

THE
YOUTH
HOSTEL

OR

*ONE DAY IN
THY COURTS.*

Being a Mock-Mock-Epic by
AN UNKNOWN AUTHOR

Edited with Notes by
E. HUBERT MASON, Litt. D.

CAMBRIDGE:

Printed for MARTIN PINCHBECK at Stoakley's,
St. Felix Clofe, Soham, near Ely, 2016.

*procul recedant somnia
et noctium phantasmata**

**Publisher's note:* It is unclear whether this epigraph, from the great hymn *Te lucis ante terminum*, was found in the manuscript, or whether it was added by the editor (see the Publisher's Foreword); in either case, it is entirely apt.

PIECES contained in this BOOK.

The PUBLISHER'S FOREWORD, occasioned by the unufual circumstances of the book's publication.

The EDITOR'S PREFACE, containing a detailed yet vexingly incomplete account of the origins of the work here presented.

The YOUTH HOSTEL, a mock-mock-epic of unknown authorship.

The APPENDIX, which confists of an additional composition prefum'd to be by the fame author.

The COLOPHON.

PUBLISHER'S FOREWORD.

“*T*HE poem here presented has a most extraordinary history,” begins the editor’s unfinished preface, and I can only echo him. Dr Hubert Mason died while *The Youth Hostel* was in the final stages of preparation. The book’s existence was known only to his publisher, Mr Pinchbeck, himself of declining years, and only after his own death was it discovered, and the corrected proofs obtained from Dr Mason’s executors, which explains the delay in publication.

It should be added that *only* the proofs were found: the original manuscript is missing, as are Dr Mason’s research notes. Chief among the questions one would like them to settle is the identity of the author, presumably one of the touring party whose names are given in the note to the dedication (see p. 15), given the strong implication in V. 136 that the poet is one of the group. Dr Mason’s claim in his preface (p. 12) to have discovered it must have been a last-minute addition, as it was not reflected in the proofs’ title page.

All that is known of the author, therefore, is what can be deduced from the hints contained in the poem: probably an undergraduate member of a Cambridge college choir of men and boys, an episode in whose tour is the poem’s subject. Dr Mason notably does not

identify

identify as the author the dead man on whose body he says the manuscript was found.

The poem itself, in iambic pentameter, is written in the epic style upon an unpromising theme: a night spent by a touring choir in a Dutch youth hostel. The subject and the brevity of its treatment amply justify Dr Mason's doubling of the prefix in his description of it as a "mock-mock-epic". Little happens. Though many characters are introduced, there is no prominent agonist; the bulk of the text consists of grandiloquent descriptions of the various situations of arrival, overnight stay, and departure. The whole would seem to be of scant interest to any but a participant in the tour.

An added puzzle is the use for a late twentieth-century composition on a contemporaneous subject of an eighteenth-century form and style, both of which extend to the book's design. Dr Mason's own prosody, always old-fashioned, here verges on the Victorian, as if in sympathy: neither the preface nor the copious footnotes read as modern compositions, even, or perhaps especially, in the few contemporary references. Strangely, Dr Mason himself does not comment on the anachronism.

Further, it is more than a little odd that Dr Mason should have undertaken the project at all. He was a crypto-geographer, noted for abstruse monographs such as his doctoral thesis, *Relocating Leng*, his masterpiece *Bibliography of the Third World*, which earned

him his Litt. D., and *In Search Of Lost Continents*, his enigmatical last book. His former researches bear no relation to any aspect of the present œuvre. Why then should he spend the last five years of his life engaged not only in editing the poem for publication, but in annotating it in obsessive detail, in the course of which he learnt Dutch and travelled as far afield as Japan?

One final oddity is the appendix, which contains a short poem entitled *The Dean's Speech*. It mentions characters who appeared in *The Youth Hostel*, and may indeed refer to the same tour, though in the absence of the original manuscript, or any other information, this is impossible to prove with certainty. The reference to lemonade casts doubt on the poem's authenticity; on the other hand, its marked lack of polish when compared with *The Youth Hostel* is rather too obvious to make a convincing fake. Perhaps it was a *jeu d'esprit* of Dr Mason's?

EDITOR'S PREFACE.

THE poem here presented has a most extraordinary history. The manuscript was found on the person of an unidentif'd man whose corpse was discover'd some years ago floating in an Amsterdam canal. The police saw no reason to suspect foul play, and the case was quickly clos'd. The man's identity could not be establish'd, the pockets of his ginger corduroy trousers containing only a Swiss Army knife of egregious dimension, a rag which may once have been a white handkerchief, an inch-long pencil, a fragment of India rubber and the afore-mention'd manuscript. After languishing for some time in the custody, so to speak, of the Politie Amsterdam-Amsteland, it was rediscov'rd during an audit of police archives by a hoofdagent-rechercheur who was also an amateur philologist; he sent it to the Algemeen Rijkfarchief, whence it was forwarded to the British Library, and came eventually to my attention. The manuscript was, fortunately for our present purposes, written in pencil, perhaps with that found, and was thus still legible after its immersion. The careful, rounded hand seems almost that of a school-child, but the work itself is clearly the product of a sensitive, intelligent and well-educated mind. Analysis suggests that the work, although short, was written over a period of several years, and perhaps the

idiofyncratic

idiosyncratic handwriting can thus be explain'd as the result of the author's writing slowly.

The poem is a narrative in the form of an epic, or rather, of a mock-epic. Indeed, its subject is scarcely even mock-heroic: the narrative spans a single night, and the poem is but an hundred and thirty-six couplets; it may therefore be said to be a mock-mock-epic. What it lacks in grandeur and length, however, *The Youth Hostel* makes up for by the density and depth of its word-play, literary allusions, and personal references. These last in fact led to the greatest part of my work as editor, as uncovering the histories to which they refer occupy'd a not inconsiderable span of time, as well as a great deal of work, and, I must admit, not a little luck. The end of my researches were, that I was able not only to identify all the persons refer'd to in the poem, but the hostel in question, and also the author.

E. HUBERT MASON, Cambridge, Jun. 30, 2002.

THE YOUTH HOSTEL

or *One day in Thy courts.*

To those who so bravely bore that which is describ'd herein.

REMARKS.

THE YOUTH HOSTEL.] Perhaps the most striking incongruity of this work is its subject. One wonders what it was about staying in a rather noisome auberge during an unremarkable tour of a country which could hardly be describ'd as exotic that inspir'd such labours. It is true that the choir had a long history of tours to the Netherlands, but it was curiously irregular for them to be billeted in a youth hostel.

To those who so bravely bore &c.] The choir and staff on the tour were as follows: the Organist, Mr. *Christopher Robinson* and his wife, *Shirley*; the tutor to the Choristers, Mr. *David Barry*; the Dean, the Rev. Dr. *Andrew Macintosh*, whose wife, *Mary*, assisted the Matron, Mrs. *Caroline Cooper*; the coach was driven by Mr. *Rex Fishpool*; the trebles were Master *Mark Williams* (Head Chorister), Master *Thomas Reindorp*, Master *Iestyn Davies*, Master *Christopher de la Hoyde*, Master *Alistair Zobel*, Master *Felix Gummer*, Master *Frederick Bols*, Master *Thomas Dobney*, Master *Jonathan Wills*, Master *Jonathan Campbell*, Master *Charles Hindley*, Master *Alexander Smallwood*, Master *Andrew Westwood*, Master *Dominic Mander*, Master *Jonathan Campbell* and Master *William Brooks*; the altos were Mr. *Aric Prentice*, Mr. *James Burton*, Mr. *Declan Costello* and Mr. *Stephen Willis*; the tenors were Mr. *Jacob White*, Mr. *Toby Watkin*, Mr. *Keith Webster*, Mr. *Timothy Copsy* and Mr. *David Thomson* (the Academic Director of the College School, also present in a pastoral capacity); the basses

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One day in Thy courts.] Ps. Ch. 84 V. 10. As we are among musicians of the establish'd Church, we use the translation of Scripture commanded by King *James*, except for the Pfalter, which is the Rt. Rev. *Coverdale's*. The verse reads *For one day in Thy courts is better than a thousand*, and has the opposite meaning to that imply'd here.

O F T have we heard the joys of Travel told,
 Of wond'rous fights, reward of trav'lers bold;
 Of horrors too, and situations dire,
 Which make us glad to stay at our hearth-fire;
 Yet none so grim as that of which I speak, 5
 And cry to thee, o Muse! t' inspire my meek
 And feeble pen with fire from Helius' height,
 Enlight'ning my dull wits with thine so bright.

Figure the scene: in alien land estrang'd
 A coach and forty, Men and Boys, arrang'd 10
 As did their likes and comfort best secure,
 While they thro' Netherlands purfu'd their Tour;
 And at each novel venue they'd alight
 Or in hotels or homes to spend the night
 (Which homes kind concert-goers did provide, 15
 And bed and breakfast to the Choir supply'd).
 But one dark evening, when Luna was veil'd
 By rain and shadow, as the 'bus travail'd,

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were Mr. *William Clements*, Mr. *Leigh-Phillips Melrose*, Mr. *Simon Robson Brown*, Mr. *Charles Armstrong* and Mr. *Reuben Thomas*; the Senior Organ Scholar was Mr. *Philip Scriven*, and the Junior Organ Scholar was Mr. *James Martin*.

V. 9. *In alien land estrang'd.*] A witty tautology (see note to V. 12).

V. 10. *A coach and forty.*] A pun on *coach and four*.

V. 12. *Netherlands.*] A pun on *nether lands*. *Vid.* note to V. 9.

V. 18. *'Bus.*] That the long-distance coach in which the choir travell'd was not strictly an omnibus is excus'd by the poet's clever use of various terms that relate to its velocity: like a wandering comet

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VV. 6-7. *Meek and feeble.*] Not merely an echo of the first *Elizabeth's* famous declaration, but a common misquotation of it.

No jewell'd de Baak, no friendly houe appear'd;
 A diff'rent creature in the distance rear'd: 20
 A fullen Edifice of concrete pour'd,
 Grey as the skies its ghaftly towers gor'd;
 The mutter'd question: "What's this place?" did swell,
 And anwser soon there came: "A Youth Hostel."
 "Do they not clofe in Winter's icy grip?" 25
 "Aye, 'tis the gen'ral way, but for this trip
 "And us they have re-open'd 'specially;
 "To-night we're the sole Guefts in this purlieu."

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approaching perihelion, the coach (V. 10) flows as it approaches the baleful hostel, becoming first a 'bus, and then a carriage (V. 29); and upon departure the 'bus (V. 218) becomes once more a coach (V. 249) as it gathers speed.

V. 19. *De Baak.*] An hotel, brilliantly lit up in the hours of darkness, at which the choir lodg'd one night; on the morrow they sang to the management with a view to sponsofship. Curiously, the matter receiv'd no further mention, nor, despite Mr. *Robinson's* assertion (see note to V. 253) did the choir ever stay there again.

V. 22. *Ghaftly towers.*] An extension fancion'd by poetic planning permission.

V. 28. *Guefts.*] A reference to the previous organist, Dr. *George Gueft*, who, when his name was mention'd in an hymn, psalm or other sung text, would jocularly instruct the choir to *laugh now, not later*.

V. 28. *Sole Guefts in this purlieu.*] This curiously excus'd fact, by its correspondence with the conventions of gothic horror, may well have inspir'd the mood of the poem.

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V. 21. *Of concrete pour'd.*] Am. Ch. 5 V. 11; of the houfes there built of *hewn stone* the prophet says *ye shall not dwell in them*.

In nervous quiet the carriage comes to rest;
 By such a fight e'en brave Rex is oppress'd. 30
 The Choir descends, their cafes are disgorg'd,
 The which in hand, they fally entrance-ward.
 But what is this? No smiling keeper waits,
 As Peter at the pearl'd celestial gates:
 This furly visage Igor calls to mind, 35
 Frankenstein's aide, spinally mis-align'd.
 Th' Attendant welcomes them, and opens wide
 The creaking door, and motions them inside.
 Within is equal gloom: the walls are grey,
 And from loud speakers such a noise doth play 40

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V. 29. *Comes.*] This is the first of several changes of tense: the sequence alternates between the present, narrating the scenes, and past, us'd for the prologue, to set the scene, to speculate about the middle of the night, and for the epilogue.

V. 30. *Rex.*] See note to the dedication, as well as notes to the Appendix V. 5 and V. 7.

V. 35. *Igor.*] A familiar, but non-canonical character, first appearing in Mr. *Whale's* cinematic adaptation of Mrs. *Shelley's* novel.

V. 36. *Spinally mis-align'd.*] As was Mr. *Pope*. The line's metre is sympathetically off balance.

V. 37. *Th' Attendant.*] Contrasting with the jocular tone of most of the poem, this is a curiously unsympathetic description. One cannot help wondering whether the author bore some stronger animus than merely a poor night's lodging, however uncomfortable, against the unfortunate *Igor*.

V. 40. *Loud speakers.*] The emphasis on volume betrays the poet's general dislike of loud noises.

As no comparifon will juftify:
 It would a tear bring to the Harpift's eye.
 The Choir now finds itfelf within an hall
 As grim as any torturer held thrall;
 Like instruments of torment, laid about 45
 Are table-football, billiard table ftout,
 Pinball machine and Super Pac-Man game,
 A piano', and fome tropic fifh, quite tame.
 A bar ftands in the centre, to one fide,
 Whence wont is the Attendant to prefide; 50
 'Tis thence the horrid mufic iffues in
 The while he ferves, a-fmirking at the din.
 Yet doughty Britifh fpirit doth prevail:
 Stiff-upper-lip'd, both Men and Boys avail

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V. 41. *No comparifon.*] This is hyperbole: the mufic play'd at the hoftel was merely typical Euro-Pop. The author had a particular averfion to mechanically amplify'd mufic in the popular idiom.

V. 42. *Harpift.*] As part of the tour programme, the Boys fang Britten's *A Ceremony of Carols*, in which they had been brilliantly accompany'd in Birmingham fhortly before the tour by the City of Birmingham Symphony Orcheftre's excellent principal. He had alfo been engag'd for the Dutch tour, but withdrew, and was replac'd by a Japanefe player who work'd frequently in Holland; but fhe too was reliev'd for the latter half of the tour by a curioufly incompetent Dutch harpift, the reference to whom is therefore anachronic, as well as curioufly proximate to the defcription of *Igor*.

V. 47. *Super Pac-Man.*] A rare variant of Namco's claffic arcade game, which the editor has not feen elfewhere. The author is believ'd to have play'd it, despite a defective joyftick.

V. 49. *In the centre, to one fide.*] A playful contradidtion; the intended meaning is that the bar was juft off centre.

Themfelves of the Facilities; fome flip,	55
Pull, slurp, quaff, fwallow from the bar tap's drip	
The ale, or lager, of the Continent,	
And, tho' 'tis pale, the alcohol content	
Suffices to flip from their weary'd minds	
The leaden chain of Tedium, which binds	60
The merry wit of Tenor; e'en the laugh	
Of Baritone is heard tho' it has but half	
Its customary vigour, 'til at laft,	
The <i>heure couchante des garçons</i> being paft	
All now prepare retirement to their reft	65
Except the Boys, who rampage fully drefs'd	
Along the corridors, and 'twixt the rooms,	
Like fixteen red and grey Fantafiac brooms.	
Their madly whirling rufh no Matron can	
Nor Madam Dean refrain, and what of Man?	70

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V. 58. *Pale.*] By contraft with the darker bitters of England.

V. 58. *Alcohol content.*] Referring both to the alcohol *contain'd* in the lager and the *content* that, despite its fmallnefs, it confers.

V. 61. *Wit of Tenor.*] A reference to that prince of put-downs Mr. *Watkin*, whose garrulity is match'd only by his girth.

VV. 61-2. *Laugh of Baritone.*] Mr. *Melrose*, e'en at that early date fam'd for his operatic laugh.

V. 64. *Heure couchante des garçons.*] Bad French.

V. 68. *Red and grey.*] The Boys' fchool uniform confifted of red blazers, in imitation of the original jackets of the Lady Margaret Boat Club, the rowing club of St John's College, grey troufers, and white fhirts, their neck-ties alfo being red.

V. 68. *Fantafiac brooms.*] A reference to Mr. *Disney's* animated feature film *Fantafia*.

Are they mindful of him? Nay, no indeed!
 The Dean they mind as little as the Creed,
 The Organist as little as a Psalm;
 And wonder how the Tutor keeps his calm
 As first they pillow-fight; from bed to bed 75
 Next do they leap most vig'rously, the Head
 Of Choristers, as agile as the Hart
 That seeks the water-brook, with his sweet art
 Doth lead them, and as surely as in notes
 Where-e'er he goes they follow; from their throats 80
 Strange ululations and wild cries proceed:
 The Staff is powerless—in vain they plead,
 In vain they threaten, conjure and entreat—
 It is not they who still at last of feet
 The roaring patter, of small tongues the shout: 85
 It is sweet Sleep, that comes, that calls them out

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VV. 76-7. *Head—Hart.*] Punning on the conventional apposition of *head* and *heart*.

V. 82. *The Staff is powerless—in vain they plead.*] Curiously, the author ascribes both singular and plural number to the staff.

VV. 84-5. *Of feet the roaring patter, of small tongues the shout.*] Feet and tongues alike give utterance here, emphasising the vocal function of the choristers.

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V. 71. *Mindful of him.*] Ps. Ch. 8 V. 4.

V. 78. *Seeks the water-brook.*] Ps. Ch. 42 V. 1.

V. 78. *With his sweet art.*] Herbert, *Easter*. Not a direct quotation, as the pronoun, there divine, is here made man.

V. 80. *Where-e'er he goes they follow.*] Rev. Ch. 14 V. 4.

VV. 86-7. *Out of darkness.*] 1 Pet. Ch. 2 V. 9.

Of darknefs, and biddeth them join her there,
 Sorrow and fighting floun, to lay their care
 On her and take their reft. So 'tis that ere
 Time from his ftore one quarter more muft spare 90
 From out the prefent hour, with one accord
 A-fleep are the Boys. O praife Ye the Lord!

Next do the Gentlemen intend to spare
 Themfelves a little ere they hence repair,
 But witon not what obftacles they'll find 95
 To try the patience and perplex the mind;
 Deadlier far than fimple children's noife
 Are this dread Hoftel's frangely crafted ploys.

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V. 95. *Witon.*] An archaifm even by the curioufly exaggerated ftandards of this poem: the Middle Englifh third perfon plural prefent of *to wite*. Since the author had little expertife in this area, it is conjectur'd that his acquaintance with Mr. *Edward Hoffack*, an Englifh ftudent and alto in the choir during the period over which the poem was written, may have fupply'd it.

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V. 88. *Sorrow and fighting.*] Ifa. Ch. 35 V. 10.

VV. 88-9. *Lay their care on her.*] Dryden, *The Indian Emperor* Song I V. 9.

V. 89. *Take their reft.*] A turn of phrafe found frequently in Holy Scripture.

V. 91. *With one accord.*] *One accord*, aye, on many concords: fee a concordance.

V. 92. *O praife Ye the Lord!*] The firft line of a well-lov'd Victorian hymn by the Rev. Sir *Henry Williams Baker*, fometime Editor-in-Chief of *Hymns Ancient and Modern*.

VV. 93-4. *Spare themfelves a little ere they hence repair.*] Ps. Ch. 39 V. 13.

Six to a room the Gentlemen are flept
 In doubly-layer'd arrays, bunk beds y-clept; 100
 The mattrèsses with gravel must be pack'd,
 Of straw surely the sheets are woven, stack'd,
 Each with a crisped pillow, on the beds:
 Here is no chamber-maid to fling the spreads,
 To tuck their edges in, and smooth them down 105
 (If such were possible, but here to crown
 The sheets no downy quilts as soft as air
 There are, but blankets rough of equine hair);
 Yet nothing daunted, bravely they set to,
 And each fashions his resting-place in blue 110
 (For such the colour of the blankets is).

But now our gaze and glance has shifted, *viz.*
 We enter one such room and face to face
 Take Six within who, whether by His grace,
 Who in His hand holdeth our lives, or here 115
 After their human whims and tastes appear
 Quarter'd together: first of all we see
 The Organ Scholar minor, Martin, he

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V. 114. *Take Six.*] A reference to the *a cappella* Gospel sextet, a particular favourite of Mr. *James Burton*, already a prolific arranger; to their flawless blend the Gentlemen of St John's could only aspire. While it is only natural that the author should concentrate on those in whose immediate company he found himself, what follows is a curiously detail'd description of this particular half-dozen. Perhaps the choice has some other significance, but the editor has been unable to discover it.

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V. 113. *Face to face.*] Divers, but especially 1 Cor. Ch. 13 V. 12.

V. 115. *Who in His hand holdeth our lives.*] Ps. Ch. 66 V. 9.

Whom James also is nam'd, in manner mild
 As quick organodigitally; ril'd 120
 Him not the lack of foot and finger-play,
 But deem'd it an expenfe-paid holiday;
 The Willis-White Quintet we next esp'y,
 So nam'd, tho' only two; the reason why
 Escapes the Muse, tho' it cannot be deny'd 125
 That rarely doth much space or time divide
 Tenor inaudible from Laziest Girl,
 For such are Steve and Jacob; next we curl
 Our eyes to Strong-Arm Charles, of baffes low
 The bafest, on whom nature did bestow 130

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V. 120. *Organodigitally.*] Even the *OED* admits no such word.

V. 122. *Expense-paid holiday.*] *In illo tempore*, only the Senior Organ Scholar play'd on tour, a custom retain'd from the strict hierarchic organisation of Dr. *Guest*, and soon thereafter abandon'd; the Junior Organ Scholar was not paid for his services.

V. 123. *Willis-White Quintet.*] Nam'd after the Steve and Jake Quintet, which featur'd in an article posted on the Gentlemen's Room noticeboard in 1991 or '92.

V. 127. *Tenor inaudible.*] Mr. *Jacob White's* voice, of moderate volume when he enter'd the choir, declin'd until it was barely above a whisper when he left. It has since more than recover'd.

V. 127. *Laziest Girl.*] Mr. *Stephen Willis's* fame as a counter-tenor rested largely on his extraordinary liping rendition of Mr. *Cole Porter's Laziest Girl in Town*.

V. 129. *Strong-Arm Charles.*] Mr. *Charles Armstrong*, later an Internet *entrepreneur*. His Pfiction Series 3 personal digital assistant was one of the timepieces us'd to *elect* (V. 139) an *alarm procraftinal* (V. 140).

A voice distinctive, and a mind no less,
 Whose many talents earn'd him——I digress;
 Aric the 'Prentice here is too, whose name
 Will later be found useful for a game;
 And finally, whose handsome form is this? 135
 Whose graceful brow? Why, this our Poet is!
 Who with his smooth scansion and flowing rhyme
 Hath brought us to the brink of line one hundred and

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V. 132. *Talents.*] A pun on the biblical meaning: Mr. *Armstrong* had previously been the business manager of the Gentlemen of St. John's, the *a cappella* close harmony group consisting of the adult members of the choir.

V. 132. *Earn'd him.*] Having the sense of both *earn'd by him* and *earn'd for him*.

V. 132. *I digress.*] A curiously murky reference, to the bottom of which the editor has as yet been unable to penetrate. What is strangest is that the line occurs at all: had the author no wish to refer to the matter, he had simply to omit it, as no doubt he has many other incidents and impertinent facts; the aposiopesis rather draws the reader's attention. One is led to wonder, therefore, whether some embarrassing or even legally dubious episode could be the object of allusion. The editor suspects this is so, and that it could even prove the principal reason for the poem's composition, but, despite the most exhaustive research, has to his immense chagrin been unable to shine any further light on the puzzle.

V. 133. *'Prentice.*] A pun on *apprentice*. While it was Mr. *Prentice's* first year in the choir, he was by no means a neophyte in the craft of choral singing.

V. 138. *Hath brought us to the brink &c.*] The glowing praise that the poet awards himself contrasts with the curiously blatant poetic solecism: this is the only couplet in the poem that neither scans nor rhymes; the first line is merely awkward, but the second collapses

thirty-nine.

These then, their beds having arrang'd, elect
 Alarms procraftinal, tho' some object 140
 To such rude heralds, eke awake they must,
 With quick'ning blood and breath their God most just
 To serve with voices mellifluent; yet
 They would sleep on were no alarms set,
 Slumber serene, for no excursion plann'd 145
 Can better th' umbrous journeys of Dream-Land.
 To douse th' electric lanterns now they essay,
 A prelude most conventional, I pray,
 Observe you, to the dormitorial Fall,
 But lo! without the lights more bright withal 150

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completely, five syllables over-long, and ends with a gauche self-reference. It seems that this catastrophe of poesis is intended as self-deprecation on the part of the poet, lest any obtuse reader otherwise take at face value the foregoing auto-encomium, a modesty curiously at odds with the self-conscious dignity, even hauteur, of the Grub Street hacks whose style he otherwise so slavishly imitates.

V. 143. *Voices mellifluent.*] See note to V. 19.

V. 149. *Dormitorial Fall.*] A distant echo of the Fall of Man.

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V. 142. *God most just.*] Imitating not Mrs. Catherine Winkworth's translation of Herr Joachim Magdeburg's hymn *Wer Gott vertraut, hat wohlgebaut*, unknown to the poet, but of the line in Mr. Herbert's *Easter*, familiar from Mr. Vaughan Williams's setting: *His life may make thee gold, and much more, just.*

The room becomes: it seems these lamps cast dark
 Rather than light, which doth most aptly mark
 This Hostel inhospitable — correct
 It rather to an Hostile; now erect
 The noble Gentlemen their last defence, 155
 To wit, to would their eyes tight shut, that thence
 The lids may bar all Luciferous beams,
 Yet still the rays stream in, nor no sweet dreams
 Are made of this Plutonic light, and fo
 Instead, with voices soft, in murmurs low 160
 The Gentlemen conjoin in gentle games,
 With jokes, with pillows, and, o Muse! with names.
 The chiefest entertainment's to devise
 New names for Mr. Prentice, and revise

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VV. 151-2. *Cast dark rather than light.*] This is an exaggeration of an unusual arrangement found at another youth hostel on the tour, where the extinction of the main lights illuminated a night-light of barely lesser brilliance. As in V. 207, the natural order is curiously inverted.

V. 156. *To wit, to would.*] A tortuous, not to say torturous, strigine onomatopœia, to *would* meaning *to wrap or bind around*, as do here the gentlemen their eyelids their orbs.

V. 157. *Luciferous beams.*] Paronomasia between *luci-ferous* and *Lucifer-ous*.

V. 161. *Gentle games.*] Cf. the Boys' exuberant pursuits VV. 66-81.

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VV. 151-2. *Cast dark rather than light.*] Milton, *Paradise Lost* Book 1 V. 64.

VV. 158-9. *Sweet dreams are made of this.*] *Sweet Dreams (Are Made Of This)* was the most successful single release by Eurythmics, a popular electric duo which flourish'd in the 1980s. Also the title track of an album, it was in 1983 certify'd *Silver* in the United Kingdom, and *Gold* in France and the former North-American colonies.

Brief Nordic <i>Aric</i> into fancier forms,	165
Which nonethelefs muſt follow rhymic norms,	
And in the final ſyllable agree,	
Maintaining the correſt ſonority,	
And ſtill commence, as doth the alphabet,	
With Aleph's rude deſcendant, A, nor let	170
A conſonant initial come before;	
The new names then reſemble that of yore:	
Thus <i>Antic</i> and <i>Acidic</i> do ſuffice,	
While <i>Baltic</i> and <i>Anginal</i> lack the dice;	
And ſo invention doth proceed apace	175
As all attempt diverſely to replace	
The biſyllabic moniker we know	
And ſtraightway, <i>nomen nomini</i> , beſtow	
One truly allegoric; ſo they ſcour	
The lexicon with ſuch diſpatch an hour	180

REMARKS.

V. 166. *Rhymic*.] Within the ſpirit of the game, but without the letter of the lexicon.

V. 170. *Aleph*.] The Rev. Dr. *Andrew Macintosh*, who with another Johnian Hebraiſt, the Rev. Prof. *John Emerton*, aſſiſted Prof. *David Froſt*'s tranſlation of the Pſalms for the Church of England's *Alternative Service Book*. Dr. *Macintosh* maintain'd that the Iſraelites' two great innovations were the invention of the alphabet, out of lazineſs, and its uſe to record national diſaſters as well as triumphs, impell'd by their contractual relationship with God.

V. 174. *Lack the dice*.] A reference to the phraſe *no dice*, meaning *no good*. And yet, *alea jacta eſt*.

V. 178. *Nomen nomini*.] Being interpreted: *a name for a name*.

V. 179. *Allegoric*.] The firſt in a flew of words fitting the criteria given in VV. 166-71.

Hath barely laps'd before they've found three score,
 And in anarchic fit have sixty more
 Concocted, yet their algebraic skill
 And alphabetic art avail not, still
 Th' acerbic alto bears his antic name; 185
 Archaic *Aric* hath retain'd its fame.
 Thus charmèd, Lethe's flood at last doth rife;
 The torpid torrent gently seals their eyes.
 But while the Choir slept, what lurk'd in the night?
 What Hostel horrors brooded while the light 190
 Of Sol's eye peep'd not thro' the window's pane?
 I know not, o I know not, but again
 When Phœbus' steeds were harness'd, safe and found
 All were discover'd, as tho' all around
 Them in the night had stood a guardian band 195
 Of angels watching o'er with sword in hand.

REMARKS.

VV. 181-2. *Three score—sixty more.*] This might be term'd *hyperbolic growth*: the Muse implies 120 new names, but the editor was able, assisted by a stor'd-programme computer, to find only 84.

V. 185. *Acerbic.*] A reference not to Mr. *Prentice's* honey'd tone, but to his biting repartee.

IMITATIONS.

V. 192. *I know not, o I know not.*] From the Rev. Dr. *James Neale's* translation of the hymn *Urbs Sion aurea*, taken from *Bernard of Cluny's De contemptu mundi*. A curiously insistent profession of ignorance as to what really occur'd in *the slow watches of the night*.

VV. 195-6. *Band of angels.*] Quoted from *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot*, a stalwart of the Gentlemen of St. John's' gig fet lift at that period, and divers hymns.

When rose-cheek'd Dawn her welcome face unveils
 'Tis first the Boys who greet her, arms like sails,
 Their voices gull-like as they tack along
 The corridors, as if they were a throng 200
 Of fleeting schooners by the trade winds blown;
 The Gentlemen awake, they sigh, they moan,
 They shave, they wash, they dress, they shuffle out
 To break their fast in hearty breakfast bout,
 But once in the canteen their faces pale, 205
 Like day-old manna, all the food is stale:
 The bread is hard, the cheese is soft, the ham
 Is leather; e'en the sugar and the jam
 Possess a certain aura of decay;
 The coffee's weak, and if the tea has ay 210

REMARKS.

V. 197. *Dawn*.] One of several deliberate clichés, tips of the hat to the present work's eighteenth century models, and the name of the then chapel clerk's *bien aimée*. Owing to his formidable consumption of tobacco, Mr. *Grantham* could indeed pass for the agèd *Titbonus*.

V. 199. *Gull-like*.] Meagre compliment! *Vid.* note to VV. 257-8.

V. 201. *Fleeting*.] The participle toils *manibus pedibusque*: the fleet-footed callers fleetingly recall a fleet.

V. 204. *To break their fast in hearty breakfast*.] Here *breakfast* is literally broken into *break* and *fast*.

V. 206. *Day-old manna*.] *Vid.* Ex. Ch. 16 VV. 19-20.

V. 207. *The cheese is soft*.] In some countries this is consider'd a good thing, but in Holland, as in England, the principal cheeses are hard.

Known any leaves thereof it shows it not:
 A dubious liquid festers in the pot.
 Once more doth grinning Igor serve, once more
 The Choir try to make do, but tho' before
 They manag'd, yet the dismal morning's such 215
 That now their evening courage seemeth Dutch.
 So soon they haste away, their bags collect,
 Their wish to with the 'bus only connect
 And good make their escape from this fell place;
 Mean while they occupy th' umbrageous space 220
 The which in Hostel nomenclature Hall
 Is call'd, such tho' it resembles not at all.
 While they yet wait the Organist sits down
 Upon the piano'-stool, his little frown,

REMARKS.

V. 212. *Dubious liquid.*] Tea was not consum'd with such attention to its preparation in the Netherlands as in England.

VV. 214-6. *The Choir try to make do, but tho' before They manag'd, yet the dismal morning's such That now their evening courage seemeth Dutch.*] Here British pluck is contrasted with Dutch courage, with an implication of *beer goggles*.

V. 221. *Hall.*] The implicit comparison is with the college Hall, scene of many a feast at which the choir would embellish the pre- and post-prandial graces with aptly pious or diverting harmonies.

IMITATIONS.

V. 217. *So soon they haste away.*] Herrick, *To daffadills*, familiar to the author from settings by Messrs. Britten and Berkeley.

V. 218. *Only connect.*] Forster, epigraph to *Howard's End* (quoted from Ch. 22 *ibid.*). Note also the humorously disconnected *infinitive*.

So strangely like a smile, he now displays, 225
 Lifts up the lid, fingers the keys and plays,
 And twists a song most pleasant, but not long,
 For Igor suddenly strides thro' the throng,
 Elbows the player aside, with loud report
 Slams shut and locks the lid! a dry retort 230
 Escapes the Org'nist's lips under his breath—
 For he is not a man who to the death
 Pursues insult or flight; his strength the more is
 In quick quips, wry remarks, and dismal stories.
 Thus, sunk in lassitude at last, the Choir 235
 Sit 'midst their luggage pil'd as if a pyre.
 Do they lack but the spark upward to send
 Their weary smoke? Is this, in short,

The End?

REMARKS.

V. 225. *Smile.*] Mr. *Robinson* was renown'd for his downcast countenance and jazz improvisation. Altho' his own musical tastes apparently lie in an adjacent realm, *Igor* is curiously inimical to this performance.

V. 229. *Elbows the player aside.*] An exaggeration: there was no physical contact.

IMITATIONS.

V. 227. *Pleasant, but not long.*] Herbert, *ibid.*

VV. 233-4. *His strength the more is—dismal stories.*] The ends of the lines of this couplet, which make the lines one syllable too long, are from Mr. *Bunyan's* hymn *He who would valiant be.*

V. 238. *The End?*] An end that is not an end, a teasing use of the conventional heading-at-the-foot in a manner more apt to the cinema than to the chap-book.

But stay! far off is heard a tiny hum
 No louder than a fly when it doth strum 240
 With brittle wings the air, yet somehow this
 Is more a sound of purpose, does not miss
 A beat or vary in its tone; indeed
 It swells, it grows, the Choir begin to heed
 'Til suddenly a small boy doth exclaim 245
 " 'Tis Rex! 'Tis Rex!" Is it? It is! The fame!
 Such rapid embarkation we do see
 As if the fingers minded were to flee,
 And, rather than a coach, the desp'rate Choir
 Boarded instead a chariot of fire; 250
 Now like a charioteer Rex yells " Hold tight!"
 And with a roar it zoometh out of sight.

REMARKS.

VV. 242-3. *Miss a beat.*] The coach is here compared to an attentive performer; and do not 'buses have their conductors?

V. 252. *Zoometh.*] Unattested before 1892 *secundum OED*, the prochronism *zoom* is here archaically inflected to refer to the noise of the motoris'd carriage in which the choir make good their escape.

IMITATIONS.

V. 250. *Chariot of fire.*] Blake, preface to *Milton*. This is just one of several images curiously eschatological for a description of an happy flight. Not only are the choir exceedingly anxious to leave, but it seems that the coach was stabl'd at some distance from the hostel (see V. 239), altho' the hostel was *en pleine campagne*.

Man, woman, boy, most solemnly they swore
 From that day forth Youth Hostels to abhor
 As Nature doth a vacuum, and to find 255
 Them lodging of a more commodious kind.
 First in Hollandse Biesbosch's leafy bow'rs,
 Then 'midst fair Putten's bottle banks and flow'rs
 They tarry'd; in the future who can say
 In what Arcadian palaces they'll stay? 260
 In what palatial arcades they may find
 Nightly relief from touring's daily grind?

REMARKS.

V. 253. *Solemnly they swore.*] Another exercise of the poetic licence: later in the tour while lodging at the Hollandse Biesbosch hotel, Mr. *Robinson* was heard to mutter *I don't think we'll stay in youth hostels any more*, or words to that effect.

VV. 257-8. *First in Hollandse Biesbosch's leafy bow'rs, Then 'midst fair Putten's bottle banks and flow'rs.*] In later years, even the Hollandse Biesbosch was deem'd to be insufficiently falubrious, and on the author's last tour to Holland the choir put up at a conference centre in Putten. On the last morning he assisted Mr. *Edward Hoffack* in the return of empty beer bottles to the super-market (not, *stricto sensu*, a bottle bank) from which they were purchas'd.

VV. 260-1. *Arcadian palaces—palatial arcades.*] LOL!!!!!!

IMITATIONS.

VV. 254-5. *Abhor as Nature doth a vacuum.*] A sentiment found in Aristotle, but first stated as *natura abhorret vacuum* by Rabelais in *Gargantua*, Ch. 5. Curiously, the poet omits to mention that the choir did stay again in a youth hostel, indeed in the same one, and on the same tour, tho' the fact is quite understandable given the difficulty of organising alternative accommodation at such short notice.

But now our tale is told, our yarn is spun,
 In short, 'tis time to call an end to fun,
 For we must find a moral, that we may 265
 As much in spirit as in heart be gay,
 Nor mere good Humour from our verse derive
 But holy Learning, that our souls may thrive:
 Fear not if first you fall, but like the dove
 Strive e'er to seek those things which are above; 270
 Where CHRIST fits, there may all we upward tend
 And at the last to Him in Heav'n ascend.

Virgin Atlantic *Rainbow Lady*

Sep. 16, 1997.

REMARKS.

V. 263. *Our yarn is spun.*] The Septuagint (Ps. Ch. 89 V. 9) has ἀράχνην, a female spider (*conferre* Codex Alexandrinus ἀράχην, a female spider or spider's web), but Dr. *Macintosh* suggests in J. Theol. Stud. xxiii, PP. 113-7, that the word was in fact a cross-reference. Such are the perils of critical apparatus.

V. 269. *Dove.*] Of the doves familiar to the author, *Noah's* fought the earth, hardly *above*, and Mr. *Eliot's* was descending. Perhaps the reference is ablative, cleanliness being proverbially next to godliness.

Virgin Atlantic Rainbow Lady.] The vessel in question was an aeroplane conveying the choir to Tōkyō for a tour of Japan. The

IMITATIONS.

V. 263. *Tale is told.*] Ps. Ch. 90 V. 9.

V. 268. *That our souls may thrive.*] *Jesus Christ the Apple Tree* (Anon.), from the collection of Mr. *Joshua Smith* of New Hampshire, known to the poet from Mrs. *Elizabeth Poston's* setting.

VV. 270-1. *Seek those things which are above, where CHRIST fits.*] Col. Ch. 3 V. 1.

V. 272. *And at the last.*] The second half of Ps. Ch. 39 V. 4 reads *and at the last I spake with my tongue*. The psalm also forms the text of the last of Mr. *Parry's Songs of Farewell*.

REMARKS.

completion in transit recalls Mr. *Benjamin Britten's A Hymn to St Cecilia*, which the composer was forced to rewrite from memory when, on boarding the MS *Axel Johnson*, his manuscripts were confiscated by customs inspectors who feared they contained ciphered messages. This does not appear to be the case here: periodic variations in the manuscript imply several different periods of authorship. Nonetheless, the coincidence is curiously suggestive.

APPENDIX:

THE DEAN'S SPEECH.

THE tour was o'er, the boat return'd
 From Netherlands' fair polders flat;
 Three concerts fung, CD fees earn'd,
 So in the coach the choir was fat
 (That antique bus of J&R 5
 Which many a tour was driven on
 By two-ty'd Rex, who proudly wore
 Those figns of Choral Scholar (hon.));
 The farewell speeches had been made,
 But still the Dean his silence kept; 10
 The Gents presented lemonade,
 At last the Rev. to his feet leapt
 " You have work'd hard for many days
 " And to your friendship I bear witness
 " But most of all I'd like to praise 15

REMARKS.

V. 5. *J&R.*] *Janet* and *Rex Fishpool*, the husband and wife team who drove the choir in their tours around Europe for decades.

V. 7. *Two-ty'd Rex.*] Mr. *Fishpool*, in recognition of his years of long service, was given a choir and a Gents tie. The editor does not know that Mrs. *Fishpool* was similarly honour'd.

V. 11. *Lemonade.*] A forc'd rhyme, Bowdlerization, or both?

IMITATIONS.

V. 2. *Polders flat.*] Echoing the bathetic *concrete pour'd* (see YH V. 21).

“Your guts, initiative, and sheer physical fitness.”

REMARKS.

V. 16. *Guts, initiative, and sheer physical fitness.*] The Reverend Doctor included this phrase in almost every encomium he deliver'd, frequently, as here, as a final flourish. Over the years its anticipation became, for familiar listeners, a considerable part of their enjoyment of his speeches.

COLOPHON.

OF a multitude of kind readers, Nat Segnit, James Martin, Ian Aitkenhead, Eleanor Franzén and Katarína Lichvárová were outstandingly generous with their time and sage suggestions. David Woodward, David Bray and Jeroen Breen were liberal with their typographical expertise, and Andrew West's article on setting the long 'S'[†] was invaluable.

The design is based on that of a 1729 edition of Alexander Pope's *Dunciad*, a facsimile of which is in the Internet Archive.[‡] The book was typeset with pdfL^AT_EX; essential packages included **eledmac** for the footnotes and line numbering and **microtype** for the optical alignment of margins and the approximation of eighteenth-century norms for punctuation. The text was set in Adobe Caslon using Boris Veysman's **adobecasl** package, improved by Reuben Thomas to produce the long 'S' with code reverse-engineered from Ulrik Vieth's defunct **pacasl** package.

The book was printed on a Lexmark X543dn laser printer on 100gsm Heritage Woodfree Paper from Atlantis Art Supplies, Poplar, cut for printing by the Wyvern Bindery, Clerkenwell.

[†]<http://babelstone.blogspot.co.uk/2006/06/rules-for-long-s.html>

[‡]<https://archive.org/details/dunciadwithnotes00popo>

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This edition was typeset from Git commit 18abaab.