

# *The Golden Treasury: 150 Years On*

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The immediate success of the *Golden Treasury* may be one of the many great mysteries of popular culture. The fairly unprepossessing little volume of 332 pages purporting to contain ‘the best songs and lyrical poems in the English language, selected and arranged with notes’ by a relatively unknown Francis Turner Palgrave, Fellow of Exeter College Oxford, and published by a relatively young publishing house, Macmillan and Co. of Cambridge and recently of London, is said to have sold some 10,000 in the first six months after its appearance in July 1861. A bestseller, to be sure. But how and why? The reasons given for its popularity are many: the tasteful dark green cloth packaging and an enticing title, the keen selection and the novel arrangement, which ‘exactly met the taste and expectations of his poetry-reading contemporaries’.<sup>1</sup> The first reason cannot in itself have been decisive, considering the similar efforts of competing anthologies, which offered engravings and woodcuts. A refreshing change from such tired designations as ‘Gems’, ‘Pearls’, and ‘Flowers’, the title, apparently suggested by Palgrave’s friend Thomas Woolner, who also provided the vignette which was to distinguish the ensuing Golden Treasury Series, was doubtless an attractive evocation of the legacy of the Golden Age but not a demonstrably compelling commercial feature. The selection is always an unpredictable and perilous factor, as apparent in the inherent incompatibility of ‘best’ and ‘selection’, and therefore seldom a decisive determinant. The arrangement, deemed by modern critics, following the initial reviews, anywhere from ‘brilliant originality’<sup>2</sup> to ‘quaintly chuckleheaded’,<sup>3</sup> cannot have had a strong influence on the purchase, especially since readers do not normally read anthologies consecutively from page one onwards or, as the first reviewer remarked, ‘systematically’.<sup>4</sup>

Such explanations are worthy of discussion and have been among the themes of subsequent scholarly discourse. But, being in the main retrospective, they do not, cannot, locate or define the spark, as it were, that set off the flame of immediate popularity. The cordial reception of the volume in the press contributed to that initial stimulation. Almost immediately after its appearance it was heralded by the *Spectator*: ‘There is no book in the English language which will make a more delightful companion than this. It has been selected with the greatest taste and discrimination, with the assistance, too, Mr. Palgrave tells us, of the Poet Laureate himself, and has been printed with a care and beauty which render its external form worthy of its contents.’<sup>5</sup> Although Palgrave’s strenuous attempts to have it reviewed in the *Times* failed,<sup>6</sup> he was

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<sup>1</sup> Sabine Haass, ‘Victorian Poetry Anthologies: Their Role and Success in the Nineteenth-Century Book Market’, *Publishing History*, xvii (1985), pp. 51–64 (p. 55).

<sup>2</sup> Anne Ferry, ‘Palgrave’s “Symphony”’, *Victorian Poetry*, xxxvii (1999), pp. 145–61 (p. 148).

<sup>3</sup> J. T. Barbarese, ‘The Sixth Palgrave’s: Who Needs It?’, *Victorian Poetry*, xxxvii (1999), pp. 235–42 (p. 238).

<sup>4</sup> *Daily News*, 4763 (16 August 1861).

<sup>5</sup> xxxiv:1726 (27 July 1861), p. 813.

<sup>6</sup> In his letters to Macmillan of 22 July, [October–December 1861] and [4 November 1861], Palgrave urged various ways, such as sending a copy directly to G. W. Dasent, the assistant editor of the *Times*, or through Robert Lowe, who had been its leader-writer and was in 1861 vice-president of the Council on Education. Except for those from the British Library, all the other letters cited in this section are from the Berg Collection of English and American Literature, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations, 49 A.L.S. to Macmillan and Co., 29 April 1859 [Jan. / March 1863]. They have no individual shelfmarks, only dates. Some have pencilled dates, possibly by a later hand, but are informed and reasonable. These are placed in square brackets herein.

persistent: ‘hav[ing] spoken to a friend who is a sub Ed. in the *Daily News*: so that between him & [Samuel] Lucas [...] we may get a review without delay.’<sup>7</sup> The review in the *Daily News* of 16 August 1861 found it an ‘attempt worthy of all commendation’. Despite its dislike of ‘these ultroneous anthologies’ the *Scotsman* praised it as a ‘beautiful and delightful little volume of “compacted sweets”, and was ‘quite surprised with the amount of keen, delicate and true criticism, modestly, but largely indicated in the preface, and in the notes’.<sup>8</sup> There were, moreover, reviews in five journals which agreed, *mutatis mutandis*, on the distinctiveness if not excellence of the anthology. The *Saturday Review* singled out its ‘arrangement and carefully considered juxtaposition of the different extracts’ to be ‘certainly superior to any book of the class we have yet seen’.<sup>9</sup> In the first number of the *Working Men’s College Magazine*, A. J. M[unby]. went beyond asserting that it is the ‘best anthology of and in our language’ by applying to it an extract from Palgrave’s own notes: ‘something neither modern nor ancient, but true to all ages, and, like the works of Creation, perfect as on the first day’.<sup>10</sup> A third, by Palgrave’s Oxford friend and editor of *Fraser’s Magazine*, J. A. Froude, although tacked on to the cumulative review ‘Some Poets of the Year’, did assert in the first sentence that the *Golden Treasury* is ‘the most precious casket that ever accompanied traveller in his roamings, or laid beside his pillow, or on the table at home [and that] Mr. Palgrave’s ‘labour has not been that of an ordinary complier, and the *Golden Treasury* deserves notice as something beyond a common volume of “Beauties” or “Elegant Extracts”’.<sup>11</sup> A fourth, in the *Westminster Review*, although ‘accustomed to turn away from similar collections with disgust, because they usually consist of a heap of good, bad, and abominable poems, selected without taste and arranged without care’, was ‘delighted to be able to acknowledge that this “*Golden Treasury*” is a model of what such works should be’.<sup>12</sup> To its general agreement with the other reviews and its undisturbed acknowledgment of the difficulties of selection *Chambers’s Journal of Popular Literature, Science and Arts* invoked the prodigious influence of the name of Tennyson, whose ‘whispered’ assistance caused the critics to ‘prick up their ears’, since ‘the advantage of Mr. Palgrave’s name on the title-page [...] did not arouse any great expectations’.<sup>13</sup> Whether ‘a charming little gift book for readers of all ages between ten and a hundred’<sup>14</sup> or ‘just the little volume to accompany the traveller in his autumn excursion, or to beguile an afternoon by the sea-shore or in some pleasant English garden’,<sup>15</sup> all reviewers seemed to agree that ‘the little book, daintily printed, and in every respect daintily appointed, while its price is within the means even of cottage readers, has within two or three months passed through four or five editions, will rank high this year among the Christmas gift books, and will never be suffered by the public to pass out of print.’<sup>16</sup>

Spread over five months these reviews kept the matter alive, as it were, and its momentum was no doubt increased by the efforts of the circle of friends of Macmillan, referred to as a kind of Tobacco Parliament: ‘Science, art and letters’, Alexander [Macmillan] wrote in the

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<sup>7</sup> Letter to Macmillan of 25 July 1861. Lucas was editor of the *Morning Star*, which does not appear, at least between 29 July and 30 September, to have reviewed the work.

<sup>8</sup> 12 September 1861, p. 3. Although unsigned, the review was identified by Palgrave as by Dr. J[ohn] Brown in a letter to Macmillan of 15 September 1861.

<sup>9</sup> xii:303 (17 August 1861), p. 176.

<sup>10</sup> i (September 1861), p. 172.

<sup>11</sup> lxiv:382 (October 1861), pp. 465-6.

<sup>12</sup> xx:2 (October 1861), p. 606.

<sup>13</sup> 415 (December 1861), p. 375. As a matter of fact Macmillan capitalized on a Tennyson connection. An advertisement in the *Times* of 28 November 1861, p. 12, made a point of mentioning that the ‘third edition’ was ‘dedicated by permission to the Poet Laureate’.

<sup>14</sup> *Examiner*, 2807 (16 November 1861).

<sup>15</sup> *Daily News*, 4763 (16 August 1861).

<sup>16</sup> *Examiner*, 2807 (16 November 1861).

summer of 1860, ‘are fairly represented in the course of the year. Holman Hunt comes occasionally, Woolner and Alexander Munro, sculptors, often. Tennyson and Kingsley have both been when in Town. Henry Kingsley is often there. [T. H.] Huxley, [William] Sharpey and others of the scientific world come.’<sup>17</sup> These, as well as the voices of such young friends of the house and up-and-coming literary figures and journalists as Edward Dicey, Alfred Ainger, David Masson, Coventry Patmore, and Richard Garnett, doubtless helped spread the news. The steady flow of reviews and opinions, complemented by a cascade of advertisements citing critical praise and, at Palgrave’s suggestion,<sup>18</sup> trumpeting the print run – ‘twelfth thousand’ in the *Saturday Review* of 16 August 1862, ‘fourteenth thousand’ in 6 December 1862 – was matched by a steady increase in sales. Macmillan may have been optimistic but since his success with literary texts had been limited mainly to works of fiction like *Westward Ho!* (1855), *Tom Brown’s School Days* (1857), and *Geoffrey Hamlyn* (1859), he was also cautious. The initial printing of 2,000 in July was followed by 1,250 in October, another 3,750 in November, and 3,000 in December – in all, 10,000 copies in four printings in six months.<sup>19</sup> There was competition, to be sure, and it could be formidable. *The Poets of the Nineteenth Century*, selected and edited by Robert Aris Willmott, went to editions of 5,000 and 3,000 copies in 1856 and an additional 3,000 in 1857.<sup>20</sup> Heavily illustrated with one hundred engravings and costly, it was not of the same class as the *Golden Treasury*, but its sales indicate that there was a lively and promising market. In 1860 alone there were two direct competitors: H. W. Dulcken’s *Pearls from the Poets* and *Nightingale Valley* by one Giraldus, the pseudonym of William Allingham. The former, a quarto, was expensive at 12s.; the latter, a duodecimo, sold at 5s. It was *Nightingale Valley* that Palgrave sought to outdo,<sup>21</sup> a particularly piquant challenge since Allingham was also among Macmillan’s friends and, like Palgrave, a friend of Tennyson’s, and was to edit *The Ballad Book* for the Golden Treasury Series in 1864. The rivalry will be discussed below. For the nonce its appearance is but another indication of the nature of the market, and, interestingly, its success – a reprint was published in 1862 amid a blaze of literally dozens of advertisements in the *Athenaeum* alone with Allingham’s name brazenly on the title page – somewhat dims the *Golden Treasury*’s halo. The point may be that the great success of the *Golden Treasury* was gradual – its heady sale of 61,000 copies by 1884 is relativized by the sale, for example, of *Enoch Arden*, ‘which sold 40,000 copies of its first edition of 60,000 within a few weeks’ in 1864.<sup>22</sup> Nurtured by frequent and spaced advertisements, it soared over the years and not alone but as part of a wave of volumes in the Golden Treasury Series edited by great literary names, the burgeoning reputation of Macmillan as a publisher of literature, the introduction in 1871 of English literature as a subject of study in schools (which required the memorizing of passages of poetry)<sup>23</sup> and later in universities, and, of

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<sup>17</sup> Quoted in Charles Morgan, *The House of Macmillan (1843-1943)* (London, 1943), pp. 50-1.

<sup>18</sup> In a letter to Macmillan of [4 November 1861] Palgrave wrote: ‘Don’t you think that if you were to advertise the new issue as “Seventh thousand” or the like, in big letters & in a “sensation” style it might pay?’

<sup>19</sup> Macmillan Editions Book, f. 218. The figures are confirmed in a letter of 19 November 1861 to Palgrave from Macmillan (British Library, Add. MS. 55841, f. 88): ‘We have sold about 5000 and have 2000 left. I have ordered another 3000 to be got on with in case of a rush about Christmas.’ The statistics differ from those in Megan Jane Nelson, ‘Francis Turner Palgrave and *The Golden Treasury*’ (unpublished dissertation, University of British Columbia, 1985), pp. 153-4.

<sup>20</sup> The statistics are from Haass, p. 55.

<sup>21</sup> In a letter of 8 October 1860, quoted in Amy Woolner, *Thomas Woolner, R.A.* (London, 1917), p. 199, Woolner informed Emily Tennyson that Palgrave ‘is busy reading all the Poets for the purpose of making a collection to publish which he intends to beat that of Allingham.’

<sup>22</sup> Haass, p. 53.

<sup>23</sup> See Richard D. Altick, *The English Common Reader* (Chicago, 1957), p. 161.

course, the increasing literacy of the English public. It was most cherished, we must remember, by those at the end of the Victorian period and later who had had it at school, a milieu which Palgrave might have appreciated but had not envisioned. At its first appearance, the *Golden Treasury* was one among a number of bestsellers. Its constantly revised impressions and four editions in various packagings over the next thirty years were a resolute effort to maintain and enhance its place in an open market in which it had, unforeseen and by a happy concurrence of circumstances, found a niche and then expanded to an almost unchallengeable institution. Within a month of the publication of the *Golden Treasury* Palgrave, responding to the suggestion that ‘Schoolmasters wd be little likely to take the present Edn but wd probably take the cheaper for school use’,<sup>24</sup> was providing – in addition to the existing extra cloth version at 4s. 6d, a morocco plain at 7s. 6d., and a morocco extra at 10s. 6d. – details of a ‘regular railway paper’ edition at 1s. 6d. or printed cloth at 2s. (‘for presents’).<sup>25</sup> And not long thereafter in a letter of 12 November 1861 he was proposing an illustrated edition and on 10 March 1862 a large paper and larger type edition.

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The success of the *Golden Treasury* was not due simply to its being at the right place at the right time, however, or to the auspicious coincidence of literary desire and commercial enterprise. It was not hastily put together to meet popular demand. As its first reviewer noted in his opening sentence, ‘Mr. Palgrave’s volume is no ordinary book of extracts for school-room consumption, jumbled together without rhyme or reason.’<sup>26</sup> He was referring to its conception, selection, and arrangement. But they did not spring up full blown in the volume. They had a history which goes deeper than the counsel offered by Woolner and Tennyson, among others. Palgrave may have introduced his project to Tennyson on a walking tour in Wales in 1860 and discussed it with Woolner, with whom he was to share a house. They and George Miller may have offered advice and opinions. But the conception and the work were Palgrave’s – not solely because Lady Tennyson mentions that Tennyson on 22 December 1860 ‘reads the poems to us chosen by Mr. Palgrave for his “Golden Treasury”’<sup>27</sup> or suchlike utterances but because they were evident in his *modus operandi*, the way he conceived, coddled, and applied the finish to his works, as well as in the content of works he had already written or was writing during the evolution of the anthology.<sup>28</sup> These taken into consideration, the *Golden Treasury* was their natural and perhaps inevitable outcome.

What must be mentioned first because it is foremost in the inspiration of all his works is Palgrave’s unwavering and absolute dedication to poetry. However obvious that may be, it cannot be overestimated. Palgrave believed in poetry, regarded it as the highest expression of man’s civilized being. All his works on poetry and poets, as well as his own poems, attest to that uncompromising devotion. An archetypal paean is evident in the conclusion of the preface to the *Golden Treasury*:

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<sup>24</sup> The letter to ‘Dear Sir’, probably to the printer Richard Clay, is undated but most likely shortly after the publication of the *Golden Treasury* since Palgrave asks that the Queen’s copy be sent to him so that he may pass it on to Lord Granville, who ‘has promised to give it to her’.

<sup>25</sup> In a letter of 14 August 1861, as well as in three undated letters, but doubtless of that time, on the colour of the cover, the use and style of a prospectus, the shortening of the preface, and the omission of the Woolner vignette from the title.

<sup>26</sup> *Saturday Review*, xii:303 (August 1861), p. 175.

<sup>27</sup> James O. Hoge (ed.), *Lady Tennyson’s Journal* (Charlottesville, 1981), p. 152.

<sup>28</sup> A brief and sound appraisal is given by Kathleen Tillotson, ‘Palgrave’s *Golden Treasury* and Tennyson: Another Source’, *Tennyson Research Bulletin*, v:2 (1988), pp. 49–54.

Like the fabled fountain of the Azores. but with a more various power, the magic of this Art can confer on each period of life its appropriate blessing: on early years Experience, on maturity Calm, on age, Youthfulness. Poetry gives treasures 'more golden than gold', leading us in higher and healthier ways than those of the world, and interpreting to us the lessons of Nature.

Like the creation of poetry itself, hard, meticulous, and patient work was essential to the realization of such an anthology. Palgrave's correspondence with Macmillan on the subject is a model of how such an undertaking comes about, is shaped and modified, and published. Interesting in itself, that process is also revealing not only for behind-the-scenes information but also for personal traits. In the first of the letters to Macmillan in the Berg Collection in the New York Public Library, dated 4 January 1860, Palgrave demonstrates his role as curator and administrator (and later, in a letter of 24 January 1861, to make it contractual that 'no subtraction or addition to the text, and no illustrations be added without the Editor's consent'). Since his manuscript is nearing 'perfect readiness', he outlines the requirements for and problems of publication. Having taken Murray's eight-volume edition of Byron, 'a small octavo of a very pretty shape & size & type', as a model, he is able to 'reckon' that his book 'will come within 300 pages. In that Byron 9 4-line stanzas fill a page – & the page when not broken into stanzas holds about 42 lines.' Although thinking it best to wait for a personal meeting 'for settling the style of publication and the financial question', Palgrave defines his role further by bringing up the matter of copyright applications. Although 'hardly above 6 poems fall within probable copyright, as we exclude all living writers, for excellent reasons', Palgrave 'suppose[s] it will be best & most civil to ask *Longman* leave for the 5 we have from Moore, & 2 from Southey: *Murray*, for 6 or 8 from Byron; *Moxon*, for selections from S. Coleridge, Keats, Hood, Shelley, Wordsworth, C. Lamb & Hartley Coleridge. Scott I suppose is common property.' At this point Palgrave's manuscript is obviously not yet in 'perfect readiness'; the selection is not yet final, although 'A. Tennyson went over the whole lot with me – a ten days job, & accepts the dedication of the book to himself.' In fact in a letter of 21 November 1860 Palgrave admits that 'by the aid of friends & by working hard I have made great advance in forming the Lyrical Collection about which I spoke to you some time since. Until transcriptions are complete & the amount of contents ascertainable I suppose it wd. be premature to determine anything more definitely as to publication.' If the title of the work is not fixed, so too are the contents, for Palgrave asks Macmillan for the loan, not purchase, of '2d hand copies, the commonest possible' of Wordsworth, Campbell, Milton, Burns, Gray, Collins, Hartley Coleridge, Motherwell, Moore, Baillie, as well as suggestions of good collections of Scotch songs, of American poets, 'wish[ing] that no one whom I can overhaul shall go by default: however unlikely. Amongst such, I wd. look at [David Macbeth] Moir, James Montgomery, Mrs [Caroline] Norton, Miss [Adelaide Ann] Procter.' And once again he will review the whole with Tennyson at Christmas. And, as ever, he will require proofs of every part of the work, especially of the texts, for, as he was to write to Macmillan on 4 April [1861], 'I have made it a rule in every case to compare the proof line by line with the original print.'

Two months later the project is evidently so far advanced that Palgrave can concentrate on the details of the product. In letters of 24 January, 4 February, and [16 February 1861] he expresses concern about the paper, suggesting in the first that Macmillan try 'some good French or German paper [...] because they are thin & unsized, qualities which make a book portable & clear in impression; & because I fear an English paper, at once thin & firm, is not to be had.' In the second letter he thinks 'that the paper should be in tone about *halfway* between the piece sent, & pure white. It is now a decided buff – all one wants is a no-colour – a white subdued.' Ever meticulous, in his letter of 16 February Palgrave asks for a specimen of the paper before printing begins, for 'that on which the 1st proof is, is both much too yellow & highly glazed – & the effect of the glazing is to make it curiously inferior to the specimen done on unglazed.' With the look of the paper 'very satisfactory', Palgrave comments in a letter of 23 April on the three cloth samples, finding the green to be the



‘prettiest’. Palgrave was concerned as well with the layout of the page. For one thing, he was ‘not sure whether the *names* should not be in a very slightly smaller type – unless the neat size would be out of keeping with the ordinary type’; for another, Woolner agrees with him ‘that the pages will bear, & look all the better, for 2 lines more on each: & this will save at least 10 on the whole’ (4 February [1861]).

Of more interest because of their pertinence to the contents of the volume are Palgrave’s thoughts in these letters about the title, the selection, and the arrangement. He first refers to his work as his ‘Lyrical Collection’ (21 November 1860). It is only a few months later, in a letter of [16 February 1861], when advertising is imminent, that he names it ‘The Golden Treasury’<sup>29</sup> and recommends that in the subtitle (hitherto not mentioned) ‘a collection of’ be ‘perhaps omit[ted]’ so that it reads ‘the best Songs & Lyrical Poems in the English Language’. Further, as it turned out, ‘Selected and arranged’ is later expanded to ‘with Notes’. These modifications, along with recurrent suggestions for the improvement of the title page and repeated requests for proofs, came as late as June 1861, just a few weeks before publication. In a letter of 3 July, ‘suppos[ing]’ that Macmillan ‘will begin to have the book out by Saturday’, Palgrave seemed relieved that the title page finally ‘looks admirable’, adding with characteristic fastidiousness, ‘the only thing to report is that time enough could not be spend [*sic*] to [Charles Henry] Jeens [the engraver] to carry the surface of the figure rather further’. Palgrave’s relentless attention to the look and contents, to alteration and improvement, is a signal of his devotion to ‘finish’ achieved through flexibility and hard work. However much his very personal accomplishment, the work is a co-production, as it were, conceived and directed by him but unlikely without the interaction of advising friends, a willing and imaginative publisher, and a team of competent publishing house workers whom Palgrave seems to have known and addressed by name.

Palgrave was always alert to the problems of selection, committed to the ‘best’ but ever conscious of the representative. The division of the work into four books is chronological, an unavoidable imperative. The composition of each, however, is personal and professional. And Palgrave took occasion to justify it in a letter to Macmillan of [July 1861, no day is given]. It is worth quoting in full for itself and its fundamental importance in Palgrave’s disposition as anthologist.

My preface states the grounds on which all the Shakespeare songs he [J. M. Ludlow in a note to Macmillan] mentioned were excluded – they seemed to A. T. & to me either parts of the plays or fragments. Milton’s Cromwell & Vane sonnets to his wife – not up to the height of the theme: the final Kindness Sonnet *is* in – op 61 omitted as strictly *occasional* or ‘O fairest flower’ with admirable lines & many full of conceits – Jonson’s *See the chariot* by AT after long consideration for the same reason – Dibdin’s because they are much more *spirited* than poetical – two quite different things – Moore’s ‘Island’ ditto – his ‘Young hero sleeps’ as tinselly. White’s sonnet is the only one about which I don’t remember the reasons – for the admission of Gray & Collins is of course a case of *general* taste & judgment & cannot be argued, except by an expression of surprize that any poetical judge does not recognize them as fine poetry in a peculiar style. Probably if Mr. L. talked this over with AT he would find that it was possible to admire the 18th century whilst continuing to admire the 16th.

Being an ignorant man and hence or not knowing Mr L. by person or fame I send these hasty notes to show you that we acted deliberately – in fact I believe nothing by any *tolerable* writer even was excluded without a long debate & frequent adjournments for reconsideration in another mood of mind.

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<sup>29</sup> Some suggest the title may have been derived from Palgrave’s criticism of readers in 1860 for whom ‘a book is no more a treasure to be kept and studied and known by heart’. See his ‘On Readers in 1760 and 1860’, *Macmillan’s Magazine*, i:6 (April 1860), p. 488.

However random, these jottings underscore not merely the sincerity and seriousness of the selection and the attempt through continued deliberation and ‘long debate’ with others to overcome a temporal ‘mood of mind’ but also to distinguish kinds of poetic expression of authors and their time. Even the regard for ‘*general* taste & judgment’, which Palgrave would normally reject since his critical tenet is that taste is disputable, is here used to stress that consensus is the ultimate determinant. Apparent, however, is the fact that decisions are slippery, requiring in addition to a fine sensibility and a flexibility of judgment an agile pragmatism and stern decisiveness. Palgrave’s treasury, as his omissions and additions in the following editions demonstrate, may be golden but, like ‘best’, not without a molten quality. Much the same may be said of the arrangement. As set forth in his preface Palgrave’s intention of presenting ‘the most poetically-effective order’ may well apply to the chronological order and, as a vehicle of instruction, ‘reflect the natural growth and evolution of our Poetry’, but his attempt to arrange the poems, as an instrument of pleasure, according to ‘gradations of feeling or subject’, is as difficult to grasp as his conception of ‘best’. Palgrave’s assertions that his model has been ‘the development of the symphonies of Mozart and Beethoven, and nothing has been placed without careful consideration’ in an attempt to ‘present a certain unity, as episodes’ are doubtless sincere but more questionable than convincing. The questionable relationship to music aside, the arrangement, however meticulously achieved, may form an ‘episode’ but the poems themselves are too unlike in texture, admittedly ‘exhibit[ing] a wide range of style’, to illuminate gradations or development of feeling – even in the unlikely event that they were read consecutively. The changes in ‘mood of mind’ which Palgrave and his fellow readers considered in the selection<sup>30</sup> apply to the arrangement as well. How could the gradations of feeling or the desired unity of the first edition be said to be discernible or stable when there were changes in the various impressions and consequently in the second, third, and fourth editions? And, it must be remembered, Palgrave’s sensibility was inseparable from his response to discussion and acceptance of consensus. In a telling and not untypical response of 4 February [1861] to Macmillan he changed the order of the opening poems: ‘You will see’, he wrote, ‘that I have tried to follow your hint about the first poem – “Phoebus” is decidedly too learned a first word.’ This meant that the first poem, William Drummond of Hawthornden’s ‘Summons to Love’, which begins ‘Phoebus, arise!’ gave way to Thomas Nashe’s ‘Spring’ – these two and other titles supplied by Palgrave, as was his practice. Changes in the selection and arrangement, as well as textual changes and title variants, in subsequent impressions and editions cannot but affect the gradations of feeling.<sup>31</sup> It is tempting to conclude that what has been characterized as Palgrave’s ‘symphony’ is not so much his score as the interpretation of his various readers. But then again the readers cannot have the overview of a conductor, a situation fostered by the fact that Palgrave, but for a sincere and yet commercially effective dedication to Tennyson and a deliberately uninformative brief prefatory apologia,<sup>32</sup> thrusts the reader directly into the music, as it were, omitting even a table of contents and placing his summary of each of the books at the end of the volume.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> For their notes see British Library, Add. MS. 42126 and ‘Palgrave’s Notes’ in the *Golden Treasury*, ed. Christopher Ricks, Penguin Classics (Harmondsworth, 1991), pp. 470–512.

<sup>31</sup> For ‘significant textual changes’, see Nelson, pp. 184–202. Palgrave himself admits ‘after-gleanings’ in his prefaces to the later editions.

<sup>32</sup> In a letter to Macmillan of ‘Tuesday’ [August 1861] Palgrave somewhat diminished the preface, ‘written in too elaborate a manner’ for an envisioned cheaper edition, by announcing that he has ‘struck out the passages which appear to be ornamental’ and thereby having ‘one page to spare’. The day ‘Tuesday’ seems to have been supplied by a later hand.

<sup>33</sup> In a letter of [30 April 1861] Palgrave made it known that he had told [Richard] Clay [the printer] that the two final indexes ‘would be enough & that we might dispense with a table of contents at the beginning’. Even the small print for the names of the authors, thought by some commentators to clear the way for the reader, so to speak, was for Palgrave mainly a matter of design. ‘I am not sure whether the names should not be in a very slightly smaller type’, he wrote to Macmillan on 4 February [1861], ‘unless the neat size would be out of keeping with the ordinary type.’

The selection of the poems cannot be said to have been arbitrary. Palgrave listened to the advice of his friends. In a brief note to manuscript copy (British Library, Add. MS. 42126, f. 2) he is quite explicit in describing the process:

In putting the book together, all poems which appear at all available or likely were gone through, after my selection, by George Miller & Thos. Woolner, sometimes alone, perhaps oftener in courts of poetry held here or elsewhere. The mass thus diminished, but retaining all that near admission, were gone through by Alfr. Tennyson during two days at Xmas 60 at Farringford. He read almost everything thrice over generally aloud to me. The book as it stands fairly reflects his taste, as his opinion was the final verdict: but so severe & strict was his judgment, that if the scheme of the book had been his, it wd probably have been less.

Still, there can be little doubt that the primary and ultimate selection was basically Palgrave's. In the same note he confides diplomatically: 'Some few poems were added after Tennyson's recension: but about most I knew that he wd have approved.' Furthermore, it can be traced to his critical writings. Practically simultaneously with the evolution of the *Golden Treasury* Palgrave was at work on a two-part review-article of Bell's Annotated Series of British Poets, a sweeping outline of English poetry from Chaucer to the present day,<sup>34</sup> the seeds of which were already evident in his earlier critical writings. What it makes clear in connection with the *Golden Treasury* is Palgrave's comfortable knowledge of a large body of poems, his critical evaluation of their intrinsic nature and relative worth, and the 'true method' of organizing literature. For one thing, Palgrave's concentration on songs and lyrical poems is not simply a matter of economics, of fitting as many poems as possible into his little volume: he did include longish poems, such as Milton's 'Il Penseroso' and Wordsworth's 'Ode on Intimations of Immortality'. Nor can their selection be firmly based on their adherence to so vaguely formulated a definition as Palgrave's 'Lyrical has been here held essentially to imply that each Poem shall turn on some single thought, feeling, or situation', nor on his following negative consequence: the exclusion of narrative, descriptive, and didactic poems, with rare exceptions humorous poetry, and even blank verse and the ten-syllable couplet, with all pieces markedly dramatic. Rather, it derives from his almost equally oracular belief, formulated for his students at Kneller Hall almost a decade earlier in his house journal, the two-part 'Method of Lectures on English Literature':<sup>35</sup> that 'it is not the poet who creates the landscape – nor yet the landscape that gives birth to the Poet: – it is the union and synthesis [...] between that which is without us and that which is within us: – between the natural mind and the mind of nature – that the Poet's creation is evolved.'<sup>36</sup> Rather than accepting the absolute dominance of a historico-chronological orientation, Palgrave envisioned and evaluated poems, as he had demonstrated in his comparison of poems on Spring by Surrey and Wordsworth, in terms of the way 'individual passion disappears, and the mind of the poet [...] draws a picture in which the simplest and closest delineation of the scene is connected with a moral embracing all humankind.'<sup>37</sup> It followed that in 'essential characteristics' Palgrave found it 'clear that a wider interval separates Wordsworth and Keats, Shelley and Byron, from Spenser and his contemporaries, than lies

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<sup>34</sup> 'The Growth of English Poetry', *Quarterly Review*, cx:220 (October 1861), pp. 435-59, and 'English Poetry from Dryden to Cowper', *Quarterly Review*, cxii:222 (July 1862), pp. 146-79.

<sup>35</sup> *Educational Expositor*, i (May 1853), pp. 119-22 and (June 1853), pp. 176-80.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 121.

<sup>37</sup> 'Growth of English Poetry', p. 448.



between them and the so-called artificial poets of the eighteenth century'. From this viewpoint and from the aim of giving pleasure rather than instruction from, as it were, emotionally and intellectually graspable entities, the kinds of poems Palgrave excluded are not surprising, nor is the inclusion of those which are perceived to be natural or unself-conscious, like songs and ballads, and the priority given to poems of the nineteenth century and those which approximate, each in its own way, the simplicity and purity of Greek verse, which Palgrave exalts. Still, it is hard to deny that Palgrave's selection, so varied in subject and texture, and so very personal in appraisal, cannot be easily derived from his stated definition and intention. Yet despite its dubious circularity it is hard to question the validity of his assertion that 'the golden rule [is] that the first duty of a selection is to be *select*.'<sup>38</sup>

Not to be overlooked, however, is the relationship between the selection and the prevailing heritage of Palgrave's own time. Although he believed it differed from others in its attempt to include 'none but the best' lyrical poems and songs 'in our language', his choice was nevertheless restricted. No collection of English poetry could be without such pillars as Shakespeare and Milton, Dryden and Pope, Shelley and Wordsworth. And hardly any collection, whatever its declared theme, could ever be without a historico-chronological framework. That was the premise of Palgrave's critical survey of English poetry and indeed of the cultural perspective of his time. Striking is an apparent consensus in the selection between Palgrave and his main competitor Allingham. Their collections have fifty-one titles in common, in percentage magnified by the fact that *Nightingale Valley* contains only 211 titles of which sixty are by the living poets excluded from the *Golden Treasury*. Palgrave was, of course, aware of Allingham's anthology, and admitted to having made use of it in one instance. But it is more likely that the overlapping was the natural consequence of cultural consensus rather than commercial competition. What anthology of representative English lyrics and songs, be it of the 'best' or the 'choicest', could do without the works and the historical framework they inherited? Allingham trumped Palgrave, as it were, by adding 'from the Time of Shakespeare to the Present Day' to the title of his edition of 1862, very likely in answer to Palgrave's literary-historical summaries of each of the centuries from which his poems were chosen. Furthermore, both works mirrored the taste of the times in the weighted distribution of the poems within this framework. The contours of the *Golden Treasury* are well defined: Shakespeare is represented by thirty-three poems, followed by Drummond by seven, and seventeen poets by one each; in Book II Milton by eleven, Herrick by seven, Dryden by two, and ten poets by one each; in Book III Burns by eleven, Gray by eight, and sixteen poets (including Pope) by one each; and in Book IV Wordsworth by forty-one, Shelley by twenty-two, and only three poets by one each.<sup>39</sup> More interesting perhaps is the weighting of the selection in both anthologies in favour of the nineteenth century: the fourth book of the first edition of the *Golden Treasury*, consisting of poems 'with few exceptions composed during the first thirty years of the nineteenth century' (p. 310), accounts for 122 of 288 poems and 242 pages of the volume's 307. In *Nightingale Valley*, sixty of the 211 titles are by living poets; eighteen of the remaining poets died in the nineteenth century. Telling too is the absence in both anthologies of the metaphysical poets, notably John Donne, and the relatively slight representation of Elizabethan poetry. Even the similarity of intention – in *Nightingale Valley* 'simply to delight the lover of poetry', in the *Golden Treasury* 'to offer those who love Poetry so well nothing not already known and valued' – may be regarded as a shared inflection of contemporary values. Both Palgrave and Allingham were poets, and yet as editors were conscious of the fact that pleasure required

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<sup>38</sup> In a letter to Lord Houghton of 31 January 1867 (Trinity College Cambridge, Houghton 230:22) Palgrave criticized Frederick Locker for having 'constantly lost sight of the golden rule' in his collection *Lyra Elegantiarum*.

<sup>39</sup> For the distribution according to all the poets in each of the four editions, see Nelson, pp. 198–202.

some assistance: both supplied commentary, glossarial, and biographical notes, comme il faut.

There were differences, to be sure. Both poet-editors had personal favourites, and both were conscious of the pressures of competition and the need for novelty. Allingham included living authors, himself among them, a few *American* poets, and numerous women. Restricted by the unavailability of Tennyson's works and concerned about other copyright matters, Palgrave had asked Macmillan in the early stages for 'any good & tolerably extensive selections from American poets if such exists', having 'gone through Poe, Longfellow, Bryant, & Lowell: But I see Mrs Brooke [Maria Gowen Brooks], [Richard Henry] Dana [Sr.], [John] Pierpoint & others mentioned with some degree of praise' and from women and lesser known poets as well.<sup>40</sup> Both, of course, differed in their weighting of poets. Palgrave's favourite was Wordsworth with forty-one poems; Allingham allotted him eighteen. Allingham included four poems by Blake, who was accorded the longest biographical note (pp. 273-6) of the collection; Blake was not included by Palgrave, who admired his art work but only in the second edition of 1884 added one of his poems and in the third (1890) three more. Such differences are to be expected, of course, and a further comparison of the selections would contribute to a profile of both.

But what defines them perhaps more clearly is the arrangement of the selections, the aspect which was most prominent in the reviews of the *Golden Treasury*. Both attempt to represent four centuries of the best or choicest English poetry. Both limit the size of their specimens as well as their nature: short and lyrical are elements of focus and variety, which in turn are concessions to the intelligence and imagination of even Palgrave's target audience, the 'fittest', and certainly to commercial potential, as do the existence of commentary notes and the absence of a textual apparatus or for that matter much concern about textual veracity. And yet they differ drastically. Allingham makes no attempt at a historico-chronological arrangement. Nor does there seem to be any perceptible logic in the arrangement. The poems just flow. Allingham's is a free and uncomplicated anthology, very much in tune with his gushing idolization of poetry and his conviction that '*How* Poetry manages to evince itself in material form would be hard or impossible to explain; even if possible, still doubtless the secrets ought to be kept, like those of love' (p. vii). Palgrave, surprisingly or not, is at once more conservative and more adventurous. He insists on a historico-chronological four-part outer structure, but denies it within each part, relying instead on gradations of an emotional thought or expression. He does little to explain, particularize, or generalize, as he does so avidly in his literary and art criticism. Perhaps because he cannot, and justifies his silent arrangement by hoping that the 'fittest' will catch the melody and so go on to comprehend the symphony, like Mozart, who having learned that the score of one of his pieces had gone astray, remembered the opening melody and then simply and quickly again wrote what followed naturally, the whole symphony. There is of course an attraction in the deep elusive promise of Palgrave's intent. Its allure is irresistible. Art is like that.

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It did not take long for Palgrave's 'little Collection' to move from bestseller to model. In the preface of his popular *Household Book of English Poetry* (1868) Richard Chenevix Trench felt obliged to justify his collection, 'long laid aside [...] on the ground that there was no place

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<sup>38</sup> In a letter of 21 November 1860. It is a measure of Palgrave's flexible taste that he included four women poets despite the doubts about women's capacity for poetry he expressed in a two-part article 'Women and the Fine Arts', *Macmillan's Magazine*, xii:69 (June 1865), pp. 118-27, and xii:69 (July 1865), pp. 209-21, as well as of his firmness in excluding, say, so popular a poetess as Felicia Hemans.

for one who should come after' the Palgrave, not by challenging it but by offering 'so different a scheme and plan from his' (p. v).<sup>41</sup> Ten years after the publication of the *Golden Treasury* the *Times*, in a review of Alexander Mackay's *A Thousand and One Gems of English Poetry*,<sup>42</sup> finding fault with the selection and pointing out the need for 'a mind of catholic taste and of critical faculty true and keen, a mind not less a master of prose expression than acute and subtle in poetic perception', mentions the *Golden Treasury* as coming 'near to our ideal of a collection of this sort'. Some thirty-five years later, by which time the *Golden Treasury* had gone through editions of 1861, 1884, 1890, and 1891, it had become something resembling an institution. 'A book of this kind, did it contain no single word of criticism, is throughout, in the highest sense, critical, and would in itself serve as a trustworthy guide to the poetical judgments of the period [...] it may safely be said that this is the first English book in which the standards set up, I do not say are secure, but have at least good prospect of enduring respect.'<sup>43</sup> Still, 'the history of criticism, we have been told, is a "chronicle of reversed judgments"', nor is the charge altogether without foundation.' What follows and is to mark the criticism of anthologies to this day is a noting of the many inclusions and omissions of poets and poems (and of the judgments in the notes) and thus a questioning of the selection, indeed of selection itself. The reviewer himself has consensual favourites. 'It was [...] to many readers of poetry, a source of wonder why Blake should have been deemed unworthy to rank with the immortals.'<sup>44</sup> He also has personal preferences: 'two great names are absent; we miss Massinger and Ford.'<sup>45</sup> And his assessment is not restricted to individual poems and poets, but to the imbalance of representation in the fourth book: 'That Shakespeare, Milton, and Coleridge taken together should occupy less space than Wordsworth is at first startling, and consideration, though it may lessen, does not remove the sense of extreme disproportion.'<sup>46</sup> What may be startling too in the face of the emphasis on change and instability is the conclusion. 'Mr. Palgrave must be regarded as a national benefactor, for he has supplied us with the best guide books to the characteristics of classic art [...] Upon the impracticable material of every age, changing with every age, upon the crude metal to be reduced to form, the classic artists impress the seal of individual minds under the guidance of the imperious idea of beauty that is not individual but universal; and the coinage is the enduring literature of the world.'<sup>47</sup> In other words, the unfinished symphony is unfinishable and thus immortal.

The question of finality is taken up again in 1896 in an unsigned article 'An Authority on Poetical Criticism'.<sup>48</sup> Once again the focus is on the selection, on the changes of 'considerable importance' over the past thirty-five years which demonstrate how the 'little volume' 'influenced taste, and how taste has contrived to influence it'.<sup>49</sup> Despite the

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<sup>41</sup> Interestingly, Palgrave restrained from responding to Trench, the Archbishop of Dublin, 'because', as he wrote to Macmillan on 6 June 1868 (British Library, Add. MS. 54977, ff. 54-55), 'despite his pains & knowledge, he seems to me to have made it a terribly weighty & didactic selection, & to have given new things without showing cause: Nor can I find any *principle* or *method* in the book.'

<sup>42</sup> 27251 (20 December 1871), p. 4.

<sup>43</sup> W. Macneile Dixon, 'Finality in Literary Judgment', *Westminster Review*, cxliiii:4 (January 1895), p. 401.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 406.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 408.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 410.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 411.

<sup>48</sup> *Saturday Review*, lxxxii:2134 (September 1896), pp. 311-13.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 312.

enumeration of additions and omissions – in the last edition there were ‘more than fifty poems which did not appear in 1861, and several which were printed then are now omitted’<sup>50</sup> – there is no doubt in the author’s mind that ‘the authority exercised by the book has been greater than that of any single commentary or critical disquisition’ because of Palgrave’s ‘extreme’ skill and taste in the original selection and the subsequent polishing in later ones: ‘almost everything on which he can lay his hand touches upon the verge of perfection.’<sup>51</sup> And, in an apparently converse but in reality complementary way, Palgrave’s ‘acute’ response to the events and taste of his day – like his inclusion of Thomas Campion after the ‘rediscovery of exquisite things lost among obscure Elizabethans’ (by A. H. Bullen, in this instance) or his enhanced recognition of Blake (after the work of Alexander Gilchrist and Rossetti) – is a sign of his devotion to artistic ‘finish’, if not perfection. Despite some reservations about the selection, the *Saturday Review*’s admiration for Palgrave’s ever-evolving accomplishment is so profound – ‘Who shall dare to estimate how valuable have been the splendour and purity of its contents in holding up the tradition of a grand style in English poetry?’<sup>52</sup> – that he proposes a monument. A year before the ailing Palgrave’s death, he concludes: ‘We hope that neither Mr. Palgrave nor his publishers will be persuaded to make many further changes in their little classic. The effect of such alteration can but be to weaken a most useful, although unobtrusive, authority in poetical criticism.’<sup>53</sup>

The monument’s immortality and authority were, however, frozen in time. Reprints of the *Golden Treasury* are mainly commemorative and of the first edition. The main limitation was not of the selection of individual poems or even of Palgrave’s taste and judgment. He always asserted the selection was personal.<sup>54</sup> And he did respond over the years to change that never denied certain resulting imbalances. It was that anthologies, the flower gatherings themselves, must be continuously weeded, reseeded, and nurtured. Only poetry is in essence stable. And so in the development of the treasury it was not so much a matter of selection and arrangement as of addition. With addition, the net and even the gross shrinking of the past was inevitable. The core of Palgrave’s treasury remained. What followed was a series of cloned titles with the replicated original Palgrave of 1861 plus a fifth book by another editor and then a sixth book by still another until such time as the integrity and relevance of the original were severely diminished. The increase in the number of modern or contemporary

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid. The actual number is greater. For an exact listing of all the additions and omissions in all the editions, including textual variants and titles, see Nelson, pp. 184–202. Palgrave was conscientious but also fairly casual about changes, as some of his comments illustrate. In connection with his incorporating additional poems at the end of Book II, Palgrave wrote to George Craik of Macmillan’s on 20 October 1890 (BL, Add. MS. 54977, ff. 214–15), ‘It was Tennyson who rather suggested that insertion in chronological order would break up the present work of the book & numeration. But I am sure the *numbers* are of no practical use except for the Index, & hence lean to insertion. There are also 3 or 4 poems which I think might be silently added.’ He also suggested large type ‘for the benefit of eyes no longer young’. In a letter of 10 December 1890 (BL, Add. MS. 54977, ff. 220–1) he wrote to Craik that he ‘reckon[ed] to have added 31 pieces, quite brief, to the edition of 1883–4, which added 14 to the original book. But I have silently omitted 6.’ And on 14 May 1891 (BL, Add. MS. 54977, ff. 227–8) he concluded: ‘You will, I suppose, advertise it as *second & enlarged*: which it now truly is, to my best ability, & I believe, to its considerable improvement.’ Earlier, in the letter of 10 December 1890, he thought that in advertising it would be ‘best not to advertise it as second & slightly enlarged [...] lest this should impede the present small edition.’

<sup>51</sup> *Saturday Review*, lxxxii:2134 (September 1896), p. 312.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 313.

<sup>54</sup> One seldom noticed result was his innovative openness to anonymous lyrics, the number of which grew from twelve in 1861 to twenty-one in 1891; yet it is noticeable that he was making some concessions to popular taste when dealing with works by some poets of the nineteenth century, such as Campbell, Moore, or Hood.

poems dwarfed the original, resulting in a protuberance which creates a different critical perspective and authority. What has emerged over the years, and is still perpetuated today, is a kind of mongrel Palgrave – how else to describe the 650,000 copies that have been printed by the mid-twentieth century? – a prototype he himself may have unintentionally initiated. In September 1897, a month before his death, he published the *Golden Treasury: Second Series*, an addition of 190 poems. It was perhaps a last attempt to realize his unfulfilled ‘wish’, as he wrote to George Craik of Macmillan’s on 26 October 1890 (BL, Add. MS. 54977, ff. 216–17) ‘to add a 5th book, which would be as long as the 4th, & to allot *two* to the 19th century: meant to contain Arnold, Browning & Tennyson if I overlive him. But this book I should probably only have ready for publication after my death.’ Like its predecessors, it maintained the chronological outer structure, starting where the first edition of 1861 had left off, in 1850, and continuing with poems written by poets who had died since then and even including five who were still alive – the Duke of Argyll (1835–1900), Gerald Massey (1828–1907), Lewis Morris (1833–1907), Frederick Tennyson (1807–1898), and Aubrey de Vere (1814–1902) – while making a special point in his preface of ‘deeply regret[ting]’ not being ‘able to adorn [his] pages with examples of Mr. A. C. Swinburne’s brilliant lyrical gift’ (p. xii).<sup>55</sup> He was thus able to include those he admired greatly, among them William Barnes, Robert Browning, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, A. H. Clough, Arthur O’Shaughnessy, Coventry Patmore, Christina Rossetti, D. G. Rossetti, and, at last and voluminously, Tennyson. Once again, the dedication is to Tennyson, albeit ‘sadly and affectionately’, to the memory of one ‘by whom the first series of the golden treasury was kindly supervised’. Even its vignette, ‘The Muse and Her Genius’, after Raphael, was the one he would have used for the *Golden Treasury* if, as he wrote to Macmillan on 23 April 1861, it ‘were brought out at my expense’. And there is a certain reminiscence of the *Golden Treasury* in the framing arrangement: from a joyous opening poem, O’Shaughnessy’s ‘Ode’ celebrating poets –

We are the music makers,  
And we are the dreamers of dreams –

to a mournful last, Tennyson’s ‘Break, Break, Break’ –

But O for the touch of a vanish’d hand,  
And the sound of a voice that is still!

And in its bundling of what Palgrave called poems of cognate character, as, for example, in the cluster of poems (clxxxvi–cxc) by O’Shaughnessy, Barnes, and Tennyson: ‘Love after Death’, ‘Readen ov a Head-Stowne’, ‘Plorata Veris Lachrymis’, ‘In the Valley of Caunteretz’, and ‘Break, Break, Break’.

Yet the new collection stands by itself, isolated from its parent, a complement rather than an organic part of the *Treasury*. As Palgrave admitted in his preface, his ‘first wish [was] to include in the same volume the later risen of our stars’, but ‘this plan proved impossible’. That impossibility emanated from his sensibility. How could he assimilate the poetry of the second half of the nineteenth century into the more subtle internal arrangement of the

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<sup>55</sup> In a letter to Macmillan of 4 July 1896 (BL, Add. MS. 54977, ff. 253–4) Palgrave is puzzled that Swinburne has not answered a request for permission to include his poems, especially since he has ‘never written or published a word about him, & whenever we met – years ago now – he was always *perfectly* friendly to me.’ One possible reason may be derived from a letter of Swinburne to Theodore Watts on 10 August 1891: ‘I have added and added points on points (mostly satirical, though some of them “quite other”) to my paper on Social Verse, till it is now a perfect porcupine of an article. It has been my Christian wish and aim to give as much pain and offence as possible to fools and quacks of divers colours – especially in Oxonicular or (as D. G. Rossetti might have said) Cohenian quarters.’ In Cecil Lang (ed.), *The Swinburne Letters* (New Haven, 1962), vol. vi: 1890–1909, p. 16.



*Treasury* when he sensed that from the ‘decided preference for Lyrical poetry [...] an impulse traceable in large measure to the increasingly *subjective* temper of the age [...] there] followed a vast extension in length of our lyrics: their work is apt to be less concentrated than that of their best predecessors [...] whilst, concurrently, they have at the same time often taken a dramatic character, rarely to be found before.’ Therefore Palgrave abandoned the principle of gathering the best lyrics in favour of a selection from the ‘finest work of our greater Victorian poets’, hoping to ‘make the specimens characteristic of each writer’s genius’, while admitting that a ‘certain monotony of character’ is inevitable in ‘representing only the spirit of less than a single century’. Palgrave’s greatest problem was his awareness of the difficulty of selecting poems which had not been subject to the ‘verdict of Time’ – a problem which he attempted to solve by ‘spreading the choice over three or four years during which the poets have been searched and read over, and the results noted at many months’ interval.’ Yet he cannot deny a ‘personal element’ and attempts to preempt criticism by agreeing with it: ‘Varieties in taste, often deeply rooted and strenuously held, will lead every reader to condemn me for omissions and inclusions: inevitably, and rightly.’

He was right. The critical response was immediate and devastating. Two reviews, both dated 23 October 1897,<sup>56</sup> joined in attacking Palgrave’s work on the same grounds: ‘Its sins of omission and of commission alike are mortal and past blotting out.’<sup>57</sup> As if written by the same pen, both listed virtually the same grave commissions and omissions. Most important they turned Palgrave’s own admission of the difficulty of selection against him. ‘It were’, wrote Palgrave in his preface, ‘presumption if we attempted with the microscope of criticism to classify these growths, or to decide whether they belong to the children’s “Adonis Garden” of cut flowers, or the true “immortal amaranth”.’ Against this apologia both critics cried out in unison: the first, ‘But this is precisely the “presumption” on which the very existence of the anthologist depends. He is there to make the choice’;<sup>58</sup> the second, the collection is ‘incomplete, ill balanced, and wanting in critical authority’.<sup>59</sup> Both, however, do not consider the fact that in limiting his selection in the original *Golden Treasury* to poets already dead Palgrave benefited from the consensual approval that the passage of time and the temper of the time confer. Without these parameters no anthologist can be an infallible judge of what was: Palgrave’s missteps and his fawning favouritism of friends are not to be denied. Nor with them can an anthologist be a faultless judge of what is, much less a perfect prophet of what will be.

The reviews – and perhaps also the death of Palgrave a day after their appearance – had an impact. Although it was reprinted twice in November 1897 and again in 1898, the Second Series was ignored in further reprints of the *Golden Treasury*, be they of the original or the revised and enlarged editions. When the World’s Classics version of the *Golden Treasury* ‘with additional poems’ appeared in 1907 and after numerous reprints followed with a new edition in 1914, it reprinted the four books containing the 288 poems of the first edition of 1861 and, ignoring the fifty-two Palgrave had added by the time of the fourth edition of 1891, tacked on 109 poems representing the latter half of the nineteenth century, dating from Walter Savage Landor, who died in 1864, to William Ernest Henley, who died in 1903, and including such American poets as William Cullen Bryant, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and Walt Whitman. This would seem to be a response to the criticism of Palgrave’s sin of omission. And its deletion of eighteen poets – among them those singled out by the *Academy* and the *Athenaeum*: the Duke of Argyll, Gerald Massey, Lewis Morris, Frederick Tennyson, Aubrey de Vere, and Richard Wilton – was doubtless a response to his sin of commission. Of the thirty-eight poets represented in the Second Series twenty find a place, but in all but two poets the selection and number of poems for each differs. And its addition of poems by such as

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<sup>56</sup> *Academy*, lii:1329, pp. 317–18, and *Athenaeum*, 3652, p. 555.

<sup>57</sup> *Academy*, p. 317.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> *Athenaeum*, p. 555.

William Aytour, George Eliot, Thomas Babington Macaulay, Charles Mackay, Francis Sylvester Mahony, and James Clarence Mangan, a further sign of the essential and desirable ‘presumption’ of an anthologist, does not absolve Palgrave, of course. But it does cast a cloud over the single-minded and in the long run pointless emphasis on selection as the dominant if not the sole criterion of evaluation, as well as overlooking such essentials as Palgrave’s conception of lyric and his particular mode of shaping his ‘symphony’.

Very soon the promise of Palgrave’s title was modified and its authority challenged. Also in the same year, 1914, while the *Golden Treasury* was very much alive and thriving, Everyman’s Library published *The New Golden Treasury of Songs and Lyrics* described as ‘a companion book to the old *Golden Treasury*, ranging farther back in time and farther forward, and adding many poets who have enriched the lyric tongue, omitted in those pages.’ ‘New’ yes, ‘best’ no longer prescriptive, and using Palgrave’s chronological frame and adding, audaciously aping Palgrave’s pattern, books fifth and sixth, but not bound by his contents. In 1922 Macmillan published in the Golden Treasury Series *The Golden Treasury [...] With a Supplementary Fifth Book, Selected, Arranged, and Annotated by Laurence Binyon*, like Palgrave a poet and art expert. Its subtitle not unambiguously announcing ‘Golden’ or ‘best’, it reprinted Palgrave’s fourth edition of 1891 and added 110 to his 338 poems, all from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and including fifteen poets who had died in the twentieth century and five – Robert Bridges, Thomas Hardy, Rudyard Kipling, John Masefield, and Henry Newbolt – who were still living, but omitting American and Overseas Dominions poets for lack of space.<sup>60</sup> In the manner of Palgrave it adds a ‘Summary of Book Fifth’, explaining that ‘this division embraces the whole of the Victorian era and a little more’, as well as following notes. And as it must be in the fluid career of anthologies it restores from the Second Series two poets, John Clare and Herbert Trench, who were deleted in the World’s Classics version, while at the same time retaining only three poets, Edward Fitzgerald, James Clarence Mangan, and William Morris, of the thirteen introduced in the World’s Classics version. As to be expected, it does not necessarily use the same poems by the restored poets. Nor does it attempt to make explicit the principles which governed the arrangement. In 1954 Collins published in its School Classics *The Golden Treasury [...] with an Introduction and Additional Poems Selected and Arranged by C. Day Lewis*, like Palgrave a poet (later to be poet laureate) and Professor of Poetry at Oxford, again a reprint of Palgrave’s first edition of 1861 to which it through-numbered 229 additional poems for a grand total of 449. It retained Palgrave’s original four summaries, omitting a summary but adding notes to the additional poems. True to the practice of anthologies, it restores Aubrey de Vere from the Second Series, while retaining only Clare, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Fitzgerald, and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow from the World’s Classics, but not necessarily using the same poems. And while accepting that ‘the *Golden Treasury* commends itself, not only by the formal perfection, and therefore the durability, of the work it presents, but also by its arrangement’, and admiring Palgrave’s ‘rare’, ‘special’, ‘creative’ talent of ‘dispos[ing] poems of many different writers in such a way that each poem gains from its context and throws light upon those around it’,<sup>61</sup> C. Day Lewis offers no description of his arrangement, choosing instead to single out those poets he has included who were eligible for the first edition – William Blake, Thomas Lowell Beddoes, Emily Brontë, George Darley, and Edgar Allen Poe – to assert that his selection is based on ‘two principles only – that the poems should be lyrical, and that they should be good’<sup>62</sup> – and in a gallant confession with regard to the ‘best’ in the original title which is applicable to his forerunners and successors, that ‘few present-day anthologists, certainly not the compiler of the supplement in this new edition, would dare to make such a claim’.<sup>63</sup> In a further instance, after adding its own fifth book in

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<sup>60</sup> The supplement was apparently popular enough to be published by itself in 1928 with notes by J. H. Fowler.

<sup>61</sup> Lewis, p. 15.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

1964, the Oxford University Press went on to publish a sixth in 1994 with the original Palgrave title in full, adding 'Updated by John Press', like Palgrave a minor poet and literary critic, well-nigh submerging Palgrave's originally chosen seventy-five poets among 231, and arranging the updated selection according to the date of birth of the poets. Nothing is said of the principles of selection other than a back-cover puff, 'faithful to the spirit of the original'.

And so it went and so it goes today, 150 years after its first appearance. As time passes and the number of new, added, supplemented or updated versions increases, so the impact of Palgrave's own contribution decreases. His particular and existential principles of selection and arrangement no longer apply. Carried along by the tide of time, its selection remains benevolently unchallenged; 'best' becomes simply an element of the adopted title. Its 'poetically-effective' arrangement, mercifully considered inimitable or helplessly just ignored, gives way to more neutral or undefinable systems. Never conceived of as fixed or final, Palgrave's own *Golden Treasury* has become a kind of sunken treasure, a frozen relic of literary history, a historical curiosity whose death knell, reverberating in countless commemorative and supplemented reprints, rings true and loud in the announcement in 2011 of the publication of a facsimile among a series of Historical Print Editions, an infinitesimal drop in a veritable tsunami of 60,000 digitized files of nineteenth-century British Library books mounted on Amazon and other book-selling websites who have a non-exclusive opportunity to sell print-on-demand copies. That the third edition of 1890 of the four was chosen is perhaps as naive or as ironical as the observation of the Wikipedia that 'there is no definitive version of this popular classic'. Why should there be? The scholarly apparatus and information exist. Nelson provides bibliographical descriptions of the four editions, significant textual changes, title variants of the poems, contents, additions and omissions, editorial errors, errors in chronology, and sources.<sup>64</sup> But an edition so derived would not rescue the time-bound work, revive its impact or stimulate its influence. Nor would Christopher Ricks's meshing of all four editions into a single conflated text, interesting as it may be, for it is a rendition of what never was intended and never existed. It reflects change and evolution but hardly the stability that has come to be called the Palgrave. For the true animus, the perpetual influence, of Palgrave's *Golden Treasury* may not be so much in the selection and arrangement as in the uncompromising recognition of the importance of poetry. It took poetry seriously, understood its cultural implications, and became a rallying point for poets, publishers, and teachers in its dissemination. It was not the first anthology but it may have been the first of such self-confidence as to not only address and satisfy the 'fittest' but, on the tide of surging national identity and burgeoning world power, also to attract and persuade those to be made fit for poetry. One jewel in the crown of Victorian enterprise and expanse, it became a myth in an age of myth, its influence more profound than the thing itself.

The universal popular acclaim of the *Golden Treasury* had its somewhat less enthusiastic counterpart in the 150 years since its publication. As to be expected of anthologies, the main response has been to the matter of additions and omissions, a continuing litany of personal preferences and inflections of the kind found in the early 'mild quarrel' of the reviewer in the Scotsman: 'too much of the "Il Penseroso," and too little of the "L'Allegro"', or, as in the case of the *Treasury of Sacred Poetry*, 'too much Newman or too much Keble'.<sup>65</sup> Less public, so to speak, and relatively late have been scholarly investigations of its evolution from earlier types of collections, such as 'Golden Treasures: Lyrics and Anthologies'<sup>66</sup> or with its role in the development of anthologies of poetry in the Victorian period.<sup>67</sup> Still others have

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<sup>64</sup> See Appendices A-F.

<sup>65</sup> Gwenllian F. Palgrave, *Francis Turner Palgrave: His Journals and Memories of His Life* (London, 1899), p. 212.

<sup>66</sup> <[freedownload.is/pdf/golden-treasures-lyrics-and-anthologies-1180661.html](http://freedownload.is/pdf/golden-treasures-lyrics-and-anthologies-1180661.html)>, chapter 3.

<sup>67</sup> Sabine Haass, *Gedichtsanthologien der viktorianischen Zeit: Eine buchgeschichtliche Untersuchung zum Wandel des literarischen Geschmacks* (Nürnberg, 1986).

dealt with its 'story' or 'making', notably Nelson<sup>68</sup> and Ricks,<sup>69</sup> and with its make-up, such as Colin J. Horne<sup>70</sup> and, more expansively, Christopher Clausen.<sup>71</sup> Others have focused on its biographical elements, on the role of Tennyson, on the nature of the selections, and on their arrangement; these and other peripheral ones, such as women in anthologies and Thomas Hardy's copy, conveniently available in *Victorian Poetry*, xxxvii:2 (Summer 1999), devoted entirely to Palgrave. None of its contributors, however, seem to have made use of the only full-length study of the *Golden Treasury*, Nelson's dissertation of 1985. Varyingly explicit or simply implicit in all are the cultural features and implications of so 'typical' a Victorian work. An explicit and representative example of this increasingly practised approach is Klaus Peter Müller's 'Victorian Values and Cultural Contexts in Francis Turner Palgrave's *The Golden Treasury*'.<sup>72</sup>

Whatever the discussion or opinion, there seems to be an overall respect for Palgrave's work. The original edition of 1861 has been reprinted commemoratively: in 2000 to mark the launch of the Palgrave imprint and in 2011 to celebrate its 150th birthday, each with a foreword by a poet laureate; it has been accorded a website.<sup>73</sup> Nevertheless it has been accompanied by certain and pointed reservations which go beyond the limitations of his anthology and the view of contemporary poetry he made explicit in a letter to Gladstone of 1 October 1875:

My list of poems by our contemporaries is sadly short [...] This paucity [...] is due to what, in one word, I should call the morbid character of recent poetry. Health and motion, animated and simple narrative; thoughts at once plain and high: these qualities it almost wants [...] Even in M. Arnold and Clough, who in some ways to me seem more truly gifted, the 'subjective' vein prevails everywhere. Shelley, in contrast with Scott and Byron, has this character; but, compared with our poets since Tennyson, he belongs to a healthier world. But what a chasm between all of these and Homer!<sup>74</sup>

Crediting Palgrave with mirroring Victorian taste is not without a pinch of sneering toleration. Although granting that '*The Golden Treasury* still seems a window left open on the Victorian mind', it is described by the same critic as 'a great stuffed heirloom chair nobody's life has room for anymore'.<sup>75</sup> What is meant, of course, is not simply that modernist poetry and thought have made it 'time to replace that doddard Palgrave'<sup>76</sup> with a new anthology but rather, and ironically, that Palgrave, held to be an elitist, has to be replaced by a still more elitist view of poetry. Palgrave's initial omission of John Donne is the commission of poetic sin, unpardonable. What is even more grave is not the sin of the man but the sin of the form. It is anthology per se, the posies for the public and snacks for students, which is inimical to poets and poetry. That cultural conflict is, however, still another story.

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<sup>68</sup> Pp. 103-70.

<sup>69</sup> Pp. 436-50.

<sup>70</sup> 'Palgrave's *Golden Treasury*', *English Studies*, n.s., xi (1949), pp. 54-63.

<sup>71</sup> 'The Palgrave Version', *Georgia Review*, xxxiv (1980), pp. 273-89.

<sup>72</sup> In Barbara Korte, Ralf Schneider and Stefanie Lethbridge (eds.), *Anthologies of British Poetry: Critical Perspectives from Literary and Cultural Studies* (Amsterdam, 2000), pp. 125-46. In this connection it may be well to mention the online 'Index Britischer Lyrikanthologien 1557-2007' <<http://ibl.ub.uni-freiburg.de/ibl.pl?kat=&cmd=&sf=1&lang=de>>, which makes available and searchable the contents of ninety-one anthologies.

<sup>73</sup> [www.palgrave.com/goldentreasury](http://www.palgrave.com/goldentreasury).

<sup>74</sup> Quoted in Gwenllian F. Palgrave, *Francis Turner Palgrave*, p. 143.

<sup>75</sup> Barbarese, p. 241.

<sup>76</sup> Ezra Pound as quoted in Adam Kirsch, 'Palgrave's Revenge', *Slate* <[www.slate.com](http://www.slate.com)>.

The Golden Treasury Of by Vinayak Krishna Gokak. Other editions. This book is the first comprehensive anthology of English verse written by Indians, compiled and edited by one who himself is a poet and a critic of distinction. Such a volume is of considerable historical value and contemporary interest, for English has been for more than 150 years, and continues to be, a vehicle of creative expression in India. The Golden Treasury of English Songs and Lyrics is a popular anthology of English poetry, originally selected for publication by Francis Turner Palgrave in 1861. It was considerably revised, with input from Tennyson, about three decades later. Palgrave excluded all poems by poets then still alive. The book continues to be published in regular new editions; still under Palgrave's name. These reproduce Palgrave's selections and notes, but usually include a supplement of more recent poems. Christopher The Golden Treasury. Of the Best Songs and Lyrical Poems in the English Language. Selected and Arranged with Notes by Francis Turner Palgrave. Thomas Palgrave describes his Golden Treasury: "This little Collection differs, it is believed, from others in the attempt made to include in it all the best original lyrical pieces and songs in our language, by writers not living, and none besides the best. The Editor will regard as his fittest readers those who love poetry so well, that he can offer them nothing not already known and valued."