

*HUGH SELWYN*

*MAUBERLEY*

*by*

*E.P.*

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*Hugh Selwyn  
Mauberley*

BY

*E. P.*



THE OVID PRESS

1920

“VOCAT ÆSTUS IN UBRAM”  
*Nemesianus Ec. IV.*

*H. S. Mauberley*

(LIFE AND CONTACTS)



# MAUBERLEY

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## ENVOI

1919

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### Part II.

1920

(Mauberley)

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## ODE POUR L'ÉLECTION DE SON SÉPULCHRE



OR three years, out of key with his time,  
 He strove to resuscitate the dead art  
 Of poetry ; to maintain " the sublime "  
 In the old sense. Wrong from the start—

No hardly, but, seeing he had been born  
 In a half savage country, out of date ;  
 Bent resolutely on wringing lilies from the acorn ;  
 Capaneus ; trout for factitious bait ;

"Ἰδμεν γάρ τοι πάνθ' , ὅσ' ἐνὶ Τροίῃ  
 Caught in the unstopped ear ;  
 Giving the rocks small lee-way  
 The chopped seas held him, therefore, that year.

His true Penelope was Flaubert,  
 He fished by obstinate isles ;  
 Observed the elegance of Circe's hair  
 Rather than the mottoes on sun-dials.

Unaffected by " the march of events,"  
 He passed from men's memory in *l'an trentiesme*  
*De son eage* ; the case presents  
 No adjunct to the Muses' diadem.



HE age demanded an image  
Of its accelerated grimace,  
Something for the modern stage,  
Not, at any rate, an Attic grace;

Not, not certainly, the obscure reveries  
Of the inward gaze ;  
Better mendacities  
Than the classics in paraphrase !

The "age demanded" chiefly a mould in plaster,  
Made with no loss of time,  
A prose kinema, not, not assuredly, alabaster  
Or the "sculpture" of rhyme.



HE tea-rose tea-gown, etc.  
 Supplants the mousseline of Cos,  
 The pianola "replaces"  
 Sappho's barbitos.

Christ follows Dionysus,  
 Phallic and ambrosial  
 Made way for macerations ;  
 Caliban casts out Ariel.

All things are a flowing,  
 Sage Heracleitus says ;  
 But a tawdry cheapness  
 Shall reign throughout our days.

Even the Christian beauty  
 Defects—after Samothrace ;  
 We see τὸ καλόν  
 Decreed in the market place.

Faun's flesh is not to us,  
 Nor the saint's vision.  
 We have the press for wafer ;  
 Franchise for circumcision.

All men, in law, are equals.  
 Free of Peisistratus,  
 We choose a knave or an eunuch  
 To rule over us.

O bright Apollo,  
 τὴν ἄνδρα, τὴν ἥρωα, τίνα θεὸν,  
 What god, man, or hero  
 Shall I place a tin wreath upon !



THESE fought, in any case,  
and some believing, pro domo, in any case . .

Some quick to arm,  
some for adventure,  
some from fear of weakness,  
some from fear of censure,  
some for love of slaughter, in imagination,  
learning later . . .

some in fear, learning love of slaughter ;  
Died some pro patria, non dulce non et decor " . .

walked eye-deep in hell  
believing in old men's lies, then unbelieving  
came home, home to a lie,  
home to many deceits,  
home to old lies and new infamy ;

usury age-old and age-thick  
and liars in public places.

Daring as never before, wastage as never before.  
Young blood and high blood,  
Fair cheeks, and fine bodies ;

fortitude as never before

frankness as never before,  
disillusions as never told in the old days,  
hysterias, trench confessions,  
laughter out of dead bellies.

V,



HERE died a myriad,  
And of the best, among them,  
For an old bitch gone in the teeth,  
For a botched civilization,

Charm, smiling at the good mouth,  
Quick eyes gone under earth's lid,

For two gross of broken statues,  
For a few thousand battered books.



LADSTONE was still respected,  
 When John Ruskin produced  
 " Kings Treasuries " ; Swinburne  
 And Rossetti still abused.

Fœtid Buchanan lifted up his voice  
 When that faun's head of hers  
 Became a pastime for  
 Painters and adulterers.

The Burne-Jones cartons  
 Have preserved her eyes ;  
 Still, at the Tate, they teach  
 Cophetua to rhapsodize ;

Thin like brook-water,  
 With a vacant gaze.  
 The English Rubaiyat was still-born  
 In those days.

The thin, clear gaze, the same  
 Still darts out faun-like from the half-ruin'd face  
 Questing and passive ....  
 " Ah, poor Jenny's case " ...

Bewildered that a world  
 Shows no surprise  
 At her last maquero's  
 Adulteries.

“SIENA MI FE’ , DISFECEMI MAREMMA”



**A**MONG the pickled foetuses and bottled bones,  
Engaged in perfecting the catalogue,  
I found the last scion of the

Senatorial families of Strasbourg, Monsieur Verog.

For two hours he talked of Gallifet ;  
Of Dowson ; of the Rhymers' Club ;  
Told me how Johnson (Lionel) died  
By falling from a high stool in a pub . . .

But showed no trace of alcohol  
At the autopsy, privately performed—  
Tissue preserved—the pure mind  
Arose toward Newman as the whiskey warmed.

Dowson found harlots cheaper than hotels ;  
Headlam for uplift ; Image impartially imbued  
With raptures for Bacchus, Terpsichore and the Church.  
So spoke the author of “ The Dorian Mood ”,

M. Verog, out of step with the decade,  
Detached from his contemporaries,  
Neglected by the young,  
Because of these reveries.

## BRENNBAUM.

**T**HE sky-like limpid eyes,  
The circular infant's face,  
The stiffness from spats to collar  
Never relaxing into grace ;

The heavy memories of Horeb, Sinai and the forty years,  
Showed only when the daylight fell  
Level across the face  
Of Brennbaum "The Impeccable".



## MR. NIXON



N the cream gilded cabin of his steam yacht  
 Mr. Nixon advised me kindly, to advance with fewer  
 Dangers of delay. "Consider  
 " Carefully the reviewer.

" I was as poor as you are ;  
 " When I began I got, of course,  
 " Advance on royalties, fifty at first ", said Mr. Nixon,  
 " Follow me, and take a column,  
 " Even if you have to work free.  
 " Butter reviewers. From fifty to three hundred  
 " I rose in eighteen months ;  
 " The hardest nut I had to crack  
 " Was Dr. Dundas.  
 " I never mentioned a man but with the view  
 " Of selling my own works.  
 " The tip's a good one, as for literature  
 " It gives no man a sinecure."

And no one knows, at sight a masterpiece.  
 And give up verse, my boy,  
 There's nothing in it.

\* \* \*

Likewise a friend of Bloughram's once advised me :  
 Don't kick against the pricks,  
 Accept opinion. The " Nineties " tried your game  
 And died, there's nothing in it.

## X.



ENEATH the sagging roof  
The stylist has taken shelter,  
Unpaid, uncelebrated,  
At last from the world's welter

Nature receives him,  
With a placid and uneducated mistress  
He exercises his talents  
And the soil meets his distress.

The haven from sophistications and contentions  
Leaks through its thatch ;  
He offers succulent cooking ;  
The door has a creaking latch.



CONSERVATRIX of Milésien ”  
 Habits of mind and feeling,  
 Possibly. But in Ealing  
 With the most bank-clerkly of Englishmen?

No, “ Milésien ” is an exaggeration.  
 No instinct has survived in her  
 Older than those her grandmother  
 Told her would fit her station.

XII.



APHNE with her thighs in bark  
 Stretches toward me her leafy hands",—  
 Subjectively. In the stuffed-satin drawing-room  
 I await The Lady Valentine's commands,

Knowing my coat has never been  
 Of precisely the fashion  
 To stimulate, in her,  
 A durable passion ;

Doubtful, somewhat, of the value  
 Of well-gowned approbation  
 Of literary effort,  
 But never of The Lady Valentine's vocation :

Poetry, her border of ideas,  
 The edge, uncertain, but a means of blending  
 With other strata  
 Where the lower and higher have ending ;

A hook to catch the Lady Jane's attention,  
 A modulation toward the theatre,  
 Also, in the case of revolution,  
 A possible friend and comforter.

\* \* \*

Conduct, on the other hand, the soul  
 " Which the highest cultures have nourished "  
 To Fleet St. where  
 Dr. Johnson flourished ;

Beside this thoroughfare  
 The sale of half-hose has  
 Long since superseded the cultivation  
 Of Pierian roses.

## ENVOI (1919)



O, dumb-born book,  
 Tell her that sang me once that song of Lawes ;  
 Hadst thou but song  
 As thou hast subjects known,  
 Then were there cause in thee that should condone  
 Even my faults that heavy upon me lie

And build her glories their longevity.

Tell her that sheds  
 Such treasure in the air,  
 Recking naught else but that her graces give  
 Life to the moment,  
 I would bid them live  
 As roses might, in magic amber laid,  
 Red overwrought with orange and all made  
 One substance and one colour  
 Braving time.

Tell her that goes  
 With song upon her lips  
 But sings not out the song, nor knows  
 The maker of it, some other mouth,  
 May be as fair as hers,  
 Might, in new ages, gain her worshippers,  
 When our two dusts with Waller's shall be laid,  
 Siftings on siftings in oblivion,  
 Till change hath broken down  
 All things save Beauty alone.

1920

## (MAUBERLEY)

I.



URNED from the "eau-forte  
Par Jaquemart"  
To the strait head  
Of Messalina :

"His true Penelope  
Was Flaubert",  
And his tool  
The engraver's

Firmness,  
Not the full smile,  
His art, but an art  
In profile ;

Colourless  
Pier Francesca,  
Pisanello lacking the skill  
To forge Achaia.

## II

*“ Qu'est ce qu'ils savent de l'amour, et  
qu'est ce qu'ils peuvent comprendre ?*

*S'ils ne comprennent pas la poésie,  
s'ils ne sentent pas la musique, qu'est ce  
qu'ils peuvent comprendre de cette pas-  
sion en comparaison avec laquelle la rose  
est grossière et le parfum des violettes un  
tonnerre ? ”*

CAID ALI



OR three years, diabolus in the scale,  
He drank ambrosia,  
All passes, ANANGKE prevails,  
Came end, at last, to that Arcadia.

He had moved amid her phantasmagoria,  
Amid her galaxies,  
NUKTIS "AGALMA

Drifted . . . drifted precipitate,  
Asking time to be rid of . . .  
Of his bewilderment ; to designate  
His new found orchid. . .

To be certain . . . certain . . .  
(Amid ærial flowers) . . time for arrangements—  
Drifted on  
To the final estrangement ;

Unable in the supervening blankness  
To sift TO AGATHON from the chaff  
Until he found his seive . . .  
Ultimately, his seismograph :

—Given, that is, his urge  
 To convey the relation  
 Of eye-lid and cheek-bone  
 By verbal manifestation ;  
 To present the series  
 Of curious heads in medallion--

He had passed, unconscious, full gaze,  
 The wide-banded irises  
 And botticellian sprays implied  
 In their diastasis ;

Which anæsthesia, noted a year late,  
 And weighed, revealed his great affect,  
 (Orchid), mandate  
 Of Eros, a retrospect.

Mouths biting empty air,  
 The still stone dogs,  
 Caught in metamorphosis were,  
 Left him as epilogues.



## "THE AGE DEMANDED"

VIDE POEM II. Page 10



OR this agility chance found  
Him of all men, unfit  
As the red-beaked steeds of  
The Cytheræan for a chain-bit.

The glow of porcelain  
Brought no reforming sense  
To his perception  
Of the social inconsequence.

Thus, if her colour  
Came against his gaze,  
Tempered as if  
It were through a perfect glaze

He made no immediate application  
Of this to relation of the state  
To the individual, the month was more temperate  
Because this beauty had been

.....

The coral isle, the lion-coloured sand  
Burst in upon the porcelain revery :  
Impetuous troubling  
Of his imagery.

.....

Mildness, amid the neo-Neitzschean clatter,  
His sense of graduations,  
Quite out of place amid  
Resistance to current exacerbations

Invitation, mere invitation to perceptivity  
Gradually led him to the isolation  
Which these presents place  
Under a more tolerant, perhaps, examination.

By constant elimination  
 The manifest universe  
 Yielded an armour  
 Against utter consternation,

A Minoan undulation,  
 Seen, we admit, amid ambrosial circumstances  
 Strengthened him against  
 The discouraging doctrine of chances

And his desire for survival,  
 Faint in the most strenuous moods,  
 Became an Olympian *apathem*  
 In the presence of selected perceptions.

A pale gold, in the aforesaid pattern,  
 The unexpected palms  
 Destroying, certainly, the artist's urge,  
 Left him delighted with the imaginary  
 Audition of the phantasmal sea-surge,  
 Incapable of the least utterance or composition,  
 Emendation, conservation of the "better tradition",  
 Refinement of medium, elimination of superfluities,  
 August attraction or concentration.

Nothing in brief, but maudlin confession  
 Irrésponse to human aggression,  
 Amid the precipitation, down-float  
 Of insubstantial manna  
 Lifting the faint susurrus  
 Of his subjective hosannah.

Ultimate affronts to human redundancies ;

Non-esteem of self-styled "his betters"  
 Leading, as he well knew,  
 To his final  
 Exclusion from the world of letters.

## IV.



CATTERED Moluccas  
 Not knowing, day to day,  
 The first days end, in the next noon ;  
 The placid water  
 Unbroken by the Simoon ;

Thick foliage  
 Placid beneath warm suns,  
 Tawn fore-shores  
 Washed in the cobalt of oblivions ;

Or through dawn-mist  
 The grey and rose  
 Of the juridical  
 Flamingoes ;

A consciousness disjunct,  
 Being but this overblotted  
 Series  
 Of intermittences ;

Coracle of Pacific voyages,  
 The unforecasted beach :  
 Then on an oar  
 Read this :

“I was  
 And I no more exist ;  
 Here drifted  
 An hedonist ”

## MEDALLION



UINI in porcelain !  
 The grand piano  
 Utters a profane  
 Protest with her clear soprano.

The sleek head emerges  
 From the gold-yellow frock  
 As Anadyomene in the opening  
 Pages of Reinach.

Honey-red, closing the face-oval  
 A basket-work of braids which seem as if they were  
 Spun in King Minos' hall  
 From metal, or intractable amber ;

The face-oval beneath the glaze,  
 Bright in its suave bounding-line, as  
 Beneath half-watt rays  
 The eyes turn topaz.

8s  
MEDALLION

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