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A. E. HOUSMAN ON THE LETTER TO DIOGNETUS VII 2

[Many years ago I wrote to ask Professor Housman the meaning of τὰ ἄστρα τῷ τῆς σελήνης ἀκολουθοῦντα δρόμῳ, the 'stars as they follow the course of the moon,' in this passage. The point is not explained in H. G. Meecham's excellent edition and I am deeply grateful to Mr. Laurence Housman for his kind permission to publish what his brother wrote in reply to the enquiry.]

Trinity College
27 Jan. 1926

Dear Nock,

To say seriously that the stars follow the moon's course is of course absurd, as they move in the opposite direction; so I surmise that this is an ornate expansion of Genesis I 16, that the Moon is confused with Night (they both ride in a coach and pair) as in Ovid fast. VI 235 and Luc. I 218, and that then one may compare Eur. Ion 1151 ἄστρα δ' ὠμάρτει θεᾶ, Theocr. II 166, Tibull. II 1 87 sq.

Yours sincerely
A. E. Housman

If the moon's δρόμος is her visible motion from her rising in the east to her setting in the west, then the herd of stars may seem to be following a great leader, if the observer is not sharp enough to notice that they are always overtaking her.