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THE LETTERS OF EDWIN ARLINGTON ROBINSON: A DIGITAL EDITION (1889-1895)

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This project comprises a digital edition of a selection of letters by American poet Edwin Arlington Robinson (1869-1935), including all known letters written by the poet between 1889 and 1895, and hosted online by Colby College Libraries' Digital Collections. The edition is based on work started last century by Professor Wallace L. Anderson of Bridgewater State University, and left unfinished by him at his death in 1984. Professor Anderson collected a vast quantity of Robinson's letters from various repositories and private parties around the country. He transcribed them and provided annotations and textual notes for about three-quarters of them. For my project, I have edited, updated and corrected a substantial portion of Anderson's transcriptions, as well as completed fresh transcriptions of my own, checking them for accuracy against Robinson's holographs held at Harvard and the University of Virginia. I have formatted the new edition so as to more accurately represent the holographs, and have added my own textual notes and annotations to those of Anderson, along with an introductory critical essay detailing my methods and principles. It is of primary importance to me that these letters be accessible to both the scholarly community and the general public, with a view to maximizing their usefulness for literary and historical research. I have settled on digital publication as the best means to achieve this end because it will render the letters accessible to anyone with a computer and internet connection, free of charge. The project of publishing the remainder of Robinson's letters in this format is expected to continue beyond the dissertation.

THE LETTERS OF EDWIN ARLINGTON ROBINSON: A DIGITAL EDITION (1889-1895)

A dissertation submitted

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by

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INTRODUCTION

The work that is presented here comprises the first part of a new, digital edition of the letters of Edwin Arlington Robinson. The first part includes the letters written by Robinson between 1889 and 1895. When complete, this edition will contain, in chronological order, all of the letters known to have been written by the poet until his death in 1935. The aim of this project is to create the most reliable and the most comprehensive edition of the letters possible, in accordance with contemporary standards of scholarly editing, and with the hope that such an edition will be of genuine value by enabling further scholarship and deepening our understanding of the Robinson.

This new edition is presented in a fully searchable, cost-free online format that will be accessible to anyone with an internet connection. In this way, it is hoped that interest in Robinson will be stimulated and renewed among both academic and non-academic readers, and will result in new research into the poet's life and work.

1. Robinson's Life

Edwin Arlington Robinson's early life was by all accounts an unhappy one. He was, or keenly felt himself to be, the "black sheep" and the disappointment in a family with solid middle-class credentials and upwardly mobile aspirations. He was born on December 22, 1869 in Head Tide, Maine, though after 1871 the family lived in Gardiner, Maine. He was raised and educated in Gardiner, and there he was to remain—except for occasional brief trips and two vital years as

a "special" at Harvard (1891-1893)—until leaving the family home for good and moving to New York City in 1900. Descended from Puritans (with a relation on his mother's side to the poet Ann Bradstreet) Edwin was the youngest of three boys. His father was Edward Robinson, a prosperous lumber and grain merchant, bank manager and city official, and his mother was Mary Elizabeth Robinson, née Palmer. The family fortunes were ruined in the Panic of 1893, thanks to bad business deals on brother Herman's part. Edward died in 1893, and Mary followed in 1896.

Edwin grew up in the shadow of his two older brothers, whose respective lives and characters were to affect him deeply: Dean, whom Edwin loved and admired, was the eldest, and twelve years older than Edwin. He was a medical doctor who had graduated from Bowdoin with honors in 1881, but after several years of successful medical practice, he succumbed to morphine addiction and after 1889 lived the remainder of his life at home, the shattered ruin of a man and dependent on the care of his family for survival. He died in 1899. Herman, the initially successful middle brother, was for a time the great hope of the Robinson family. He had something of an adversarial relationship with Edwin, and between the two there seems to have been little feeling except mutual disdain, if not outright hatred. He married the one true love of Edwin's life, Emma Shepherd, and after losing the family fortune, he turned increasingly to drink and life in the shadows, estranged from his wife and children for years and supporting himself on odd jobs before dying in 1909, aged 44.

Robinson was attracted early on to poetry and literature, and he was keenly aware that such an attraction set him squarely at odds with his family, the citizens of Gardiner and the utilitarian and increasingly materialistic values of 19th century America. Many of his letters are notable for evincing both sentiments of defiance against these values and guilt for not being able, by his very nature, to live up to them and become, for instance, an enthusiastic businessman like

his father and brother Herman, with all the human mediocrity that such values, for him, entailed. Indeed, much of Robinson's biography can be seen as a dogged struggle to resist middle class prosperity at all costs and to maintain the ideals which he felt convinced could never coincide with such prosperity, even if this resistance meant poverty for himself and life on the margins of society.

Robinson's first book of poetry, *The Torrent and the Night Before*, was self-published in 1896, with no commercial but some critical success. *The Children of the Night* was published in 1897, and *Captain Craig and Other Poems* appeared in 1902. The poet's fortunes continued to decline in New York: although he had many good friends among writers, artists, and other interesting people, he was not able to attain wide recognition as a poet. He turned increasingly to drink and took a job as a time checker for the New York Subway.

Unbeknownst to Robinson, however, Theodore Roosevelt's son, Kermit, had become smitten with his poetry and was able to convince the President to share in his enthusiasm. In 1905, Roosevelt awarded Robinson with a sinecure at the New York Customs Office. The income from this job, the opportunity it afforded him to concentrate almost exclusively on his poetry, and the sudden attention it garnered for Robinson was the great turning point in his career. From this time on, Robinson's star as a successful author was steadily on the rise, and his many subsequent volumes of poetry earned him praise and fame among critics and readers alike, along with lucrative financial returns. After 1911, he spend the summers at the MacDowell Colony for artists in New Hampshire. He won the Pulitzer Prize three times, and was nominated four times for the Nobel Prize. Robinson proposed to Emma, always unsuccessfully, several times after Herman's death, and never married. He died of cancer in 1935, a famous American author and respected poet who was mourned by many friends and admirers.

2. Origins of this Edition

The original basis upon which this edition has been constructed is an unpublished draft edition of Robinson's letters by Professor Wallace Ludwig Anderson of Bridgewater State University, Massachusetts. In the late 60s, Professor Anderson, a devoted and respected scholar of Robinson, tracked down a vast quantity of the poet's letters—around 4,000, "nearly nine-tenths" of which "had never been printed," according to Robinson's biographer Scott Donaldson—from various repositories and private parties around the country. Although Robinson's handwriting is notoriously difficult to decipher, Anderson accomplished the monumental task of transcribing the and providing annotations and textual notes for about three-quarters of the letters (Donaldson 10). According to Danny D. Smith, Chairman of the Gardiner Library Association's Special Collections Committee, "Wallace Anderson intended to publish, in probably five volumes at the Harvard University Press, the complete correspondence of Robinson. Before Anderson's untimely death, he transcribed approximately eighty percent of the known letters of Robinson."

Unfortunately, Anderson was unable to prepare his edition for publication before his death in 1984, and his contract for the completed work with Harvard University Press was canceled. The unfinished work was stored with the rest of Anderson's papers in a Massachusetts warehouse until Professor Donaldson was able to arrange for their transfer to the Colby College Library in 2001. Here, he was able to make use of the manuscript in preparing his important 2007 biography of the poet.

In 2014, I was granted permission by Anderson's two sons to publish from their father's manuscript. Colby College Libraries, as the custodian of the Wallace Ludwig Anderson Archive, saw a common interest in my project of editing Robinson's letters, and offered to host my work

on their Digital Commons institutional repository. Since I would be basing my edition on the prior work of Anderson, this would provide Colby with an opportunity to digitally showcase an important part of their Anderson collection, i.e. his transcriptions of Robinson's letters. Furthermore, as one of the largest—if not *the* largest—repository of Robinson's autograph letters, such a project would be all the more appropriate to be hosted by Colby. Patricia Burdick, Assistant Director for Special Collections at Colby and my primary staff contact for the project, added in an email to me that "the project has represented to us an opportunity for Colby to explore innovative uses of Digital Commons that could inspire archival peers." Burdick adds that funding for the project comes from a combination of "in-kind contribution of staff time (scanning, organizing materials and files, phone consultations . . .) and outright funding" from the college.

3. A New Synthesis

Despite its high quality in terms of literary scholarship, Anderson's manuscript was left in a rough and incomplete state, and his transcriptions, while generally excellent, were made decades ago, and in adherence to the textual editing standards of the (pre-World Wide Web) 20th century. Instead of a simple reproduction of Anderson's work, unaltered, the time has come for a fresh look at Robinson's letters. This new edition is hence an attempt to accomplish this desideratum by maintaining all that is still valid and useful in Anderson's edition, while improving upon it wherever necessary in the interests of accuracy, quality, completeness and adherence to contemporary standards of editing; it is thus a composite product or synthesis of Anderson’s original draft manuscript, with my own transcriptions, modifications, alterations, corrections, and notes.

The majority of transcriptions for the letters of this first section of this edition—i.e.,

1889-1895—were first transcribed from Anderson's manuscript, then rigorously checked for accuracy against scans of the holographs and edited to fit my editorial objectives as described in Chapter Three. However, after the letter to Harry de Forest Smith of October 21, 1894, this process was reversed in the interests of a more direct approach, and I began making the transcriptions myself from the holographs. This method has proved more satisfactory in that it enabled completely fresh and unmediated transcriptions to be produced which could still have the inestimable benefit of comparison with Anderson's versions; these latter have continued to be of immense help in clarifying difficult words and phrases, as well as in determining the correct chronological order of the letters. In addition to verifying Anderson's transcriptions against the scans, I traveled to Houghton Library at Harvard and to the Albert and Shirley Small Special collections library at the University of Virginia in order to verify the integrity of their scans and to make further scans of letters for transcription. I was in every case quite satisfied that the scans I had received and made for myself were adequate reproductions of the originals.

If the vast majority of Anderson's transcriptions have in fact been kept unaltered, this is simply because in the vast majority of cases he was found to be correct. It would be pointless, if not impossible, to “reinvent the wheel” in those aspects of the work which he had already done so well. His chronological arrangement of the letters, his excellent explanatory notes and, with slight modifications, his systems of organization and labelling, have likewise been retained and incorporated into the new edition.

Still, while Anderson's influence upon this new edition has been significant, it does depart from Anderson's edition in many details, as well as principles. These differences, the niceties of which will be further discussed in Chapter Three, include a different philosophy of transcription in general, and a divergent approach to reproducing the graphic character of the holograph. Also,

Anderson made various mistakes in transcription which I was able to correct. Ultimately, while preparing the letters for publication, I came to rely more and more on my own reading of the holographs, my own judgements as to what was and was not appropriate for the new edition, while continuing to utilize Anderson's work as my primary “consultant”, rather than a binding authority.

This new synthesis, then, comprises advantages not to be found in previous editions of Robinson's letters, including, most importantly, a more reliable text, as well as a more authentic overall presentation of the visual character of Robinson's page. For these reasons, this digital edition can and should be taken from henceforth as the point of reference for scholars working with the letters.

4. Robinson's Correspondence

Robinson's known correspondence is vast, stretching without significant break between 1889 and 1935 (Anderson 61). According to Wallace Anderson, writing in 1980, over 4,000 of Robinson's letters are still extant (52). He noted that, "[m]ost of the originals are scattered across the country in sixty or more libraries; some are in the hands of private collectors. A few are inaccessible" (52). He continued to remark that some of Robinson's letters are known to have been destroyed or lost, whereas some which Robinson is known to have written, such as those to Dr. Alanson Tucker Schumann and W.H. Gerry, have never been discovered (52). The two largest repositories of Robinson's letters are Colby College's Special Collections library, with over 1,000 letters, and Harvard University's Houghton Library, with over 700. The University of Virginia is also a major repository, holding about 300 letters at the Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections library. The letters are written to hundreds of recipients, and Robinson's letters to a single recipient may be spread throughout various repositories or collections within a larger

repository. Only very rarely do any of these collections contain letters in response to Robinson from his recipient, though many of these are quite possibly held elsewhere, in other collections.

The letters comprising the first part of this edition—i.e., 1889 - 1895—with two isolated exceptions,[1] have only four recipients: Harry de Forest Smith (133 letters), Arthur R. Gledhill (41 letters), Joseph S. Ford (24 letters) and George W. Latham (20 letters). The letters to Smith, Gledhill, and Latham, are held at Harvard's Houghton Library, while the letters to Ford are held in the Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library at the University of Virginia. After 1895, the number of Robinson's correspondents, as also the physical locations of his letters, increases exponentially. Indeed, it can be truthfully stated that the letters that I have prepared so far have only barely scratched the surface of Robinson's correspondence.

5. Previous Editions of the Letters

In addition to a handful letters published individually or a few at a time in literary journals, three major volumes of Robinson's letters have so far been published, along with one smaller volume that was only published in a limited edition. The general details related to these volumes are as follows:

Selected Letters of Edwin Arlington Robinson, from 1940, was the first of the major letter collections. According to Anderson, it was edited by a committee of Robinson's friends and executors: Lewis M. Isaacs, Louis V. Ledoux, Hermann Hagedorn, and Ridgely Torrence. These editors were eager to preserve Robinson's image in the eyes of the public as a celebrated and respectable man of letters. It contains 181 letters written to 41 recipients throughout the poet's life, many of these letters having been expurgated for content which the editors considered "to be

[1] These exceptions include one letter to Fred Palmer from January 5, 1882, and one letter to Chauncey G. Hubbell from November 14, 1895.

homely or vulgar or too personally revealing" of Robinson (Anderson 53).

Untriangulated Stars: Letters of Edwin Arlington Robinson to Harry de Forest Smith, *1890 – 1905*, was the next major collection of Robinson's letters to be published. It appeared in 1947 and was edited by Denham Sutcliffe, containing 160 letters to a close friend of Robinson's youth. While Sutcliffe does not substantially excise material from the text of the letters, he nevertheless omits 30 of Robinson's known letters to Smith. Sutcliffe's own explanation as to why he omitted these letters was that "most of them [were] brief notes, which it seemed needless to print" (311). He does not mention anything about the fact that several of the letters written during Robinson's Harvard period contained accounts of his visits to Boston's "houses of seclusion" (i.e. brothels) and so an attempt to censor Robinson for the sake of his public image is to be suspected here as well.

The last major collection of the letters to be published was *Edwin Arlington Robinson's Letters to Edith Brower*, edited by Richard Cary. Published in 1968, it contains 189 letters written to Robinson's friend and confidant, Edith Brower, between 1897 and 1930.

One other noteworthy collection, *Letters of Edwin Arlington Robinson to Howard George Schmitt*, was edited by Carl J. Weber and published in 1943. This slim booklet of 31 pages was published in limited edition of 200 numbered copies by Colby College Library. It contains 66 letters to Schmitt, a young man who was an ardent admirer of Robinson's poetry.

Of the 220 letters here presented in the first part of this new edition, 130 have been previously published. The bulk of these—121 letters—were written to Smith and first published in *Untriangulated Stars*. The twelve letters to Smith from this time period that were omitted there are labeled in this edition as "Omitted in US," which label, along with the letter's page numbers in the earlier volume, will be found to the right of the three-letter repository

abbreviation in the note section that follows each letter.

The nine other previously published letters presented here were written to Gledhill and first published (eight in part) in Selected Letters. These previously published letters to Gledhill are always indicated as such in the notes, likewise to the right of the repository, with the abbreviation "SL," and its page numbers in that volume.

CHAPTER ONE:

SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS EDITION

1. Value for Criticism

This new edition should be a significant improvement in terms of accuracy, breadth, accessibility and comprehensiveness over the editions of the letters which have previously appeared. In fact, this is the first edition of Robinson's letters—in any form—to appear since *Edwin Arlington Robinson's Letters to Edith Brower*. Unlike the previous editions, the *only* criterion for inclusion here is that it be a letter written by Edwin Arlington Robinson. The goal here is to be exhaustive rather than selective, and when it is finished, this will be the first complete edition of Robinson's known letters ever to be published. A complete digital edition of the letters will best serve new scholarship seeking to appraise Robinson's life and work because it will make the letters available in all their fullness, without any attempt to filter them according to the identity of Robinson's addressee or preconceived critical opinions as to what is or is not of value, or morally appropriate. This is in contrast to the previous collections, which were either limited to Robinson's correspondence with specific individuals (Smith, Brower, Schmitt), or else selected and abridged according to the particular interests of the editors.

The latter phenomenon is particularly noticeable in *Selected Letters*, which had as its avowed intent "to present Robinson the man" (x) and which, as Donaldson expresses it, "sanitized his [Robinson's] image through a process of omission" (10). This "sanitization through omission", however, also occurs in *Untriagulated Stars*, where thirty complete letters are omitted.

Such omission is unfortunate because the letters thus excised often contain a great deal that is valuable for criticism, and open windows on aspects of Robinson which make him both fascinating and uniquely himself among American poets. Notably, they offer glimpses of a trait of Robinson's that is characteristic of him throughout his poetry: his *sympathy*, his ability to feel *with* and *as* others, to see all sorts of people, including the "fallen" and the "dregs of society," with genuine compassion, as human beings with dignity, worth, and imaginative interest,[2] while refusing to judge them according to the simplistic moral standards of the environing society. While the adherents to such standards are always ready, as in Robinson's "Supremacy," to smugly damn those who transgress against them, Robinson reaches toward a vision of something like *apocatastasis*: "I heard the dead men [the ones society has condemned] singing in the sun."

On the contrary, he reserves his condemnation for the crass lack of such sympathy evinced by "the average man," who can so cavalierly purchase a night's pleasure from a woman without even considering the human costs involved. As he writes in one of the thirty letters omitted from *Untriangulated Stars*:

> I do not think that I ever fully realized before the meaning of the word "prostitution." During the past month I have visited something like thirty or forty of these houses and I really think it has done me more good than all the ministers in the world could do, if they preached till their lungs rattled. Fortunately my experience with the real elephant has turned me, I think, forever against it and caused me to realized {sic} what a woman is in the true sense of the word. It is hard for me to understand how a man of any feeling or intellect can frequent these holes with ~~the~~ no other motive than that of pleasure. This may make you laugh, but that will make no difference. You know I have always told you that I had more than ordinary reverence for womankind, and disliked to hear them made light of. The fact that perhaps a little over one half of them are more or less blistered does not seem to me to be any defense for the average man's indifference to their condition, beyond those in whom he has some immediate interest. (Letter to Smith, March 6, 1892)

What renders such a passage useful for literary criticism is that we can find echoes of these sentiments, in different ways and with various levels of specificity, in many of Robinson's

[2] As he says in his letter to Smith from October 1, 1893, in commenting on his poem "Supremacy": "There is poetry in all types of humanity - even in lawyers and horse-jockeys - if we are willing to search it out".

poems. "Supremacy," itself a product of his Harvard years, has already been mentioned. But this sincere feeling for marginalized people *as* people is found again, for instance, in "Aunt Imogen," although this time the "outcast" is an "old maid," in some ways only the more "respectable" counterpart of the "fallen woman" of the brothels. Of course, there is also "The Growth of 'Lorraine'" from 1902, a sensitive and intelligent poem about the suicide of a prostitute which Donaldson specifically links to Robinson's experiences in the brothels (85-86).

These are only a few examples of how presenting the letters unabridged can help criticism to find and explore unseen or unverifiable dimensions in the poems. In the case of "The Growth of 'Lorraine,'" having these previously omitted letters as evidence, we can know that the poet who speaks through both Lorraine's and the narrator's voices quite likely had encountered women like Lorraine in waking life, and had quite possibly found himself (or known somebody who had found himself) in something like that narrator's position of trying to "rescue" a woman who felt herself to be already irrevocably lost. In a word, the voice that is able to speak so convincingly *as* a Lorraine or an Imogen belongs to a man who has felt *with* them, or their living counterparts, in his own life. To be sure, one of Robinson's favorite stories was Bret Harte's "The Outcasts of Poker Flat," of which he said "in some ways I think it is the best short story in the English language."[3] Nevertheless, the descriptions of his experiences which can be found in the omitted letters enable us to confirm that Robinson's sympathy for such outcasts was *more* than purely literary fancy, gleaned imaginatively, for instance, from the numerous sentimental novels or melodramas about "fallen" women and men that were current at the time.

Many other examples of useful material for criticism can found in the letters, whether previously unpublished or otherwise. Robinson's disgust with the materialism and acquisitiveness of American society finds voice in many places throughout the letters, and his

[3] See letter to Smith, January 1, 1891.

lack of sympathy with popular notions of "success" serves to underscore his compassion for those who fail to fit in with those notions (including, as he certainly was aware, himself):

> . . . I am and always was too much of a dreamer: I have no sympathy with the cold matter-of fact, contriving nature that has made the fortunes enjoyed by multitudes all around us (by fortunes, I mean the the possession of enough to make a man and his family comfortable and happy) and this is a dangerous state to be in. (Letter to Smith, February 3, 1892)

What is particularly interesting here is that Robinson defines "fortunes" in extremely modest terms, as "the possession of enough to make a man and his family comfortable and happy". This was doubtless the level of success enjoyed by many of his solidly middle-class relatives and friends in Gardiner including, before his ruin, his brother Herman. And yet Robinson loathed the patent small-mindedness that too often accompanies the grasping for even such a modicum of success. Characters like Richard Cory, who kills himself despite having everything in material terms that a person could wish for, or Aaron Stark, the grotesque miser with "eyes like little dollars in the dark," underscore Robinson's fundamental conviction that "success" has nothing to do with money.

And yet the letters also betray Robinson's own sense of insecurity about this ideal. There is no doubt that the ideal itself was sincere, but for Robinson it also had to be constantly defended and earned. The perennial treatment of the themes of success and failure in the poetry can be seen, judging from statements in the letters in the years leading up to his public recognition as a poet, to grow out of a palpable sense of unease or inner conflict about his own destiny, and his sense of having disappointed his "dear friends". To take just one out of many possible examples:

> I am half afraid that my "dear friends" here in Gardiner will be disappointed in me if I do not do something before long, but somehow I don't care half as much about the matter as I ought. One of my greatest misfortunes is the total inability to admire the so called successful men who are pointed out to poor devils like me as examples for me to follow

> and revere. If Merchant A and Barrister B are put here as "ensamples to mortals," I am afraid that that {sic} I shall always stand in the shadow as one of Omar's broken pots. I suspect that I am pretty much what I am, and that I am pretty much a damned fool in many ways; but I further suspect that I am not altogether an ass, whatever my neighbors may say. I may live to see this egotistic idea exploded, but until that time comes I am to hug my own particular phantoms and think as I like. (Letter to Smith, October 1, 1893)

Such sentiments find direct reflection in poems like "Dear Friends," where the poet—perhaps with a certain feeling of "whistling in the dark"—requests these friends to

> . . . reproach me not for what I do
> Nor counsel me, nor pity me; nor say
> That I am wearing half my life away
> For bubble-work that only fools pursue.

This sonnet is an example of how Robinson's letters served as an important means of airing ideas which would later find voice in his art. But what is of perhaps even more significance than such direct mirroring in the poetry as we find in "Dear Friends" is the explicit identification of himself, in the letter quoted above, as one of the "broken pots" in Fitzgerald's *Rubaiyyat of Omar Khayyam*. Due to this self-identification, we are able to read the poems about Robinson's sympathetic outcasts—Captain Craig, "Lorraine," Miniver Cheevy, Eben Flood, Aunt Imogen and others—as arising not merely from pity, advocacy, or even simple compassion, but also, and perhaps more profoundly, from *identification* with them. Robinson's poetic explorations of the true nature of success and failure, and his attempt to validate the lives and experiences of marginal characters, grew partly from his own need to validate his own sense of purpose and identity as an artist, and to justify his alienation from his society.

The examples of the connections between the letters and the poetry outlined above will hopefully serve to emphasize the contention that Robinson's letters, whether previously published or not, can be valuable for criticism, and that a complete edition of these letters has much potential as a field for further critical inquiry. While there is certainly nothing wrong, when

selecting letters for publication, with levying delimiting criteria for inclusion or topical filters for the purpose of presenting different aspects of the poet's correspondence, there is also value in presenting the letters without any such critera whatsoever, and allowing readers to draw their own conclusions as to what is and is not of value.

Aside from the proposed thoroughness of this edition, the accessibility of these letters signals an important new chapter in the study of Robinson. Heretofore, researchers interested in Robinson's letters have had a pretty narrow choice: either rely on the limited and sometimes unreliable selected editions,[4] or travel to various scattered repositories and face the poet's daunting handwriting on their own.[5] The result of this difficulty of accessing the letters is that they have not played the part in the critical consideration of Robinson's poetry which perhaps they might have if well-edited transcriptions had been readily availible. Professor Anderson, through his tireless efforts, brought all of the known letters together, and their publication in an open, publically accessible online format will make consulting them quite easy.

2. Unfamiliar Aspects of Robinson

Beyond the the openings for literary criticism which can be found therein, the letters present to the public certain unfamiliar aspects of Robinson, aspects which are not without interest in themselves. Although Robinson is often reticent in his letters about his personal secrets (there are few major revelations, for instance, to be found in the correspondence regarding his family, even though we know from his biography about the major disappointments and family tragedies that did occur) he nevertheless had a wide and diverse circle of friends,

[4] See Donaldson, p. 10, for a brief description of these defects.

[5] Donaldson mentions that "his [Robinson's] miniscule and idiosyncratic handwriting stopped me cold" when he first attempted in the 1970s to read the letters in view of preparing his biography (10). It wasn't until the early 2000s, after he had convinced Anderson's family to transfer the late professor's papers—including the precious transcripts of the letters—to Colby College, that Donaldson was finally able to read all of the letters and adequately write his book (10). The fact of his accomplishment should serve to further highlight the desirability of making transcriptions of these letters available in an easily accessible edition.

some quite close, with whom he corresponded devotedly for years or throughout his life. For the careful reader, alert to subtleties of tone and allusion, a great deal can accordingly be gleaned from Robinson's letters, casual in tone as they often are, about his character, personality, quirks, opinions and ideas about literature, society, and "life in general." Donaldson's summary observation on the letters (in Anderson's unpublished edition) is worth quoting in full:

> The letters themselves are characteristically reticent and at the same time engagingly self-deprecatory. One sees Robinson in his embodiment as a practicing writer, deploring the cheapness and materialism around him, making witty comments, arranging for social engagements, giving advice and comfort and money to colleagues and friends. One does not see him announcing his love or campaigning for causes, except for doing away with Prohibition. The letters reflect the reserve and dignity of the man who wrote them, and demonstrate the good nature with which he confronted his often difficult days. Sometimes, one can read between the lines for emotions concealed. What goes unsaid can say a lot. (11)

Hence, despite certain limitations, the letters do offer readers the opportunity to see Robinson more readily in the context of his personal relationships, which is to say "offstage", as a private individual and as a working artist, rather than a merely public persona or as the purely poetic "voice" or consciousness behind his art.

2.A. Robinson as Reader

On the topic of literature, in particular, Robinson's letters are especially rewarding, teeming as they are with references to the books he is reading at any given time and his opinions on them. In fact, if one topic can be said to pervade his correspondence more than any other, it is literature. This is of interest not only to biographers who wish to know what sorts of books Robinson read, or to literary critics who wish to explore the matter of Robinsons influences, but also to the historian of American culture who is researching the Anglophone intellectual currents of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Almost from the very beginning of the correspondence, we are presented with Robinson

as a serious reader and intellectual, for whom literature—novels and poetry, in particular—was not only a pleasure but a passion. Early on in his letters he is writing of books, not merely in a casual way, but in such a manner as is indicative of a critical mind at work, a mind that is interested primarily—*as* an artist—in matters of art, i.e., questions of form, analysis, aesthetic value, stylistic effect, and intellectual content. The spectrum of Robinson's reading was pretty much limited to the English, American and European traditions (classic and modern); but within that range, the depth of Robinson's knowledge of the tradition is impressive and, at times, even surprising.

In addition to having a good knowledge of "the classics," Robinson was always well abreast of the current trends in literature, and this is why his letters can provide a particularly excellent reading list and general point of departure for students who desire to deepen their knowledge of 19th century literature—Anglophone and French, in particular—containing as they do careful evaluations of still-canonical authors such as Tennyson and Thackeray, along with a great many others who have since fallen into obscurity, such as Maarten Maartens or James Lane Allen, about the latter of which Robinson wrote admiringly, "Sometimes I am tempted to give James Lane Allen the place next to Hawthorne in America{n}fiction but somehow I lack the courage, or something else. If he doesn't belong there he does very near it" (Letter to Smith, Feb. 16, 1895).

What becomes evident very quickly in the letters, however, is that art—literature especially—was the veritable center of Robinson's spiritual life. He seems to have looked upon literature in an Arnoldian sense, as the precious repository of all that was good and noble in humanity, in life, in the universe. Not religious in the conventional sense (although in 1895 we find him enthusiastically discussing his reading the New Testament), Robinson always speaks of

literature and art more generally in quasi-devotional terms, indeed as a life-raft for the human soul in the increasingly materialistic and positivistic 19th century. Here, for instance, he earnestly counsels George Latham, who was evidently worried as to the "value" of reading literature, not to give it up:

> Whe{n} a p man puts by fiction and poetry—especially poetry—he is unconsciously brutalizing himself. This may sound a bit strong, but I believe it. If I am too much the other way myself, I am at least good for a warning; but I would rather take my chance where I am than with your ordinary practical man, who, in turn, is a warning at the other end. (May 5, 1895)

Robinson was always conscious, and perhaps in the back of his mind even guilty, that he was manifestly *not* a "practical man". He realized that placing himself so squarely at odds with the unimaginative pragmatism of his Puritan ancestors, and the outright materialism of his age, was a sort of "treason against the world", and this consciousness exacerbated his sense of being a "black sheep" in Gardiner; his advocacy for literature bespeaks a highly personal devotion to the Ideal as salvation from the purely mundane—from all that is petty, ugly, narrow and ignoble in the world.

Much of Robinson's passionate knowledge of books and authors was clearly stimulated by the periodicals of the day, which he constantly read and brooded over, and which carried the latest work by the most important (or else merely popular) writers of the day in prose and poetry, in addition to literary criticism. Thus, even though—particularly in Gardiner—he was often physically isolated from the world of ideas and letters, Robinson was nevertheless exposed to a great deal of intellectual culture through these periodicals. The names of these publications—*McClure's, Harper's, The Globe, The Critic*, *The Chap-Book*, *Lippincott's*, and many others—fill the letters, along with discussions of their contents and their respective merits and demerits. And indeed, it is in cases of the latter sort where Robinson's comments are particularly enlightening

about his own values. As he says in a letter to George Latham, by way of criticizing *The Nation* and *The Dial*:

> The truth of the whole matter is, I fancy, that I hav{e} next to no interest in public affairs—even to the extent to which they are treated in an ordinarilly {sic} intelligent review[6]. Both the papers hav{e} too decided a leaning toward long reviews or books about ancient Japanese architecture, and History 13, and things of that sort to suit me. (May 5, 1895)

As this selection suggests, Robinson's constant rumination over the journals and magazines of the time helped him to formulate very clear canons of taste and preferences with regard to intellectual culture, and his expression of these preferences in the letters helps us to understand his focus upon certain subjects to the exclusion of others in the poetry.

2.B. Robinson as Critic

What is perhaps most important about all these comments by Robinson on books, authors, literature and culture in his letters is that they show us Robinson as *critic*, which is a side of him that is *only* possible to know through the letters. As he himself humorously noted, his only two "hobbies" were "prose & verse" (Letter to George Latham, May 5, 1895). Thus, throughout the letters—seemingly on every page—Robinson gives us delightful little extempore essays in literary criticism, ranging from single paragraphs to several pages in length. A selection of these could easily fill a book of their own, but one or two instances will have to suffice here. For instance, we have this enthusiastic and intelligent appraisal of a novel by William Black:

> Did I say anything in my last epistle about {W}illiam Black' s latest novel, "StandFast, Craig-Royston"? I do not remember of mentioning it, so will say a few words now at the risk of repetition. The book is great in a small way- that is, the author has made a work of art of a rather tame threadbare story: The same old anguish and lossof {sic} useful flesh and strength; the same young man and the same - no, I can hardly say the same young woman, for in many welcome respects she is an exception to the general run of frowzy confectionary heroines. Mr. Black devotes very little space in this book to the usual amplexo-osculatory demonstrations so necessary to the mushroom novelist of to-day, but he gives us all that we can reasonably demand of the most amorous lugubriousness. (I do

[6] WA reads "mind".

> not know whether there is such a word as "lugubriousness" in the dictionary or not, but it seems to convey the meaning.) But the most attractive character in the story- from a psychological point of view- is the girl's (Maisrie) father:he is a curiosity, I will not attempt to analyze him here, but will leave you to read the book for yourself. . . . (Letter to Smith, March 22, 1891)

In this capsule review of Black's novel, Robinson's awareness of the book's adherence to many of the "same old" fictional formulas, as well as its departure from them, is both engagingly humorous and demonstrative of his fundamentally critical approach to literature. Also, Robinson's praise of Black for breaking the "same old" mold in certain places is indicative of the literary values which, expressing themselves through his poetry, have made him an historically significant *modern* poet.

To take just one more example of Robinson's literary criticism, in the letter to Smith from May 23, 1892, he eloquently and concisely compares the virtues of Eliot, Dickens, Thackaray, and Austen:

> As to "Middlemarch", I regret to say that I am unable to appreciate the transcendent beauties of Geo. Eliot's character analysis. To me, she makes more of human character than life itself warrants. Thackeray is to me the ideal student of human nature. To be sure his creatures are to some extent types but not in the sense that those of Dickens are. Dickens deals almost exclusively in exaggerated characteristics; Thackeray with definitely drawn and coherent characters; while Geo. Eliot's works are a study of formative influences and psychological (I know how to spell it) results. In my opinion she stands below Jane Austen though she deals less with complex destiny. It may reveal my uneducated taste in making this confession of my opinions, but a fellow may as well tell the truth.

Here again, we have Robinson's characteristic self-effacing humor, combined with his knowledgeable and well-considered opinions of the relative virtues of the authors in question. This is interesting in itself, but his concern for questions of character, psychology, and issues of "complex destiny" in fiction relates directly back to his own poetry, which is remarkable precisely for its concern with the characters' pychology, as well as the theme of "complex destiny."

2.C. Robinson as Prose Writer

Regardless of the topic, Robinson's letters immediately announce that they were written by a *writer*: his prose consistently rewards the reader sensitive to tone and style, being heavily imbued with his unmistakeable voice which is by turns humorous, witty, playful, comically self-deprecating, melancholy, wistful, sentimental, nostalgic and kind. Again, examples of Robinson's engaging prose can easily be drawn at random from the letters, but I shall settle for only two here, the first being taken from the letter to Smith of February 8, 1891:

> It has just occurred to me that it would be no more than common decency to answer your last letter. Upon going to my desk I find that my stationery has given out, and consequently I am obliged to resurrect this somewhat ancient foolscap. You will doubtless discern a certain fringe of ante-diluvian saffron upon the same, but I trust the discovery will awake no other emotion than that of reverence. I have read that this is the kind of paper that most of the famous English novels and histories have been written upon. Doesn't it wake strange thoughts within your dreamful bosom to think that a man should be gifted with the stamina to cover ten or twelve hundred of these pages in carrying out a single narrative? Think of this, and take down one of Dicken's or Thackeray's novels. Think of the "ink and the anguish", and the golden gallons of midnight oil! I tell you what it is, old man, we poor ungifted devils of the common herd know little of the bulldog persistency and enthusiasm required to bring forth a thing like "The Newcomes" or "Our Mutual Friend." Dickens would cover more paper in calling a cat than I have covered thus far; and Thackeray would slap the whole human race while I stop to swear at my pen. You will probably swear also when you attempt to read this, but I shan't hear you and so will feel no remorse.

This is elegantly written and full of subtle humor. Note especially the whimsical delight that the writer takes in explaining, with grandiose, self-consciously literary mock-seriousness, something that is really quite simple: his need to write on an old piece of paper. Here we see Robinson having fun with words quite spontaneously, and this is common in his letters.

However, there are also occasions in the letters where one gets the sense that Robinson is using the opportunity to write a letter as a means of "training" for more serious prose work.[7] Again, this is something that is encountered early on in the letters and provides corroborating

[7] Which work we know, moreover, that he was devote himself to after leaving Harvard, with the ultimately aborted prose sketches of *The Book of Scattered Lives*.

evidence for Robinson's claim, in his letter to Arthur R. Gledhill of October 28, 1893, "that writing has been my dream ever since I was old enough to lay a plan for an air castle." One instance of this seemingly deliberate attempt to cultivate an authorial persona can be found in the letter to Smith from October 5, 1893, Robinson writes:

> It is a warm and magnificent day after a long cold rain, and I naturally think of the spot where the ashes of our old fires, with a few shrivelled corn-husks, are all there is to tell of the many jolly symposiums we held there only few weeks ago. It beats the devil how time creeps away with those skinny shanks of his. Before we know it, spring will be here again, and who knows but we shall spend the same sort of a summer together as the one just past? I know it is past, for the hornets have left the orchard and the big flies are come to take whatever of summer there may be left in the dried pears and apples. "The bee has quit the clover" long since, and we shall not see any more of him until another year. By the time five or six more of these years have left us. we ought to have some idea of what we are good for.

The combination here of of reverie, poetic description, and literary allusion gives the impression of being a sort of mood piece in which Robinson was practicing different effects of tone and strategies of effective expression. This careful and conscious control of tone, pace, and mood is, again, a hallmark of many of Robinson's greatest poems, which successfully manage to walk the tightrope between dark humor, psychological realism, melodramatic sentimentality and high tragedy.

CHAPTER TWO: THE COLLECTED LETTERS PART I (1889-1895)

The period from 1882/89 through 1895 that comprises the first section of this edition has much interest in itself, seen as a unit. Throughout these six years, Robinson's development from a bright but still provincial small-town teenager, to an urbane and cultivated young intellectual and artist is evident. All of the qualities mentioned above which make reading Robinson's letters worthwhile are present here in abundance.

Besides the single letter to his cousin Fred Palmer in 1882, the letters in this section are addressed to four people. The two chief addressees were a pair of Robinson's boyhood friends: the first, in terms of intimacy and the sheer quantity of letters addressed to him, was Harry de Forest Smith; the second was Arthur R. Gledhill. While the letters to Smith, with the exception of the thirty omitted ones which were mentioned above, have previously been published in Sutcliffe's *Untriangulated Stars*, only nine of the letters to Gledhill from this period were published, in mostly abridged form, *Selected Letters*. Later, after he had left Harvard, Robinson also wrote letters to his college friends George W. Latham and Joseph S. Ford. The letters to Ford and Latham have never been published. It is reasonable to assume that Robinson wrote many other letters during this period, especially since he sometimes alludes to writing such letters, and to other correspondents such as his friends Mowry Saben and William Butler. Unfortunately, however, if any of these other letters are still extant, their whereabouts are unknown.

While Robinson naturally sometimes writes in his letters of matters that are specific to the friend he is addressing, the content is nonetheless predominantly Robinson himself—*his*

thoughts, ideas, preoccupations, and worries—and the poet does not greatly vary the form or substance of this content according to the identity of the addressee, with each of whom he freely discusses the things—always excepting major family troubles—that interest him most.

1. Life at Harvard

The geographical path traced by the letters of these years is broadly from Gardiner, to Cambridge, Massachussetts, and back to Gardiner. The high point of this period is arguably comprised of the letters from the two years (1891-1893) in which Robinson attended Harvard as a "special" student, most of which were written to Smith. During these two years, Robinson was greatly stimulated by the college atmosphere, and his letters include many descriptions of his courses, his professors, and Harvard life in general. We also see Robinson developing his tastes for friendship, intellectual discussion and general conviviality. In addition, there was the excitement of Boston, a great cultural hub of the time, which exerted an irresistible attraction upon him. His regular excursions to various Boston theaters to hear symphonies, or to see the stars of the period perform in the theatrical "hits" of the day, or else classics like Shakespeare or Italian opera, provided the young man from rural Maine with an opportunity to nurture his pre-existent affinities for drama and music. The letters from this period provide a witness of this long-vanished world of American theatre, and include much interesting commentary, evincing the same keen critical intelligence that we have seen directed toward books, while usually displaying a chatty sense of "fun". Thus, in a letter to Smith from February 21, 1891, he writes regarding the great Julia Marlowe:

> Have seen her four times and like to see her in a dozen more pieces. The first piece was As You Like It. It was produced magnificently, and Jacques mimicking the Fool moralizing on time was well worth the admission fee, which by the way is always fifty cents for me. The whole thing was about as fine as it could be, and was by far the finest acting that I have ever seen on any stage. I next saw her in Romeo & Juliet which was excellent but not so satisfactory. Then came like Twelfth Night which was simply "out of

sight".

Robinson's passionate enthusiasm here is palpable, and is characteristic of his approach to theatre and music, where he tends to be more inclined to simply let loose and enjoy himself as an "amateur"—though always a *critical* amateur—than when discussing his "proper" domain of literature. Still, his censure can be severe for things he disapproves of, as in a letter to Smith from March 18, 1892, where he excoriates the contemporary fad for farces:

> Farce comedies have been the ruling amusements here this winter, and I would like to see a law passed rendering the composition of one of them a capital offence. If there is anything pertaining to the drama more disgusting or degrading, I have yet to see it.

The remaining letters of Part One of this edition include those written in the years immediately leading up to and immediately following Robinson's Harvard adventure. These immediate post-Harvard years are noteworthy because it is during this time that Robinson begins, while back home in Gardiner, Maine, to consciously cultivate the persona and working habits of a professional *author*, scrupulously working at his short-lived dream of being a fiction writer in the mold of Daudet, Coppée, and other French realists whom he passionately admired, as well as continuing with his poetry (specifically the material that he would soon collect into his self-published first collection, *The Torrent and the Night Before*, in 1896). Here the focus on literature is even more pronounced as, deprived of the life of Harvard society and Boston culture, Robinson found himself "rotting for a little human companionship" (Letter to Gledhill, April 2, 1895), and thrust almost entirely into the world of his own (since-destroyed) fiction (the process of writing which he describes in tantalizing detail) and intense reading.

2. The Frustrated Novelist

What is particularly interesting in this connection is the extent to which Robinson in this period saw himself *primarily* as a prose writer, and only secondarily—if at all—as a poet. Vachel

Lindsay, on the occasion of Robinson's fiftieth birthday, very aptly described him as "a novelist distilled into a poet. . . . He 'tells on' people, yet is no tattletale, but rather the bracing historian, who gives the final human news" ("A Poet's Fiftieth Birthday"). The letters from this post-Harvard "exile" in Gardiner go some way toward verifying that Lindsay's intuition was rooted in the poet's own frustrations as a fiction writer. The language Lindsay uses to describe Robinson is actually very reminiscent of that which was commonly used to defend the new realist novelists in the late 19th century, and to justify their work as "historians of morals" or as "mirrors" into which society could look and see its own illnesses.

Robinson was of course a great reader of novels in general, and he paid close attention in particular to modern fiction, which ran the gamut from popular melodramas like *The Silence of Dean Maitland* to realist masterpieces such as *Madame Bovary* and—at the Naturalist extreme—the novels of Zola and his disciples. Though never a partisan of any "movement," as such, Robinson was influenced by realism and was greatly inspired by many of its virtues, deeming them necessary correctives for what had become stagnant literary conventions. Although 19th-century realism as a literary movement was extremely diverse and multifaceted, the characteristics which Robinson most appreciated in realist novels included the sincere attempt by the artist to look at humans and human events as they appeared to him, without his explicitly superadding his own moral, religious or artistic judgments on his subjects within the text itself. Rather, the values and sympathies of the writer must be inferred from careful attention to the description and arrangement of the subjects he portrays. Another, related, virtue of realism for Robinson was its refusal to bow to moralistic or sentimental expectations for plot and character, such as the hackneyed expectation that a novel have a "happy ending" or that virtue be rewarded and wickedness punished. Robinson would excel at manifesting such virtues in his

poetry throughout his career, and this, one could argue, is one of the things that makes his body of work so distinctive, especially for the time it appeared. Indeed, the "realist tendency" in Robinson's poetry is partly what makes it "modern." A poem like "The Mill," with its grim and unsentimental portrayal of poverty and despair, somehow manages to accomplish in three short stanzas what might take ten pages for a Maupassant. Such poems, in fact, succeed as *realist poetry*.

In the immediate post-Harvard years, however, Robinson's mind was squarely set on expressing these values in fiction. After he returned to Gardiner in the summer of 1893, Robinson set to work with deadly earnest on the "sketches" that were to comprise his "Book of Scattered Lives". His intention was to publish them by the fall of 1895, and there is a sense that in his mind this was his last opportunity to save himself from life as a "practical man", with a "regular job" and the type of worldly life that he so detested. The letters detail his assiduous daily working habits, his frustrations over his failures, and his occasional elation over a successful attempt. His sense of almost desperate determination to succeed comes through strongly again and again: "Some day you will see ~~an~~ a printed edition of 'Scattered Lives' and {=even} though it be printed on toilet paper with a one-hand printing press," he wrote to Smith on April 14, 1895. Failure in this endeavor was not an option for Robinson:

> My other work {i.e., fiction} goes on at a fair rate and I shall make a strong effort to get a book out in the fall. This will make you laugh, may be, but I mean business. If it fails to appear it will be no laughing matter with me. I assur{e} you. Not that I shall be discouraged, or any thing of the kind but I shall be most damnably disappointed—which is partly the same thing, after all. (Letter to Latham, February 24, 1895)

While he was also, during the same period, enthusiastically collaborating with Smith on a verse translation of Sophocles' *Antigone*,[8] and although he occasionally sent out one of his short poems for publication, it is clear that poetry, for which he would one day be celebrated, was not

[8] Selections from which can be found in the letters, although the finished product was accidentally destroyed.

his central ambition—at least, not in theory. The problem was that poetry would not leave Robinson alone! He was painstakingly writing and rewriting artistic prose stories with which he was rather pleased—"Marshall," "Theodore," "Saturday, "my reincarnation story" and several others, all of which remain in name only—but to his dismay he kept finding himself sidetracked. In the same letter to Latham cited above, after speaking of his publication aspirations, he continues to mention his recurring "fear," and his humor, we suspect, is only partial:

> I am sometimes afraid that the ambition of my life is to be a "pote", but I am slowly learning (I think) to tread that under. It comes up once in a while in spite of me, however and causes me to send away sonnets & things, which, for a wonder, sometimes stick.

This idea that poetry is a dangerous temptation that needs to be "tread under" for the sake of "my more serious work"[9] seems to have caused Robinson a not insignificant degree of chagrin. In a letter to Smith from March 3, 1895, Robinson expresses his dilemma thus:

> I hav{e} so much material in my head and good material too that the weight of it makes me dizzy at times; and then there is that fear that I may not do any thing after all. My worst and most persistent enemy, though, is a constant inclination to write poetry Sometimes I am half afraid the damned stuff will kill what little ability I have.

Such passages from the letters can help deepen our appreciation of Robinson's later achievements (and failures) as a poet by providing significant insight as to his artistic motivations. New criticism on Robinson may well benefit from attempting to read and evaluate his poetry as the work of a frustrated novelist or short story writer who later found success by "distilling" his need to present subtle, realistic psychological "studies" of modern life into verse, not only in the well-known shorter pieces such as "Richard Cory" and "Eros Turanos", but also in the later and now-neglected book-length blank verse tales, such as the Arthurian poems, or *The Man who Died Twice*. In this way he helped lay the foundations for modern American poetry.

[9] This is from a letter to Smith from February 25, 1894. What is interesting about the context here is that he disparages his "fascination" for "old French [poetic] forms" in the very same letter where he shares a poem he has just written: the now-classic "The House on the Hill"!

In conclusion, the six year period from 1889 to 1895 marks Robinson's personal, intellectual and poetic coming-of-age, as is made evident in many letters in which the author enthusiastically reflects on his reading, his early aspirations and efforts to be an author, his disillusionment with life and the world, and his hopes for the future. The tones, themes, and obsessions that show up throughout his later work are all evident, though often still in nascent forms, in this period of his letters and manifest in subtle (and at times unsubtle) ways.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

1. Transcribing the Holographs

"I shall not take the trouble to read it over (I seldom do that for any body) but shall trust to your own ingenuity in filling blanks and deciphering hieroglyphics, in the making of which I own no master."—Letter to Smith, May 26, 1895.

In deciphering Robinson's handwriting and replicating the intended content of his text, Anderson is highly reliable, and in this area his work as a transcriber has proved invaluable. A comparison of the holograph with Anderson's transcriptions shows very few outright errors in the reading of words, phrases, and sentences. Robinson's handwriting, as he himself often humourously acknowledges in the letters,[10] can be daunting at best, and barely legible at worst. Looking at Robinson's words in the holograph, one is often at a loss as to where to even begin in making sense of them. But after comparing even the most formidable specimen of this handwriting with Anderson's transcription of it, everything clears up, and what seemed previously to be an incoherent scribble suddenly *makes sense* as a word. Looking at it afterwards, it seems so obvious that it *is* what Anderson transcribed it to be, though it is hard to tell truthfully if one would ever have been able to arrive at such insight if Anderson had not first provided the key. Truly, Anderson's almost uncanny success in grasping Robinson's text and in transcribing it with such consistent accuracy is a remarkable accomplishment, and one which has certainly made my work possible.

Nevertheless, while it is true that Anderson "was able to correct many errors in [the] three

[10] As in the letter to Smith of March 7, 1893: " I do not know how much you read of what I write, but I trust you are able to make something of it—that is, when there is anything."

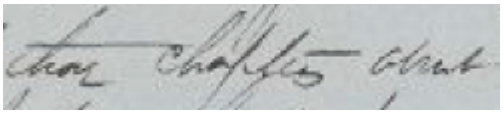
previously published volumes of Robinson's letters" (Donaldson 10), Anderson did make various mistakes of his own: occasionally it is clear that he read a word incorrectly, and there are also infrequent omissions (or additions) of words or sentences, or simple typos. Although it is true that Anderson is usually reliable, my differences with him in readings of words are still more numerous than his differences with the previous editors. Indeed, at times I have preferred a previous reading over Anderson's. For instance, in the letter to Smith of February 3, 1895, Anderson has "Still it is a **good** work & Caine is a great man" (my emphasis). I read the highlighted word as "great," and on checking the letter in Sutcliffe's *Untriangulated Stars* I found that Sutcliffe had also read "great." Thus I was able to maintain the stronger reading in this case. On the other hand, an example of where I have differed from the readings of both Anderson and Sutcliffe comes in the letter to Smith of January 20, 1895, where both previous editors have "This seems to me a little too large **honestly** and I shall probably work it down" (my emphasis). I read the highlighted word as "however" in the holograph, and have transcribed it thus. No doubt, the difference in meaning between the two readings is highly subtle, but the new reading is nonetheless a more accurate rendering of the holograph. I have corrected Anderson's mistakes, misreadings, ommissions or additons and have indicated these corrections in the alphabetical footnotes.

2. A Middle Way in Transcription

It should of course be pointed out when considering the work of past or present editors that not all of Robinson's words are strictly reducible to distinct letters, and for their part the previous editors' practice was to consistently transcribe Robinson's evident *intent*, rather than to take a rigorous approach to replicating the "letter" of the holograph. In many cases, such a practice is simply the only feasible option. Each handwritten epistle contains numerous places

where what we are dealing with are not English "words," per se, but rather Robinson's *ciphers* for English words. At this point, direct transcription of what is "on the page" becomes impossible.

One example, taken at random from the same letter to Smith of January 20, 1895, will suffice to illustrate the general problem:



There are three distinct "words" here—"those chapters about"—but their transcription can only be arrived at on the basis of their context and familiarity with Robinson's chirographical habits. In the first word, for instance, we see two characteristic examples of Robinson's tendency to combine letters—in this case, of "t" and "h," at the beginning, and "e" and "s" at the end. "Chapters" is relatively straightforward, for a Robinson word anyway, but the "p" could just as easily be one of Robinson's "f's" in another context, while the "t" is only crossed *after* the "e." And if the reader is not aware that Robinson, as a general rule, likes to "cross" his "t's" only after the vertical line, s/he could easily be mislead to read the horizontal line as a dash. The "r" at the end is a mere dot. Finally, the scribble from which we derive "about" could, depending on the context, easily be interpreted in numerous ways: "abut," "what," "almost"?

All this is merely to show that Robinson's transcriber cannot take a "strict" approach to rendering only what is "on the page", for if one were to attempt this, however desirable it might be in principle, in practice there would be very few words to transcribe at all! Still, in the interests of attempting to approximate the impression of the holograph more faithfully than previous editors have done, and while recognizing the limitations of such a scheme if taken to extremes, I have settled on a somewhat uneasy compromise when revising Anderson's

transcription or transcribing on my own between strictly reading Robinson's holograph, on the one hand, and Robinson's "intent," on the other. In general I have fallen back on the latter strategy only when the former proves impossible—but such occasions are numerous.

Still, this new edition should be an improvement in terms of overall fidelity to what "Robinson actually wrote". While Anderson's work in this connection is admirable in that he does show more concern than, say, *Untriangulated Stars* to be faithful to the characteristics of Robinson's holographic text (such as faithfully and consistently transcribing Robinson's errors within angle brackets), his practice of mostly transcribing Robinson's intent tends to obscure the distinctive *messiness* of a typical Robinson letter. For instance, for any word that is missing letters in the holograph, when Robinson's intent is clear Anderson will—with only very rare exceptions, where he indicates a missing letter with square brackets—silently supply the missing letters. In this new edition, however, I have tried to dispel the illusion of tidiness that such corrective measures inevitably generate by interpolating missing letters with braces ({ }). A comparison between the quantity of Anderson's square brackets and my braces on most pages will give a sense (and yet only a sense) of how much Anderson's transcription "hides." At the same time, in keeping with my policy of compromise between two extremes, I have not attempted to be slavish in my indication of Robinson's missing letters, which would require braces for virtually every word and would be unnecessarily pedantic. Readers interested in the niceties of Robinson's handwriting are encouraged to consult the holograph scans included with each transcription.

3. Transcription of Accidentals

Anderson is much less reliable as a guide to Robinson's accidentals than he is to his substantives, and I have striven in this edition to rectify this weakness as much as possible.

Starting from the earliest letters, Robinson displays a delicate and versatile feeling for prose writing, and his grammar is always impeccable. However, he is inconsistent and unpredictable with his use of periods, commas, apostrophes, etc. Whether due to the writer's haste, fatigue, or lack of revision,[11] punctuation marks are often absent where they would be expected. Like the other editors of Robinson's letters, Anderson had something of a "blessed rage for order" in his tendency to smooth over all irregularities in Robinson's punctuation. Indeed, if one had only Anderson's transcription to go by, one would be led to believe that Robinson thoroughly adhered in practice to MLA standards of punctuation, while the holograph shows us that he did not, or at least not always.[12]

A rigorous policy of "tidying up" a text's accidentals and graphic features for easy readability was simply an accepted part of standard procedure in editing for much of the 20th century; hence any critique of such a procedure in what follows should not be read as exclusively applicable to Anderson, even though he is the immediate reference. What complicates matters, however, is that Anderson's program of correction, if such it can be called, was itself inconsistent. For example, in the letter to Smith for February 15, 1892 (omitted by Sutcliffe), Robinson provides a numbered list of examination questions that he was given in his English class. Some of the numerals in the list do, and some do not, have a period following them. In the holograph, the first question is preceded by a "1" without a period. Anderson follows the holograph in leaving the period out, but in his transcription of the question ("Explain Scotts relation to his age") he *adds* an apostrophe to "Scotts," rendering it "Scott's." This is a common procedure for Anderson; but while it is obviously proper usage, it is clearly not on Robinson's

[11] Circumstances which Robinson frequently mentions in his letters.

[12] He certainly *knew* the punctuation standards of his day, as the occasions of his correct usage show in abundance. And the written ink corrections of typewritten letters, such as that from October 1, 1893, demonstrate that he was quite capable of correcting his own drafts.

page.

This illustration of Anderson's habits of transcribing punctuation is only one example out of countless others that could be drawn from the letters. In a word, even when Robinson omits them, he almost unfailingly will add periods to the ends of sentences, after individual letters of initials, and after abbreviations. He will also always add possessive apostrophes wherever they would be expected in standard usage.

Secondly, Anderson often (though not always) leaves *out* punctuation and other accidentals that are definitely present in the holograph, such as the underlining of Robinson's signature or periods occasionally placed after the signature. Indeed, while it is easy to predict when Anderson will add something, knowing when he will leave something out is a much more doubtful matter.

In any case, in this edition I have sought to improve upon Anderson's work (and the work of all previous editors) in this domain by following a much more scrupulous approach to the transcription of accidentals. I have corrected all of Anderson's omissions and additions, whether in the main text of the letters, or in the headings, salutations, valedictions, and signatures, with the goal of being as faithful as possible to the holograph, and in accordance with contemporary principles of textual editing. In a word, I have made every effort to ensure that wherever a period—or any other accidental—appears in this transcription, it is also to be found in the holograph.[13] All interpolations are clearly indicated by my braces or WA's square brackets.

4. Additional Transcription Guidelines

[13] Robinson's possessive apostrophes, when he includes them at all, are not always placed before the genitive "s" for singular possessives in the holograph—in fact, they are usually found after it, giving the impression, even for singular possessives, of denoting a plural possessive. Yet, in all such cases I have followed Anderson in transcribing Robinson's obvious intention where apostrophes are concerned, since the benefit of "authenticity" that could be gained by a strict transcription of apostrophe placement seemed negligible when weighed against the likelihood that such a transcription would so deeply contradict Robinson's obvious intent.

As a general rule, I have followed Anderson's transcriptions and editorial suggestions unless there is good reason (such as those outlined above) to do otherwise . Occasionally, Anderson will make suggestions when Robinson's intention is not clear, placing these suggestions, followed by a question mark, in square brackets next to the original text. Anderson also uses square brackets to indicate Robinson's evident intent—for example, Robinson may have written "t" by itself, where in Anderson's opinion it is clear that Robinson meant "too"; hence, Anderson will supply the missing o's in square brackets, rendering the text thus: "t[oo]." Likewise, there may be instances when Robinson neglected to supply a word which is obviously demanded by the context, which word is similarly placed in square brackets. All square brackets are Anderson's, unless otherwise specified. Occasionally, I will myself add a suggested reading or supply a missing word in the text, in the manner of Anderson. The only difference here, as in the notes, is that my additions and suggestions are always enclosed in braces ({ }).

Words underlined in Robinson's holograph have remained underlined in my transcription, although I make some effort to approximate the length of such underlining. In the endnotes, words originally underlined in Anderson's notes have been italicized, in accordance with contemporary usage.

A word should be said on the subject of dashes: Robinson uses both short (-) and long (—) dashes to indicate our standard em dash (—). Anderson is not consistent in the manner in which he transcribes Robinson's dashes: sometimes he uses short dashes, sometimes long ones. For the sake of consistency, I have adopted the policy of always using an em dash (—) to indicate Robinson's em dashes, even when the graphic on the holograph more closely approximates a hyphen or en dash. The exception here is in typed letters, where I always transcribe the dash of the length used by Robinson.

5. Approximating the Graphic Character of the Holograph

In addition to the textual and accidental content of the letters, I have also differed from Anderson and the other editors in terms of reproducing the layout and overall graphic character of Robinson's holograph. The underlying basis of both areas of difference is the same: whereas Anderson and the editors who preceded him were aiming for an easily readable text of the letters, my aim has been to reproduce with as much fidelity as possible both the content *and* the visual character of the holograph, and to this end I have spared no reasonable effort, even if the results of such effort can never hope to be completely satisfactory. Still, I feel that a more authentic approach to the appearance of the holograph, far from being a mere cosmetic luxury or matter of antiquarian indulgence, will actually help the reader to have a more profound experience of the text itself, since the form in which a text is presented will influence the way it is read and responded to. If, in other words, Robinson's letters are seen in something approaching their natural state of dishevelment, with words and letters regularly crossed out and irregular placement of headings, etc., the impact this will have on a reader can be expected to differ from that produced if they are seen (as heretofore) in neatly arranged, carefully copy-edited, "literary" paragraphs, without errors—i.e., as artificially preserved *artifacts* of a bygone age. Although such methods of preservation can greatly facilitate the actual reading of an author's letters in terms of their content, by veiling the visual character of the holograph, a standardization of the holographic format and layout in the interests of more easily digestible content also detracts from this content by denuding it of its form. Of course, if taken to extremes, such standards of faithful reproduction of holographs would necessitate that the only way to fully experience any written work would be through the holograph itself, and this is obviously not a practical option in most cases, including the present one of Robinson's letters.

Moreover, the attempt to be more faithful to the holograph in transcribing it leads to certain paradoxes. Thus, for example, I have imposed a few formal standardizations of my own, sometimes for the sake of convenience, and sometimes out of sheer necessity (see below). But although it has proved impossible to do entirely without certain artificial standards or conventions of format in transcribing the text, by attempting to approximate *something* more of the graphic character of the holograph than has previously been published, I feel that my work here represents an improvement over the previous editors' more limited intention to reproduce merely the verbal content of the holograph.

My approach in this connection can be further summarized as follows:

Unlike the previous editors, I have made a point of adhering to Robinson's line breaks. I have indicated where his holograph pages begin and end with page numbers at the top of each new page (except for the first of a letter). All page numbers, unless otherwise specified in the notes, are my own additions, and they appear as numerals between two hyphens (for instance, "-2-".) For my purposes, each side of a holographic sheet of paper is a "page": thus, if Robinson wrote on both sides of a sheet, this is considered two pages, and they are numbered accordingly in this edition.

Also, I have tried to be sensitive to what appeared to be meaningful spaces in the text, and have reproduced them accordingly, using for this purpose a large space of uniform length ( ), such as can be easily recognized as such, throughout the transcription. For his part, Anderson usually (not always) omits such spaces, or sometimes takes them as a sign to start a new paragraph (these omissions of Anderson's are not indicated in the alphabetical footnotes, though the interested reader is always welcome to consult his manuscript in such instances.) There are many cases where I omit large spaces in the holograph as well because these seem to

be without significance. In such cases where I omit a large space in the text, I do not draw attention to it in the notes.

Another formal standardization that I have imposed, or rather maintained from previous editors, is paragraph indentation: all paragraphs, with the exception of the first of each letter or of paragraphs which clearly have no indent at all in the holograph,[14] are indented using a standard-length space, regardless of what appears on the holograph. As for the first paragraph of a letter, beginning immediately after the salutation, I always attempt to approximate the indent to the appearance of the holograph. This is because Robinson regularly uses a noticeably larger indent for his first paragraphs, and this is one of the salient visual characteristics of his page which I feel is worth carrying over to the transcription.

As with the first paragraphs of letters, the indentation and arrangement of poetic lines and stanzas is generally governed by how I see them in the holograph, and not according to any formal standard. This, and all transcriptions of spaces and indentations, will necessarily always be a matter of approximation and personal judgement, but the hope, again, is that something of the overall character of the holograph can be carried over through such methods.

In terms of the layout and placement of headings, salutations, valedictions, and signatures, I have again sought to reproduce the arrangement displayed in the holograph. Anderson, as well as the other editors, employed a standard method of transcribing these elements, placing the heading (date, city, etc.) at the top right of the page, and the valediction and signature at an invariably fixed position to the right beneath the letter text, on two separate lines.[15] In contrast to the previous editors, my placement of these elements in the transcription is always regulated according to what I see in the holograph. Thus, if a date is to the right, I place it

[14] Or where otherwise indicated, in certain special circumstances.
[15] This last detail is actually true only of Anderson and Richard Cary, as the other editors did not include the salutations, valedictions and signatures of Robinson's letters.

to the right, and if it is in the center, I place it in the center, in as exact an approximation of the holograph as possible, relative to the other elements of the letter. Again, in many instances, Robinson would place his valediction and sometimes even his signature on the same line as the closing words of his letter (invariably because he has come to the end of a page). As opposed to Anderson, I will always follow the holograph as much as possible in the placement of these items.

Occasionally, Robinson would insert a brief note at the top of his first page. Anderson always moves these notes to the end, after the valediction and signature. Sometimes, also, Robinson would write across the page vertically, in which cases—usually—I simply transcribed the text as if it were horizontal, while preserving the line breaks (and while remarking in a footnote how it is arranged in the holograph). Moreover, Robinson occasionally placed something that would ordinarily have been expected to be part of his heading below his signature (i.e. "Cambridge, Mass"), which items Anderson moves to the heading in his transcription. I have followed the holograph in placing these items where Robinson originally had them.

I have attempted to loosely reproduce the various red Harvard letterheads used by Robinson when he was a student there, but only on the first page of the letter where they are used, making no note of their appearance on subsequent pages, for which the interested reader is advised to check the holograph scan attached to each transcription. I have not attempted anything like exactness in my use of specific fonts and colors for these Harvard headings, my purpose being rather to show that they were there and to invoke something of the character of their presence. Anderson omits these letterheads entirely, or incorporates them into his heading at the right, without further comment, and in such a way that a reader without access to the holograph could not tell whether it was originally a printed letterhead or Robinson's writing.

As for the matter of Robinson's crossed-out letters, words, phrases, etc., only Anderson among the previous letter editors made a point of indicating their presence. Unlike Anderson, who routinely places deleted items within angle brackets (<n>), I have opted to use a single strike-through line wherever Robinson obviously meant to delete something, even though he himself often used multiple lines, in various directions, and of various lengths, for this purpose—or, in the case of tyewritten letters, typed directly over undesired letters. The use of a single line, rather than angle brackets, to indicate mistakes in the holograph is mostly a matter of stylistic preference, although I also think that using the strike-through better approximates the graphic characteristic of an aspect of Robinson's holograph, even if imperfectly. One exception to this general rule of using the strike-through is when, as occasionally happens, there is a crossed-out mark in the holograph which I am unable to properly strike through, such as quotation marks or commas. In these instances, I follow Anderson's example of using angle brackets to enclose the canceled mark.

In terms of spacing, as opposed to Anderson (who used double-spacing), I have maintained single-spacing throughout the transcription, with the only exceptions being in letters that were originally typed with double-spacing, or else where the holograph appeared to me to indicate clearly that Robinson was intentionally making an extra space between lines, as in the case of spaces between poetic stanzas. Also, in cases where Robinson used a caret to insert a word above the line, I have created an extra line space to accommodate this.

Again, it bears repeating that my aim in all attempts to reproduce the visual character of the holograph has always been an approximation of its "spirit," rather than a strict reproduction of its "letter."[16]

[16] Carets, as well as other such markings used occasionally by Robinson, are always transcribed in standardized form, and I make no attempt to reproduce their exact position in the holograph, though I do attempt to

6. Arrangement of this Edition

One of the advantages of digital publication is that it has facilitated the inclusion of Anderson's original manuscript transcriptions, in addition to the new, verified and edited versions of the letters. Of possibly even greater interest, scans of Robinson's original holographs for each letter have also been included. In this way, readers will be able to to compare Anderson's manuscript edition with the new one, and to place them both against the source texts, thus weighing the respective advantages and disadvantages of each.

The main internet address (url) for *The Letters of Edwin Arlington Robinson: A Digital Edition* is http://digitalcommons.colby.edu/ear/. On this page, the reader can choose from two hyperlink options: "Introductory Material for the Robinson Letters" and "Edwin Arlington Robinson Letters and Transcriptions." The "Introductory Material" option links to another page[17] where various PDF documents relating to the background and methodology of this edition. Salient among these documents are this essay, along with a list of "Works Cited in the Notes" and a list of symbols and abbreviations used in the transcription.

The main text of this edition, of course, is to be found in the "Edwin Arlington Robinson Letters and Transcriptions" section.[18] Here will be found my edited and corrected transcriptions of Anderson's transcriptions, which (as was mentioned above) I made from his manuscript and then checked for accuracy against Robinson's original holographs. These new transcriptions are to be regarded as the "primary" files within the "Letters and Transcriptions" section. They are arranged vertically according to date, with the most recent letter at the top. The title for each primary file is shown to the right of a photographic icon of the first page of the transcription, and is arranged in the following manner: "To *Name of Addressee – Full Date*," i.e. "To Arthur R.

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approximate the position of words inserted above the line.

[17] http://digitalcommons.colby.edu/robinson_essays/

[18] http://digitalcommons.colby.edu/robinson_transcriptions/

Gledhill – February 23, 1890." Beneath this title is the author's name, i.e. Edwin Arlington Robinson. By clicking on the title of any of these files, a separate download page will open where the reader can find the following items for PDF download:

1. The primary file (the new transcription of the letter for this edition, with its notes). This can be downloaded by either double clicking the letter's title to the right of the icon, or by clicking the "download" button to the right of where it says "Download Full Text" in the "download box" (which is below the icon and to the right).
2. A scan of Anderson's original transcription of the letter (labeled as "Anderson's Manuscript Transcription," in the "download box").
3. Anderson's "Yellow Note Page" for that letter (labeled as such, in the "download box").
4. A scan of Robinson's original holograph (labeled "Scan of Robinson's Holograph", in the "download box").

Items 1-4 are invariably present for every letter. Occasionally, there will also be further items included, such as images of relevant people, places, or things referenced in the letter.[19]

Upon opening the PDF of any primary file, the new edition's transcription of the letter in question will be found to start on the next page after a Colby College cover page. The cover page includes an official Colby College heading, the letter title, and recommended citation for the letter. Immediately following the text of each transcription is the endnotes section. This section includes, immediately preceding the endnotes themselves, the three-letter code for the repository from which the letter was taken, incidental information about the letter.

The entire website is searchable. Readers will find a search bar at the upper left side of each individual page/section of the website, with the option for an advanced search below the

[19] In the notes, items 2-4 (as well as other items such as images, etc.) are usually referred to in general as a letter's "additional files".

search bar. Also below the search bar is a dropdown menu which provides the option to search "in this collection" ("collection" here being the specific section of the website that one is currently on, i.e. "Introductory Materials" or "Letters and Transcriptions"), "in this repository" ("repository" here being the entire website), or "across all repositories" (all of the various repositories hosted on Digital Commons @ Colby.[20] Various other options for modifying a search are given in tabs to the left after it has been entered.

The search function produces the best results when the search terms are specific and exact. For instance, a search for "To Harry de Forest Smith" within the "Letters and Transcriptions" collection returns 135 results, including every instance of these words that occurs in any of the PDFs that are held in this section. Most of these results are the individual letters to Smith, which containt the exact words of the search in their heading. To the left, options are given to further limit this search, the most helpful of these being the option to view the search results according to the years of the letters in which the search terms are found.

7. Notes in this Edition

The notes accompanying the letters in this edition are of two kinds: alphabetical footnotes and numbered endnotes. All footnotes are mine; endnotes are Anderson's, except those followed by my initials (SL).

As for the endnotes, they are generally of an explanatory or literary-critical nature. They were a feature of Anderson's original work, and I have augmented them with my own wherever I felt it to be necessary or helpful for a hypothetical moderately educated reader with access to the internet and the ability to conduct a web search. Since the ready accessibility of the internet has rendered annotations for all but abstruse references unneccessary, I have tried to keep my own additions to a minimum, though the new addition nonetheless contains a sizable amount of my

[20] http://digitalcommons.colby.edu/

own notes. Judging from what he left behind, Anderson's intention was not to be exhaustive with his annotations, but rather to be helpful, that is, to provide reasonably well-educated readers with sufficient information to successfully navigate the letters without having to resort overmuch to encyclopedias or other reference works. While in general Anderson did an excellent and judicious job with his annotations, he was not always consistent with what he chose to gloss. I have attempted to rectify this lack of consistency with my additions, although there are cases where I was unable to identify a reference or where, more commonly (due to the such information's ready accessibilty in our times, etc.) I have refrained from glossing something I considered to be "easily-available information," but which Anderson may have wished to gloss himself, in an era where such information, however "basic," was not "a mouse click away."[21] Also, I have added occasionally added comments of my own to one of Anderson's notes, and these comments are placed within braces ({ }), without my initials.

In addition to the notes which he did make, there are instances where Anderson clearly intended to add a note because it is numbered in the text of the letter transcript, and a corresponding number and space exists on the yellow note page he had devoted to that letter, but these are left blank, are with merely a word or two with question marks, indicating that he was not able to identify a reference. In most cases, I have been able to supply the indicated note.

Another situation which is relevant here is where Anderson has added notes in pencil which I am unable to read, whether in whole or in part. In these (rare) cases I have omitted this penciled material from the new edition. If, on the other hand, it seemed obvious to me that one of Anderson's penciled remarks was a note to himself about something that is otherwise covered in the numbered notes, I have silently omitted it.

[21] The instances where I have added my own endnotes have usually necessitated a change in Anderson's original numbering of the notes for the letter in question (that is, unless this occurs at the end of the numerical series). Any changes in numbering are always indicated in alphabetical footnotes.

Very rarely, I have edited one of Anderson's notes. Usually, this is for cosmetic purposes related to style or format. If the edit is substantial, it is mentioned in the footnotes. As always, anyone interested in comparing differences between Anderson's manuscript and the new edition should consult the additional files for each letter, containing Anderson's manuscript transcription of the letter and his corresponding notes.

As a general rule, endnotes are made only on the first instance of a noteworthy reference, although there are some repeated glosses for items that are reiterated in later letters, especially when such iterations are separated by a lengthy period of time. This will be clear to readers who are approaching the letters chronologically. Readers who are looking only at specific letters in isolation would do well, if an obscure allusion appears for which there is no note, to use the search function. A specific search will turn up earlier notes on the term, if any were made.

As previously mentioned, all footnotes are mine. They are in alphabetical sequence, and are to be found within the primary files for the purpose of commenting on many miscellaneous matters of the text, the most common of which concern various peculiarities of the holograph, or of Anderson's transcription and notes, where these would seem to be of interest. I have also sought in these notes to indicate what I felt to be significant differences between my transcription and Anderson's, whether with regard to the reading of the holograph or to accidentals,[22] though I have only rarely given any attention here to my own or Anderson's differences from other editors.[23]

8. Punctuation in the Footnotes

Since I have striven in the footnotes to be as precise as possible, I have adopted for them

[22] This excludes differences related to punctuation, or to the placement and arrangement of headers, valedictions, and signatures, or to the first indent of a letter, since these can be assumed to differ from my own transcription in every letter.

[23] Anderson himself does this occasionally, but in his endnotes.

the British convention of optionally placing commas and periods *outside* the quotation marks. This appeared necessary to me, since many of the footnotes consist of indicating differences of transcription with Anderson. For example, if I read the holograph as saying "honestly", and Anderson transcribes it "however", it was important to be able to express this unambiguously. American standards would require one to write, "WA (Anderson) has 'however.'" This obviously includes the period within the quotes, which seemed highly problematic. The British convention, however, allows one to more accurately write: "WA has 'however'". This allows for no confusion about the period.

9. Labeling the Letters

Anderson was admirably systematic and consistent in his methods for labeling the individual letters and their notes. His labeling system has been carried over to the digital edition, with some slight modifications.

The primary files of the new edition each contain an identification header at the top right, starting on the first page after the Colby cover page (page 2 of the PDF file). For example, a letter to Arthur R. Gledhill has the header "EAR-ARGledhill Nov 21/89 - 1," which can be explained according to the following key:

1. The three letter abbreviation of Robinson's full name, in capitals;
2. A dash;
3. An abbreviated form of the addressee's full name: (i.e. ARGledhill for Arthur R. Gledhill);
4. The three or four-letter abbreviation of the month in which the letter was written, sans period, preceded and followed by a space;
5. The day of the month in which the letter was written;

6. A forward slash;

7. The two-digit form of the year in which the letter was written (i.e. 89);

8. A dash preceded and followed by spaces;

9. The page number of document.

In his own transcripts, Anderson did not use a descriptive header for the first page of each letter, opting instead for the three-letter abbreviation of the repository in its place, and using his header on subsequent pages.[24] I have however decided to use the header for all pages inclusive of the first of each letter, since that the repository is of less immediate interest than the information presented in the header; in any case, as will be shown below, the repository is always identified in the notes.

Below the header, as in Anderson's manuscript, is the identity of the letter's addressee, in capital letters and underlined, i.e. "TO HARRY DE FOREST SMITH".

The transcription of each letter is followed immediately by an abbreviated indication of the library or repository from which the respective letter was been taken (i.e. HCL for Harvard College Libraries). Occasionally, next to this abbreviation, there will be a brief textual note by Anderson (or me if enclosed in braces) referring to the orginal holograph, such as "EAR misdated this letter" or "Written in red ink." If the letter has been previously published, the abbreviation of the title in which it is to be found (sometimes qualified by "in part") is given, along with the appropriate page numbers for the original publication. In some cases, as in the letter referred to above, to Arthur R. Gledhill from Nov. 21, 1889, there will be a paragraph-length background note by Anderson, left unnumbered. Below this will be the explanatory

[24] Anderson used the header described above for the pages devoted to transcriptions of letters. However, he used a slightly different header for his yellow note pages. I have not used this latter header for this edition; it seemed unnecessary, especially since I have opted to place the notes immediately after the letter transcriptions, rather than on a designated separate page.

endnotes section, indicated by the label "NOTES" in the center of the page (my addition).Then the numbered sequence of notes will begin. In rare cases, there are no numbered notes for a particular letter.

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