



ROBERT SHACKLETON

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1919–1986

IN the address given at the Memorial Service for Robert Shackleton, Professor Richard Cobb tellingly recalled how Shackleton's early teaching years were spent in Brasenose College, how he then moved round to the north side of Radcliffe Square while he was Bodley's Librarian for twelve years, and how latterly, as a Professorial Fellow of All Souls, he had rooms and was to be found on the east side of the same square.<sup>1</sup> Taken together with the fact that he was an undergraduate at Oriel College, just to the south, it might seem that Shackleton's whole life was therefore of parochial and limited interests. In many ways however the reverse was true and his commitment to, and interest in, the world of ideas and modern international problems was as great both as his detailed knowledge of certain foreign countries and as the number of friends he had world-wide. A very academic scholar, he travelled, in his own manner, both physically and in the mind.

Robert Shackleton was born on 25 November 1919 at Todmorden, Yorkshire, the eldest child of Robert William Albert and Emily Shackleton. His father was a boot and shoe maker by profession. A brother and sister, twins, were born later. He attended the Roomfield Boys' School where his wide reading, good geography, and ability to write an excellent essay were much commended even before he passed on to Todmorden Secondary School in 1930. It appears that at about this period he was asked what he wanted to be later in life and, being then passionately devoted to astronomy (he gave a talk on the solar system at the age of ten), he replied 'Astronomer Royal', a remark not without interest, coming as it did from the future editor of Fontenelle's *Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes*, who, to the end of his life, kept a number of astronomical books at his

<sup>1</sup> Professor Cobb's Memorial Address, given on 6 December 1986 in the University Church of St Mary the Virgin, was subsequently printed in a limited edition for distribution to friends.

bedside. His school reports were uniformly excellent, revealing weaknesses only in art and manual crafts, an interest and a skill he never developed. At Christmas 1932 he was awarded the school first prize in French and Latin, which, slightly surprisingly perhaps, took the shape of a copy of the Oxford University Press *Complete Works of Shakespeare*, edited and with a glossary by W. J. Craig, an Oxford book which was thus the foundation stone of his future notable private library and still with him at the time of his death. The Headmaster of Todmorden School was then A. Radway Allen, and it is interesting that amongst other pupils of note there at this period were two Nobel Prize winners, Sir John Cockroft and Sir Geoffrey Wilkinson.

At Easter 1936 Robert Shackleton made his first trip abroad, to Paris on a private visit organized by his French teacher, Miss J. T. McLellan. At about this time too he appears to have been allowed to work in the John Rylands Library at Manchester, a privilege for which he was always deeply grateful. When the moment came to choose an Oxford college he acted in a characteristically organized manner: he consulted the *Oxford University Calendar* in the public library and selected one of the few colleges then provided with a Fellow in modern languages, Oriel, where an enthusiastic young tutor, Arthur Crow, had just been appointed. The other men's colleges which then had modern language Fellows were St John's (W. G. Moore), Queen's (Ian Macdonald) and Christ Church (F. A. Taylor). In December 1936 Shackleton gained an open scholarship in French at Oriel and he was matriculated there in the autumn of 1937.

Bred as he had been in North Country non-conformity (he was by upbringing a Baptist) and in a strong Liberal tradition, he soon took an active part in the Oxford University Liberal Club, of which he became President. In particular he opposed the introduction of conscription, arguing, in the *Manchester Guardian*, that this conflicted with the essential Liberal principle that the individual should order his own life for himself. He accepted that repealing conscription, once brought in, was not possible in the grave international situation of the day, but he insisted that the Liberal Party should continue to oppose any permanent Military Training Act. On a more local level he supported the movement, only successful thirty years later and after the French student riots of 1968, for the creation of an elected Undergraduate Council able to express student views not just on politics but on general university matters as well. These activities brought him

into contact with Lloyd George and his secretary Archibald Sinclair.

Despite all this Shackleton was an assiduous student, visiting France for two months in 1938 and it is noticeable that he made a point of attending all lectures given on eighteenth-century subjects, being in particular those of L. A. Bisson, H. J. Hunt, and F. A. Taylor. In the Spring of 1939 he was elected to a Heath Harrison Travelling Scholarship in French and visited France twice that year, spending time at a summer course at Strasbourg. While he was there he went briefly into Germany where, during a political discussion, he was nearly arrested by the Nazis. His surviving undergraduate notes from this period contain, besides an eighteenth-century bias, a remarkable amount on Seneca and the Stoics. In the summer of 1940 Shackleton was awarded a First Class in the Final Honour School of Modern Languages (in French), with a distinction in the spoken use of the language.

He joined the Royal Corps of Signals in November of the same year and served subsequently, as a corporal, in North Africa and Italy where he was on the headquarters staff of General (later Field Marshal Lord) Alexander. Arriving on the third day of the Sicily landing in 1943 Shackleton saw something of the Italian campaign. During the year he spent in Italy he acquired a knowledge of Italian (which he later spoke with distinction and great pleasure) and, meeting numerous Italians, was forcibly struck by the poverty of southern Italy. He managed to visit a number of important sites, including Agrigento, Palermo, Syracuse, Naples, Rome, Siena (later a favourite holiday town), and Florence, and was present at an audience given by the Pope. He is also said to have visited Benedetto Croce, whose works he had read at Oxford, and to have supplied him with some then precious sugar. Some of his first antiquarian books were acquired at this time in Bari (the 1795 Basle edition of Montesquieu) and in Naples. After a serious arm injury and a consequent period in military hospitals he was returned home and at once took up an active role in Liberal politics, standing as one of the two Liberal candidates for Blackburn in the 1945 election. However despite the support of his pre-war acquaintance, Sir Archibald Sinclair (now leader of the Party), and his own reputation as a rising man in the Liberal movement, he was not elected, the two seats being won by Mrs Barbara Castle and L. J. Edwards.

Shackleton returned to civilian life in January 1946. He went back to Oxford to work under the guidance of Professor G.

Rudler on a B.Litt. thesis on the theory of climate, the proposal being to start with its classical origins and to consider its scientific, philosophical, and literary aspects in France from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries. In the same year he was awarded a Zaharoff Travelling Scholarship but this he resigned almost at once on his appointment as Lecturer in Modern Languages at Trinity and Brasenose Colleges, tenable with a Fellowship at the latter college. In 1947 a change of parliamentary constituency boundaries led to an opportunity for him to become the prospective Liberal candidate for Sowerby (the constituency which included his home town), but in the following year he realized that a conscientious discharge of his Oxford duties was incompatible with fighting a hard political campaign in Yorkshire. He took the difficult decision of withdrawing from active politics, remaining however an alert and committed Liberal for the rest of his life.

Despite having apparently acquired worldly experience and political ambitions Shackleton then gave his new colleagues the impression of being a somewhat timid and retiring man, and such indeed was part of his character. He was at first a teetotaller, and his seemed perhaps a surprising appointment for a college of a very traditional cast with a pronounced reputation for sport. The governing body was then small, as were those of other Oxford colleges, at least in comparison with today. Shackleton became the sixteenth Fellow in seniority in the college; the first, W. N. Stocker, having taken his MA in 1877. The shades of pre-war Oxford, not to mention the attitudes of even earlier periods, were still present but in changing times and with the return of many older students, not all undergraduates, who had seen much of both life and death, a certain evolution was bound to come. The earlier world where young gentlemen could have meals brought to them and their friends in their rooms by college servants carrying white-covered trays was gone, but a number of such features survived, at least for Fellows, even if the attendance of college servants at luncheon parties in formal dress now had to be paid for at two shillings and six pence a head. Social and economic change caused an element in the college to insist on a greater and wider academic achievement and this party, to which Shackleton naturally belonged while still picking up and appreciating many of the older ways, soon introduced reforms.

A senior colleague wrote to congratulate him on his election, giving him some brief administrative advice on arranging teaching, and telling him to contact the Bursar about moving into

rooms in college. Shackleton, who had lived at home, in student rooms or in 'digs', was on the brink of becoming the quintessential bachelor don, one deeply devoted to his academic community, very much part of it, but also, in the long run, one who did much to share both its more splendid traditional side and its contribution to intellectual life within a wide international circle. Brasenose was to be his home for thirty-three years and was ideally suited to him, having close links with south Lancashire grammar schools, balanced with a strong Yorkshire tradition epitomized by, among others, Maurice Platnauer, Leslie Styler, Robert Auty, and later Herbert Hart. Hugh Last became Principal two years after Shackleton's arrival and, since Shackleton considered him to be the ideal 'uomo universale', his reign was one of the great formative influences on the young Fellow.

Life was spartan in some respects but Shackleton threw himself actively into academic and collegiate life alike. He was evidently a highly organized person from an early age and this present account of him owes much to the incredibly complete archive of personal papers and documents which he maintained until a few years before his death, many personal and professional records and letters being meticulously sorted and filed. This archive, bequeathed in his will to the Bodleian, contains for example a number of his undergraduate essays and notes, unusually systematic and clear in themselves but partly typed out only a short time later, and the whole explained in a contemporary account of how these papers were originally organized and then re-arranged. Shackleton kept no diary but a careful, if not an obsessional, recording of his formal activities, finances, and work was clearly a hidden and a very deep part of his nature.

This organizational bent made him an excellent academic administrator and college and faculty office taught him much at a time when both spheres were expanding. At Brasenose he served, *inter alia*, as Dean, dealing efficiently and with aplomb with undergraduates climbing on college buildings, gambling, and making incursions into women's colleges. His justice was dispensed with carefully and appropriately graded quantities and qualities of sherry and was well and appreciatively remembered by generations of students. He was of more than common height, early of a balding appearance, and with long and somewhat awkwardly controlled arms. He seems soon to have contracted, or to have developed, certain mannerisms both in posture and in speech, all of which became memorable to students and friends alike. His frequent reiteration of the

affirmative in his own particular nasal drawl was a favourite and endearing souvenir. His turn of phrase and wit on many occasions were also legendary.

As a tutor he inspired affection, not always untempered by amusement, in his pupils. He was perhaps not notable for producing many academic high-flyers although some of his students, and in particular many of his graduate students, later achieved fame in the university world. His undergraduates in any case took on his particular intellectual methodology and this even served to identify them in the mass of otherwise anonymous Schools examination scripts. In later years they affectionately offered him an annual dinner in London.

Shackleton's distinguished graduate pupil, Robert Darnton, has described his impressions of supervision sessions: 'Your first impression when you climbed up the stone stairs which always smelled strongly of cleaning fluid, to his rooms in Brasenose was of overwhelming erudition. But it was genial. The nasal "Come in", called out from behind some leather tome from the seventeenth or eighteenth century, always sounded inviting. You stepped into a magical world of books, books over all the walls and all the tables, old books, leathery and heavy, which Robert hoisted lovingly from their places on the shelves. I didn't know then—1961 when I was a green B.Phil. candidate and had hardly heard of Fontenelle—that Robert was the son of a bootmaker in Yorkshire. But I noticed how big his hands were and how they took to leather. His whole frame was big. It filled the large window opposite the shelf of the *Encyclopédie* (original folio edition, with the *Supplément* and *Table analytique*). Sometimes Robert would seize the floor-length curtains and lean far back on his heels, discoursing of Fénelon or La Bruyère. I sat in terror that the window-hangings would come crashing down in the middle of the *crise de conscience sous Louis XIV*. But by the time we reached Montesquieu I had decided that the room would hold up and I had begun to realize that Robert had a great deal to say, not merely erudition. He came to the point slowly, making his way through a thick, bibliographical, underbrush. But when he got there, he always came up with something surprising. I had expected to find a Montesquieu who championed the separation of powers and English liberty. Robert's Montesquieu was essentially French, the subtle analyst of "l'esprit général", whom I later came to recognise as a prophet of sociology and anthropology. Of course Robert did not talk "ologies". He spoke slow, careful English and wonderfully elegant, mispronounced,

French. But he knew what he talked about, deep down to its philological roots. In discussing Rousseau, I used some innocent seeming words, like authority and sovereignty. Robert started pulling dictionaries and encyclopaedias off his shelves, all of them printed at intervals from the late seventeenth to the late eighteenth centuries. I had to track the words through edition after edition, and in the end I realized that political ideas acquired peculiar shapes in language and that the ear had to be tuned to that language as it existed in different times and places. I remember especially looking up the word "cité" in the *Encyclopédie*. I had thought that it meant "city", but after a little exegesis from Robert it sounded like the general will. Robert had no use for "discourse", or indeed for anything much that the French produced after 1800 except perhaps Simenon, but he understood the grammar of political thought from Machiavelli to Rousseau. His analysis of it had affinities with more fashionable varieties of intellectual history. But Robert never was fashionable. He was too erudite, and his erudition may have acted as a barrier, which prevented outsiders from appreciating the keenness of his mind. Inside his study, his intelligence flashed from every corner.'

Characteristically the first hundred and twenty pages of Shackleton's own B.Litt. thesis on the theory of climate start with a philological survey of dictionary definitions at various times before moving through the classification into zones (with much on Bodin), the modes of influence (heat, humours and temperaments), the notions of national character, before reaching the political, religious, and moral repercussions of such ideas. Much careful work, including detailed textual comparisons of texts in different editions, was done on authors such as Botero, Carpenter, Robert Johnson, Moryson, and others, all largely before 1700. This work on the history of ideas never saw the light but it evidently formed an excellent basis for his later work on Montesquieu, an author who indeed attracted his attention from as early as 1948.

The Faculty of Mediaeval and Modern (European) Languages at Oxford saw a notable development in the immediate post-war years. Led, on the French side, by Gustave Rudler, Marshal Foch Professor since the foundation of the Chair in 1919 and author of the then standard *Les Techniques de la critique et de l'histoire littéraires en littérature française moderne* (Oxford, Imprimerie de l'Université, 1923, and dedicated to Gustave Lanson), it also owed much to the energies of Alfred Ewert, the Professor of Romance Languages. The flamboyant and well-known Enid



Starkie had become Reader in French Literature in 1946 and recent University Lecturer appointments had been made in French philology, Portuguese, Spanish, Russian, and German. If there were only six or seven Fellows in modern languages outside the women's colleges (long a stronghold for this subject), many others could now admit, or boast, a lecturer in one language or another.

From early on Shackleton lectured to a large audience on Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes*, a prescribed author text. He took an active part in faculty life and became Chairman of its Board in 1959, developing those skills as a member or chairman of committees for which he came to be greatly respected in wider circles, both national and international, in subsequent years. His energies were considerable and the time was propitious. The year 1947 saw the first annual Conference of the University Teachers of French, held at Worcester College, Oxford, and the launch of *French Studies*, the first British academic journal solely concerned with French language and literature, run and published respectively by Alfred Ewert and Basil Blackwell. Shackleton was closely associated with both sides from an early stage. He was President of the Conference in 1958 and played an important part in its transformation into a fully-fledged academic body as the Society for French Studies in 1959. He became Assistant Editor of *French Studies* in 1961 and Editor in 1966. It has been said that during these years, 'he became a familiar figure to all those in the habit of attending Annual General Meetings of the Society through his presentation of the editorial report—a meticulous and lucid expression of the academic and financial fortunes of the periodical for the year, delivered in the balanced Augustan prose for which he was well known, and often interlaced with wit'.

Shackleton's first academic publication was probably written immediately after he took Schools and appeared, in *Modern Languages*, in October 1941. This article on 'Shakespeare in French Translation', which deals with the *Théâtre anglois* of La Place (1745) and the work of Le Tourneur, is of interest since it shows not only the author's academic commitment but also his careful bibliographical awareness. His early work towards a B.Litt. surfaced promptly in 1948 in an article on 'Botero, Bodin and Robert Johnson', but by then he had already turned his attention to Montesquieu and from the following year on for three decades articles on this author were to come from his pen every year. The first three set the scene: a survey of Montesquieu studies in 1948; an article on Montesquieu, Bolingbroke, and the

separation of powers, touching both on political theory and a comparative study of cross-channel influences; while the third, 'Montesquieu: Two Unpublished Documents', revealed the inveterate library researcher already at work. At this time too several reviews appeared every year over his signature, all touching central eighteenth-century subjects and particularly Enlightenment authors, usually Montesquieu and Rousseau. Some of the first also concern the French theatre, a field in which he later showed little interest, but more typical of his future approach was one on an introduction to comparative literature.

His first major publication was a critical edition of Bernard Le Bovier de Fontenelle's *Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes*, together with the same author's slimmer *Digression sur les Anciens et les Modernes*, a volume published by the Clarendon Press in 1955. Shackleton's introduction covers Fontenelle's early years, the scientific background to and the moment of publication of the work, Fontenelle's sources, his attitude to Newton, and his general position in the Enlightenment. Fontenelle's main source was traced back to the 1656 French translation of John Wilkins's *Discovery of a New World*, a work which itself drew its inspiration from Campanella's enlargement on Galileo's allusion to the possibility of life on other planets. Other, even less scientific works, such as Pierre Borel's *Discours nouveau prouvant la pluralité des mondes* (1657) and Cyrano de Bergerac's *L'Autre monde* (1657) and *Les États et empires du soleil* (1662), were also brought into play. On the textual side Shackleton gave a list of all the editions of the *Mondes* appearing from 1686 until the author's death in 1757 and on the basis of sixty-five salient variants he constructed a table showing the affiliation of all the versions contained in the twenty-seven different editions. He used as his copytext the edition of 1742, arguing that 'a work which reflects the progress of science over a long period of highly important years must clearly be reproduced in the most exact form, scientifically, which it received from its author'. Certainly Fontenelle, as Secrétaire perpétuelle of the Académie royale des Sciences, was in a good position to keep abreast of scientific discovery, but it is not clear that the variants really prove that he did, since he systematically opposed Newtonianism and misrepresented the papers by Pierre Varignon on 'forces centrales', which appeared in the *Mémoires de l'Académie* in 1700 and 1706. Fontenelle was eighty-five at the time of his final revision of the work and it is arguable that he did not really see himself as an historian of science but rather, an equally Enlightenment trait, as the creator of the genre of

popular science. If Shackleton was open to criticism as an over-zealous historian of science, fractionally lacking in sense of humour, and if a number of his general remarks and comparisons are suggestive but slight, there is no doubt that his edition is a remarkable and fundamental contribution to the establishment of an important early Enlightenment text. It shows him at home in textual scholarship, competently tracing and using editions in a number of different libraries (the last text quoted was, already, only to be found in his own personal collection), and keenly aware of the publishing mechanism at work behind these editions. The Preface acknowledges advice from Alfred Ewert and others but the influence of Gustave Rudler's *Techniques* and of the Lanson School must also have played a part. Books were always very real and personal objects to Shackleton and this, his only detailed textual work, reveals that his sense of the life of a printed text was already keenly alive. Although he never returned to Fontenelle he remained interested in him and, similarly, an edition of Campanella was among the last books which he acquired.

By the time Fontenelle's *Entretiens* appeared in 1955 Shackleton was already deeply immersed in Montesquieu studies, his major academic field of interest and in recognition of which *The Times* headed his obituary as that of 'the Doyen of Montesquieu scholars', while an Italian paper called him, in a phrase he would have appreciated, 'la Voce di Montesquieu'. As early as 1952 he was writing on the genesis of the *Esprit des lois* and the following year he contributed a masterly analysis of the handwriting of Montesquieu's various secretaries to the edition of that author's complete works edited by Shackleton's friend, the Inspecteur Général des Bibliothèques, André Masson. It was thereby possible to date many manuscripts accurately. This was followed up by a similar study on the Bibliothèque Nationale manuscript of *L'Esprit des lois*. Articles on every aspect of the life and work of his chosen author and his friends came one after the other: the abbé Guasco, the evolution of Montesquieu's theory of climate, Montesquieu and the fine arts, Montesquieu's religion, additions and corrections to his correspondence, Voltaire and Montesquieu, Bayle and Montesquieu, all these preceded the publication by the Oxford University Press in 1961, of his *Montesquieu: a Critical Biography*.

With his typical sense of order and his deep interest in publishing history Shackleton kept his manuscript, his proofs, his correspondence with his own publishers, and a complete file on the reception of his book. This factual and historical approach

underlay the writing of the work itself. As he himself put it in the preface: 'I have tried not to analyse and evaluate the thought of Montesquieu, but to write his biography; and his life being a life of ideas rather than events, I have tried to study the genesis of those ideas and to show how his works grew out of his reading, his travels, and his friendships.' Typically he goes straight on to say: 'The preparation of this book has taken me into more than sixty libraries, public and private, in five countries, and in these, almost without exception, I have been courteously and well received.' A list of libraries visited both for this work and later is, to one's surprise, not to be found among Shackleton's personal papers. It would have been of great interest, for he seems to have sought out both libraries and bookshops in every town and village in which he stayed, both in Europe and in the rest of the world. It is notable that he gave them the preference over, say, art galleries or even churches.

The eighteen chapters or sections of the biography take their subject chronologically through his life. Two chapters are devoted to individual works, the *Lettres persanes* and the *Considérations sur les causes de la grandeur des Romains et de leur décadence*, which Montesquieu called, as Shackleton was wont to recall, 'mes Romains'. The second part of the book is, however, devoted largely to the *Esprit des lois*, the first of these chapters concerning 'the preparation of *L'Esprit des lois*' and the last to the quarrel it occasioned. The six intervening ones cover the author's conception of law, theory of governments, system of liberty, doctrine of climate, and other moral and physical causes, the history of laws and the role of religion. These were described by Sir John Plumb as an unequalled précis of this great work. The same reviewer, like others, had nothing but praise for the massive scholarship contained in the book and opinions such as 'an excellent guide', 'infallible', 'an indispensable companion', soon established the book as one of the most outstanding contributions to French eighteenth-century studies in its time. The very erudition did however limit its market to the narrower academic world. For Harold Nicholson, writing in *The Observer*, 'the common reader may find it long and stiff', while even Professor Plumb confessed to a sense of fatigue 'as name follows name and title to title'. Horace Walpole had called the *Esprit des lois* 'the best book ever written', but Harold Nicholson viewed it as 'responsible for that historical misfortune, the Constitution of the United States'. Commentators disagreed over Montesquieu himself: for one he was 'probably the most agreeable intellectual of the eighteenth

century', while for another he lacked charm, but there was some agreement that the biography did not analyse Montesquieu's temperament, that it did not explain the intellectual preoccupations of the subject and his friends, or the social forces to which their thought was related, nor did it systematically place Montesquieu's political and social theories in context in the aristocratic revolt against Absolutism. However, even if these literary or wider historical criticisms may perhaps have retarded or even prevented the translation of the book into other languages, they could not prevent it justly becoming the major biography of its subject, one which by virtue of its meticulous scholarship did much at an important juncture in Enlightenment studies to promote those very studies as a serious academic discipline. In the event the book was translated in French in 1977 by Jean Loiseau, the author revising the text for this edition.

French, German, Italian, and Polish journals reviewed the book and it was henceforth before an international audience that Shackleton pursued Montesquieu studies. He surveyed 'quelques néologismes de Montesquieu' at a meeting of the Fédération internationale des langues et littératures modernes. 'Montesquieu and Machiavelli: a Reappraisal' appeared in the first issue (1964) of *Comparative Literature* as indeed its opening article. Here he studied first exactly which works by Machiavelli were owned by Montesquieu and then the chronology of the author's references to, and quotations from, that writer. Montesquieu relied on Machiavelli for his description of the republic as a form of government but in general Shackleton found little detailed debt to the Italian; rather the general one that reading Machiavelli had stimulated Montesquieu to reflect on the extent and on the limits of personal policies in the history of states, on historical causation, and above all on the relation between history and politics. This was indeed Shackleton's world where exact scholarship mingled with the history of ideas and with practical politics.

An acknowledged scholar in his chosen field, Shackleton soon came to represent Oxford in continental eighteenth-century studies, and he addressed many meetings in France, and even as far afield as Afghanistan, with occasional but always well-turned contributions. His interests were however widening to the Enlightenment in general. Earlier he had written on Newtonianism and continental literature and in 1965 he treated Asia as seen by the French Enlightenment. A tacit but natural comparatist, he was President of the International Comparative Literature Association from 1964 to 1967, but, such a trade label not

then being approved of in Oxford, Shackleton never promoted the name, preferring to exercise the substance. Much of his wider work was in this vein and he was ever interested in influences or cross-border connections. The Enlightenment for him neither began nor ended at Calais. Indeed his early interest in this field had led him to a meeting which was to have a fundamental effect on the direction of his studies in general. He described the incident thus: 'In the summer term of 1939 I was approaching the end of my second year as an undergraduate at Oriel, reading French. I was proposing to offer as a special subject "The influence of England on French literature in the second half of the eighteenth century". In the Oxford Modern Languages School special subjects were not then usually taught. One was left to one's own devices: a healthy training. My Tutor, A. D. Crow, suggested that I might usefully, nevertheless, seek general advice on what to read from the Merton Professor. I went accordingly to 20 Merton Street and made the acquaintance of Nichol Smith. The hour and a half which I spent in his study I remember vividly and regard as having had a decisive influence on my career. I can see him now taking book after book from his shelves to show me, calf-bound eighteenth-century volumes, for the most part French translations of English works: *Joseph Andrews*, the *Night Thoughts*, Ossian, and as like as not the *Essay on Man*. I was not, before this, without an interest in books and I had started a modest collection. But I had never seen so many together in a private house. It was then that I saw, in my undergraduate way, that the physical objects we call books are the bone structure of literature and began to understand that bibliography and literary history are inseparable disciplines.' The parallel with his own later style in supervision, as described by his pupil Robert Darnton and quoted earlier, will be obvious. The lesson was well learnt and, as the years went by, became the passionate *Leitmotiv* of the man, being indeed the burden of his last lecture.

The Merton Professor's lesson bore fruit in more senses than one, and Shackleton subsequently wrote articles on Pope, Johnson, Gibbon, and Bentham. For Pope he himself acquired both French and Italian translations of the *Essay on Man*, then, since 'l'appétit vient en mangeant', in his last years he could not resist owning the first edition of the English original. Writing on the *Essay* and the French Enlightenment Shackleton traces Voltaire's reflections of Pope, considers the translations which appeared early on and the debate they occasioned, highlighting in particular Jean-Baptiste Gaultier's 1746 attack, partly because of its

unusual clarity in establishing the Spinozism of the *Essay on Man* and partly because it was the first sustained exposition of the conspiracy interpretation of the Enlightenment. Even before the *philosophes* achieved any tenuous grouping, Pope could, on the Continent, be seen as a conspirator seeking to subvert society and religion, gaining thus a place in the vanguard of the French philosophical movement.

Shackleton was also a keen Johnsonian, a regular member of both Society and dining Club, the Great Cham's engraved portrait hung in his entrance hall, and in him both the dictionary-maker and the philosopher were honoured. He moved in Johnsonian circles, he was long a friend of both Donald and Mary Hyde, and he was often to be found at Four Oaks Farm, their bibliographical retreat. In those days the Oxford Modern Languages world had unusually strong links with Johnsonian studies, the Librarian of the Taylorian, its library, being none other than L. F. Powell, the learned editor of Boswell, while its Slavonic Librarian, J. S. G. Simmons, was another Johnsonian expert. In an article on Johnson and the Enlightenment Shackleton starts with Johnson's apparent opposition to much that the movement stood for but then goes on to study his visit to France and the common ground of Locke and Bayle. He points out that Johnson translated Paolo Sarpi, whose *Istoria del Concilio tridentino* was so fundamental in the development of the Enlightenment in Italy. Johnson also owned the first seven volumes of the *Encyclopédie*. Shackleton argues that he had a typically Enlightenment belief in the spread of knowledge, that he accepted the empiricism of Locke, was naturally sceptical, and leaned to utilitarianism in politics—like Voltaire, the young Diderot and the early Enlightenment even though Johnson stood poles apart from the atheism and materialism of the 1770s.

Gibbon, whose first publication was his *Essai sur l'étude de la littérature* (1761), was bound to attract the student of Montesquieu. Shackleton's article on the impact of French literature on Gibbon is, as usual, carefully documented. It studies the formative period of Gibbon's first visit abroad and shows him evolving from being, in an unusual Shackletonian phrase, 'a drop-out from Oxford' to one who had, by 1758, identified the great flaw in French thought which it was to be his lifework to transcend, the conflict between the *érudits* and the *philosophes*. Later Shackleton returned, in his article, 'The Greatest Happiness of the Greatest Number: the History of Bentham's Phrase', to the textual history of philosophy, a favourite field. Here he pursued

the idea from an Oxford coffee-house round France and Italy, bringing in Montesquieu, Helvétius, Beccaria, still finding time to include a careful study of Bentham's manuscripts: the entire peregrination designed to illustrate his attachment to a phrase which had 'moulded the political thought and the political activity of western Europe'.

On the Continent the roles of Jansenism and Freemasonry in the great liberal movement stemming from the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes also interested Shackleton greatly. He owned the works of Jansenius, he was a regular user of the library of the Société pour l'histoire du Protestantisme, a keen member of the Société Saint Simon, and an avid reader of that chronicler, much given to the study of the Regency generally, later writing on the death of Louis XIV and the 'new freedom' in ideas. More and more however he moved over to the *Encyclopédie*, a vehicle of erudition and ideas and a work which he owned, having bought it cheaply in Bordeaux, even if subsequently his friends were inclined to suspect that the price quoted tended in fact to go even further down with inflation.

In common with other scholars at that time but with the advantage of his close personal acquaintance with the work he did much research trying to identify the authors of each and every article. He studied the surviving accounts of the publishers, the ascriptions given in the volumes, and generally brought his remarkable knowledge of French libraries and bibliographical sources to bear on the problem. Administrative duties prevented him from completing this project in detail although his Zaharoff Lecture of 1970 on *The Encyclopédie and the Clerks* and his later Manchester lecture, 'When did the French "philosophes" become a Party?' (1977), showing that a small inner group had come to be welded into a party in the early 1750s, were two fruits of this. Another was to have been the study, together with Robert Darnton, of the reports to Joseph d'Hémery, the Parisian police chief, on the *littérateurs*, great and small, of the day. This work, slowed by his final illness, is to be published by his co-editor.

In Shackleton the scholar was a book collector and the book collector was a frequenter of both bookshops and libraries. Within two years of his appointment at Brasenose he was made College Librarian, a post he retained until 1966. A disastrous college fire in 1950 offered the opportunity to create a better undergraduate modern history library instead of top floor rooms, and with a keen sense of both history and the proper environment for study he went on in 1951 to clear the windows on the



west side of the main library, which had been blocked up in the eighteenth century, and, in 1959, to add a colourful and effective redecoration. Buying policy too was revised and, while some in the college saw the older library stock as a realizable financial asset, Shackleton, with consummate and characteristic commitment, turned the issue. His 1973 paper to the Governing Body, like his final public lecture, pleaded a deep-felt cause. It opens thus: 'I would not take the view that no circumstances could justify a College in disposing of a bibliographical treasure. If we possessed a rarity so valuable that the proceeds of its sale would completely transform the economic position of the College (for example a Gutenberg Bible), there would be a case for considering its sale. The position at Brasenose is quite different. . . .' He goes on to consider the current prices for College *incunabula* and certain other collections, which he had carefully researched and on which he had taken expert advice, and then discusses 'the question of scholarship'. He concluded: 'Old books are not curios: they are research material. The College should make them better known (to our own undergraduates, among others), better housed, and more readily accessible. It should be prepared also, selectively and judiciously, to add to their number. This is done by a number of other colleges, some of them much poorer than we. If we were to pursue this policy, we should be doing something to justify our existence as an autonomous learned corporation.'

In 1961 Shackleton was elected a Curator of the Bodleian Library and at once began to take a keen interest in its affairs. He was a regular user of the library and made a point in getting to know many members of the staff. Four years later, in 1965, he was appointed University Reader in French Literature, following the retirement of the late Dr Enid Starkie who, by force of character and academic output, had given the post particular prestige. In the same year the university, which was undergoing the general review of its operations chaired by Lord Franks, decided to institute a separate inquiry into library matters. Shackleton, known as a bibliophile, an active college librarian, a Curator of the Bodleian and a good administrator, was asked to take charge of this. The terms of reference were to explore the possibilities of increased co-ordination between university libraries; to consider the need for, and the method of establishing and maintaining, union catalogues of various categories of books and periodicals; to consider acquisitions policy and how to make the best of available resources; to assess whether more might be done

in the sharing of information and facilities, and in developing a common policy for the training of staff and their conditions of service; to consider priorities in the future provision of library accommodation; to review the method of financing university libraries; and to consider the desirability of establishing a permanent libraries' committee charged with the surveillance of library facilities. For this important and wide-ranging brief a powerful committee was empanelled including Lars Hanson, the Keeper of Printed Books at the Bodleian, Ian Philip, the Library Secretary, Trevor Aston (later University Archivist and General Editor of the History of the University), Walter (later Sir Walter) Oakeshott, the Rector of Lincoln College, and Professor (later Sir Rex) Richards, a future Vice-Chancellor. The committee researched the Oxford position thoroughly and visited numerous libraries in both Europe and America. Its two hundred and ten page report gave a remarkably full picture of Oxford library provision at the time and made no less than fifty-seven recommendations.

The 'Shackleton Committee' report long dominated the Oxford library world. The time scale given to the inquiry had had to be extended and in the closing months the committee, and the Bodleian, suffered a grievous loss with the sudden death of Lars Hanson, whose infectious learning, like that of his colleague Richard Hunt, did much, under J. N. L. Myres, to attract high quality academic staff to the library and thus to make it in those post-war days a shining example of learned librarianship. At this time, in January 1966, a preliminary report was presented at the end of the original period allowed to the Committee, a short eight months. This report foresaw a central libraries' committee co-ordinating the governance of all university libraries in Oxford with Bodley's Librarian and another professorial level appointee responsible to it. This pattern was altered in the final report leaving the outside libraries free under the general direction of the central committee, a noticeably more traditional and less co-ordinated structure. It may not be irrelevant that during the summer of 1965 Dr J. N. L. Myres, Bodley's Librarian, had resigned his office during a debate over the allocation between university bodies of certain key central accommodation. Shackleton was in full possession of the brief, an established scholar and a known administrator, and on 26 February 1966 he was elected as the nineteenth Bodley's Librarian.

In general the report proposed gathering up the disparate Oxford library provision, co-ordinating its finances, giving it

much ostensible general uniformity, establishing union catalogues and encouraging automation, and proposing ambitious building schemes. The committee had looked at world library developments, made recommendations, both short and long term, general and detailed, and had assessed some of the costs. The report was thorough and forward looking. In what was apparently still an expanding academic world unaffected as yet by the oil crisis of 1973-4 the omens were good.

Following the acceptance of the report and the establishment of the Libraries Board, Shackleton started his librarianship with vigour. He became a Professorial Fellow of Brasenose and could continue to live there. His predecessor as Librarian had completed an admirable programme on the restoration and development of the Old Library buildings. The successor, with the energy and goodwill accruing to a new broom, moved his office from a high cubbyhole down to a managerial suite on the ground floor, took the degree of D.Litt. which he felt the position required, turned to modern technology, and appointed a Keeper of Catalogues to take charge of automation. An Anglo-American conference on the subject (funded by the Old Dominion Trust, later the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation) brought an impressive group of librarians and others together at Brasenose College to consider the mechanization of library services and particularly the joint cataloguing of older books. This was taken further in 1968 by the establishment of Project LOC, encompassing in particular the British (Museum) Library and the libraries in the universities of Oxford and Cambridge. Although no particular scheme under discussion reached fruition these strategically important international planning meetings did much to advance the subject generally and owed much both to Shackleton's initiative and to his skill as a host.

Much else too was to be undertaken in the Bodleian during his librarianship. The long-term storage needs of a growing copyright library had been evoked by the report and the first phase of the university's book repository, housed just outside Oxford at Nuneham Courtenay, was an important step towards beginning to meet this recurrent problem. The extension of the Radcliffe Library underground in the forecourt of the University Museum allowed for vital reading rooms to be established in an important sector and was privileged to be visited by Her Majesty the Queen in 1976 shortly after its opening.

Following Shackleton's visit to America in the Christmas Vacation of 1965 with his committee he returned there many

times and played a notable part in maintaining the American Friends of the Bodleian started by Dr Myres. An outstanding exhibition, 'The Bodleian and its Friends', was taken to many centres both eastern and western in 1969-70 and did much to spread the fame of the library. Shackleton's period at the Bodleian saw the actual advent of such remarkable collections as that of the ephemera gathered by John Johnson (transferred from the University Press) and the musical one of Walter N. H. Harding, bequeathed by that extraordinary British-born collector from his home in down-town Chicago. Among other gifts and benefactions to the library at this time, and attributable directly to Shackleton's negotiation, was the anticipation by Paul Mellon of his gift of a major part of John Locke's private library. This was established in a fine suite on the first floor of the Clarendon Building, in itself an important university allocation to the library, and providing an imposing setting for the papers and books of a fundamental Enlightenment philosopher whom Shackleton much admired.

On becoming Librarian Shackleton had promoted Ian Philip, the popular and highly experienced Secretary of the Library, to be Keeper of Printed Books. Philip was a 'manuscripts man' by training and though learned in antiquarian matters was not a bibliographer on the Hanson scale. The new Keeper of Catalogues was Peter Brown, then at the British Museum Library working on catalogue automation, and when in 1970, after a slightly abortive start on similar work at the Bodleian, he moved to be Librarian at Trinity College, Dublin, he was succeeded by John Jolliffe, his former British Museum colleague. Jolliffe was a specialist in both the French sixteenth century and in automation, being the co-inventor of the 'fingerprint' method for the rapid recording of multiple copies of early printed books. He laid the technical basis for the automation of the Bodleian's Pre-1920 Catalogue using the revised file which had been in preparation since the 1930s. Jolliffe was brilliant but of independent views and a perfectionist. Collaboration was only possible on his terms (which did not include acceptance of the widespread AACR 2 cataloguing rules) and so the Bodleian pursued a lone and long drawn out path. Shackleton, who remained on good terms with colleagues individually, was however neither a team leader nor good at technology and thus he could not keep this key programme going. The Bodleian therefore began to lose much of the impetus and the advantage it had had in the 1960s.

As the general financial and administrative climate became

more difficult, with major schemes and expansion now harder to fund and staffing increasingly subject to bureaucratic complexities, it was no longer easy to maintain the early promise. Moreover in the early 1970s Shackleton began to fall ill with the first stages of polycythemia which, giving him initially a very rubicund but later a very pallid appearance, progressively sapped his positive forward-thinking energy. The strain told and in 1974 it became necessary for Ian Philip to be made Deputy Librarian in order to help out. The cause of Bodleian automation which Shackleton had so rapidly pushed forward made but slow progress (to see partial fruition sadly only just as he died) and others, including particularly the British Library (through ESTC), took forward the automation of older bookstock cataloguing. In the 1970s all the departmental keepers of the Bodleian came to retirement age and the opportunity for wide managerial changes arose. Shackleton however left the structure untouched, a failure to keep pace with the changes since the mid sixties which was unfortunate. He was not, and did not claim to be, a professional librarian. It is arguable that, as times became more difficult, a professional—or a more forceful fund-raiser or organizer—was what the library and the university really needed. Shackleton's gifts lay elsewhere. They contributed much to the library through his international scholarly presence and his keen bibliophilic interest. Colleagues arriving to ask him an urgent administrative question knew full well that to appear with a Sotheby catalogue in hand was to ensure a rapid side-tracking into the academic and bibliographic aspects of potential acquisitions. Rare book librarianship was more his line and he was distinctly aware of his position as 'Bodley's Librarian', seeing his post almost as that of a learned host, rather than that of the keeper in charge of one of the world's great collections of books and manuscripts. This was a personal role he played remarkably well. From stray meetings with visiting foreign readers through personal lunch and dinner parties, on to the postprandial surveys of library developments made at the annual Bodleian lunch held in his own Brasenose hall, Shackleton was ever the accomplished, friendly and generous host whose further virtues included a deep acquaintance with the best in untrammelled European food and wine. Many, world-wide, retain the warmest and most affectionate memories of their reception in Bodley and Brasenose. It was typical of his feeling for the importance of free scholarly access to books that he should, with perhaps a slightly antique disregard

for contemporary pressures, have opposed the introduction of impersonal reader's cards.

By the later 1970s his administrative style in both library and university had become somewhat autocratic and the burdens of major university office weighed heavy on him in contrast with his ever-present love of factual academic research. The Marshal Foch Chair of French Literature was due to fall vacant in 1979 and with some relief he returned to full-time academic life. His election necessitated a move from Brasenose to All Souls, to which the Chair was attached. Brasenose had been his home, in every sense of the term, for over thirty years and his suite of rooms there, surrounded by double-banked rows of books, numerous rugs, a Savonarola chair and other pieces of traditional style but elegant furniture, was the perfect setting for him and provided every convenience a bachelor could wish. The portrait of him by Margaret Foreman (now in Brasenose) shows him standing by the window bay, crowded bookshelves filling the room and with (carefully chosen) old tomes on every available surface. His doctoral gown is over the chair at the desk, his Bordeaux doctoral diploma scroll box on the chest in the foreground, the open door behind reveals the suitably distant figure of his long-serving college servant, Oliver, together with the plaster medallion of Montesquieu which adorns the small private dining room beyond. True to the character of the subject the painting records with accurate detail all the setting and indeed the fractionally uneasy stance of the man. The facial likeness is not totally true to life but very close to the photograph of the scene used by the painter. Photographic records were, more than usually, misleading likenesses. Sir William Coldstream's official portrait in the Bodleian is however no closer, and despite the subject's careful choice of the library set of the (in the painting finally sadly anonymous) *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* as a backdrop, less evocative than this formal, contrived, Brasenose intimacy.<sup>2</sup> The magic of the Brasenose/Bodley years was however broken by the move to another setting: All Souls could provide a distinguished academic context but residence, home, and room for the eighteenth-century heart of his great collection of books had to be found privately, in domestic isolation, ultimately in the ground-floor Victorian charm of 12 Norham Gardens.

<sup>2</sup> There is also a drawing of Shackleton, by Bob Tulloch, which hangs in the Brasenose Senior Common Room.

During his library years Shackleton had by no means relinquished his active presence on the international academic scene. He had taken frequent sabbatical leave, he assisted with the production of volumes of studies in honour of both Theodore Besterman and Jean Seznec, he reviewed and wrote regularly and was a frequent attender at meetings in France, Germany (though initially with some wartime bred suspicion), and Italy. In 1975 he was elected President of the International Society for Eighteenth-century Studies and in the ensuing four years his diplomatic skills did much to maintain orthodox democratic administration in that body. His presidential address to the Society's 1979 gathering in Pisa, where he had opened the proceedings with a speech in fluent Italian given in the colourful setting of the local opera house, parochial banner-holders lining the stage, was a typically well-documented piece on the Enlightenment and the artisan, showing, with Diderot, how the new interest in the artisan is the literary counterpart of the development of the machines themselves and thus a literary echo of the Industrial Revolution.

Early on Shackleton had become a Fellow both of the Royal Society of Literature and of the Society of Antiquaries, and in 1966 he was elected to the Academy where he played an important part both in his section and on the Publications Committee. He was a Delegate of the Oxford University Press (1972–81), chairman of the Committee for the Brotherton Collection, and a Trustee of St Deiniol's Library, Hawarden. Abroad he was glad to be a member of the readers' committee at the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, and also of both the Grolier Club of New York and Silliman College at Yale University. He received honorary doctorates from Bordeaux (1966), Dublin (1967), Manchester (1980), and Leeds (1985). Shackleton, born on the watershed of the Pennines, would, in a broad-minded way, point out his claims to be both a Yorkshireman and a Lancastrian, and appreciated his degrees from both sides of the border. He was made Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur in 1982 and also received the Médaille de la Ville de Paris (1978), as well as those of Pisa (1979) and of the President of the Italian Republic (1985). In January 1986 he was made a Commander of the Order of the British Empire. Shortly before his death he heard that he was to receive an honorary doctorate from the University of Paris-Sorbonne, an honour which was bestowed posthumously.

On taking up the professorship he intended both to work on

the d'Hémery police reports on French writers and to write a book on French intellectual life under the Regency. The invitation to be Lyell Reader in Bibliography at Oxford, a post he held in 1983–84, however turned him towards the bibliography of Montesquieu, a subject near to his own heart and one which he could study and illustrate so well from his own incomparable collection of that author's works. In his Lyell lectures, a characteristically 'agreeable' occasion, to use one of his favourite adjectives, he described how he had built up his thousand-volume collection, 'buying from catalogues, buying from bookshelves, especially when travelling in France or in Italy, but even in New York; in Oxford itself, where I have more than once bought editions rejected from college libraries. I habitually spent more than I could afford, and did not reject duplicates which often proved not to be so. Eventually I overtook [the municipal library of Montesquieu's home town] Bordeaux. I thus believe my collection of eighteenth-century editions of Montesquieu to be the best in existence and it is still growing. I think it appropriate, as a former Protobibliothecarius, that I should leave it to the Bodleian Library.'

In his bibliographical (and bibliophilic) survey Shackleton started with the first edition of the *Lettres persanes* of 1721 and, to his great regret, had to admit that this rarity had 'so far' eluded him. Only five copies, virtually all in institutional libraries, were then recorded and it is satisfactory, if a trifle sad, to be able to record that, thanks to his financial bequest, the Bodleian has now been able to complete the benefactor's collection with a fine copy of this book. As it was Shackleton owned three other 1721 editions and numerous other early ones, one of which had belonged to Henry Fox, Charles James Fox's father, and another to Lytton Strachey. He also possessed most of the early English translations.

The collection contains the first separate edition, 1725, of the *Temple de Gnide*, Montesquieu's stylized prose poem evoking with heated sensibility the life of court circles in the early years of the reign of Louis XV. There are also other early editions including in particular the undated (1742) London (really Paris, Huart) one, the first of the many especially fine ones of this text, together with the famous totally engraved 1772 edition, of which the late Professor Gordon Ray has said that Eisen never surpassed his plates here in suavity and grace. Other editions present were printed by Didot and Bodoni, while the translations include a Latin one published at Naples in 1786. There are also numerous



editions of the *Considérations sur les causes de la grandeur des Romains*.

Montesquieu's major work, *L'Esprit des lois*, appeared in 1748 and at once had a complex publishing history. The Shackleton collection contains, for a start, sixteen different editions published before 1751, with two copies of the first authorized French edition and one, with a Geneva imprint, which Shackleton described in some detail since it was in fact produced in London by the Oxford-born bookseller, John Nourse. There are besides numerous copies of English translations produced, before 1803, in places as varied as Aberdeen, Dublin, Edinburgh, Glasgow, London, and Worcester (Mass.). Montesquieu wrote on a number of subjects, in a number of styles, and was read by a number of different publics. Editions of his works are therefore unillustrated or finely illustrated, and in folio, quarto, octavo, duodecimo, or even smaller formats. All these varieties are well represented even to the almost chapbook production, *Les Étrennes de la Saint Jean*, 1742, in which Montesquieu had a contribution. Twenty-four eighteenth-century editions of the complete works not only add weight to the collection but also mean that it is thereby remarkably representative of most aspects of European publishing style during the Enlightenment and the French Revolution.

Shackleton was an inveterate book lover, keenly interested in the text, eager to possess each and every important version of it, appreciative of original wrappers as much as of fine leather bindings. He had too a sense of provenance, of belonging to a chain of owners and revelled, quietly, in having an elegantly printed set of bookplates, his normal one being: 'Robert Shackleton—mon bien mondain.'<sup>3</sup> Others read: 'Hunc librum antiquum in civitate dilecta Burdigalensi emit Robert Shackleton', 'Ex libris Robert Shackleton cuius in bibliothecam fortuna me transtulit', 'Hunc librum Gallicum in metropoli Gallica feliciter comparavit Robert Shackleton', 'Hunc librum peregrinum peregrinans adquaesivit Robert Shackleton', 'Hunc librum rariorum in alma terra Italica feliciter nactus est Robert Shackleton.'

Apart from his Montesquieu collection Shackleton's library contained virtually all the eighteenth-century and modern books which a scholar in his field could require. He rarely had to borrow from Oxford libraries. He possessed the *Encyclopédie*,

<sup>3</sup> This phrase was thought to be the ownership inscription of Humfrey, Duke of Gloucester, and was doubtless then chosen by Shackleton partly on this account. It is now ascribed to the duke's physician, Gilbert Kymer, Chancellor of Oxford University.

works by Diderot (some bequeathed by Enid Starkie, of which Shackleton, her literary executor, was proud), a finely bound set of the duodecimo Kehl Voltaire, the first English edition of the *Letters concerning the English Nation*, Rousseau's works, Bayle, Bachaumont, Boulainvilliers, and indeed, outstandingly, most of the minor and anonymous works, like the *Traité des trois imposteurs*, which contributed to the early Enlightenment. His eighteenth-century reference collection with many *Almanachs royaux* was remarkable. In 1979, on leaving both the Bodleian and Brasenose, he sold all he then had (bar the Montesquieu) to the John Rylands University Library of Manchester, retaining a life interest in the books but at a price which, being below the full market value of the collection, allowed him to record his personal feelings of gratitude to the library where he first became acquainted with early books. Typically the funds this sale gave him in the ensuing years were spent partly on travel, partly on the acquisition of more books. With these later purchases he branched out to own quite a number of English books such as first editions of Ralph Cudworth's *The True Intellectual System of the Universe* (1678, his last major acquisition), Pope's *Essay on Man*, Gibbon's *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, and Pine's Horace.

During his professorial years at Oxford Shackleton took less part in faculty matters, contenting himself with lecturing on certain standard texts and on French eighteenth-century censorship and publishing. He played a large part in establishing the Voltaire Foundation (bequeathed in difficult circumstances to the University by Dr T. D. N. Besterman in 1975) on a firm footing and as both a Director and Chairman he took a keen interest in it to the end, thereby helping to place Enlightenment studies on a permanent basis in Oxford. His presence both helped to raise the scholarly standards of the Foundation and gave the University the necessary guarantee that financial management would be sound. He continued too to attend meetings of the International Society for Eighteenth-century Studies and made several visits to Australia, a country he was fond of and where he was a Visiting Fellow at the Australian National University in 1980.

It was however European travel and particularly Italy that attracted him most in his last years. This surfaced of course, with numerous references to items in his personal collection, in articles on the Grand Tour in the eighteenth century, where he reviewed English books on the subject from Moryson and Lassels to

Gibbon noting both how these visits helped to cement the *respublica literatorum* and, by arousing interest in archaeology, did much to increase the English awareness of the importance of their own heritage. It is of course relevant too that he was a founder of the revived *Nouvelles de la république des lettres*. Another article, typical of the Shackleton method, analyses the duration of stay and the recorded reactions of fifty-six British and French intellectual visitors to Naples in the eighteenth century, finding that most made little contact with philosophically important circles there, although some major figures none the less drew inspiration from their visit. Shaftesbury, he noted, went to Naples to die—was this to be, years later, a precedent for him? Certainly Italy claimed him more and more. He visited friends, he examined libraries and bookshops, he saw people but he travelled alone. He has been described, later in life, as proceeding in a procession of one. Bologna, Florence, often Siena, Rome, Naples were the haunts of one who earlier had kept a careful record both of the dates of his trips abroad (his last was his one hundred and seventy-ninth) and of the hotels he had stayed at world-wide. Professor Cobb has commented on the evocative nature of the latter: 'Issoudun, Istanbul, Islamabad; Leeds, Leningrad, Lille, Lisbon, Lincoln (Nebraska); Sées, Sélestat, Sidi-bou-Saïd, Shrewsbury, Singapore; Tahiti, Tashkent ("unpleasant hotel, primitive bathroom, avoid"): he did not return to Tashkent.' But it was to the towns of southern Italy that he returned most readily. Italian matters held his attention and on the occasion of the brutal murder of the General of the Carabinieri, Dalla Chiesa, and his wife in Palermo Shackleton sent a personal telegram to the Minister of the Interior expressing his horror and sympathy. He held the medal of the President of the Italian Republic. He later met President Sandro Pertini on his visit to All Souls and he would surely have appreciated that the latter should send a moving telegram to his funeral.

Informally formal, an appreciator of ceremony and of ordered ways, he was a man for whom perhaps hotels provided the assurance of a regular domestic life to which he had grown accustomed through his years at college. An excellent speaker on formal occasions, he gave several memorial addresses, that for his professorial predecessor, Jean Seznec, being, as ever, carefully researched, even to Shackleton's visiting, with some difficulty due to rail strikes, Seznec's home town of Morlaix in Brittany. The ceremony with him precluded, perhaps intentionally, closer intimacy. Others have spoken of his personal loneliness, of his

solitary nature, of his independence. A man of many good friends, an excellent and generous host, an exemplary guest, he was however not a man of close relationships. He rarely ventured a critical statement on other people and an old acquaintance writes that his most damning criticism of any member of Brasenose was: 'I find no harm in him.' He rejoiced in news rather than gossip, doubtless, one suspects, because it was more factually based. He had a deep affection for his mother but tended to be diffident, if courteous, in the presence of women. He never married, preferring to converse with his chosen century. Spare time was spent reading his books from which literature after roughly 1800 was excluded with the sole exception of some two hundred Simenon novels kept by his bedside, more, one is inclined to think, as a form of travel literature than as an exercise in sleuthing or sociological analysis. No great cook himself, he collected books on different national *cuisines* and even later when he could eat but little he would savour retrospectively past meals and take the greatest interest in the planning of menus for special occasions. No one who met him was indifferent to him; a few found him impenetrable and a fraction pompous, most remembered him as a personality and indeed remembered him with affection and gratitude.<sup>4</sup>

Two heart attacks early in 1986 left him very weak but he managed to attend the royal investiture and even to lecture at Leeds when he received the Marc Fitch Prize for Bibliography there. The lecture was his swan-song and yet again a variation on his essential theme, the fundamental importance in the modern world of truly learned, and expanding, libraries where European thought, the basis of so much of our modern society, could be properly studied. Announcing that he would take early retirement at the end of September he departed for a few weeks in Italy. He died at Ravello on 9 September and was buried in the Protestant cemetery overlooking Naples. The last letter of this erudite bibliophile scholar and remarkable cultural ambassador, written to an Italian friend, plans a new edition of his favourite

<sup>4</sup> The present writer is indebted to many Brasenose, faculty and library friends, not to mention eighteenth-century studies colleagues abroad, for anecdotes and memories of Robert Shackleton. Particular mention must however be made of the help received from Dr Shackleton's brother and sister, Mr Stanley Shackleton and Mrs Marian Holman, and from the Principal of Brasenose, Professor W. H. Barber, Professor R. Darnton, the late Professor R. A. Leigh, and Mr J. S. G. Simmons.

author and indeed finishes on the name Montesquieu. His  
tombstone records the facts of his life and ends:

Books, learning  
and friends world-wide  
were all his life;  
Oxford, France, and ever Italy,  
his homes.

GILES BARBER