

Preface

A.E. Housman(1859-1936),a poet and scholar, was born and brought up in the Bromsgrave area. His first collection of poems *The Shropshire Lad* was published in 1896 and the *Last Poems* in1922. The last collection of poems entitled *More Poems* was published posthumously by his brother Lawrence Housman in 1936. Thus Housman covered a long period of 40 years starting from the Victorian through Georgian to the early 20th century. Since his formative years coincided with the time when Victorian literature was at its highest, the predominant aspect of his poetry too, is the Victorian pessimism. The thematic and emotional range of Housman's poetry may not be as wide as that of Auden and Yeats, but still he deals with motifs closely related to human life and a variety of themes are traceable in his poems. They include, besides pessimism and nature; love, death, soldiering, childhood and exile etc.

A cursory glance at the small output shows that Housman may not rank with major Victorian poets with respect to the emotional intensity and thematic variety of their verse. But he can justifiably be called a poet who communicates with utmost verbal directness. Since he has never been rated as a major figure, he has, perhaps, not received the amount of critical

attention which, for example, Hopkins did. But the fact that outstanding critics like Edmund Wilson, Randall Jarrell, William Empson, Christopher Ricks, F.W. Bateson, and Cleanth Brooks have commented on his poetry, clearly indicates that his verse has its own kind of poetic excellence. The present study entitled *A.E.Housman's Poetry: A Reassessment* aims at studying the major themes of Housman's poetry. Since his death in 1936 Housman's character and personality have attracted more critical attention than his poetry. Critical comments on individual poems are fragmentary and scattered. And moreover, to the best of my knowledge, no attempt till date has been made to discuss all the major themes of Housman's poetry in a single volume. Even studies by the above mentioned critics do not provide a comprehensive treatment of all the major themes. This is the reason because of that I have decided to take up a thematic study of Housman's poetry for my Ph.D. dissertation.

It is a matter of pride and privilege for me to have as my supervisor Dr. Rahatullah Khan, Reader, Department of English, A.M.U., Aligarh. It is only his personal interest, expert guidance and boundless support that has enabled me to complete the work in the present form. I am equally grateful to Prof. Suhail Ahsan, Chairman, Department of English, for his kind help and co-operation in the completion of this work. My deep and sincere

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