

"Lionized in the Salons of Jerusalem"

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‘Lionized in the *salons* of Jerusalem’: Louis Alexis’s *School of Nero*

To be a classical scholar is to be passionate about antiquity and its traces; but where does scholarship end and madness begin? This article takes its readers into the borderlands between academia, the teaching profession, and the arcane, following the traces of a visionary philologist who moved freely between those three worlds and whose occult intuitions achieved lasting scholarly value.

1. Introducing Louis Alexis

There was once a very good and much loved teacher of Greek called Frank Dawson. He taught at Sevenoaks, an ancient and prestigious private school in Kent with a long classical pedigree. One day in 1974 he surprised his pupils by announcing that he had changed his name by deed poll to Louis Edward Mithras Alexis. Louis (pronounced Lewis), he told them, was for the composer, Ludwig van Beethoven; Edward, for Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford; Mithras, in honour of the eastern deity with whose cult he was fascinated. He did not explain the Alexis part, though his classically astute pupils recognised it as a conventional pastoral code signalling his chastely appreciative eye for youthful male beauty.¹

Mithraically reborn, he began publishing at his own expense a series of books in which he intended to give his pet theories a proper airing. The first, *School of Nero*, appeared in 1975. Its back cover promised a *De Vere’s ‘Hamlet’* in two volumes but alas, death (1977) intervened. We can get an inkling of its likely drift and vigorous tone from an article republished posthumously in the *Shakespeare Oxford Society Newsletter* of Summer 1978. This was not a society based in Oxford or answering to that city’s university (the editorial address was in Baltimore) but one whose members firmly believed that Edward de Vere was the true and secret author of the plays of Shakespeare. De Vere was the ‘E.’ of Alexis’s ‘E. M.’ and he had published on him as Dawson in the *Shakespearean Authorship Review*, another organ of the ‘Oxfordian’ faction.² The piece had first appeared in Sevenoaks’s school magazine. Here is an excerpt:

Take *Hamlet* 1.5.189:

O cursed spite, That ever I was born to set it right.

¹ Spiro 2016: n.p. On Theocritus as a Victorian and Edwardian code for male same-sex desire see, with caveats for period homophobia, Jenkyns 1980: 290-3. Alexis in Theocritus: *Idyll* 11; in Virgil: *Eclogue* 2. I gratefully acknowledge Karim Arafat for remarks in personal correspondence on Alexis’s inspirational qualities as an educator.

² Helpful for background is Alexis’s obituary in the newsletter (Anon 1978), likely written by its editor Gordon Cyr from material supplied by the secretary of the society’s English chapter, Harold Patience. Alexis’s brother J. C. Dawson was headmaster of More House School at Frensham in Surrey.

This could be 'that I, E Vere, was born...' and the interjection 'O' in the vicinity helps out the suggestion. Or take *Hamlet* 1.2.80, where the prince (the earl's fullest autobiographical portrait) says it is not his actor's trappings

That can denote me truly.

But 'truly' in Latin is VERE...

There are scores and scores of such ambiguities, all playing on the name or titles of the Earl of Oxford and of nobody else, least of all Shaxper of Stratford. And the argument about 'coincidence' gets weaker and weaker with every discovery.³

Anti-Stratfordians have proposed various courtly ghostwriters for the plays and sonnets over the years, including Sir Francis Bacon and William Stanley, 6th Earl of Derby; de Vere entered the lists in 1920 and quickly became the twentieth-century favourite.⁴ Oxfordianism was an *idée fixe* for Alexis, whose fascinatingly disputatious textual notes and commentary pack a great deal more Shaxper-bashing into *School of Nero* than its title would lead the unwary reader to expect; but it would be unfair to dismiss him as a monomaniac.⁵ Alexis was a high-functioning polymaniac. He believed wholeheartedly in both the cosmic catastrophism of Immanuel Velikovsky's *Oedipus and Akhenaton* (1960) and the ancient space aliens of Erich von Däniken's *Chariots of the Gods?* (1968), finding authentic cultural memory of their orbit-shifting comets and extraterrestrial visitations in Book 1 of Statius' *Thebaid*. He was furthermore convinced that Hannibal used high explosives to force his passage through the Alps and then destroyed the Roman opposition at Trasimene and Cannae with rockets, mines, and poison gas, because there really was no other way to explain Book 7 of Silius Italicus' *Punica*.⁶

All of this is vigorously argued with ingenious recourse to a very broad base of ancient general knowledge, and thereon might hang a cautionary tale for all who call ourselves classicists; but for now at least let us turn our attention to the central thesis of *School of Nero*. The author sets out his stall in a longwinded but properly candid subtitle: here for the first time is the true story of

Europe's first Christian ruler identified and excerpts edited from his literary heirs: Silius Italicus, Papinius Statius, Valerius Flaccus; with Textual Notes, Commentaries, Illustrations etc.

³ Alexis 1978: 7.

⁴ J. Thomas Looney (1920), *Shakespeare Identified in Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford*.

⁵ E.g. (among many such instances) Alexis 1975: 13 n.29, notionally on Statius: 'An amusing example which still deceives people, especially scholars, appears in the literature about 'Shake-speare'... Shaxper had been pirating the plays... the Stratford spiv's highest achievement in the acting line was as the shadow (*umbra* = ghost) of the real author in his native village.'

⁶ Ancient astronauts: Alexis 1975: 54-28 and really passim. 'The key is simple: who says "Phoenician" says "chemist"', Alexis 1975: 45.

The ‘School’ of the title is precisely these three epic poets of the late first century AD, all of them secret Christians who enciphered the enlightened emperor’s message so that it might be rediscovered by a discerning posterity. What then is this book, and why should we care?

2. Introducing *School of Nero* (1975)

If you are possessed by an urge to read *School of Nero* you will find secondhand copies available through online sellers. Prices are low because it does not interest collectors, but it is a rare book nonetheless, a pure loss-maker. I happened on a review copy in the Classics Bookshop in Oxford in the 1990s and have never seen another in the flesh.

Though a vanity publication, and highly peculiar in format (8” x 11¾”, or 202 x 323mm), the book is produced to a notably high standard. The Latin texts have line numbering and an elaborate system of notation to either side: this will have added to the already considerable expense of setting the pages in metal type, which was the only way of making a book back then. The presentation is precise, with very few typographical errors: clearly Alexis had a good eye for detail. He also chose and worked closely with a reputable firm of long standing, Aberdeen University Press. This does not make *School of Nero* an academic publication: the Press of that era was a legally separate entity, independent of the university, and could print what it liked. Clearly in this case the author paid for the professional production of a quintessentially private publication. Alexis was not commercially minded, and his book carries no recommended retail price or ISBN. Nonetheless it was properly made to last, a κτήμα ἐς αἰεὶ for the author and whatever persons he chose with whom to share it. The cover is of robust printed card, and the paper stock inside is leagues ahead of anything one might see from an academic press in these days of economy. It was a labour of love at what was surely great expense on a schoolteacher’s salary. The print run must have been very small, perhaps so small that a handful of *gratis* review copies made a considerable dent in it.⁷

Counting its Addenda and Corrigenda and a grandiosely titled final salvo of *esprit d’escalier* ‘Parerga and Paralipomena’ (107-112), *School of Nero* runs to xii+112 numbered pages. Of these latter the Introduction takes up the first eight, followed by adventurously emendatory textual notes (9-24); intricately presented passages from the aforementioned Latin authors (25-44); digressive commentaries on those passages (45-98); and then some schoolmasterly notes on ‘Syntax, Rhetoric Etc’ (99-106) in which the boys of Sevenoaks might have found some familiar nuggets. The divide between textual note and commentary is not hard and fast — Alexis’ enthusiasms will have their way — but the author engages confidently with some classic editions, with whose famous authors (Bentley, Baehrens, Heinsius, etc) he feels himself to be on familiar, rough-and-tumble terms. He also includes two pages of pen-and-ink drawings of what he considers to be relevant iconographic evidence, done to order by a seasoned professional: this too is likely to have cost him good money. The same artist, Peter Archer, also

⁷ I am necessarily speculative on these points (though I think within reasonable bounds) because the current Aberdeen University Press has no connection to its defunct predecessor and retains no records from that era. I thank Sandra at the Press for her prompt and helpful correspondence on this point.

supplied a dynamic cover image in which a Nero-faced Mithras bursts forth from the living rock, sending fragments flying.⁸

Such is our subject. The rest of this article pursues limited aims. Others will be better equipped to judge Alexis' textual emendations should they so wish, and indeed some such judgement has long ago been passed. The only adequate response to Alexis' commentary would be a commentary on that commentary, the ideal reader of which does not exist. Instead we will in the first instance examine Alexis' Introduction (1-8), and the review of *School of Nero* written by Alexis' fellow schoolmaster H. J. K. Usher (1977) for *Classical Review*, the British reviewing journal of record in Greco-Roman scholarship. This was the only review Alexis got, at least in non-ephemeral press. I pursue this second element because the copy of *School of Nero* I own is Usher's review copy, with his pencilled marginalia and a hand-written first draft of what he thought might say. The saga of Christian Nero may thus throw a little light on collegial relations and the ethical or aesthetic challenges of reviewing para-academic works. We will then consider Alexis/Dawson's actually quite productive career in peer-reviewed academic publication; and finally, the verse preface in which he professes his methods and aims, breaking out Mithraically from tired convention and philological compromise.

3. Alexis' Introduction

School of Nero's Introduction is not exactly its beginning. The preceding front matter sandwiches a soberly ordered yet eyebrow-raising table of contents ('Hannibal's Roxets', 'Akhnaton and the UFO') between a substantial verse preface, to which we will later return; acknowledgements 'for help of various kinds' to a local Sevenoaks solicitor and a teaching colleague;⁹ and a list of sigla that places Brian Warmington's mainstream and still fairly recent (1969) *Nero: Reality and Legend* ('BHW') and a smattering of older scholarship by such as Verrall alongside great names including von Däniken ('Dan'), Velikovsky ('Vel'), the marginally less fantastical Robert Graves, and the seventeenth-century Scottish folklorist Reverend Robert Kirk, of *The Secret Commonwealth of Elves, Fauns and Fairies* fame ('Ki').

But let us make the titular Introduction our beginning for now. Its subtitle, SAINT NERO, takes us straight off into the hermetic haze from which Alexis drew such pleasure and affirmation. In this case

⁸ From Alexis's note on the cover art: 'The god Mithras is depicted with Nero's head. This Persian saviour-god was born from a rock, the "stable of Bethlehem" in the Christian story... The Mithraic Christianity which Nero learnt from Saint Paul was soon to be taken up by Marcion, who gave the Church the idea of catholicity and a spiritual canon... and probably wrote the fourth Gospel. If, as I surmise, Nero left Rome in 68 AD for the East, he may have met and inspired Marcion' (1975: inside front cover). Peter Archer had illustrated the first paperback Dr Who novelisation, script editor David Whitaker's *Dr Who in an Exciting Adventure with Daleks* (1965), and was a regular cover artist for Armada paperbacks in the 1950s and 60s.

⁹ I novelistically surmise that the biology teacher James Nottidge helped smooth the way for Alexis's transition in his working environment and that the solicitor Peter Kingshill made his new identity legally secure. Kingshill was a respected ally of the socially marginal:

<https://www.goldminemag.com/columns/book-of-folk-ballads-centering-around-crime-unfolds-into-scintillating-read>

his sermon-text is the book *Saint Néron* by Jean-Charles Pichon (1962), published in a mass-market paperback of which used copies are still plentiful. Pichon was a fascinating character, an actor and screenwriter, poet, novelist, and political journalist as well as an aficionado of esoteric counter-history. According to his version Suetonius and Tacitus had lied, or rather, their texts had later been censored and rewritten to turn them into liars, reassigning blame and hiding what had actually happened.¹⁰ Nero in fact had not had Rome's Christians judicially mass-murdered after the great fire of 64; nothing could have been less like him. What was more, Saint Paul had met Nero in person and persuaded him of the truth of the new faith. When Tacitus derided the emperor's Golden House as a vainglorious pleasure-dome he failed (or rather, was made by later textual meddlers to have failed) to realise that it had been raised as a house of God, under Nero's direct patronage. The truth for those in the know was that the persecution of Christians in Rome began only under Nero's successors, and was a deliberate attempt to undo his good works in spreading the Kingdom of Heaven.

Pichon's conspiracy theory was an extreme variant of a story that had been kicking around for a long time. The idea that art and animus had led Suetonius and the rest to manipulate their material and craft a hostile caricature of Nero's reign was notably expressed by Charles Lewes in 1863 in an article for general English readers titled 'Was Nero a Monster?'. A novelist by trade, Lewes saw much of his own craft mirrored in that of the ancient historiographers, whom he took to be fellow literary authors first and foremost.¹¹ Alexis knew and approved of Lewes's essay, the underlying idea of which now seems modestly commonsensical.¹² Pichon, though, went far beyond it because reception of Nero in France had gone so far in the other direction. By far the most prominent and influential of Nero's nineteenth-century detractors was the problematically brilliant polymath Ernest Renan, whose Aryanising *Vie de Jésus* (1863) was an international bestseller. Conceived as the fourth volume of a grand history of Christianity, his subsequent *L'Antéchrist* (1873) followed the lead of late antique Christian polemic in identifying Nero with the titular nemesis riddlingly conjured by the author of the Book of Revelation, Mr 666 himself. Renan's eschatological Nero was the archenemy of Christianity who would (for real) return as prophesied at the End of Days.¹³

Alexis had clearly read *Antichrist* in its mass-market and appendectomised English translation (1899), and he was at one with Pichon in feeling contempt for its proposals. His very title digs back at Renan's pietistic nonsense: 'school' is one of that author's favourite lazy catch-alls, and *School of Nero* is savage quotation-against-the-grain.¹⁴ He then spends much of his Introduction showcasing and expanding on Pichon's counter-Antichristic revelations. How, he joins Pichon in asking, could the Nero who only once permitted a gladiatorial show, and then insisted it be bloodless, possibly have turned hundreds of

¹⁰ Interpolation and rearrangement to reassign acts and alter motives: Alexis 1975: 4, and cf. his picture caption at 60: 'One of the *certamina sacra* of Tac 14 Ann 21 (mutilated, like all passages showing Nero's Christian leanings).'

¹¹ Malik 2020: 128.

¹² Dawson 1969: 263n9. The contributors to Elsner and Masters (eds.) (1995) are among Lewes's modern scholarly successors.

¹³ Malik 2020: 129-30.

¹⁴ Renan 1899: 242: if Galba had managed to stabilise the situation 'he would have been a kind of Nerva, and the series of philosopher Emperors might have begun thirty years earlier; *but the detestable school of Nero won the day*' when Nero's protégé Otho overthrew him (emphasis added).

Christians into living torches? To find proof of Paul's intimate converse with Nero, one need look no further than a mediaeval fresco from Norman Palermo that shows Paul debating with Simon Magus in front of a figure labelled NERO REX; and so on.¹⁵ He finds that even the dramatic roles that Nero performed were chosen to telegraph his Christian belief:

Heracles, who accepted death to save his family, or Thyestes with his cannibal-feast (the Christian Eucharist was likened by the Aztec Montezuma to cannibalism and not by him alone), or Oedipus-Akhnaton, who founded Heliopolis as Nero projected Neropolis, clashed with Jove-worshippers, was associated with incest and Persia, loved art and feasting, hated war, was pushed suddenly off his throne, lived on as a mysterious wanderer or holy man, and died under strange circumstances, a pattern which Nero, perhaps deliberately, was to copy...

Significant too is Nero's lifelong devotion to the Syrian goddess Atagartis, associated with the Fish, the Dove, and the constellation Virgo — all symbols of power in Christianity.¹⁶

When devotion to pagan cult can prove Christian faith, all manner of things become wonderfully possible at once, including a Nero who lives on after a mock-death that can be multifariously explained away. The ancient sources intriguingly report that for decades afterwards false 'Neros' were sporadically sighted in the Greek East, always causing a stir. These were no Elvis-style phantasms but genuine sightings of an ex-emperor who had used his flair for costuming and impersonation to make a clean getaway:

On June 9th 68 Nero disappears from Rome. What happened to him nobody knows. One of the few certainties is that he did not die as described at [Suetonius *Nero*] 47-49, **which is patently transferred material from his stage-life, or perhaps a Mithraic ordeal**. The likeliest guess is that he spent the rest of his days wandering about the East as a kind of troubadour...

Nero survived until he was seventy-three, lived by the 'simple craft' of his art, and was lionized in the *salons* of Jerusalem... he died in 110, having spent some twenty years in the near East and his old age in Parthia, where he gave the ancestors of the 'Norman' kings the information that led to the Palermo mosaic.¹⁷

QED: the loop is satisfyingly closed, with a spare argument ('or perhaps...') up Alexis's sleeve just in case. But, he says, there is problem with all of this: Pichon did not go far enough. He failed fully to develop and underline the point that the Christianity to which Paul introduced Nero was specifically a *Mithraic* variety, in conformance with Alexis's overarching fixations. This occult strand was later subsumed into the mainstream faith but still reveals itself to the adept in special signs such as the date of Christmas, the story of the adoration of the Magi, and the shape of a bishop's mitre. What is more, the

¹⁵ Alexis 1975: 1-2, following Pichon.

¹⁶ Alexis 1975: 2.

¹⁷ Alexis 1975: 3-4 (emphasis added). The 'Normans' who settled Sicily must have been descendants of Mithraic Persians, because how otherwise could they have known to encode Tiridates' recognition of Nero's initiated Christianity into the Palermo mosaic? — thus Pichon.

Mithraic flavour of Nero's Christian faith explains his homosexual marriages to Pythagoras, Doryphorus, and Sporus: 'A mimic marriage of two males *must have* been part of the ceremony [o Mithraic initiation], symbolizing the union of the initiate with the deity... After all, the idea is common enough in Christian mysticism', so it must have been there in Mithraism too (the pedestrian reader may fill in the details of the argument for themselves, if they must).¹⁸ It explains too why King Tiridates of Armenia, according to the epitome of Dio (63.5), prostrated himself before Nero as if in the presence of the deity, saying ἦλθον προσκυνήσων σε ὡς καὶ τὸν Μίθραν' ('I came to prostrate myself before you as before Mithras himself'): evidently he recognised the emperor as a higher-ranking initiate. The Locusta of the sources was no poisonous assassin, but Mother Superior of the *Domus Aurea* nunnery: her potions were magic mushrooms that induced mystic ecstasies among her devoted Sisters; and to top it all, the emperor was a fine musician and poet.¹⁹ Though his own works were furiously suppressed by his brutish successors, the epicists of the next generation learned at his knee, and his genius and message live on through them. They too were secret Christians.

Put like that, it all sounds dreadful, and it is, but it is also clever and passionate and *interesting*. Let us now see how a contemporary rose to the occasion of reviewing it.

4. Usher's review

Known to his friends as John, H. J. K. Usher taught at the prestigious and progressive University College School in Hampstead. A few years after he reviewed *School of Nero* he was to co-author the school's official history (*An Angel without Wings*) and in the same year publish his own *Outline of Greek Accidence* (Duckworth, 1981), a respected handbook that is still in print. His review of *School of Nero* runs to two pages in the 1977 *Classical Review*, the British journal of record for reviews of books in the subject area of classics and ancient history. This is an august forum in which to find a vanity-published book getting critical notice, and it appears also to have been the only publication that reviewed it.

The editors probably sent the book Usher's way because its front matter advertises the author as a teacher, offering the school as a correspondence address. The review process thus defaulted to treating it as an edition intended for educational use, and accordingly Usher opens his review with considerations of pedagogy. He justly notes that the Flavian epicists had previously been inaccessible to sixth-formers and undergraduates because they had for the most part lacked commentaries. Alexis's work thus, he says, has the potential partially to unlock Statius and the rest as teaching texts, but Usher regrets to report that it does no such thing: that the texts are beautifully but confusingly presented; that the author shows only an eccentrically tangential understanding of the manuscript tradition; and that some of Alexis's more plausible textual conjectures have in any case been made before, by editors whose works he has consulted carelessly or not at all.²⁰

¹⁸ Alexis 1975: 5-6 (emphasis added).

¹⁹ Alexis 1975: 6-7, and to be fair, for all we know Nero may well have had real talent.

²⁰ Usher 1977: 279 (inadequate as teaching text); 280 (tenuous grasp of manuscripts); 281 (ignorance of previous emendations).

This is all fairly damning on the conventional scholarly front, though Usher civilly concedes that there are ‘excellencies’ and ‘shrewd observations’ to be dug out by the strongly committed reader.²¹ His overarching verdict, expressed through neat ring-composition, is that the book offers both too much and not enough, making it effectively relevant (through he does not go so far as to say so out loud) to a readership of one, the man who wrote it:

In Mr Alexis’s treatment of [these extracts] the reader will find both a good deal more and a great deal less than he bargains for...

The most appropriate comment comes, perhaps, from one of the Manes to whom this work is dedicated: ‘Not only have we here a shower of information which we do not expect in the least, but we are defrauded of information which we do expect.’²²

Usher’s closing gambit twists the knife a little: he is quoting Housman (on Horace’s *Ars Poetica* and how best to emend it), one of the three great philologists to whose departed spirits Alexis offers up his work as a trophy of victory.²³ It seemed that his time had been imposed on unfairly by a putatively student-facing edition that had wandered far from its basic task down a bewildering array of rabbit-holes, and his penultimate paragraphs let Alexis have it with both barrels:

The range of A.’s interests is extremely wide, embracing much curious information, and he finds room for it all. Thus the reader will learn about Kepler’s third law (to illustrate the longevity of nymphs), the social status of tailors in Tudor England (to illustrate the ‘royal’ plural), that Beethoven’s Choral Symphony was arranged for the hymn ‘Love divine, all loves excelling’, that Atlas is a sea god identical with the zodiacal sign of Capricorn, that the Normans were Persians, that Pallas was the παιδικά of Aeneas, that ‘Octavia’ was written by Lucan’s father, that Elizabeth I was part of the ‘monstrous regiment’ blasted by John Knox, that Vere wrote ‘Hamlet’, and that Mynors edited Juvenal...

The reader will discover too that Hannibal blew up Alpine cliffs with gunpowder, won the battle of Cannae by the use of poison gas, and that the ignited cattle of Sirius were really rockets; that Oedipus was both Moses and Tutankhamun; that technologically advanced ‘gods’ dwelt — and still dwell — in subterranean and submarine kingdoms, and that Tisiphone was an UFO, a space-ship serviced in an underground hangar, equipped with radio antennae for signalling.

Usher was very hard on *School of Nero*, but he had taken some care to modulate his own rhetoric as he thought over how to respond to it. His shorter pencil draft opens with much the same material, but first gives free play to a classic motif out of Lewis Carroll:

²¹ Usher 1977: 280-1

²² Usher 1977: 279 and 281.

²³ Alexis 1975: v: ‘BENTLEII HEINSII HOVS MANII CETERORVMQVE INTERPRETVM QVI POETIS DVM SERVIVNT IPSI SVAM INVENERE POETICAM DIS MANIBVS. | ΤΡΟΦΕΙΑ’. Usher cites Housman 2004: 158, from ‘Horatiana (III)’, originally published at *Journal of Philology* 18 (1890): 1-35.

“One can’t [sic] believe impossible things.” “I daresay you haven’t had much practice”, said the Queen. “When I was your age, I always did it for half-an-hour a day.” By some such ingenious routine, Mr Alexis has acquired an impressive number of unorthodox beliefs: that Edward de Vere wrote the plays of Shakespeare and Scipio and Laelius (engagingly abbreviated to Laescip) the plays of Terence; that space ships and astronauts frequented prehistoric skies and that Pallas was Aeneas’ παιδικά...

He concludes the pencil draft with an expression of regret that *School of Nero* has such unkind words for previous scholars. ‘We all live in glasshouses, and there might well be a truce on stone-throwing.’ To illustrate Alexis’s own vulnerability on this score he adduces the gaffe about Mynors and Juvenal. That bit makes it into the published review; the proverbial glass houses and stones do not. Usher’s rough notes reveal that the White Queen’s remarks to Alice in *Through the Looking-Glass* suggested themselves irresistibly to his mind as he worked through Alexis’s text; he then went and checked the quotation to make sure he got it right (his initial version—from-memory skipped straight to the more famous ‘six impossible things before breakfast’). He was enjoying his task and responding playfully, quite in the spirit of the book he was reviewing, to work he halfway admired.

By the time he submitted his copy he had reined in the fun, all the better to communicate his own sobriety as he shifted from teasing to condemnation. On a first read-through he had been delighted to find many merits, careful thought, ‘genuine and often serious...learning, with provocative use of anthropology... The style is splendidly vigorous’. But the book was *heretical*—his term, from the pencilled notes — and by the time he saw his review to print he had decided on a less mixed message. Then as now, classics teaching was its own little world, and I imagine he perfectly well knew who taught Greek at Sevenoaks. It would not have cost the earth to be kind.

In the light of Usher’s magisterial *damnatio* it would be easy to write off Alexis as an eccentric irritant who dissipated his cleverness on mad enthusiasms. There may be some truth in it, but I suggest there was more to him than that. For one thing, he was already a well-published classical scholar who had contributed noteworthy work to the very journal in which *School of Nero* was now being ridiculed.

5. Alexis Dawson, classicist

‘See my article in CJ 64’: before Frank Dawson went all the way as Louis Edward Mithras Alexis, he had explored a halfway persona in the world of academic print. In the late 1960s and early 1970s ‘Alexis Dawson’ published no fewer than three articles in reputable peer-reviewed journals.²⁴ Each time his authorial byline gave the school as his address, so he was not trying to veil his identity: this was work in which he took pride, and with real justification.

The first article, ‘Hannibal and Chemical Warfare’, appeared in *Classical Journal* in 1967 under the byline ‘A. Dawson’. The claims about poison gases and high explosives that Usher was to ridicule in his

²⁴ At the time of writing *L’Année Philologique* listed all three as by a separate ‘Anne Dawson’; I have logged a correction.

1977 review of *School of Nero* got their first outing here, at least in Dawson's hands. Playing off Livy's colourful account of the campaign against later Greek sources whom he critiques shrewdly, and assigning a minor supporting role in the argument to future *School of Nero* star Silius Italicus,²⁵ the author develops an intricate case through detailed close readings. In so doing he consciously engages with and breathes fresh life into an obscure pre-scholarly tradition according to which reports of battlefield confusion in classical military historiographers such as Livy sometimes unknowingly testify to the deployment of advanced chemical technologies fielded by barbarian opponents.

Dawson specifically resurrects speculations first aired by the early nineteenth century Irish journalist and short-story author William Maginn, whose prolific and admired output had included paradoxical takes on Shakespeare, making him a kindred spirit.²⁶ The 1840 number of *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country* that ran Maginn's 'Did Hannibal Know the Use of Gunpowder?' indexed it under 'Adversaria': that is to say, as a playful literary provocation, alongside the same author's 'A Few Notes upon Shakspeare [sic]'. Dawson was aware of his predecessor's jesting tendency but reckoned his propositions about Hannibal deserved to be taken completely seriously — and taken further. As was to be the case with Pichon in *School of Nero* eight years later, Dawson fully credits his predecessor for opening up the field. Maginn had cracked the code that revealed Hannibal's Alpine demolitions, mines, and rockets; now Dawson closes the loop by identifying the mustard-gas attack that drove the consuls' army at Cannae into deadly encirclement. Speculative diagrams of the manoeuvres accompany vigorous close-readings of the literary sources to complete the picture:

The key lies in a detail which Livy preserved and which Polybius had omitted, as he omitted the detail about the 'vinegar', because he did not understand it...

We can now understand why the [personified sirocco] Vulturinus in Sirius had to visit Etna's furnaces before reaching Cannae: the high degree of burning, far greater than the normal effect of the sirocco, had to be explained somehow. We can now understand Livy's soldiers, found with their faces buried in the soil (22.51.8): the pain-crazed men were trying to find cool wet earth to relieve the fire in their eyes, knowing perhaps that mud was used in the treatment of ophthalmic ailments.²⁷

In generously scholarlike fashion, Dawson also sought to situate his predecessor's work within a hallowed intellectual tradition.²⁸

²⁵ Silius: Dawson 1967: 117-8, 121, 123.

²⁶ Dawson 1967: 117-8.

²⁷ Dawson 1967: 122 (diagrams), 123. At 122 he 'regret[s] that Maginn will never know' an explanation that would have pleased him greatly.

²⁸ Dawson upgrades Maginn to 'scholar' status (1967: 117) and seems to imply (1967: 121) that Maginn knew the *Epistola de secretis operibus artis et naturae et de nullitate magiae* (n.d.), attributed to Roger Bacon and proposing an explosive explanation for the defeat of the Midianites by the outnumbered forces of the Biblical Gideon (Judges 6-8). This probably spurious work was not published till decades after the death of Maginn, who will have arrived at the parallel independently.

In sum, 'Hannibal and Chemical Warfare' is Dawson's definitive attempt at setting out his case for Phoenician munitions; his energy and mastery of the texts make it read persuasively; and the detail with which he develops his conclusions, arguing closely from the literary sources and deploying impressive classical and chemical knowledge, explains the brevity and confidence with which he was to reassert them as Alexis eight years on. As far as he was concerned the question was settled.

Journals and their peer-reviewers evidently were more adventurous in those days. A couple of years later *Classical Journal* happily accepted a second piece from Dawson. 'Whatever Happened to Lady Agrippina?' (1969) vividly identifies a basic narrative problem in Tacitus' account of Agrippina's death (*Annals* 14.1-10). This is the article to which Alexis alludes in his Introduction to *School of Nero*, as quoted above (again, he never sought to cover his tracks). The Nero of the *Annals* first attempts to dispose of his mother by inducing her to travel in a boat that has in some way or another been rigged as a death-trap. Whatever the device is (and Tacitus' scant details are mutually contradictory), it fails, so the emperor has her killed by soldiers once she has struggled ashore. Dawson has two objections: the episode is a poor fit to its context, and it is not internally consistent. Tacitus' technique in this extended and elaborate episode is that of a sensationalising novelist, not a historian:

Admittedly the novelette is an admirable piece of writing. That moonlit bay of Baiae, the terror of the disintegrating boat, Agrippina's nocturnal swim, the horrific murder in the villa at Bauli, the ghostly trumpet-calls, all blend into a scene of nightmarish horror, like something out of Dante or Poe... But mere aesthetic considerations should not blind us to the sobering fact that these haunting pages, from beginning to end, are a farrago of lies and absurdities.

The rhetoric could do with toning down, there are glimmers of the wild claims still to come, and Dawson's own, highly novelistic theory of what happened on the Bay of Naples that night has not won widespread acceptance — but his negative thesis is absolutely right.²⁹ Tacitus' account does not make proper sense as history, and putting it in dialogue with Suetonius and Dio makes it look even worse. It is, he concludes, a mere collage of free-floating narrative elements with which Tacitus the novelist-dramaturge makes opportunistic play.³⁰

This last part edges towards conspiracy-minded hyperbole, because Dawson had to be Dawson — but the underlying point was worth making, it is good that he made it, and later scholarship acknowledges his contribution with respect. Indeed, his suggestion that Tacitus and other hostile later sources are transmogrifying scenes from Nero's thespian career into putative episodes of a monstrous biography was astute and well ahead of its time.³¹

²⁹ Agrippina was about to topple Nero and replace him with Otho; when the plot was discovered she killed herself; Nero then mercifully gave Otho the opportunity to redeem himself in Spain: Dawson 1969: 258-9. I have seen this taken up only by Graham 2017: 159-60, non-scholarly. 'A prince whose reign was a Golden Age, the friend of St Paul and possibly a Christian convert': Dawson 1969: 262.

³⁰ Dawson 1969: 266.

³¹ Dawson 1969: 261-2. Bartsch 1995: 247 takes a contemporary scholar to task for failing to take account of this 'important discussion'. Dawson is germane to her own project (1994), and still problematically foundational for Baltussen 2002: 30.

The third and final article is in *Classical Review* (1972), the very journal in which a few years later *School of Nero* would meet its schoolmasterly nemesis. The title ‘Emendations in Manilius II *Proem*’ does not suggest a page-turner but what follows is a highly entertaining drama by way of textual emendation, setting at odds two bygone and highly committed editors of Manilius’ *Astronomica*: the acerbic A. E. Housman (early twentieth century), and the scholar and theologian Richard Bentley (early eighteenth). Though a sensitive poet, Housman famously lacked all mercy in his dealings with scholars whose work he considered mistaken or shoddy, which was most of them; his textual notes and reviews are packed with vicious epigrams and make for bracing reading. In his own ‘Emendations’ Dawson channels the spirit of Housman for the most part against the man himself. Here he is on *Astronomica* 2.7. Again the grand fixations of Louis Alexis are starting to poke through, but the barbs are deftly wielded:

As verbal quibbles to ‘Shake-speare’, so to Housman confusable letters were the Atalanta’s apples, to pursue which he would abandon every other consideration... Here, to display one case of *-entum* changed to *-entem* in Book iii, he sheered away from Bentley’s *septem*, not delayed by the fact that it was another’s brain-child. But the numeral is crucial. ‘Seven Grecian towns contend for Homer dead | Through which the living Homer begged his bread.’ The gloss rubs off as soon as we replace ‘seven’ with ‘many’. It is like saying ‘Some Blind Mice’ or ‘The Multitude against Thebes.’³²

Housman was a great thrower of stones and to see him pelted in this pointedly Housmanic style is very funny. Proposing to eclipse him, Dawson talks a good professional game and argues with vigorous sense for particular conjectures and rearrangements:

Fulfilled predictions, say the poet, prove astrology neither deceived nor deceiving. But what is line 132 doing in the midst of this reasoning? Place it at the end... Freed from *turba* the word *adversa* can do other work.³³

When he was focused on the job Alexis/Dawson could put on a proper show as a classicist, and the progression from 1969 to 1972 gives no indication that he was becoming less proper or less focused. If anything, ‘Emendations in Manilius’ is a more tightly controlled piece than ‘Lady Agrippina’. Three journal articles may not seem like much in our age of publish-or-perish, but a university lecturer could publish less in a lifetime and still be respected.³⁴ Alexis/Dawson fairly well knew what he was about, and *School of Nero* was the ultimate expression of the kind of classicist he wanted to be.

³² Dawson 1972: 160.

³³ Dawson 1972: 163-4.

³⁴ I think with especial affection and respect of a former long-serving colleague at a Scottish university who in his whole career published only three articles, two of them short and one of them co-authored, plus some reviews. He would not have wished to be tiresome by carrying on once he had said what he felt he needed to say. Needless to add, he was a scholar of considerable capacity and students revered him.

6. Lewis/Louis Alexis, initiate

BENTLEII HEINSII HOVSMANII CETERORVMQVE INTERPRETVM QVI POETIS DVM
SERVI<VER>VNT IPSI SVAM INVENERE POETICAM DIS MANIBVS

ΤΡΟΦΕΙΑ

School of Nero can have had few readers down the years, and I expect that fewer still have committed to deciphering its substantial dedicatory poem. Running to most of a page in two compact columns and showcasing what seems to me Alexis's considerable capability in Latin verse, it summons and pays tribute to the shades of all the bygone scholars, famous or obscure, who in past generations have blazed the trail that he now treads. *School of Nero* honours at its outset 'the ghosts of Bentley, Heinsius, Housman, and all the other scholars who, while they serve<d> the [ancient] poets, themselves found their own *poetica*' — their own principles of art; their own creative power, feeding on but unconfined by ancient texts. The Latin word that I translate 'scholar', *interpres*, is frequently used of divinatory faculties that extend uncannily beyond the everyday.³⁵ In the hands of the initiate classical scholarship may become a kind of magical practice, a calling-into-being of wild possibilities.

Some of these possibilities have become much less wild over time. Adonis/Dawson's madcap suggestion that Tacitus *et al.* were retrospectively overwriting Nero's actual life with scenes from his stage career was eventually taken up and developed by significant scholarship and thereby continues to wield indirect influence.³⁶ Consider too the purportedly ludicrous claim, included in both versions of Usher's ever-growing list of Adonian absurdities and placed as its climax in the pencil version, crazier even than ancient UFOs — 'that Pallas was Aeneas' παιδικά'. Usher leaves the key term in the obscurity of a learned language because it was not the done thing to discuss erotics plainly in scholarly print back then, especially homoerotics (though Dover's *Greek Homosexuality* (1978) was soon to break that bar). *CR*'s readers will nonetheless have grasped the point at least as clearly as did Sevenoaks's schoolboys when their teacher renewed himself as a gay-pastoral Alexis. How possibly, wonders Usher, could anyone have come to imagine that Aeneas is romantically involved with Evander's son, and that the vengeance he wreaks on Turnus at the epic's close is in any sense that of an outraged lover for his slain beloved? But to twenty-first-century readers the idea of gay subtext does not seem outlandish at all, especially when foreshadowed by the pairing of Nisus and Euryalus in *Aeneid* 9. In fact mainstream Virgilian scholarship was taking it seriously within ten years of Usher rejecting it as depraved nonsense.³⁷ One may even reasonably wonder if his town-square condemnation played a role in spreading the notion around.

So it turned out that some of Alexis's magic had real power. Conceivably it might help him live forever, but in the meantime it would do his work in the world:

³⁵ Alexis 1975: v. OLD *interpres* 2 'a spokesman or messenger of a god', 3b 'an interpreter (of omens, oracles, dreams, etc).'

³⁶ Notably through Bartsch 1994, a fine work that continues to set agendas.

³⁷ See in particular Putnam 1985, Pavlock 1992, and Lloyd 1999.

As the wave at last swallows the shattered timbers of a broken ship that have been tossed upon the insatiable gulf of the open sea, so too fate's oblivion pulls us under, for all our struggles: what pitifully little endures from so great a shipwreck! As our whole race collapses in destruction, it happens nonetheless that a few may reach the shore by way of a masterwork of genius, and that the noble work of the mind may set itself against the swift downfall of a jealous age...

Whether you are fated to live long or to perish, little book, certainly you are worthy to bear witness to my concerns. I humbly offer you as tribute. You will be my proclamation, until the day shall come that swallows up the days used in between.

Thus begins (1-8) and ends (55-8) the elegiac proem of *School of Nero*, a blood sacrifice offered to the eldritch powers of bygone classical philology. Usher had completely misapprehended Alexis's project. The Sevenoaks schoolmaster had no interest in quibbling over textual detail with every little editor of Silius and the rest: that would be to fiddle as Rome burned. He wanted to wrestle with gods as the world rushed to ruin about him. He wrote to please his favourite ghosts, and above all to explore and operate upon himself. Three striking lines echo Virgil's famous *felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas* (*Geo.* 2.490), typically taken as praising Lucretius' didactic epic, *De Rerum Natura*: 'Happy is he who has gained understanding of the causes of things'. The *infelix* of the first quoted line is the respectable textual scholar who avoids controversy by letting threadbare conventional readings (*trita*) stand rather than take a chance on emending an unsatisfactory passage:

*est tamen infelix, uolgo quicumque probatur,
felix, cui fatum docta Minerua fuit.
ille nec in turba nec turbae scribit, in ipso...* (27-9)

And yet any man is unhappy who is approved by the common crowd. Happy is he whose fate has been learned Minerva. That man writes not in the crowd or for it, but within himself...³⁸

At the end of a beautiful little discussion of the challenges of editing and the ultimate impossibility of a completely correct edition, Alexis sets out his overriding aim and claim: by forming a classical text, one may transform oneself. The trick is to write it, as he has put it earlier, *within* oneself. This is classical scholarship as self-actualisation through internal katabasis, and there can be no work more vital. The petty criticisms of *infelices* are beneath the notice of an initiate on the path to the stars. Bavius and Maeuius were the proverbial poetasters and sore losers of Virgil's day:³⁹

haut secus errorum uexatis agmine chartis
Amphitryoniades alter adesse uolo.
grandia nec posco: Bauui quoque vel tua, Maeui,
ingenium nobis prodita Musa facit. (45-8)

³⁸ There is a clear echo too of Horace's Callimachean-vatic *Odi profanum uolgu et arceo* (*Odes* 3.1.1) in the repetition of *uolgu* at lines 25 (*trita feret uolgu*) and 27 (*uolgo quicumque probatur*).

³⁹ *Eclogues* 3.30; *Epodes* 10.

By means of these pages, harried into order and hardly free from mistakes, I wish to become a second Heracles. Nor are my demands lofty: your traduced Muse, Bavius, or yours, Maevius, moreover feeds my own capacity.

For Alexis as for his Heracles of old, katabasis is the necessary prequel to ascension. As well as Virgil and Horace, Alexis will have had in mind book 3 of Pope's *Dunciad* (emphasis added), and I wonder if Usher read him and felt seen:

Some are bewilder'd in the Maze of Schools,
And some made Coxcombs Nature meant but Fools.
In search of Wit these lose their common Sense,
And then turn Criticks in their own Defence.
Each burns alike, who can, or cannot write,
Or with a Rival's or a Eunuch's spite.
All Fools have still an Itching to deride,
And fain wou'd be upon the Laughing Side;
If Maevius Scribble in Apollo's spight,
There are, who judge still worse than he can write...

Closing thoughts

To pay proper homage to the *manes* of Louis Alexis this article ought to end with a *Parerga and Paralipomena*, full of all the wonderful ideas that had occurred to its author since he sent his copy to be set in metal type — but we publish very differently now, whether our market be academic, popular, or arcane. Our every casual thought is all but print-ready, material is reordered with a gesture of the mouse or trackpad, and the radical opportunities of online self-publishing invite all of us to dive into each momentary enthusiasm with no real consequence if we fail. When Alexis moved beyond handwriting or typescript (did he type?) into physical book-publication he invested far more, materially, socially (with potentially ruinous material consequences), and psychically. On every level, *School of Nero* put it all out there for a world that might or might not notice, and was likely to condemn if it did.

I admit it: twenty-something me bought *School of Nero* because it looked to be nuts. I paid £5, a lot of money to me in the 1990s, and the book did not disappoint. It is beautifully and intricately crazy. I have had my fun with it, but I have also come to respect its author's commitment — as did Usher long ago, before he decided to cramp his own style and turn the screw. I have sympathy for Usher too, caught in a bind between the day job, service to his discipline, and whatever else he may have had going on. There are no villains here, but Alexis emerges as a kind of hero. He was seriously brave, he served generations of students with passionate commitment, he was a classical queer forebear, and he spread the light of Mithras — what is not to like? And *School of Nero* achieved exactly what it needed to, Maeviuses be damned.

Alexis's death was a loss to his profession, was mourned internationally by the Oxfordian community, and robbed the world of an imponderable quantity of occult-academic treats. His two volumes of *De Vere's 'Hamlet'*, the first 'coming shortly' (he must already have been discussing it with the press) and the other in preparation, promised a detailed treatment of de Vere's public and hidden lives. It would have packed a lot in — the back-cover blurb to Volume 1 alone promises a whirlwind of intrigue:

...the Royal ward and William Cecil — the Queen's Favourite — the secret marriage [sc. to Queen Elizabeth I] and the public marriage — publication under pseudonyms — Continental tour — Euphues, the Athenian gentleman — French hostage — the duel — the 'taking of the ghost's word for £1000' — bankruptcy and second marriage — Clown William in the forest, how Shaxper of Stratford entered theatre-land — the poetomachia...

HAMLET ACT I introduction, emended text, commentary.

Between them the two volumes would have 'emended' all of *Hamlet*, turning the play into a set of rebuses that Alexis was just the man to solve. His answers to what would effectively have been his own riddles would have proved to his own considerable satisfaction 'how a hoax became history, etc.' That he ends his blurb for Volume II with 'etc' is beautifully apt because these speculations could run and run, with no end in sight whichever way they might turn; that was the wonderful thing about them. There could have been cameos for Nero and Silius like de Vere's in *School of Nero*, perhaps a UFO or two, and who knows what else. I would like to think the manuscript is still out there somewhere, biding its time.

Louis Alexis bent text and history alike to make them rhyme. To his departed shade, then —

INTERPRETI QVI POETIS DUM SERVIVIT IPSE SVAM INVENIT POETICAM

END

Appendix 1: Alexis's verse proem

qualis inexplata iactata uoragine tandem
fragmina disiectae sorbuit unda ratis,
nos quoque luctatos mergunt obliuia sorti;
durant e tanto quantula naufragio!
ut genus omne ruat, paucis tamen accidit ante
ingeni magni tangere litus ope
liuentisque citis opponere lapsibus aeui
excultae studiis nobile mentis opus.
priscorum sero genitis mysteria uatum
pandere et ambages euoluisse uiris

10

gaudebantque uago scribarum nata furore
 nec sua plorantes menda leuare libros:
 sic terris latitans aurum non utile mira
 fecit ut ecfossum splendeat arte faber,
 sic uaffer exhibuit genitalia rusticus arua
 qua prius obruerant stagna paludis humum,
 Tethye caementis domita fastigia diues
 sic labyrinthheae struxit in astra domus.
 o stirps ingeniosa, tua quam digna Minerua!
 macte bonis animi, grex operose, tui! 20
 quam Minyis Lynceus acie, quam cantibus Orpheus,
 pectore tam nobis profuit ista cohors!
 trita sequi licuit: sordebant trita peritis
 indelibatam continuare fidem.
 trita feret volgus: feret omnia iudice dempto:
 indicium tollas, arbiter usus erit:
 est tamen infelix, uolgo quicumque probatur,
 felix, cui fatum docta Minerua fuit.
 ille nec in turba nec turbae scribit, in ipso,
 quo referat puro dissona, quisquis habet, 30
 uera sagax sueto, si possit, tradere textu,
 si nequeat, quoquo tradere vera modo.
 sueta nouatane sint, quid refert, dummodo verba
 auctorum niteant libera sorde doli?
 docte, per ignotos praestat grassarier orbis!
 nota foue: uitium quod fuit ante manet.
 ad noua ni ueterum descenderis aemulus, istud
 irata polies Palade semper opus.
 uix suffecturis tamen inlustrare priorum
 uiribus exopto facta, reperta, sales, 40
 atque emendandi forsitan non pectore tanto,
 at certe simili munus obire fide.
 Alciden, quo nulus amantior exstitit aqui,
 multa salutari ui reparasse ferunt:
 haut secus errorum uexatis agmine chartis
 Amphitryoniades alter adesse uolo.
 grandia nec posco: Bauui quoque vel tua, Maeui,
 ingenium nobis prodita Musa facit.
 sic mihi contingat uiuo uolitare per ora,
 huic studio studium cessit ut omne meum. 50
 Graecia me cepit quali, fas credere, nympa
 uallis Aricinae religione Numam,
 dulci seruitio neque detrahet ulla senectus,

Nestor seu Priamus sive Tithonus ero.
o uicture diu dicam periturene, certe
testari curas digne, libelle, meas,
obsequio tribuamus eris praeconia, donec
hauriet absumptos hos quoque sera dies.

Appendix 2: Usher's preparatory notes

1. Preparatory notes on a sheet of 4" x 6" ('Albert') notepaper, consisting of:

- (i) Miscellaneous annotations (no heading) with references to pages in *School of Nero*, including the phrase, 'ambiguities are no harder to invent than crossword clues';
- (ii) A short list of 'Conjectures to check';
- (iii) The Alice quotation, initially from memory but with the missing phrase "I daresay you haven't had much practice", said the Queen' subsequently inserted above the line.

2. Draft on a leaf neatly cut from a 6" x 9" notebook, as follows:

"One ca'n't believe impossible things." "I daresay you haven't had much practice", said the Queen. "When I was your age, I always did it for half-an-hour a day." By some such rigorous routine, Mr Alexis has acquired an impressive number of unorthodox beliefs: that Edward de Vere wrote the plays of Shakespeare and Scipio and Laelius (engagingly abbreviated to LaeScip) the plays of Terence; that space ships and astronauts frequented prehistoric skies and that Pallas was Aeneas' παιδικά. The central heresy of this beautifully produced and illustrated volume is that Nero was a Christian saint; even those not committed to the alternative view that Nero was the antiChrist may feel a certain lack of rigour in the argumentation (thus [p.2] we know perfectly well what *sacra certamina* were; cf. e.g. Quint. 3.7.4; and why should not the Palermo mosaic show a judgement?). It is Mr Alexis' contention that Nero inspired Christian poets to feats of systematic ambiguity ('ambiguities are no harder to invent than crossword clues' p.13: nor to imagine in others); and the bulk of the book gives new texts, with detailed commentary, of parts of Silius, Statius and Valerius: parts chosen, as well, to show off further heterodoxies — Hannibal used poison gas at Cannae; Oedipus was both Moses and a relation of Tutankhamun.

It would be a pity if what most people will regard as absurdities were allowed to obscure the merits of much of what Mr Alexis says about the passages he edits. He has thought carefully about their meaning, and he brings to their interpretation genuine and often curious (Artemis = the mugwort) learning, with provocative use of anthropology, psychology, and etymology. He emends his authors and others, with confidence; though it should be observed that not all of his suggestions are new, for instance, *amentasse* at Cic. *de orat.* 1.202. The style is splendidly vigorous; but I am sorry that Mr Alexis is prone to a modish Housmania, that leads to immoderate attacks on fellow-scholars (one editor of Propertius is compared to John Steinbeck's Lennie; and Heinsius — 'the Dutchman' — is told that 'as usual' he 'did not know where to stop'. Mr Alexis has no monopoly of accuracy (Mynors never edited Juvenal) or judgement (the

possibility of *pro* at Livy 1.21.1 is proved by Ovid. *fast.* 1.251). We all live in glasshouses, and there might well be a moratorium on stone-throwing.

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