

Obituaries

FREDSON THAYER BOWERS

When Fredson Bowers was elected to membership in the American Antiquarian Society at the October meeting in 1968, he was indisputably the leading figure in bibliographical and textual studies in the English-speaking world—a fact symbolized about six months later by the award to him of the Gold Medal of the Bibliographical Society in London. Although much of his scholarship up to that time had been devoted to British drama from the Renaissance to the Restoration, his membership in AAS was distinctly appropriate for two reasons. One is that the work he had done on American literature, though not extensive, was enormously important and influential: in 1955, at a time when there was a stirring of interest in the scholarly editing of American literary works, he published an exemplary edition of Whitman's manuscripts for the 1860 *Leaves of Grass*; then, in the early 1960s, he began editing the text of Hawthorne for the Centenary Edition, the first volume of which appeared in 1962 and provided a model for the many other multivolume editions of American authors that began appearing in the 1960s and 1970s; and in 1964 he published a short essay showing how W. W. Greg's 'The Rationale of Copy-Text' could be applied to the editing of American literature, an essay that furnished the theoretical basis for the standards of the Center for Editions of American Authors.

But even if he had done no work at all on American books, his presence in AAS would have been highly fitting because he, more than anyone else, personified bibliographical scholarship; his theoretical writings became classic statements of the way in which the processes of book production affect the texts that appear in books—the way, that is, in which the physical evidence in books is related to their intellectual content. He explained, more thor-

oughly and effectively than his predecessors, the importance of and the techniques for describing books as physical objects; and he developed procedures for analyzing the production history of books from clues present in them and applying this knowledge to the editing of texts (of all kinds, not just 'literary'). The emphasis at AAS on bibliographical work is a tradition that reaches back to the institution's earliest days, and Bowers's interests thus went to the heart of what AAS stands for.

Fredson Thayer Bowers was born in New Haven, Connecticut, on April 25, 1905, the only child of Fredson Eugene Bowers (president of the Gilbert Manufacturing Company, a maker of corsets and automobile fabrics) and Hattie May Quigley. After graduating from Hillhouse High School, he attended Brown University from 1921 to 1925 (Phi Beta Kappa, 1924; Ph.B., 1925), displaying there his interests in writing and music (the former by editing the *Brown Daily Herald*, the latter by playing saxophone and Hawaiian guitar in a small jazz band). He went on to study Renaissance literature at Harvard under George Lyman Kittredge and Hyder Edward Rollins; his dissertation for the Ph.D. (1934) was a massive examination of the revenge motif in Elizabethan and Jacobean drama and became, in shortened form, his first scholarly book (*Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy*, 1940), now considered the standard treatment of its subject. Having served as instructor in English and tutor in the modern languages at Harvard during his graduate school days, he stayed on in that position two more years (1934-36) and then became instructor at Princeton for another two, before moving in 1938 as assistant professor to the University of Virginia, where he remained for the rest of his life. Wartime service as Commander (U.S. Naval Reserve) in Naval Communications, Washington, D.C., intervened early (1942-45) in his Charlottesville years; but after his return he moved quickly up the academic ranks (to associate professor in 1946 and professor in 1948) and steadily built one of the most distinguished and influential careers in the history of American scholarship.

His interest in the physical evidence in books, adumbrated be-

fore the war in several pioneering articles, reached fruition just afterward in *Principles of Bibliographical Description* (1949), an epochal book that amply exhibited its author's rigorously logical and powerfully synthesizing mind; it instantly became, and remains, the central work in its field. With the publication of this book and the early volumes of his edition of Thomas Dekker (1953-61), important as the first practical use of Greg's 'Rationale,' his eminence was unquestioned. In consequence, he was asked to deliver, in the 1950s, three major series of bibliographical lectures, which resulted in three major books—*On Editing Shakespeare and the Elizabethan Dramatists* (1955), the 1954 Rosenbach Lectures (University of Pennsylvania); *Textual and Literary Criticism* (1959), the 1958 Sandars Lectures (Cambridge University); and *Bibliography and Textual Criticism* (1964), the 1959 Lyell Lectures (Oxford). These books have been widely read and cited as magisterial basic statements of the role of textual criticism in literary criticism and of analytical bibliography in editing. He proceeded over the next thirty years to augment this impressive record with theoretical essays of landmark status and with celebrated literary criticism (the former gathered, with earlier pieces, in *Essays in Bibliography, Text, and Editing*, 1975; the latter in *Hamlet as Minister and Scourge and Other Studies in Shakespeare and Milton*, 1989), in addition to completing a series of scholarly editions remarkable in its range and amazing in its extent—a total of some sixty volumes of writings by Marlowe, Dekker, Shakespeare, Beaumont and Fletcher, Dryden, Fielding, Hawthorne, Whitman, Stephen Crane, William James, and Nabokov. An ongoing project, during all this time (and left uncompleted at his death), was a descriptive bibliography of Restoration British drama (1660-1700).

Scholarly productivity did not prevent his devoting large amounts of time and energy to the service of his profession. In 1948 he established an annual volume, *Studies in Bibliography*, which he edited until his death and which, through his eye for innovative work and the perspicacity of his suggestions to contributors, has been a key factor in shaping the course of biblio-

graphical scholarship. He was also generous of his time in conferring with students and directing dissertations, in advising editors who wished to set up editorial projects (the John Dewey edition being a notable example), and in delivering lectures that proselytized for the cause of bibliographical and textual studies (he taught regularly at the University of Chicago in the summers from 1949 to 1959). Furthermore, he was an energetic chairman of Virginia's English department for seven years (1961-68), building it into one of the most prestigious departments in the country, and he brought the same devotion to a shorter term as dean of the faculty (1968-69). He served as regional chairman of the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation (1954-58), as a Phi Beta Kappa visiting scholar (1961-62), as a member of the Shakespeare Variorum Committee (1962-78) and the Executive Council (1962-66) and English Advisory Committee (1966-68) of the Modern Language Association of America, as the president of the South Atlantic Modern Language Association (1969), and as a member of the editorial boards of the *Virginia Quarterly Review* and *Shakespeare Quarterly*.

Such a life rightly accrues honors—endowed chairs (Alumni Professor, 1957-68; Linden Kent Memorial Professor, 1968-75), fellowships (Fulbright, 1952-53; Guggenheim, 1958-59, 1970 [taken up in 1972]; Villa Serbelloni, 1971, 1972; All Souls College, Oxford, 1972, 1974; Churchill College, Cambridge 1975), honorary degrees (Clark University; and Brown University, 1970; University of Chicago, 1973), and awards (Brown University Bicentennial Medal, 1964; election to the British Academy as Corresponding Fellow, 1968; Thomas Jefferson Award, University of Virginia, 1971; election to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1972; Julian Boyd Award, Association for Documentary Editing, 1986; and, as mentioned earlier, the Gold Medal of the Bibliographical Society, 1969).

His effectiveness as a force in his field, a reflection of the strength of his intellect and the vigor of his prose, was undoubtedly enhanced by his personality. Impatient with muddled thinking, he did not

hesitate in print to expose it; he was no stranger to controversy, but his conduct in debate was always driven by principle, never by petty animosities or an eagerness to fight. In person, his invariable graciousness did not lessen the authority conveyed by his notably erect posture and commanding presence. Those who were close to him knew that he was the most kind and loyal of friends; and only they were likely to be aware of the true breadth of his enthusiasms — which encompassed dogs (his first book, in 1936, was *The Dog Owner's Handbook*, and he was a judge of dog shows and a breeder of Irish wolfhounds), stamp collecting (he enlisted the help of his friends in adding specimens to his collection and in returning those he used on his envelopes), photography (he made many 16 mm. family films when his children were young), sports cars (his last one was a Mercedes convertible), the stock market (he subscribed to many financial newsletters and was in constant touch with his broker), music (he reviewed some 5,000 records in nearly 1,200 'Music Off Records' columns in the Sunday *Richmond Times-Dispatch* between 1939 and 1966), and wine and good food (his house, Woodburn, set on thirty-eight acres with a sweeping view of the Blue Ridge Mountains, had a well-stocked cellar).

A first marriage, to Hyacinth Adeline Sutphen of New York, produced four children and ended in divorce after twelve years (1924-36); his second, to the novelist, short-story writer, biographer, and essayist Nancy Hale, lasted forty-six years (1942-88), until her death at the age of eighty. He and Nancy Hale were ideally suited to one another and respected each other's work; the stone house, Howlets, at Folly Cove, Rockport, Massachusetts, that had been her aunt's and then her mother's studio (her mother was the painter Lilian Westcott Hale) became their summer place and played an important role in the rhythm of their lives together. She was a member of the distinguished New England Hale family and presented to the Antiquarian Society in 1975 a copy of the New Testament annotated by her grandfather, Edward Everett Hale (president of AAS in 1906-7 and nephew of another president, Edward Everett, who served from 1841 to 1853), and pub-

lished by his father, Nathan Hale (nephew of the Revolutionary hero). After her death, her husband arranged for the Society to receive five miniatures on ivory portraying nineteenth-century members of the Everett and Hale families. Both Fredson Bowers and Nancy Hale were good friends of the Society, just as they were good friends of many individuals in the world of books and culture.

Fredson Bowers was one of those rare figures who dominate and transform a field; those who follow him in descriptive and analytical bibliography and textual criticism must take his work as their point of departure. His death (on April 11, 1991) marks the end of an era.

G. Thomas Tanselle

GEORGE LEE HASKINS

George L. Haskins, one of America's leading legal historians, professor emeritus at the University of Pennsylvania Law School, and member of the U.S. delegation that helped to organize the United Nations, died on October 4, 1991 at his home in Hancock, Maine. A summa cum laude at Harvard in 1935, Haskins received his L.L.B. from Harvard Law School in 1942. He enlisted the following year as a private, rose to the rank of major, and served in military intelligence in the War Department General Staff. For his services he received the Army Commendation Medal with oak leaf clusters and was decorated by the British government with the George Medal. In 1946 he began his long and distinguished career with the Pennsylvania Law School, was appointed Algernon Sydney Biddle professor in 1974, and retired in 1985.

Haskins was a scholar's scholar and a worthy branch of the scholarly family tree planted by his father, Charles Homer Haskins, the famous medievalist. Distinguishing himself early, George entered the medieval field with *The Statute of York and the Interest of the Commons*, written in part while a junior fellow at Harvard and then as a Henry Fellow at Merton College of Oxford.

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