museum in 1896). Unlike the previous section, Stray makes it clear at the beginning that his is not an exploration of whose opinion was the right one, but rather explores 'the nature and context of the dispute' (p. 155). One interesting aspect of the dispute between Housman and Jebb was that it was carried out through the pages of the *Classical Review*, a 'journal founded in the previous decade to encourage open scholarly discussion in Classics by the frequent and regular publication of signed reviews' (p. 156). Stray's detailed exploration of this very public dispute between the two scholars shows the way in which the question of how scholars should conduct debates, and the relationship between the audience and the scholar, changed at this time. Neil Hopkinson returns to the debate briefly discussed in the first chapter of the volume in Chapter Nine, looking at the differences in opinion on the text of Propertius between Housman and J. P. Postgate in the late nineteenth century. This debate, lasting around thirty years, was essentially lost by Housman, and Housman himself has claimed that his reaction to this was in part responsible for the composition of *A Shropshire Lad*.

Next, David Butterfield in Chapter Ten compares the career of Housman with that of W. M. Lindsay, one of the great British Latinists. After a brief description of Lindsay's life and career and an analysis of the similarities between Housman and Lindsay, Butterfield turns to the direct contact between the two scholars. Considering that they were at Oxford University at the same time, and part of the same academic world, 'there is no evidence that they knew each other or that their social interests overlapped' (p. 196). There are only three items of direct contact between them which have survived, the earliest being a letter from Housman in 1901 in reply to Lindsay (whose letter has not survived). The other two items are a letter from Housman to Lindsay in 1903 and a postcard from Lindsay to Housman in 1920. Butterfield demonstrates that there was more correspondence between the two men in the early twentieth century, but the argument between them seems to mostly have occurred in print from 1905 onwards. This, as Butterfield explains it, comes

from the different way in which they approached ancient texts. While Lindsay gave greater importance to textual transmission and palaeography, Housman's work was more retrospective and gave great importance to emendation. Whatever their differences, however, 'the contribution of both to Latin philology remains undoubtably immense' (p. 208).

In Chapter Eleven Luigi Lehnus provides a set of previously unpublished letters written by Housman to the papyrologist A. S. Hunt between 1908 and 1927 (Burnett, 2007). These show Housman's thoughts on emendations and how he contributed to the *Oxyrhynchus papyri* publications. In the final chapter in this section, Chapter Twelve, Colin Leach looks at some of Housman's letters from a recently edited collection. He shows some aspects of textual criticism not necessarily seen before as well as Housman's interaction with other scholars. It further adds to the impression of Housman as a man deeply convinced of the quality of his own scholarship. However, as he admits, 'Housman's correspondence yields rather little about the scholar that is new' (p. 241).

The final section of the book, 'Housman's Legacy', consists of three short essays by highly respected modern textual critics. Georg Luck (Chapter Thirteen) explains how he came to know of Housman's work and the debt which he feels towards him, as well as showing how many of Housman's emendations were accepted for the recent Oxford Classical Text edition of Propertius. In Chapter Fourteen E. J. Kenney provides a version of a speech he gave for the Housman Society dinner at Trinity College, Cambridge in 1976. This is very much a personal tribute to 'the scholar [who] has meant most to [him]' (p. 258), and includes amusing fantasy cricket teams for Oxford and Cambridge Universities (in which Housman plays for his *alma mater* Oxford). The final chapter of the book, Chapter Fifteen, is by the co-editor of Housman's collected classical papers, James Diggle. Diggle relates the story of how he acquired a cap and pen belonging to Housman, which illustrates the front cover, from an admirer of Housman's poetry who had bought it from Trinity College after Housman's death.

Overall, this is an extremely engaging and balanced approach to Housman and his scholarly work. While certain details of his life and work are sometimes repeated in multiple chapters, each essay provides a useful examination of different aspects of Housman's work, from the emendations on certain Latin texts to his interactions with contemporary scholars. The authors in this volume have largely managed to avoid straying

<http://rosetta.bham.ac.uk/issue8/reviews/sapsford-butterfield.pdf>

into the 'cult' of Housman, though each of them is obviously a great admirer of his work and contribution. Overall this volume shows that Housman was certainly a great Classical scholar whose works continue to influence us in our own work today.

Bibliography

Burnett, A. (ed.) 2007. *The Letters of A. E. Housman* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Fraenkel, E. 1926. Review of Housman's *Lucanus*, *Gnomon* 2, 497-532.

Heyworth, S. J. 2007. *Sexti Properti Elegi* Oxford: Oxford University Press.