

thing that enhanced your personal humanity.' Nash shared with his students not only the appointed classroom hours but also his larger life—his friends, his family, and his farm. The farm, perched snugly on the slope of Broadbrook Mountain, was the place where many first perceived, through Nash's own example, how a life of art and work and scholarship might well be intertwined. 'My dreams, aspirations, and energies found plenty of room, up there,' wrote Sinclair Hitchings, keeper of prints at the Boston Public Library. 'I will always connect the farm with the future,' he remarked. And that future—now the present—is more humane, more literate, better designed, more conscious of its heritage, for Ray Nash's generous life.

Stephen Harvard

GORDON NORTON RAY

When Gordon Ray addressed the International Federation of Library Associations in Budapest in 1972, he entitled his remarks 'Books as a Way of Life.' There could be no better title for an account of his own life. Although that talk was not autobiographical, he did describe his qualifications to speak to a bookish audience in this way: 'When I was young, it was largely through books that I formed my view of the world. As a teacher, books have been my chosen subject. I have written a number of books on my own. And for the last twenty-five years book collecting has been my absorbing avocation.' If we add to all the books he encountered in these four capacities—as reader, teacher, scholar, and collector—the books produced by the faculty of the University of Illinois while he was an administrator there and those written by Guggenheim Fellows during his presidency of the Guggenheim Foundation, we can see the extent to which his life was enveloped in books. His solid accomplishment and commanding authority in these various worlds of the book gave him a unique standing: in any of his fields,

he was the obligatory figure from whom to seek advice, whether informally or through appointment to advisory commissions, boards of trustees, and search committees; he achieved a reputation for being able to cut through ineffectual discussions with a focused summary and sensible conclusions. His great influence was exercised with compassion and humanity—traits that came, he would have said, from the civilizing power of literature. He was always, at heart, a bookman.

Gordon Norton Ray was born in New York City on September 8, 1915, the son of Jessie Norton and Jesse Gordon Ray (who represented an Indiana limestone company), and grew up on the Chicago north shore, graduating in 1932 from New Trier High School in Winnetka. His parents were soon to move to Bloomington, where both the university and their new company were located: the Independent Limestone Company had been founded in 1927, with his father as president, to quarry stone from the land owned by his mother's family. (It was income from this company that later allowed Ray to build his collections, and he accepted the presidency of it in 1974.) Ray graduated from Indiana University in 1936 with A.B. and A.M. degrees. From Indiana he moved to Harvard for graduate work in English literature. After receiving another A.M. in 1938, he settled on Thackeray as the subject for his doctoral dissertation and went to England in the summer of 1939 (on a Dexter Traveling Scholarship) to search for material. Until that time Thackeray's descendants, respecting the novelist's wish to have no biography, had denied all access to the great mass of his papers. But Ray's visit to Thackeray's granddaughter, Hester Thackeray Fuller, came at a propitious time: the family had decided to select a scholar to work on the papers, and Ray seemed to Mrs. Fuller the right one. He was promptly appointed editor of the Thackeray letters and thus became the envy of graduate students (and their advisers) throughout America. A decade later, Richard Altick, writing his account of the glamor and fascination of literary detective work, *The Scholar Adventurers* (1950), called this episode 'one of the most spectacular success

stories in recent literary scholarship'; and through Altick's book Ray continued to be a hero to later graduate students.

His work on the letters was inextricably linked with the disruptions of war. He had arranged for the microfilming of the letters before leaving Europe at the outbreak of war in 1939, and he performed much of his editorial work on them (and on the material already in the United States) before his own entry into military service. First he completed his dissertation on 'Thackeray and France' and received his Ph.D. in 1940; he then stayed on at Harvard for two years as an instructor in English (1940-42), aided by another Dexter award and two Guggenheim Fellowships. By the time he was ordered to active duty in the United States Navy on December 1, 1942, he had completed his edition of the letters; and he turned his voluminous manuscript over to his adviser and friend Howard Mumford Jones, who undertook to read proofs and check references for him. Ray's forty months in the Navy (to March 23, 1946) included two and a half years in the Pacific aboard the aircraft carriers *Belleau Wood* and *Boxer* and service on the staff of Vice-Admiral Donald Duncan; as a fighter director and radar officer, he advanced to the rank of lieutenant, earning seven battle stars and a Presidential unit citation. His war years made a deep impression on him and were the subject of many later allusions: a model of the *Boxer* still sat on his office desk at the time of his retirement. The first two volumes of *The Letters and Private Papers of William Makepeace Thackeray* were published by Harvard University Press in 1945, while Ray was still in the Navy. His discharge in the spring of 1946 allowed him to take over the proofreading from Jones beginning with the middle of the third volume, and the third and fourth volume appeared in 1946. This four-volume work was a superb achievement, presenting a vast amount of new material in a form that still stands as a model of documentary editing.

The next chapter of Ray's career was set at the University of Illinois, where he moved as professor of English in the autumn of 1946 and remained until the end of June 1960. During the six

months between leaving the Navy and settling in Urbana, he had held a third Guggenheim Fellowship (awarded in 1945), enabling him to return to Mrs. Fuller's London house for further work in the Thackeray papers there and in other English collections. The fruits of this research were a series of distinguished publications on Thackeray: two editions (a facsimile of the Morgan manuscript of *The Rose and the Ring* in 1947 and a gathering of Thackeray's contributions to *The Morning Chronicle* in 1955), a critical study based on the lectures he delivered at the Lowell Institute in February 1950 (*The Buried Life: A Study of the Relation between Thackeray's Fiction and His Personal History*, 1952), and, finally, in 1955 and 1958, the two massive volumes of his life of Thackeray (*Thackeray: The Uses of Adversity, 1811-1846*; *Thackeray: The Age of Wisdom, 1847-1863*), which constitute — as Bradford A. Booth said in 1964 — 'one of the indisputable masterpieces of literary biography in our time.' Ray also edited Thackeray's *Henry Esmond* for the Modern Library (1950) and in 1954 began a long association with another series of classics, serving for seventeen years as general editor of the Houghton Mifflin Company's Riverside Series and arranging for the publication of some eighty titles in it (one of them, in 1960, being his own edition of H. G. Wells's *The History of Mr. Polly*). This productivity is all the more remarkable in the light of the administrative duties he accepted at Illinois, serving as head of the English Department (1950-57) and then as vice-president and provost (1957-60). He did, however, have three interludes away from Illinois: in 1948-49 (after spending the summer of 1948 as a visiting professor at the University of Oregon), he was a Rockefeller Post-Service Fellow and a member of the United States Educational Commission in the United Kingdom, which established the Fulbright program; in 1952-53 he was Berg Professor of English and American Literature at New York University; and in 1956-57 he held a fourth Guggenheim Fellowship, to begin work on several projects relating to H. G. Wells (including a biography).

In September 1956, just after that fellowship began, his father died, leaving him (his mother had died in 1952) with a large block

of Independent Limestone Company stock and thus a considerably increased annual income; as a result, he declined the monetary part of the Guggenheim award. He was also in a position to enlarge the scope of his collecting, and he began concentrating on English illustrated books; but he had already accomplished impressive feats of collecting, both for himself and for his university. His collecting had begun in earnest when he was abroad in 1948–49, inspired by the sight of Michael Sadleir's collection of Victorian fiction (which was for him, he later said, 'a revelation'). From then on until the end of his life he made visits nearly every summer to England and France searching for books; and until 1957 those trips also produced major acquisitions for the University of Illinois Library. While he was building for himself notably comprehensive collections of English and French literature from 1789 to 1914 (including manuscript as well as printed material), he was securing for the university massive archives and whole collections of books (the papers of two important publishers, Richard Bentley and Grant Richards, in 1951 and 1952; the Tom Turner library of 8,000 volumes of twentieth-century English literature in 1953; and the papers of H. G. Wells, amounting to 60,000 items, in 1954). Anyone who buys books by the roomful (as he once did in a shop in Penzance) is bound to achieve rapid celebrity in the antiquarian book world, and his book-buying trips of the 1950s have become legendary; but he also added to the Illinois holdings by the systematic purchase of individual titles, increasing the total by several thousand volumes each year. These purchases in turn affected his own research: his interest in H. G. Wells, reflected in his last Guggenheim application, was obviously related to his bringing the Wells papers to Urbana; and three books resulted, two of them editions that appeared while he was at Illinois (*The Desert Daisy* in 1957 and — with Leon Edel — *Henry James and H. G. Wells* in 1958) and the third, much later, his biographical study *H. G. Wells & Rebecca West* (1974).

In 1959 Henry Allen Moe, then Secretary General of the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, offered Ray (with

whom, as a four-time Fellowship recipient, he had become well acquainted) the position of Associate Secretary General. Ray accepted, made arrangements to move to New York during the summer of 1960 (his books to be placed on newly constructed shelves lining the walls of a river-view apartment at 25 Sutton Place South), and began work at the Foundation on September 1. Eight months later, following Mrs. Simon Guggenheim's decision to relinquish the title of president and Moe's election to that office, Ray was named Secretary General; and in 1963, when Moe left at the age of sixty-nine, Ray was elected president (and trustee) and thus became on July 1 the second principal administrative officer in the Foundation's thirty-eight-year history. During the twenty-two years of his presidency (until his retirement just before his seventieth birthday in 1985), he saw to it that the Foundation maintained the standards of excellence for which it had become known, adhering unswervingly to the policy of awarding Fellowships only to individuals who had significant accomplishments to their credit and who showed promise of making further contributions. His views on this matter and many others were expressed in a series of widely read annual reports, each one an essay characterized by the lucidity and incisiveness with which he could treat complex issues. In his time the Foundation awarded \$96,000,000 to 8,100 Fellows.

Ray's position at the Foundation gave him a vantage point from which to have a possibly unrivaled view of the scholarly, scientific, and artistic worlds, and his role as adviser to the learned community grew steadily larger during this period. Some idea of that role can be suggested by a recitation of the institutions on whose governing boards he served: the Foundation Center (1962-68; vice-chairman, 1963-65; chairman, 1965-68), Grolier Club (1963-86; president, 1965-69), Modern Language Association of America (trustee of invested funds, 1966-85), Smithsonian Institution (1968-85; chairman, 1970-85), Pierpont Morgan Library (1970-86; vice-president, 1974-86), Rosenbach Museum and Library (1972-81), American Council of Learned Societies (treasurer,

1973–85), Rockefeller University (1973–86), New York Public Library (1975–86; honorary trustee, 1984–86), Columbia University Press (1977–82), Winterthur Museum (1977–85), and Yaddo (1979–85). This list leaves out some two dozen other committees, commissions, and advisory boards relating to higher education and libraries, several of which gave him particular pleasure—such as the visiting committees to the Harvard University Library (1966–72, 1973–79, 1980–85), the Watson Library of the Metropolitan Museum of Art (1977–86), and the Lilly Library (chairman, 1979–86); the council of the Fellows of the Pierpont Morgan Library (1962–66; chairman, 1965–66) and of the Friends of the Columbia Libraries (1970–86; chairman, 1973–86); and the board of the American Trust for the British Library (treasurer, 1980–86). He was also frequently asked to speak on ceremonial occasions, such as the opening of important conferences or the dedication of new library buildings, and some of those addresses—particularly those surveying the state of the humanities and of the rare-book world—have become celebrated. All the while, the honors poured in: election to the Royal Society of Literature (1948), the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (1962), the American Antiquarian Society (1971), the American Philosophical Society (1977; vice-president, 1986), and the Roxburghe Club (1982); the award of the University of Evansville Medal of Honor (1970), the Sir Thomas More Medal for Book Collecting (University of San Francisco, 1973), and the Joseph Henry Medal (Smithsonian Institution, 1980); and thirteen honorary degrees, from 1959 to 1982.

During his Foundation years, Ray's activities as scholar, teacher, and book collector continued unabated. He accepted a professorship in English at New York University in his third year at the Foundation (1962–63) and taught popular courses there (and directed dissertations) in Victorian literature every year for the next seventeen, becoming professor emeritus in 1980. (He also spent a summer during this period—in 1969—as Beckman Professor of English at the University of California, Berkeley.) His generosity to his students, welcoming them to his Foundation office and

offering them the use of materials from his collection, became widely known, and many of them have recorded their indebtedness and appreciation. The focus of his own scholarship in these years, and of the collecting that inspired it, was English illustrated books of the nineteenth century and French illustrated books and bindings from 1700 through the 1930s. (At the same time he was impressively expanding his holdings of literary manuscripts.) By 1976 he was ready to display the English items, and in March and April of that year the Pierpont Morgan Library mounted a major exhibition on the subject, drawn almost exclusively from his collection and accompanied by the publication of his large volume *The Illustrator and the Book in England from 1790 to 1914*. Six years later (from April through July 1982), the library held a similar exhibition of his French materials, in connection with which he delivered the library's Franklin Jasper Walls Lectures and published his two-volume work on *The Art of the French Illustrated Book, 1700 to 1914*. These two exhibitions and their associated publications represent the culmination of his life as a scholar-collector. There are few collectors of any period who could provide, almost single-handedly, material of such quality (including drafts and proofs) for two exhibitions of such breadth; and there are fewer still who could write about their fields with such scholarly depth and stylistic elegance. These two books, which demonstrate the interconnections between scholarship and collecting, are masterpieces of trenchant commentary, revealing time and again his comprehensive knowledge of the history of book illustration and his lifetime of reading in the literature that inspired the illustrations. They are monuments as solid in their field as his Thackeray work is in Victorian literary study.

To those monuments he was able to add a 'small sequel' (as he called it) that he had long planned: when he was invited to deliver the Lyell Lectures at Oxford in May of 1985, he used the occasion to survey French Art Deco books, bringing his analysis of French bookmaking up to the chronological limit of his own collection. The fortunate timing of these lectures seemed to epitomize the

well-regulated nature of his whole life. He liked order and routine, but there was always room in his carefully controlled schedule for the entertainments he enjoyed—such as, in Urbana, his weekend excursions by train to New Orleans; and, in New York, his quiet hours at the Grolier Club reading booksellers' catalogues (probably no other member in recent times used the Club library so regularly). In his earlier years, he was athletic, engaging in basketball, baseball, handball, bowling, and tennis, and he remained all his life a devoted follower of sports: in New York he often invited groups of friends to baseball games; he held a season ticket to the Knicks' basketball games; and he was known to decline social events in favor of games on television. He was an avid reader of detective stories (amassing a fine collection of them as a by-product) and a steady attender of movies; and he apparently remembered them all in considerable detail, just as he seemed to keep straight the plots and characters of all the major (and many minor) novels of English, French, and American literature. His range of allusion was thus astonishingly wide; and, although he sometimes revealed his impatience with small talk, he was an engaging conversationalist, alternating anecdotes with pronouncements, bemused detachment with magisterial gravity. (His obituary in the *London Times* was particularly apt in describing him as 'a man of solid and authoritative presence, and of considered and consequential speech.') To some people he appeared formidable at first, but many have reason to know how approachable he could be. His formality and reserve, however, often made it difficult for colleagues and friends to feel that they knew him well, even while they were drawn to him by his charm, his sense of humor, and his balanced and sympathetic concern for their problems.

No doubt more people experienced his conversation over a meal than in any other setting, and his love of good food was probably his best-known diversion. He made a point of inviting many Guggenheim Fellows to lunch, sometimes at the Century Association but equally often at a favorite restaurant (San Marino, La Toque Blanche, La Petite Marmite, Le Chantilly); on summer

trips his visits with book dealers were punctuated at midday by lunches with Fellows who were spending their Fellowship periods abroad, and those gatherings at the White Tower, L'Etoile, Le Crillon, and La Tour d'Argent became part of the lore that Guggenheim Fellows share. Ray was a tall man, with a large frame, and always handsome, but the trim figure of his youth and early middle age ultimately yielded to the daily regimen of rich meals. He lived as he wished to until the end, but during his last five or six years he experienced some of the problems that excessive weight can cause. When he died of a heart attack in his apartment on December 15, 1986, his affairs were, characteristically, in order, his will having designated the Morgan Library as the repository for his collection of manuscripts, drawings, and some 15,000 books. Few scholars could have had more reason to feel satisfied with their accomplishments. Gordon Ray left some projects unfinished, as anyone with a lively mind is bound to do; but he had produced four major works, which will be read long into the future, and had lived a life that influenced many other lives, a life that will be a continuing model and an object of respectful wonderment for those who contemplate a career in literary scholarship.

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