

Housman and Swinburne

I find myself to be a rarity among writers of verse I know, in that I enjoy reading criticism and critical theory (aka, poetics and analytics, not "reviews") as much as reading verse (or, truthfully, often more, especially such verse as appears in today's MFA- and PC-dominated journals and perfect-bound books full of much of the same).

I'm even more removed from my cohort, in that I greatly enjoy reading articles in old academic journals, especially articles by once-renowned authors whose star has fallen.

In this vein, I recently was doubly favored by finding in the Sierra Vista Library bookstore, for a dime apiece, a stack of 1960s-era issues of *American Scholar*, and in one found an article by the now largely dismissed A.E. Housman on the now largely-forgotten Algernon Swinburne (both of whom have been noticed recently more for their homosexuality than for the quality of their work).

As it turns out, both these writers were once known as accomplished prosodists, experts on metrics--an aspect of verse largely ignored by poets and critics of our day; but (again, showing my outofdate tastes) I not only am interested in (though inept at and only erratically attentive to) metrics, but have a somewhat more than merely antiquarian interest in Swinburne and Housman. (Sidebar: Swinburne had a strong influence on the young metrics-mad Ezra Pound; Housman was a famous classics scholar at Cambridge, who incurred Pound's ire for dissing his idiosyncratic translation of Propertius.)

So I read the Housman article (originally written in 1910, but only rediscovered some years later) with pleasure, and found it to be probably the best piece on Swinburne I've ever read.

And having read it, I thought to find it on the Web for future reference. And having found it there, thought some of you might also find it a good read. So here's the link.

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