

PARAGRAPHOI

This section publishes short essays exploring topics of interest to the profession. Submissions should run to no more than 1200 words. Diverse opinions and spirited exchanges are welcome. Contributions will be evaluated by the editor.

With Jackson's Help

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SUMMARY: In lines 7–8 of Housman's dedicatory poem (*Manilius*, vol. 1) *nomen* means "fame" and *virtutis* refers to scholarly achievement, not to Moses Jackson (cf. *TAPA* 132 (2002) 209–13).

IN A STUDY OF THE DEDICATORY POEM prefacing the first volume of Housman's *Manilius* (*TAPA* 132 [2002] 209–13) Stephen Harrison offers a text and translation (Holford-Strevens') of lines 5–14:

non ego mortalem vexantia sidera sortem
aeternosve tuli sollicitare deos,
sed cito casurae tactus virtutis amore
humana volui quaerere nomen ope,
virque virum legi fortemque¹ brevemque sodalem
qui titulus libro vellet inesse meo.

I did not endure, not I, to importune the stars that blast our mortal lot, or the eternal gods, but smitten with love for valour that would swiftly fall I resolved to seek a name with human help, and man to man I chose a brave and brief companion who should be willing to stand at the head of my book.

What is the *nomen* that Housman had wished to seek? What else but fame, a common meaning? And "seek a name" can so be understood. In this aspiration Housman decided to seek human help, not superhuman, and chose his helper—Moses Jackson, *harum litterarum contemptor*. What of *cito casurae virtutis amore*? *Legi*, after *volui quaerere*, ought to imply that the choice of helper followed the decision to make a *human* choice. Is he saying that love

¹ *-que* is omitted in the citation.

of Moses' excellence (or whatever, for the untranslatable *virtus*) was behind that decision)? If so, I have to desiderate the clarity of thought and formulation that is the hallmark of Housman's style *utraque lingua*.

May not *virtutis* have a quite different and more specific application, perhaps most fittingly to be illustrated by Horace's *et mea / virtute me involvo* (*Carm.* 3.29.54–55)? Resigning worldly goods, Horace wraps himself in his *virtus*, that is (English "virtue" could not be less felicitous here), his power as an achiever. The *Manilius* came out of Housman's *virtus*, his passion and genius for scholarship, in which it would stand as a towering example—for a short while. For the scholar would die and "perhaps there will be no long posterity for learning." But conscious of its inevitable evanescence, he had the Roman craving for posthumous glory—to build himself a monument.

A couple of incidental queries. Are there other examples of Housman's Latin verse apart from the four-line epigram in *Manilius* I p. xxi and of course *exempli causa* supplements in textual lacunae? And what made him deprive *Latium* (adj.) of its customary capital, which he himself regularly uses in his texts? And, far from any wish to find fault, I cannot help wishing that human anatomy to be dissolved by death (line 26) had not been represented by *bones*.