

## Editorial

It is well for us to consider the connecting threads, the paths of influence, between HW and other writers. Thus is the finished tapestry enriched.

Brian Fullagar examines many such threads in his essay 'What Time in Mists Confounds', which takes us back to the baseline and gives us a chance to think about the whole philosophy of the natural history genre of writing. Brian takes as his title a quotation from *The Hound of Heaven* by Francis Thompson, thus immediately shedding a new clarity on HW's work. For could not *A Chronicle of Ancient Sunlight* have been equally entitled 'What Time in Mists Confounds'? Sunlight and mist would appear to be contradictory metaphors but how can we view ancient sunlight except through the mists of time?

If we turn to 'Some Nature Writers and Civilisation', the Wedmore Memorial Lecture for the Royal Society of Literature, given by Henry Williamson, FRSL, on 9th October 1959,<sup>1</sup> we find him quoting in his opening paragraph the words of the German poet Heine:

*Under every gravestone an entire world lies buried.*

And then he goes on to state more definitely than he does anywhere else in his entire oeuvre, the debt he owes to Richard Jefferies: that in reading Jefferies's *The Story of My Heart* he found his purpose in life; 'to extend Jefferies's truth of redemption through Nature to my fellow men.' HW's affinity with Jefferies is deeply apparent in this paper; almost he could have been talking about himself. His debt to Hudson is not so immediately obvious; it does not have such a cathartic birth, it is more gently pervasive, but it is none-the-less as deep.

Interestingly, this morning's post brought a letter from Ronald Walker with a short piece examining the influence of Thomas Hardy on HW. This is an aspect little explored as Ron so rightly states. As this issue of the *Journal* is already formatted it will have to await the spring before you can also peruse it.

Incidentally, how many of you have access to 'Some Nature Writers and Civilisation'? If this is a gap in enough member's reading then we could arrange to have it reprinted in the *Journal*. Please let me know if you would wish this.

Apart from its interest as a statement of HW's central philosophy, it must be remembered that it was quite an honour for HW to be invited to give this lecture. We tend to say that HW died unacknowledged by the establishment, but we must remember that to be made a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, an honour bestowed by fellow writers for literary achievement only, must surely be one of the greatest honours a writer could wish.

But it is not only other writers that we must look to and examine. We all 'know' the main influences on HW and perhaps this becomes a problem because we take them for granted, but much of our knowledge is very superficial, and we do need to look objectively as well as subjectively, to arrive at an understanding of the man and his work. For to take Heine's words quoted above and to twist them slightly:

in HW's writing *an entire world lies buried.*

AW

Note: 'Some Nature Writers and Civilisation' in ESSAYS BY DIVERS HANDS, Volume XXX (The Proceedings of the Royal Society of Literature). Reprinted as a separate pamphlet.