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ROSEMARY M. NIELSEN AND ROBERT H. SOLOMON

Horace and Housman: Twisting Conventions

1
It is rare to find a classical poem and its English translation equally as revelatory of self as are Horace's Odes IV. 7 and A.E. Housman's translation published in 1897.* In translating a classical work, a textual critic and scholar, which Housman was, usually has little room and

* Horace, Odes IV. 7

Diffugere nives, redeunt iam gramina campis
arboribusq; comae;
mutat terra vices, et decrescuntia ripas

flumina praetereunt;
Gratia cum Nymphis geminisque sororibus audet
ducere nuda choros.

immortalia ne speres, monet annus et alnum
quae rapit hora diem;
frigora mitescunt Zephyris, ver proterit aestas
interitura simul

pomier Autumnus fruges effuderit, et mox
bruma recurrit iners.

damna tamen celeres reparant caelestia lunae;
nos ubi decidimus
quo pater Aeneas, quo Tullus dives et Ancus,
pulvis et umbra sumus.

quis scit an adiciant hodiernae crastina summae
tempora di superi?
cuncta manus avidas fugient heredis, amico
quae dederis animo.

cum semel occideris et de te splendida Minos
fecerit arbitria,
non, Torquate, genus, non te facundia, non te
restituere pietas;

infernis neque enim tenebris Diana pudicum
liberat Hippolytum,
nec Lethaeae valet Theseus abrumperare caro
vincula Pirithoo.

almost no desire, nor justification, for exploring personal feelings.¹ Temperamentally too, Housman was not inclined to permit the per-

A.E. Housman, *More Poems* v. 'Diffugere Nives,' Horace, Odes IV. 7

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

(5)

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

(10)

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

(15)

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

(20)

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

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

(25)

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

¹ 'The sole criterion of the merit of his [the translator's] translation is its conceptual accuracy; he must neither omit any unit from the original, nor add any unit to the original, nor substitute in his own tongue a unit of different sense from that of the original.' D.C. Woodworth, *Classical Journal* 33 (1938) 194. By her standards, and by extension, the prevailing code of the era, Housman's poem is wanting. According to J.P. Postgate: 'By general consent, though not by universal practice, the prime merit of a translation proper is Faithfulness,

sonal to mix with the scholarly.² A close examination of the structure, language, and imagery of Horace's poem reveals a refashioning of literary commonplaces, attitudes towards nature, love, and death. Similarly, reading Housman's translation in light of his knowledge of the text, his preference for the literal translation by John Conington (1863),³ and our exegesis of Horace's ode, we sense the presence of deeply held, personal concerns in what is ostensibly a translation. IV. 7 has been out of favor in recent years, while Housman's translation of it has been regarded as accurate and sensitive, a 'lovely rendering,'⁴ but our study indicates that both judgments deserve re-examination.

Odes IV. 7 has been depreciated for three decades in terms which Conington himself expressed: 'The Odes of Horace, in particular, will, I think, strike a reader who comes back to them after reading other books, as distinguished by a simplicity, monotony, and almost poverty of sentiment, and as depending for the charm of their external form not so much on novel and ingenious images as on musical words aptly chosen and aptly combined.'⁵ Housman's insistence that 'poetry is not the thing said but a way of saying it'⁶ has been used recently by Woodman to criticize the 'patchwork character' of IV. 7: he finds verbal clichés, a lack of subtlety, and, the most crucial flaw, an absence of coherence.⁷ Ironically, however, as Woodman understands, it was

and he is the best translator whose work is nearest to his original.' *Translation and Translations* (London 1922) 3.

² R.E. Mortimer, a student of Housman's, recalls: 'In spite of this [Housman's acid tongue], we all liked him in a kind of way, and felt a certain awe of him as a man of mystery and of manifest ability ... when he interpreted a page of Latin text, his precise and incisive translations, free from all ambiguity and humbug, are remembered still.' Maude Hawkins, A.E. Housman: *Man behind a Mask* (Chicago University Press 1958) 135.

³ '... I think Conington's [1863] better, though less showy, than Theodore Martin's [1860]: closer to the sense, and nearer, though of course not near enough, to Horace's manner': from a letter addressed to John Drinkwater, December 1922. *The Letters of A.E. Housman*, ed. H. Maas (London 1971) 209.

⁴ R.R. Dyer, 'Diffugere Nives: Horace and The Augustan Spring,' *Greece and Rome*, Series 2, xii (1965) 83.

⁵ J. Conington, *The Odes and Carmen Saeculare of Horace* (London 1904) preface, xxix.

⁶ 'The Name and Nature of Poetry,' A.E. Housman: *Selected Prose*, ed. John Carter (Cambridge University Press 1961) 187.

⁷ A.J. Woodman, 'Horace's Odes Diffugere Nives and Solitudo Actis Hiems,' *Latomus* 31 (1972) 752-78; on pp. 756-66, Woodman summarizes trends in criticism of

Housman who made an unusual, emotional defence of Odes IV. 7, praising it as 'the most beautiful poem in ancient literature.'⁸ In Housman's career, neither before nor after 1914 do we have records of such comments in his lectures. Housman detested the conventional and the soothing in poetry, as Woodman notes; therefore, it is inevitable that we examine conventions in Horace's poem and Housman's version. Neither poet rests easily with assumptions made in the past about the nature of poetry, the value of love, and the significance attached to death. Both poets celebrate the power of self-knowledge in a world of limited action. Yet Housman examines love from his own experience and the biases of his time; his IV. 7 is radically altered, by Horace's standards, and the classical scholar must have known this was so.

Housman especially praised the imaginative quality of IV. 7 and its lyric beauty, and although he acknowledged the fidelity of Conington's translation of Horace, when Housman translated IV. 7, he radically transformed it. It seems that, faced with psychological pressures created by the death from cancer of his mother after nearly a decade of continual childbearing, and writing within a climate of censure for homosexuality,⁹ Housman translated the ode in ways that reveal these conscious or unconscious concerns. Among other things, Housman created image-clusters dealing with lost maternal beauty that are not supported by Horace's nature imagery; he deleted mythical figures essential to the Latin ode; and he added English colloquialisms unjustified by the Latin diction. Most important, however, he added the sophisticated *persona*, and altered the tone, metre, rhyme, structure, and final message of the ode. In order to understand Housman's far-reaching changes, we must first examine Horace's organization, and his use of poetic techniques and ideas in IV. 7.

The design that we see contains seven scenes or movements, split into two groups, and arranged rhetorically in a series of planned in-

IV. 7. Our purpose is to continue the analysis of IV. 7, not to compare it with I. 4.

8 R.P. Graves, *A.E. Housman, The Scholar-Poet* (London 1979) 171-2.

9 Graves, 102 ff., discusses the impact of the Wilde case on Housman's generation. We shall probably never know whether Housman's affinity for Moses Jackson, which presumably made Housman fearful of introducing Jackson to his family, and which resulted in an abortive series of poems, in *Additional Poems*, about the break-up of male relationships, was other than Platonic. See, too, *A Shropshire Lad* XLIV and the 1895 letter (Graves, p. 104), in which Housman laments the suicide of a young naval cadet, apparently to avoid exposure for what Wilde called 'Love that dare not speak its name.'

terruptions and restatements.¹⁰ Lines 1-6 describe a recent and tentative springtime. The gnomic utterance of lines 7-8, which interrupts the natural description of the seasons, marks a brief second scene or panel. The third panel comprises lines 9-12, and emphasizes the seasonal cycle as a rapid motion towards death. The fourth movement (the *tamen* panel, lines 13-16) contains an unusual image of lunar renewal and the contrastive figure of the decay of Roman kings and heroes. Like the *sententia*, the fifth movement's rhetorical question (17-18) temporarily stops the progress of the preceding lines; IV. 7 has a strategy of faltering steps, halting progressions.

The poem moves, in the sixth step (19-24), to a personal injunction to Torquatus about the folly of trusting in material legacies, and about the necessity of relying on one's own spirit. The seventh and concluding part (25-8) presents examples of the impotence of men and deities in the face of death, despite love, friendship and noble stature.

The first twelve lines provide us with two distinct descriptions of the seasons, separated from the rest of the poem by two jarring interruptions. In the last sixteen lines, the poem turns to the theme of acceptance of the inevitable legacy of death. Horace displays this latter theme in two ways: first, he presents Torquatus with the fact of his own fate, and second, Horace shows the inability of anyone — god, king, or hero — to rescue the dead. Thus, the ode's structure is unconventional, with seven small panels arranged in two large divisions (1-12; 13-28).

In the first panel, Horace uses words that carry connotations of decay, loss and danger to describe the renewal of the earth. The complexity of the poem is, like that of I. 4, hinted at in the choice of the verb that starts the first line. The perfect tense of this initial word 'diffugere' ('they have fled') is ambiguous about the precise condition of the disappearing snows: either they have fled apart or they are still fleeing, as the perfected state may express. As a result, the reader cannot be secure in the initial judgment that winter is over. Furthermore, the *diæresis* that occurs after 'nives' ('snows') balances the departing of the snows and the returning of the grasses ('gramina') in the same line; this, too, suggests that we are caught on the cusp of two seasons. The return of the green grasses (1, 'redeunt') is also an uncompleted

10 Woodman, 760. Three possible structures, two of them tripartite, are examined. Despite preferring a scheme which separates the poem into parts at lines 8 and 16, Woodman remains unconvinced that any of the structures justifies the image of repair introduced by 'tamen' instead of 'etiam.'

act, although the verb is in the present tense, the adverb 'iam' ('now') indicates that the process continues. Moreover, it is possible that the grasses are appearing prematurely (if the winter snows are still in the act of fleeing or receding, and not yet fled). One of the chief themes of the first half of the poem is subtly expressed: the perpetual ebb and flow of the surface of the earth.

After the tension that begins with the first image of snows escaping or fleeing, there is tonal counterpoint and a degree of ambiguity in the description of spring in the first six lines. While winter may not have completely disappeared yet, spring has not come in its fullness. The latter seems the case since there are no flowers, playful flocks, or sacrifices offered to the vegetative deities in honor of the advent of spring.¹¹ There are no humans in this impermanent landscape. The poem begins with nature caught in a precarious balance of contrary processes. The disjunctive organization is thus foreshadowed by and complementary to the early imagery, sound, and expression.

This six-line unit also establishes a second theme, in which the re-emergence of life after death or winter is closely associated with physical damage and loss. The first example of this connection of nature's rebirth to loss appears in lines 3-4, where the words themselves evolve, from 'mutat' ('it changes') to 'vices' ('exchanges' or 'reciprocal cycles') to 'decescentia' ('subsiding'). Horace varies the conventional treatment of the progressive nature of spring, just as the spring waters have literally rearranged the normal landscape, causing damaging floods even while they hasten the season by fructifying the earth ('terra' in line 3). Horace implies that considerable cost is involved in rebirth. This theme of exchanges and attempts to balance values permeates the ode. Horace is attempting to balance the imperfect profligacy of nature with man's sense of unfulfilled expectations. Unlike nature, which does return, though never without loss and change, man can only dream of return. Man's dreams involve his noblest imaginings, gods and heroes, and in the poem's next panel, the spring season is described in greater detail. Now even greater restrictions to the possibility of rebirth appear.

At the end of the first movement in lines 5-6, there appears a cluster of images of attenuation. Although there is a chorus of Nymphs and the Grace, they appear ungarnished. In addition, the Grace is naked, not clothed in conventional diaphanous garments,¹² while the others

may or may not be naked (grammatically 'nuda' can refer only to 'Gratia'). There are no celebrants to be inspired by the dance of the deities. In fact, there is no dance, only that implied by the word 'choros' (6), which literally denotes a band or troop and only suggests movement. In addition, although Horace's description of the diminished chorus is ironically lengthy, no Venus appears (as in I. 4, 5-6) to lead or to accompany the group. Finally, the goddesses are not presented, as they conventionally are, near water, baths or fountains.¹³ In the first movement of IV. 7, water is restricted to the body of withdrawing or subsiding floods; this image carries resonances of harm, change and escape, in addition to those of fertilization. The landscape has been changed by the waters that accompany spring; by extension, so too have the environment and life of man. The changes are not unquestionably good. For example, the land's contours may have been altered by the flooding (and men may have died). On the whole, then, the goddesses are not in the scene in which they ought to be, and they move without conventional rhythm, unity or promise.¹⁴

In the description of these women, the verb 'audet' (5) has connotations of courage or nerve; it suggests that they are taking a chance by appearing in an unwelcome manner, time, or place. The combination of 'audet' and 'nuda' suggests, therefore, not conventional sensuality and ethereal self-possession, but rather an unexpected vulnerability and timidity. Why the Grace might hesitate or feel vulnerable is difficult to explain (although classical attributions of human qualities and emotions to deities are frequent). It may be that Horace presents the goddesses as uncomfortable with the kind of spring in IV. 7, which is not perfect, idealized, nor even stylized.¹⁵

As a result of Horace's descriptive surprises and variations, the panel containing the Nymphs and the Grace does not transport us into a fecund or festive world. Later in IV. 7, in the last two lines, two more female figures appear, Diana and an adjectival form of Lethe. In this

Hellenistic poetry in 'divine raiment' (*Θεοειδὲς πέπλος*, *The Greek Anthology* IX. 640). Some commentators see the absence of clothing in IV. 7 as symbolic of the lack of foliage in early spring; we see continued imagery of diminished growth throughout the poem.

¹³ For example, *The Greek Anthology*: IX. 326 ff. and 625 ff.

¹⁴ See Odes I. 4, 5-7.

¹⁵ See K. Quinn, *Horace: The Odes* (St. Martin's Press 1980) 312, *ad. loc.* where the entry of the goddesses is seen as an evocation of 'the imaginary world of sophisticated fancy.'

¹¹ For conventional elements of the springtime *encomium*, see Horace, Odes I. 9 and III. 13; *The Greek Anthology*: IX. 363; 384, 1-6; 437.

¹² In Graeco-Roman art they are usually dressed; at least once they appear in

manner, IV. 7 commences with female characters who lack specifically feminine bodies or actions, and the poem concludes with two other female figures who are not conventionally participants in vegetative renewal. Diana's procreative function is minimal because she is chaste; Lethe has no relation to spring fertility. In Horace's poem, Diana, as in Euripides' play, is unsuccessful in gaining rebirth for Hippolytus. Lethe's potential for rebirth of the chosen dead is only at the cost of memory.¹⁶

Counter-conventional strategies fill the ode, and include the gnomic utterance of the second movement (7-8), which has interested critics and which requires close examination.¹⁷ The collocation of the two verbs ('ne speres, monet') dramatizes the cautious approach Horace urges us to take in celebrating nature. 'ne speres' means 'do not expect,' although it also has a second nuance, 'do not hope for'; 'monet' can be translated as 'it cautions.' By juxtaposition of the two verbs, the ode urges rejection of the initial satisfaction at the arrival of spring, encouraging, instead, circumspection and restraint. The conventional promises of spring are never fulfilled within the poem, not even on the material level. A spare, diminished spring is followed by a harvest, whose falling apples are more real than the unseen blossoms that, logically, must have preceded them. The second movement reinforces and summarizes the ambivalence of lines 1-6.

Horace's diction, in the second panel, extends the gnomic questioning of the natural fruitfulness of the earth. 'alumnus' in line 7 denotes physical nourishment, but that image is the only positive one in the panel;¹⁸ it is immediately followed, in the rest of the movement, by images that deny the hope of man for immortality. In effect, the initial presentation of spring is bordered by the two-line *sententia*, in which is made explicit Horace's challenge to the relatively simplistic, but widely accepted, springtime conventions. For example, the progressing spring is now described as merely a day or hour. Literally, 'hora,' in line 8, also refers to season, and may anticipate two other words con-

nected with weather and periods of time controlled by the weather: 'lunae' (13, 'moons') and 'caelestia' (13, 'heavens').¹⁹ But the juxtaposition with 'diem' and the placement inside the relative pronoun clause which 'hora' governs suggest that Horace wants us to read the shorter period, day or moment. Diction, structure, and sound combine to close the already truncated evocation of spring and its rewards. In this fashion, the second movement of IV. 7 is a capstone to the first.

The poem's reconsideration of the natural seasons, which enters in the third movement (9-12), jars the reader, but is not redundant, as some have thought.²⁰ Now the year is shown as a rapidly moving cycle of destruction, not regeneration. The emphasis on the procession towards inevitable loss is explicit, not implied, and rigorously erases the poem's initial, unfulfilled promise of bounty. The first word, 'frigora' ('chills'), recalls 'nives' (1) with the focus on the physical aspects of winter. 'Bruma' (12) is a euphemism for winter, and denotes the days of solstice, not the season itself.²¹ In this panel, violent change and final dissolution appear or are implied throughout spring and summer (9-10), 'ver proteriti aestas/ interitura simul' (summer, itself about to die, will have crushed spring). Through the incrementation of negative connotations, Horace keeps death and winter subtly but constantly in the poem's background.

The diction of the third movement adds to the theme of trampled bounty. Summer will 'crush' (9, 'proterit') spring; it is an act of aggressive evolution. Horace is avoiding conventional descriptions of natural burgeoning. The destruction of spring, ironically, follows the amelioration of wintry chills by the Zephyrs earlier in the same line; the tread of summer erases any hope associated with this action. The headlong rush of the seasons towards winter foreshadows Horace's theme, in the poem's second half, of irreversible human loss through death.

The Zephyrs, warming westerly winds, continue the poem's reduction of the fecund and female elements of nature: they assume a role

¹⁶ See Plato, *Republic*, 621a; and Vergil, *Aeneid* VI, 713-15: 'tum pater Anchises: anime, quibus altero fato/ corpora debentur, Lethaei ad fluminis undam/ securus latices et longa oblivia potant.'

¹⁷ C. Becker, *Das Spätwerk des Horaz* (Göttingen 1963) 148-9.

¹⁸ For 'alumnus' as the nurturing or fostering care of earth, daylight and Venus, see Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura* 2, 997; Vergil, *Aeneid* 7, 644; *Ecllogue* 8, 17; Plautus, *Rudens* 694; but see C. Schiller, *Commentar zu einigen Oden des Horatius* (Leipzig 1837), who finds it only 'ein sehr gewöhnliches Beiwort zu dies.'

¹⁹ W. H. Alexander, 'Horace's Odes and Carmen Saeculare,' *University of California Publications in Classical Philology* 13 (1947) 232: 'losses in respect of weather' or 'losses caused by weather.'

²⁰ R. G. M. Nisbet and M. Hubbard, *A Commentary on Horace: Odes Book 1* (Oxford 1970) 60.

²¹ See Cato, *De Agri Cultura* 17, 1; Caesar, *De Bello Gallico* 5, 13, 3; Pliny, *Naturalis Historia* 18, 231; and Horace, *Odes* II. 6, 18; and *Sermones* II. 6, 25.

traditionally allotted to Venus.²² Zephyrus regularly attend Venus, who is missing from this ode, which offers variations on older conventions.

Most innovatively and surprisingly, however, Horace assigns 'reparant' (13, 'repairs' or 'restores') to the Iunae (literally months or moons). If Iunae is seen as a metaphor for the passage of seasonal time or weathers, spring's return may be implied, and the shock-value of Iunae diminished. Even in that event, however, Horace, by not naming spring and by treating the return as a function of the pale light of the evening, further weakens the power, extent, and unique promise of that season. In iv. 7 the rush of the natural cycle, the choice of metaphors, and the selection of diction attenuate our conventional understanding of the spring season.

For example, autumn's 'apple-bearing' (11, 'pomifer'), the time when it 'will have poured forth the fruits' (11, 'fruges effuderit'), occurs in a poem which lacks the sun, as well as flowers, bees, and other signs of natural fertility. In addition, within its own panel, no one receives this autumnal plenty, since, until now, there are no humans. The pouring out is a contingent action, like the healing of the moons; it is, in fact, suspended in the future perfect tense ('effuderit').

Winter is hastening back to the earth soon, as the adverb 'mox' shows (11), and will end autumn. 'Sluggish' (12, 'iners') denotes an energy-draining quality, depictive of winter solstice. The verb 'recurrat' ('runs back') once more indicates transition between states of being, recalling 'diffugere' (1), 'redeunt' (1) and 'praetereunt' (4, 'they are passing beyond'). Its tense is present, but with an emphasis on the future because of 'mox.' The harvest-promise of autumn exists in a potential future; the sapping winter solstice leaves neither time nor strength for harvest; and there are, anyway, no men to gather the fruit. Like winter and its threat of death, the solstice is culminative or final, ending the first half of the ode. The seasons cure and mar with little useful (or used) bounty.

Horace gives imagistic and rhetorical structure to the ode in subtle ways. For one thing, the poem is full of uncompleted or broken groupings: the two sisters; the single Grace; and, reading 'bruna' (12) literally as solstice, three named seasons instead of four. In iv. 7, there is a consistent theme, which later becomes explicit, of broken contracts, unsatisfying legacies, and unfulfilled promises. The ode is also framed

by coldness, beginning with 'diffugere nives' (1) and closing with the cold of the underworld. In addition, lines 9-12 begin with 'frigora' and end with 'bruna.' Throughout iv. 7 spring, summer, and autumn are encircled, like life itself, by cold, darkness, and sluggishness. The poem moves from a pale, unstable spring to the lower world of pale, bloodless, and cold humans. The promises of a reborn world and a reborn human being pale before the realities of natural loss and undefeated death.

The poem's second half begins ominously at the time of the longest night of the year, the literal solstice. Diminished activity and sluggishness result from reduced sunlight as winter replaces fall. Yet Horace makes 'bruna' the season of repair (13, 'damna tamen celeres reparant caelestia Iunae': 'nevertheless, swift moons are repairing celestial damages'). This shocks the reader. The line deserves detailed analysis: 'damna' ('damages'), in particular, calls for examination. The plurals, 'damna' and 'Iunae,' recall those of the first scene: snows, grasses, trees, floods and riverbanks. For a moment the reader does not connect 'celeris' ('swift') with a particular noun, because there are several plural possibilities. Therefore, the repairer of the damage is uncertain until the final word of the line. Furthermore, 'damna' carries connotations of penalty and natural defect,²³ so that the line initially stresses natural damage, and delays the mention of the sole means of renovation. 'Celeres,' coming after the caesura, receives emphasis and suggests swift action, which would be curative, after all ('reparant'). But the adjective 'caelestia' returns us to 'damna,' defining the extent of the damage. With 'Iunae' we swing once more from despair to promise. After the tortuous word order has been negotiated, we then feel the shock of recognition that the rehabilitation comes from moons, and not suns. As with the progressive verb forms of panel one and the injunction 'immortalia ne speres' (7) of the second panel, 'damna' reveals Horace's concern with impermanence at all levels of existence. No moon, no season (certainly not the spring of this poem), no legacy (19-20), no special gifts (23-4, 'genus,' 'facundia,' and 'pietas': 'lineage,' 'eloquence,' and 'piety'), and no king, hero, or goddess fully rehabilitates the world in iv. 7. It is a lesson worth repeating and extending; something human makes it difficult to accept.

Horace ties the theme of a disappointing rehabilitation and falling or dying to the only natural creatures capable of drawing value from

22 For the customary associations of Zephyrus with lively springtime activity and with Venus, see *The Greek Anthology* x, 1-7; 15. See Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura* 1, 11; v, 737 ff.; and also Catullus 46, 1-3.

23 See Horace III. 5, 27; Propertius III. 13, 2 for 'damna' as financial loss. See Manilius 2, 95 and 3, 287 for 'damna' as damage caused by the waning moon.

death, in a world where rehabilitation is illusory, the 'we' of the personal pronoun and verb-ending of 'nos ... decidimus' (14, 'we have fallen down'). For the first time men enter IV. 7. The human auditors of 'nos ubi decidimus' are then immediately joined to the heroic Roman figures of Aeneas, Ancus, and Tullus. This triad is accompanied by an important pair of singular nouns, 'pulvis' and 'umbra' (16, 'dust' and 'shade'), the ultimate states towards which all humans, even heroes, move. The bounty of the world has given way, as the subject-matter of this panel, to a group of legendary figures, which has given way to the stuff of the underworld. One convention, among many conventions of style, metaphor, myth and theme, which is broken by Horace, is the traditional treatment of the cycle of the seasons as being efficacious, predictable, and compensatory for man's immortality. While the seasons in IV. 7 repair some material damage, no man reaps or harvests benefit. It is as if a contractual expectation of man, inherent in his literature and his psychology, were not met. Poetic conventions and traditional beliefs are legacies from the past, promises offered to us as literary and philosophical guides. Horace, like any original poet, begins the task of creation the moment he questions these promises.

Returning to the combined motif of accounts (17, 'adiciant') and philosophical promises (17, 'summae'), Horace asks: 'Who knows whether the gods above might add tomorrow-times to day's sum?' (17-18).²⁴ This is a challenge to man's simple, business-like assessment of life. The poet implies that few men see the consequences of mortality. Horace made the reader join with the narrator in asking and answering this question. Throughout the ode, we are made to think of transitions or exchanges by words such as: 'diffugere' (1, 'they have fled'), 'redeunt' (1, 'they are returning'), 'mutat' (3, 'it exchanges'), 'decrecentia' (3, 'subsiding'), 'praetereunt' (4, 'they are passing beyond'), 'alumnus' (7, 'life-giving'), 'rapit' (8, 'it seizes'), 'proterit' (9, 'it will have crushed'), 'interitura' (10, 'about to die'), 'reparant' (13, 'they are repairing'), 'decidimus' (14, 'we have fallen down'), and the line 'pulvis et umbra sumus' (16, 'we are dust and shade'), whose last word foreshadows in sound the last word of the contractual metaphor, 'summae' (17, 'sums'). The poem's chief image-clusters have gone from flow and change, to promise, then on to death; and now they move to the

sums or orderly conclusions each man projects about the rehabilitation of nature and his personal future. Horace uses the language of business or reckoning. He describes man's life as 'the sum of today's days,' and grants to the supreme gods (18, 'di superi') the sole prerogative to credit our account, that is, to add 'tomorrows.' Unbound by contractual obligation, however, the gods might do so, but without accountability.

The question of lines 17-18 is formulated in rhetoric which recalls the use of word order and plurals in line 13, in the phrasing 'hodiernae crastina summae tempora.' The plural ending of the verb 'adiciant' (17) allows, at first, each of these words to be considered as the possible subject of the verb; it is not until 'di superi' (18) that we realize that today's sum ('hodiernae ... summae') has been reduced to the singular, and tomorrow-times ('crastina ... tempora') is emphasized as a plural possibility. Once again in IV. 7, Horace treats the present as a lean time and the future as vague, neutral, and uncertain. In addition, with 'quo pater Aeneas' (15), hard consonant sounds ('quo ... quo'; 17, 'quis scit ... adiciant hodiernae crastina') rap out Horace's command that the reader pay attention to the rhetorical question.

Horace continues his word-play and variation of word-order, sound, rhetoric, and syntax in lines 19-20. He turns inward here as he considers two problems: the legacies men regard as possessing a lasting value, and the nature of the true self ('amico ... animo') in a world of mutability. The legacy-motif has been foreshadowed early in the ode by words such as 'fruges' (11, 'fruits'), 'damna' (13, 'damages'), 'dives' (15, 'gods') and 'summae' (17, 'sums'). The two phrases 'heredis, amico' (19) and 'dederis animo' (20) present an unusual, extended rhyme with six identical vowels; in fact, except for the second syllable in 'animo,' not only do all the syllables rhyme, but they also have the same stress weight.²⁵ Although the first phrase splits between 'heredis' and 'amico,' this is a rare case of extended or doubled Latin rhymes. The lines treat the difficulty of understanding the love one feels for a friend in light of inevitable human inability to hold on to things. The problem of linkage through affinities is revealed by the linkage between syllables.

The clause 'quae dederis' (20) separates 'amico' and 'animo,' with the result that one hears 'friend' before realizing that Horace is using 'amico

24 See *Sermones* II. 3, 124. 'Summing up' life's values appears in IV. 7 and I. 4, 15. Similar transactional or accounting images may be more frequent in *carpe diem* poems than we have understood, and may be important to the genre.

25 Internal rhyming of 'hērēdis' and 'dēdēris' may play on the Greek root 'cheir' (hand); it may show a contrast between giving and grasping in this section of Horace.

... animo, 'the dearest and truest friend': one's own soul, spirit or self. Just as time and its promises were devalued earlier in IV. 7, the contritions of possessions (19, 'cuncta') to man's happiness are negated now. Although pride in a legacy was part of the Roman code of behavior, with legal implications and even contractual resonances, Horace changes the inheritor in IV. 7 from the personified hands of the greedy heir, first into 'amico,' a male friend, and then, as the line progresses, into 'amico ... animo,' the interior person. This unexpected message about the true heir recalls 'immortalia ne speres' (7, 'do not hope for immortality'), although now it is delivered to an as yet unidentified audience, the 'you' in 'dederis' (20, 'you will have given'). The listener's attitude is controlled throughout IV. 7.

The poem has moved from no auditor (1-6), to a second person singular (7, 'speres'; 20, 'dederis'; 21, 'occideris'). Finally, it has a specific addressee, Torquatus (23).²⁶ In this way, IV. 7 has become steadily more specific and personal, which is reflected in its themes, grammar, and treatment of conventions. Nevertheless, the ode retains its basic concern with an uncertain future and the failure of attempts to deal with time by means of legacies of thought, style, and ritualized action. Greedy hands (19, 'manus avidas') clutch at our bequests and ignore our love, much as the seasons crush each other in the third panel. Now the poem presents death without euphemism: 12, 'bruma' ('winter-time'); 14, 'decidimus' ('we have fallen down'); 16, 'pulvis et umbra' ('dust and shade'); 21, 'occideris' ('sinking' or 'falling'). Minos enters to direct the thoughts of Torquatus and the reader about essential Roman virtues.²⁷

Minos is introduced by 'splendida' ('ennobling' or 'glittering') in line 21; the adjective modifies 'arbitria' (22, 'judgments'), but, because it precedes Minos, resonances of the prestige of the judgment surround the judge as well. 'Splendida' brings connotations of light and glory to Hades, in contrast to the 'pulvis et umbra' of line 16. In addition to the imagery of a noble judge and judgment, lines 21-4 carry a heavy rhythm, which complements the seriousness of the subject. Lines 21-3

contain partial and full rhymes ('splendida ... facundia'; 'non te ... non te'); anaphora with 'non' and 'te'; and abundant *-t* sounds (especially in lines 22-3). At this place of emphasis we move from the venerable and fearsome mythical figure, Minos, to the actual human being, Torquatus, who is summoned to attention by harsh knocking sounds and the explicit denial of the legacy of family stock (23, 'genus'), persuasive oratorical skill (23, 'facundia') and pious bonding (24, 'pietas'). It is difficult to overestimate the importance of the loss of such a patriarchal value as 'pietas,' which denotes participation in a traditional religious, political, and social code of belief and behavior.²⁸ Through sound and sense the three 'non'-clauses dramatically announce Horace's refusal to support three traditional means of ensuring the immortality of an individual. There is, moreover, a deeper issue raised: in a world of mutability (on the natural, social, and personal levels) are there any standards for judgment that are not temporary, too? We have seen this point raised in regard to the granting of tomorrows; it is now raised in regard to the granting of a second lifetime by Minos. Horace has moved from accepting the conventional standards for the determination of the value of a life to enlarge the significance of the *sententia* in lines 19-20. In IV. 7, we are continually driven to depend on one's self-judgment. Rhadamanthos and Aeacus are left out of IV. 7, and Minos, who is connected with fearsome activities, is used so that judgment by others may itself be questioned. If one cannot understand the basis for awarding the after-life, how is one to work towards earning it? The poem moves from Minos to Lethe in a way that suggests an arbitrary, or nearly arbitrary, selection process and a subsequent process of forgetting. Judgment of man and god, heroes and judges is at question. Judgment, however, constitutes a secondary theme in the final lines. The primary theme is the need to understand that all promises, even those made by gods and near gods to those beloved of the gods, can be broken after death. Horace forces Torquatus, whose name is suggestive of the tortuous, twisting motion of much of the ode, especially the last few lines, to accept that neither the goddess Diana nor the hero Theseus is strong enough to break the chains of the underworld (25, 'infernis ... tenebris') and free Hippolytus or Perithoos. After the promised splendor of 'splendida arbitria' (21-2) we have returned to the darkened shadow of 'pulvis et umbra' (16). Again Torquatus' name reminds us of the pulling and twisting motion of the potential deliverers

26 A member perhaps of the gens Manlii Torquati. W. R. Johnson in *The Iliad of the Lyric: Lyric Modes in Ancient and Modern Poetry* (University of California Press 1982) believes that one effect of using the named addressee is to increase the sense of intimacy by making the reader 'present' to the poet. See p. 127.

27 Conington does not delete Minos (nor confuse the order of the founders of Rome). For Minos in classical literature see W. H. Roscher, *Ausführliches Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie* (Leipzig 1884-1934) Vol. II, part 2, 2992-9.

28 For social, religious, and moral implications of 'pietas,' see R. M. Henry, 'Pietas and Fides in Catullus,' *Hermathena* 75 (1950) 63-8; 76 (1950) 48-57.

against the Lethaeian chains (27-8, 'Lethaea ... vincula'). Horace presents Theseus interposed, caught, that is, between 'Lethaea' and 'vincula Pirithoo'; rhetorically, he is between the chained friend he wishes to save and the river that creates the chains. Lethe recaptures the water imagery of the first phrases of lines 1-4, with the crucial difference that Lethe is the river of total forgetting. Lethe may also be tied to the poem's themes of loss and imperfect rehabilitation, for in Vergil, *Aeneid* VI. 703 ff., the souls drinking her waters are reincarnated without memory of what they have been. Even reincarnation involves an exchange, as love, memory, and life's virtues are irretrievably lost.

Horace views all rehabilitation of the earth, the moon, the seasons, and human life as disappointing, because total renewal is impossible. In IV. 7, liberation from the cycle of loss through the judgment of Minos, should it be favorable, is ironically disappointing also, since the reborn (whether moral or mythic) pays the cost of all memory. In this reassessment of the mythology and conventional religious and social attitudes about legacies, judgments, and death, Horace, the *vates* or seer, uses the struggle against inevitabilities to urge us to renew our attention to the 'amico ... animo' (19-20). The final six lines of IV. 7 ring with negatives forcefully telling Torquatus (and us) what should not be believed; the final rhyme 'caro ... Pirithoo' (27-8) echoes what may be the poem's key phrase 'amico ... animo' (19-20). In this fashion, Horace underscores his injunction to Torquatus, and to us, to concentrate on educating the spirit, and not on trusting the comfortable conventions and customs associated with legacies. So too Diana, Hippolytus, Theseus, and Pirithoos learned, by their own struggles against the Lethaeian chains, not to rely upon ties of devotion and affinity.

In this reading, IV. 7 is unified and passionate; subtly and consistently it breaks chains of association. Sound, sense, and structure present Horace's central concerns: the need to recognize, at all levels, inevitable loss amid apparent replenishment; the value of criticizing established social, religious, and poetic conventions; the acceptance that divine judgments, being mysterious and unpredictable, cannot guide human conduct in the face of death. Finally, Horace directs attention to the nurturing of one's 'amico ... animo.' The disjunctiveness of IV. 7 breaks traditional trains of thought, and forces the reader back from illusions about the future; the ode espouses, as the proper response to the broken dreams of rebirth, self-reliance in its purest sense.

II

Housman's poem is a compound of translation and original creation. Like many of the poems in *A Shropshire Lad* it contains a complicated *persona*, a speaker of fictionalized innocence and sophistication. In Horace, and in the Conington translation that Housman praised, there are no speakers distinguishable from the poet himself. Housman's *persona* is closely tied to almost every modification of Horace, most notably changes in meter, rhythm, stanzaic pattern, diction level, imagery, tone, and even the chronology of the founding fathers of Rome. It is difficult to overstate the importance of the *persona* as an alteration of IV. 7. John Stevenson has written that Housman recognizes 'the value of an essentially naive speaker in dramatizing the characteristic movement from innocence to experience' in *A Shropshire Lad*.²⁹ Leggett has also detected a pattern of diverse *personae* in those poems.³⁰ Housman's version of IV. 7 presents an unusually complex *persona*, who must be examined if we are to understand the greater pessimism, emotional intensity, and didacticism of Housman's poem.

The speaker has a mixture of English and Roman interests and backgrounds.³¹ For example, he writes of 'shaws,' 'meads,' and 'stern as-size' but also of Tullus, Diana, and Aeneas. He starts with a scene that could be set in any bucolic region, Rome of two millennia ago or present-day England, then breaks the English setting with the introduction of the 'Nymphs and Graces Three' in stanza two. He writes in iambic pentameter rhyming ABAB in seven quatrains, although Housman knew that the meter could not duplicate or parallel the First Archilochean of Horace's ode, with its combination of uniqueness and high seriousness. So, too, Housman knew that the sing-song rhymes were no match for the fluidity of Horace's pattern. Except for the absence of alternating three-stress and four-stress lines, Housman's version resembles the English ballad form he loved to use; there is no similar echo of a studied pastoral simplicity in Horace's ode.³² We begin Housman's

29 John Stevenson, 'The Ceremony of Housman's Style,' *Victorian Poetry* 10 (1972) 45-55.

30 B.J. Leggett, 'The Poetry of Insight: *Persona* and Point of View in Housman,' *Victorian Poetry* 14 (1976) 325-39.

31 Although several poems by Housman, aside from his translations, bear classical names in their lines (*A Shropshire Lad* viii, xxi and lxii; *Last Poems* iv and xxiv; *More Poems* x, xi, xxiii, and xlv; *Additional Poems* 1), no other poem bears so many classical names in a non-classical, let alone archaic English, setting and vocabulary.

32 In addition to the four-three stress alternation, some ballad forms appear in

ode with the understanding that its speaker has two literatures, two states of experience in life, two purposes in mind, two eras to present, and two stages to present for the actors of his poem. There is no induction, as in simpler poems with speakers; this version of Horace is more complicated.

The strategy of the speaker is to appear to be direct and simple and to hide a sophisticated mind and complicated attitudes. But the poem becomes darker in message and more emotionally charged than the original, and it concludes with a summary not in Horace. It is an elegy, a poem of mourning for two lost loves: the lover who suffers from giving birth and the lover who suffers from the death of comrades. There is no defense of the enlightened *'animo ... amico'*; behind the pretense of rural rawness lies a severely hurt, sophisticated speaker.

The speaker's origins are not impossible to guess. Housman writes in a world-weary time. Victorian England has seen the flowering of the attitudes presented in Arnold's *'Dover Beach'*: by 1897 'the sea of faith' is, if anything, less 'full' than before; T. S. Eliot's *'The Waste Land'* would continue the skepticism about God and society. Housman's personal sense of the frailty of civilization informs all of his art, and his sense that standards were collapsing may be seen in the contrast between the ancient world and the modern in such poems as *'To an Athlete Dying Young'*.³³ A contrast between the worlds of Horace and his translator, the speaker, may be seen in the reactions to homosexual love of comrades, a tolerated excess in Augustan Rome, a serious crime in England, as Oscar Wilde had recently discovered.³⁴ It is a theme and a source of tension in the poem.

The complex interplay of literatures and cultures appears in the structure selected by Housman's speaker for his translation of Horace. In stead of Horace's ring-composition with two major divisions and an ending that returned us to images of water and the flow of eternity, Housman presents his poem in a tripartite structure: the first two parts are two-stanza divisions in length, the last one three stanzas long. Iron-

ically, this three-part division characterizes some Horatian odes, though not IV. 7, as well as Pindaric poetry and the work of later dramatists; it is possible to see Housman's sections as strophe, antistrophe, and epode.³⁵ Throughout the poem, Housman's *persona* conceals and reveals himself by means of his degree of fidelity to Horace. Clearly, like Housman, he knows more than he tells, and we can learn a great deal from examining the discrepancies between the original and the copy.

The divergences appear in the first imagery of nature in the initial lines of the poem. Birth imagery not justified by Horace's poem appears in Housman. The river, singular instead of Horace's plural, *'flumina'*, withdraws to a river-bed instead of subsiding between riverbanks. There is an anthropomorphic quality to the river and to the earth that it has ravaged, 'altered' (4), and fructified. Spring 'returned' in Horace; its grasses and leaves 'renew their birth' in Housman, further anthropomorphizing the scene. The river seems to be treated as a husband returning to his bed after love, a love which alters the partner's 'fashion' (4) at least partly because it results in a renewed act of giving birth. All this is set against the edges of wilderness, 'shaws' (1), a dark and primal setting. None of these connotations and resonances of the wages of birth appears in Horace; their presence in the beginning of the translation serves to underscore the metrical, rhythmic, stanzaic, and structural divergences from Horace.³⁶

The second stanza continues the examination of the costs of renewed births by presenting the picture of rather timid female deities, who 'put off their fear/ And unapparelled in the woodland play' (5-6). The lines present the three women as if they were not the daring, nude figures of Horace; rather, they are children in a country game. The game, in addition, lacks song, dance, and devotional qualities, with the result that the diminished celebrants contrast vividly with the earth-mother figure of the first stanza. The scene drives the *persona* to a cold, fateful *sententia*: *'Thou wast not born for aye'* (8). The last word rhymes with 'gay' or 'bay' and means 'eternity,' with the effect that the line is briefer and gloomier than the rhetorical question of the original. The pessimism of the wisdom colors the rest of Housman's poem, especially the final stanza with its emphasis on the failure of comradesly love. The inno-

Housman with four-four stress structures. Three-three structures and non-ballad forms appear, too; the existence of these variations and other forms, nevertheless, indicates his ability to use and modify poetic structures.

33 T. B. Habber, 'Housman and Lucretius,' *Classical Journal* 58 (1963): 173-82. Habber presents evidence that Housman learned ways of criticizing gods and charging them with being oppressors from his readings in Lucretius.

34 Wilde's lost law suit, followed by conviction for homosexuality, a crime then, filled the last half decade of the century with scandal.

35 See *Odes* I. 20; 23; 26. Also *Odes* IV. 12. For the tricolon effect, see I. 8, 1-7; I. 14, 3-4; II. 5, 10-20.

36 The first two lines of Conington are: 'The snow is fled: the trees their leaves put on./ The fields their green: / Earth owns the change, and rivers lessening run/ Their banks between.'

cent play of the girlish deities seems to challenge the reader, who has already found negative features in springtime rebirth. Entropy overtakes maturation as a theme.

As in Horace, there is a second beginning, wherein the seasonal cycle is presented as also engaged in entropic action or motion. 'Hard cle on the heel of spring / Treads summer sure to die' (9-10); and on hers comes autumn, scattering his bounty more haphazardly than he does in Horace's 'effuderit' or 'pouring forth'.³⁷ Autumn is a masculine personification here, but winter is as unsexed as spring in Housman. Then sonification here, when nothing stirs' (12) returns us from a foolish back to wintertide, when nothing stirs' (12) returns us from a foolish bountifulness to the time of apparent death of the world. Housman's refusal to be consistent and grant sexual qualities to two of the four seasons is ironical, especially since they are the traditionally contrasted ones of spring and winter. Linguistic and mythological patterns for the seasons exist in Latin and English, but Housman ignores both literatures and introduces a greater bleakness into his poem.

Stanza four continues Housman's intensification of Horace's themes of inevitable loss and death. The metaphor of the altered fashion of the female earth is followed by the description of the marred world, which can be healed only by the return to the lunar cycle of twenty-eight days. Parallels to the return of the menstrual cycle after the birth of a child may be unintentional but resonances of female suffering fill the poem. The language supports these overtones, as 'tread' and 'dying' carry echoes of their sexual significance in English poetry. Housman's moon has a direct antecedent in Horace, of course, but the man's moon has a direct antecedent in Horace, of course, but the resonances are different because of the preceding imagery. Housman makes the moon's healing part of a process that includes birth, withdrawal of the fructifying male, and inevitable alteration and marring of the mother-earth. Finally, in a stanza that begins with a non-Horatian interjection, 'But oh' (13), and an equally original (and unique, for Housman) italicization of 'we' (15), Housman changes 'umbra,' 'shadows' or 'shades,' to 'dreams' (16). It is not only the underworld to which 'we' are now headed (as in the Latin) but also the place of 'dreams,' the world of Hadean visions; some might identify it as the subconscious. This is not explicit within the poem, but Housman's knowledge of Latin traditions and English rhymes makes it seem unlikely that he misses either his innovative description of Hades or his emphasis on 'dreams.'

³⁷ See, among other uses, the 'Song' in *Love's Labour's Lost*: 'When turtles tread, and rooks, and daws, / And maidens bleach their summer smocks,' for the ornithological use of 'treads,' an archaism Housman's *persona* must know.

Housman's fourth stanza increases the intimacy of the *persona*, the emotional intensity of the poem, and the tensions between what the *persona* tells us and what he implies about himself and his beliefs. Lovers pass on to two worlds: one of dust and one of dreams.

The stanza is important, also, because it contains a serious flaw in translation. For some reason Housman confuses Horace's order for the founding fathers of Rome in lines 15 and 16, putting Aeneas last. The change is hard to understand if we view the *persona* as that of an accurate student of Latin; it is even harder to grasp since we know that Housman was a classical scholar and a master of English rhythms. He is probably not changing the historical order out of laziness, ignorance, or parody of the *persona*; it is more likely that Housman is challenging the reader to sense the breakdown in the classical order. For the same reason, although Housman preferred Bentley's reading of 'pater' for 'pius,' he translates the phrase as 'good Aeneas' (16) instead of 'father Aeneas'.³⁸ We must know that this, too, reveals a breakdown in the speaker's accuracy; for some undisclosed reason the *persona* falters here, unable to mention the word 'father.' This poem depends on our comprehension of strategies: Housman breaks continuities on purpose. Young maidenhood is not able to flow into motherhood; seasons progress without continuing the scheme of sexual personification; the founders of Roman civilization are out of historical order. There is no modifier for Aeneas and Tullus, in spite of Housman's acceptance of *saevos* ('cruel') as the correct word in Latin.³⁹ Perhaps the *persona* is being unmasked as more rural and naive than we have thought him to be before now, but there can be no easy dramatic explanation for such upstaging. In fact, it may be that Housman is subtly undermining the respect for the *paterfamilias* that Horace uses, that the Augustan world cherishes, and that Housman and his age were questioning.⁴⁰

Line 17 introduces further changes to Horace's poem, which had concealed the identity of the audience and recipient of the poem's wisdom. For a moment the poem resembles a Browning dramatic monologue, but the listener is clearly Torquatus. Horace's '*animo ... amico*' becomes 'thy heart' (19) adding echoes of the lover to Torquatus. The phrase appears twice within one line, something very unusual in Housman's shorter poems, and jarring here too. Horace's '*quis scit,*'

³⁸ R. Bentley, *Q. Horatius Flaccus. Ex recensione et cum notis* (Berlin 1866)

³⁹ A. E. Housman, 'Adversaria Orthographia,' *Classical Review*, Vol. v (1891) 295

⁴⁰ L. Wenger, 'Häusgewalt und Staatsgewalt im römischen Altertum,' in *Miscellanea Francesco Enrie* II (1927) 1-55

'who has told,' is now 'what tongue has told,' in line 18 foreshadowing the appearance of 'golden tongue' in line 23 and reinforcing the sense of intimacy and a physical reference level missing from Horace.

The graphic detailing of physical elements in the imagery increases, with 'hands,' 'manus' in Horace, becoming 'fingers' (20) in Housman. The deletion of Horace's key phrase, 'animo ... amico,' however, leaves the stanza without an object for the heart's feasting. At this crucial moment in the directive to Torquatus, we are left unsure of what love shall please him. The ambiguity seems part of the strategy of the poem, which involves moving from love associated with birth towards a love associated with comradeship.

The sixth stanza continues the carefully planned ambiguities. The 'stern assize and equal judgments' (22) appear more specific than the 'splendida ... arbitria' of Horace. But the latter glorified both the judge and the judged; the place and time of the 'stern assize' are uncertain, and the effect seems predetermined and inevitably negative. Minos, too, was in Horace to remind us of the triple figures of judgment in Hades itself, who held the power for limited resurrection. But Housman has deleted him, and added sternness and impartiality. An unusual usage of 'friend' (24) as a verb adds to the difficulty of reading the stanza, and it departs from 'non ... restituet' ('shall not restore'), while emphasizing the poem's new interest in comradeship. The end of the stanza is ambiguous again, with the speaker either telling Torquatus that lineage, tongue, and righteousness shall not help him any longer or telling him that they will not help him any more than something else, perhaps legacies.⁴¹ The latter meaning is removed, however, by the period, making the sentence easier to understand but no less difficult to read for the first time. Housman's speaker is now depending on secondary levels of significance to make his points about the dangers and failures of love of comrades.

For a brief moment, then, the sixth stanza almost implies a second *sententia*, but the seventh contains no wisdom with which to refashion one's life. Instead, we find images of night, stain, and a chain that ends all hope for renewed love. The epode of Housman's poem juxtaposes Diana with 'pure of stain' (25) just as Horace had, but it will be recalled that 'pudicum' in Horace modified 'Hippolytum,' thus making the phrase play on Diana's traditional association with chastity; Housman

puts the modifying phrase into a different clause, separated from the name of the goddess by a comma and by the end of a line. The effect is that Diana stands alone in Housman, helpless: 'Diana steads him nothing' (26). In addition to this weakness, Diana appears in darkness of night, not amid the 'infernis ... tenebris' or lower realm of shades. We are swept back in the poem to stanza four, where the moon appeared by night to heal the marred world, and then to stanza three, where wintertide was a dark season when 'nothing stirs' (12). The night also recalls the 'dreams' of line 16. A nightmarish cluster develops towards the end of the poem: not even chaste goddesses can love men well enough to save them from eternal night.⁴²

The poem ends with no *sententia*, but a two-line sentence in enjambement is set off by a semi-colon. Horace's carefully drawn-out image of 'Lethae ... vincula' delays, until the ode's penultimate word, the knowledge that 'Lethae' (a feminine noun) is chaining the dead, and 'vincula' echoes the words that end in -a in the ode, linking them together in a sound-chain. But, in sound and sense, Housman tries for a different ending, in order to make his point. He diverges from Horace.

For one thing, Lethae does not appear in Housman; for another, there is a single chain instead of a pair or several. The word 'chain' (27) rhymes with 'stain' (25) and emphasizes anew the judgment of comradesly lovers as final and devastating. We end with 'the chain/ The love of comrades cannot take away' (27-8). Is it a chain that is unremovable or a love that is unremovable even if the chain holds the loved one? It is a final ambiguity; Housman challenges our immediate reading, the obvious one, for which the rest of the poem has prepared us – that love is defeated. That reading is still the better one, but now the poem reveals an equivocation, however small and unreasonable, in the speaker, an equivocation for which we have been prepared by other ambiguities in the final part of the translation. The poem ends in painful awareness, but incomplete acceptance, of the loss of comradesly love.

⁴¹ Housman treats dying as a voluntary 'descending'; this change to Horace reinforces Housman's theme of volition, error, stain, judgment, and subsequent unending punishment.

⁴² 'Caro' modifies 'Pirithoo,' in line 28; but in Housman there is a broader treatment of the matter of comradesly love. Also, Housman published textual commentaries on fragments of Euripides and may have known one that T.B.L. Webster translates in the following way (*Thaïs*, fr. 388N2): 'But there is another love among men, the love of a just, temperate, and brave soul. This ought to be the rule for men, that the temperate should love the pious and say good-bye to Kypriis, the daughter of Zeus.' See 'The Myth of Ariadne from Homer to Catullus,' *Greece and Rome*, Series 2, 13 (1966) 26.

The poem began with consideration of physical devastation associated with rebirth of the earth in spring, considered the destruction inherent in the seasonal cycle, broke Horace's chronology for the founding fathers, turned increasingly to ambiguities (however slight), and then ended with only one chain instead of several. This poem mourns two kinds of love, one connected with mother-earth (and perhaps all earthly mothers) and one connected with comrades who fall before assizes that are cruelly impartial. As in no other poem that Housman wrote, his long-respected translation of IV. 7 reveals the poet as one who understands with acuteness the suffering of lovers of two distinct kinds. As in no other poem, Housman reveals his ability to understand Latin poetry and his need to move beyond imitation and to present secondary levels of meaning. No Shropshire lad wrote this translation, and the divergences are not the result of ignorance, innocence, or accidental inaccuracy. We have external evidence for these judgments of ours about the seriousness of Housman's poem.

In May, 1914, two decades after the publication of the translation, when Housman devoted a lecture before students and colleagues, to IV. 7, to textual analysis of Horace's odes IV. 7, he concluded with a unique public recitation of his translation of the ode. We know now that this was a courageous act of extraordinary self-revelation, but Housman's audience, in a final irony, never recognized what the scholar-poet was doing, although one listener recorded that the characteristically taciturn professor seemed close to tears.⁴³ Housman's translation, it can be seen, twists Horace's ode, makes it an elegiac, yet sometimes almost hopeful, plea for acceptance of one who loved not wisely but too well, twice, once a mother who wore herself out with successive pregnancies, renewed births of a most dangerous kind, and then, either in dreams or in life, a comrade of his own, whom judgment and assize deemed lost forever.

43 One student at the lecture recalls: "This ode he dissected with the usual display of brilliance, wit, and sarcasm. Then for the first time in two years he looked up at us, and in a quite different voice said: 'I should like to spend the last few minutes considering this ode simply as poetry.' ... He read the ode aloud with deep emotion first in Latin, and then in an English translation of his own. ... 'That,' he said hurriedly, almost like a man betraying a secret, 'I regard as the most beautiful poem in ancient literature,' and walked quickly out of the room. Afterwards another undergraduate ... commented: 'I felt quite uncomfortable. I was afraid the old fellow was going to cry!'" R.P.

Graves, A.E. *Housman: The Scholar-Poet* (London 1970) 171-2.

III

It is difficult to reconstruct Housman's interest in Horace, but it may be that he felt a similar incentive to vary or twist the conventional in poetry and in morality, and felt a particular pain at the manner in which the centuries had twisted homosexual or homoerotic love from a normal experience to a serious crime deserving of cruel punishments. Then, too, he may have sensed that Horace had used allusions to ancient Greek and Roman literature and mythology as a means of discussing contemporary states of mind and culture. He may also have been drawn by the Horatian concentration on and acceptance of something that seemed inhospitable to Housman, the *paterfamilias*. He may have felt the ingenuity of the second start to Horace's poem, and he may have sensed the effect of the delayed information, broken meanings, and subtle juxtapositions. He may also have liked the unintentional attenuation of the female deities of spring rituals, and the emphasis on spring decay and loss, another unconventional or twisting element to Horace's ode. He may have recognized the possibilities inherent in using the healing moon as a symbol for the passage of time, especially in a poem where the passage of the seasonal cycle presents entropic motion. Broken legacies, promises, exchanges, and expectations fill Horace's ode, and they appealed to Housman's sense that the world promises more to youths, rural or not, than to sophisticates, whether they are poets or scholars or, as in his case, both.

Housman faced the translation just as Horace had faced the earlier literary conventions and conventional attitudes, with energy, subtlety, and innovation. His poem emerges as a twisting of Horace, who, in turn, had twisted the ancient to his advantage. If Horace's admonition to depend on an edified 'amico ... amico' seems preferable to Housman's gentle equivocation and constant pessimism, it should not blind us to the subtlety with which Housman diverged from Horace's example in order to create his elegy for lovers. These are two very different men, ages, and poetic aims. Comparison of Horace's Odes IV. 7 with Housman's 'Diffugere Nives' should be aimed at examining the achievements of two poets; the values of traditional concepts; the possibilities inherent in the process of translation; the evolution of ideas about love, legacies, and the human spirit.

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