



JAMES BOULTON

# James Thompson Boulton

## 1924–2013

IN THIS AGE OF SPECIALISATION, distinguished academics achieve their reputation by work on one period or one author. The age of the generalist is over. While there are those still alive who were appointed to teach anything and everything, it is now not uncommon to find a member of an English department described as a ‘Lecturer in seventeenth-century literature’ (or any other period), implying that he or she never steps outside the limits suggested by that description. Jim Boulton became a major figure in two widely different fields, however, with subsidiary interests elsewhere. He was an outstanding editor, historian and critic of eighteenth-century literature; and he was a dominant presence in D. H. Lawrence studies, from his own *Lawrence in Love: Letters from D. H. Lawrence to Louie Burrows* (Cambridge, 1968) to the completion of the magnificent modern edition of Lawrence’s work over which he presided as General Editor with determination, flair, and rigorous affection. His work on the Lawrence edition will be described here by John Worthen (it is characteristic of Boulton that he now needs two people to do him justice: there were giants in the earth in those days).<sup>1</sup>

### I

James Thompson Boulton was born on 17 February 1924 at Pickering, North Yorkshire, the first of five sons born to Harry, a joiner and

<sup>1</sup> Parts I and III of this memoir were written by Professor Watson and Part II by Professor Worthen.

undertaker, and Annie, a domestic science teacher. He was educated at Lady Lumley's School, Pickering, and University College, Durham, which he entered in 1942, only to leave a year later to do war service in the Royal Air Force. He trained at Elmdon, now the site of Birmingham Airport, near which he was later to spend an important part of his career. As Pilot Officer, and then Flight-Lieutenant, Boulton served in Rhodesia, Egypt, India, and Malaya: it was in Malaya, flying massive single-seater Thunderbolts, that he saw the end of the war. He was fortunate to survive: the surrender of Japan came as his flight was preparing, in a highly dangerous raid, to attack Singapore.

According to all accounts, he had been an unambitious and not particularly distinguished undergraduate in his first year, although it had included one life-changing event, when he encountered Margaret Helen Leary, of St Hild's College, in 1943. University College occupies the Castle at Durham, and it was at a ball, standing near the fireplace in the great hall, that they met. They were married in 1949, beginning a life together (and a working partnership) that was to last for almost sixty-four years. He returned from the war, however, a changed man, with a much firmer sense of purpose, and determined to do well. The Department of English was small, as was the University at that time: he studied modern literature under Claude Colleer Abbott and Clifford Leech, and medieval literature under Bertram Colgrave. He did three years work in two, and graduated with First Class Honours in 1948.

He went on to Lincoln College, Oxford to read for the degree of B.Litt., a very common first step in postgraduate work in those days. Here he came under the influence of Humphry House. House's work on Coleridge is visible in the critical practice of Boulton's early work, and House's editorial achievement was a model for Boulton's method in his later years. In addition, *The Dickens World* of 1941 showed what could be done in understanding the progression of a work to its finished state. It was House who spotted the need for a more complex study of eighteenth-century political literature than had hitherto been attempted, and who directed Boulton's interests towards it. During the course of his work in the Bodleian Library he came across a significant document, which resulted in his first publication, in the now sadly defunct *Durham University Journal* in 1951, 'An unpublished letter from Paine to Burke'.

In the same year he was appointed Assistant Lecturer at the University of Nottingham. He stayed there as Lecturer, Senior Lecturer, Reader, and finally Professor, until 1975. These were the years in which he developed and extended his knowledge of the eighteenth century, and published

work that had begun in Oxford. The *Durham University Journal* printed a more ambitious piece on Burke, ‘The *Reflections*: Burke’s preliminary drafts and methods of composition’ (1953). He also began writing on modern drama, which continued to be an interest: he published essays on T. S. Eliot (1956) and Harold Pinter (1963). Many years later, he was still lecturing on this subject: his future son-in-law, Allan Wilcox, then a Birmingham undergraduate, remembers Boulton coming from Nottingham to lecture on it, and, typically, taking time to discuss it with him, an unknown member of the audience who buttonholed him afterwards.

He returned to his preoccupation with eighteenth-century political writing by publishing an edition of Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (London, 1958). This was Boulton’s first full-length work, for which he was awarded the degree of Ph.D. by the University of Nottingham in 1960. Its excellence is demonstrated by its frequent reappearances: in a second edition in 1968, as a ‘Revised Blackwell Edition’ in 1987, and as a ‘Routledge Classic’ in 2008.

No critical edition had appeared in the two hundred years since its publication in 1757, and yet it was a work that needed the scholarly attention of a modern editor. ‘Without exaggerating the wisdom of the *Enquiry*’, he wrote, ‘one must rank it among the most important documents of its century.’ That preliminary clause was typical of Boulton: the strength of his claim was to be balanced by a sense of proportion. It was a practice of his criticism and his editing that gave the reader confidence. Moreover, it displayed a knowledge of Burke that was based on a perceptible empathy. Before the Introduction, there was an epigraph, a quotation from the *Enquiry* that was, by implication, applied to its editor: ‘A man who works beyond the surface of things, though he may be wrong himself, yet he clears the way for others . . . I am sensible I have not disposed my materials to abide the test of a captious controversy, but of a sober and even forgiving examination; that they are not armed at all points for battle; but dressed to visit those who are willing to give a peaceful entrance to truth.’ It was too modest, in many respects; but it was an elegant way of describing what he intended in the edition—working beyond the surface of things, not intending to stir up needless controversy, and trying to find readers, who, like the editor, would be seekers after truth.

The *Enquiry* had been shaped by debates and discussions at Trinity College, Dublin, and (in the second edition) by the comments of reviewers, when Burke added the ‘Essay on Taste’, in the manner of Addison. Boulton correctly saw Burke’s psychological approach as fundamental.

His discussion of the cross-currents of philosophical thought in the eighteenth century was clear and shrewd: he showed himself aware of the defects of Burke's position, yet also of its advantages. 'The fallacies of the sensationalist position are clear enough', he wrote; but it produced 'the lucidity and peculiar strength of argument so characteristic of the *Enquiry*.' The balanced judgement, the forceful and direct language, were typical of Boulton's work. 'It would be foolish to claim that Burke made a major contribution to the discussion on taste,' is how the final paragraph of this section of the introduction begins. But that paragraph concludes 'What is lacking in profundity of argument and mature reflection is recompensed by a more than usual freshness of expression and vividness of illustration.'

The Editor's Introduction continues with sections that discuss Burke's treatment of the Sublime, and the Beautiful. Acknowledging a debt to Samuel H. Monk's *The Sublime* Boulton acknowledges Burke's particular contribution to the discussion of a well worn eighteenth-century topic. These sections end with a discussion that looks forward to Boulton's later work. Of Part V, discussing words, he writes: 'it makes suggestions—of potential if not immediate value—which transcend the restrictions imposed by tradition on the majority of critics'. What was true of Burke became a major occupation for Boulton, the study of the function of words in putting forward a point of view. He had an uncanny appreciation, and a great love, of a well-put argument: as a good critic of poetry appreciates the use of imagery, the work of a line and a stanza, the right word in the right place, the complete consort dancing together, so Boulton had a wonderful 'feel' for an argument and its expression.

This was the driving impulse behind *The Language of Politics in the Age of Wilkes and Burke* (1963), published by Routledge and Kegan Paul in London and the University of Toronto Press in Canada. While the Introduction to the *Enquiry* was very properly subordinated to the purpose of providing a masterly summary of philosophical context and poetic (and painterly) influence, *The Language of Politics* showed an increased firmness and confidence, not least in the 'comparison and analysis' practice of criticism (Boulton had cited Eliot in the earlier work). His perceptive commentary on the work of some of his predecessors in the introduction was a model of delicate disagreement, as when he wondered how a critic could write of Junius's 'balanced but hysterical prose'. 'It is an astute remark', he wrote, 'though it may not be immediately apparent that prose can be at once balanced and hysterical.'

The book concentrated on two periods of political controversy. The first was from 1769 to 1771, the time of Wilkes and the Middlesex election. But Wilkes, as Boulton put it, precisely and sharply, ‘was interested primarily in John Wilkes’. Much more rewarding for the critic were the Junius Letters, here rescued (with the help of Coleridge) from patronising comment and neglect, its author ‘the master of the language of factious politics’; and Samuel Johnson’s *The False Alarm*, with its grand dismissal of vulgarity and venality. The controversy over the Falkland Islands in 1769–70, oddly pre-figuring controversies over events two hundred years later, brought out the contrast between them: Junius was jingoistic (Boulton’s nicely chosen word), whereas Johnson pondered the greater questions of war and peace. However, each had his defects: Junius was too provocative, Johnson too lofty and theoretical. The truest insights were to be found in Burke’s *Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents* of 1770: in Boulton’s study of that work one can sense his admiration for Burke as a man of affairs as well as a moral philosopher; an admiration of his style, too, of the perfect equilibrium of strength of feeling and political judgement.

Burke provided the link with the second, much larger, part of the book, dealing with the ‘political controversy, 1790–1793’. The introduction to this part discussed the profound effect that *Reflections on the Revolution in France* had on the opinions of those who observed its beginnings; not only those who welcomed it with enthusiasm, such as Richard Price, but also those who supported Burke while at the same time acknowledging the real significance of what had happened in Paris. The discussion of Burke and his opponents was valuable in itself, but Boulton went far beyond conventional wisdom in recognising what he called ‘the intimate relationship that exists between Burke’s philosophical reflection and his literary techniques’. The detailed examination that follows led up to a close examination of the famous description of Marie Antoinette, which was seen as fundamental to the work and central to its effectiveness. It had been referred to briefly, in the discussion of words in Part V of the *Enquiry*. Now it was examined more closely, in relation to the uses of imagery—medical, religious, and those concerned with tradition and manners.

By contrast the chapter on Paine’s *Rights of Man*, following a similar critical practice, noted the cleverness of another kind of style: ‘Paine is suggesting, by his choice of idiom, tone, and rhythm, that the issues he is treating can and ought to be discussed in the language of common speech.’

If this included bad grammar, so be it. The sections that follow continued to stir the reader into an acknowledgement that the expression of political views is as vital as the views themselves. Mackintosh's *Vindiciae Gallicae*, Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* and Arthur Young's *Travels in France* were each given detailed treatment. Young, for example, was distinguished from the others by his first-hand descriptions of poverty and hardship among the French country people: it made a welcome change, Boulton noted, when a writer concentrated on human experience rather than political attitudes to events.

Boulton's chapter on the other pamphleteers in prose and verse suggested, in its rapid overview of some tiresome and opinionated productions, a certain impatience with those who were too ready to air their own opinions. It was followed by an impressively detailed study of Godwin, as political writer and novelist. The recent flowering of Godwin studies is perhaps a reminder of how far Boulton was ahead of his time; just as he remarked that the name of Paine is completely absent from those volumes that were much prized in the 1950s and 1960s, the *Pelican Guide to English Literature*. The force of his writing is refreshing, critical but never opinionated. He pinpoints a writer's virtues: 'Sober, honest, plain-speaking but temperate as Mackintosh undoubtedly appears, he does not lack shrewdness or decisiveness as an opponent.' But he can see weaknesses with an unerring eye and write about them with a commendable firmness. Of Mary Wollstonecraft he writes: 'the frustration she experiences in trying to counter Burke's persuasive tactics is made too clear, and the superiority in argument that she would claim is not established'.

*The Language of Politics* managed to be both a study in depth and a portrait of an age. Boulton provided a similar portrayal of an earlier period in the introduction to the Oxford University Press edition of Dryden's *Of Dramatick Poesie* (1964, second edition 1971). While W. P. Ker, in his 1900 edition of Dryden's essays, had been content to provide the basic introductory matter—the dialogue form, the debt to Corneille—Boulton saw the work as a contribution to an international debate on the use of rhyme in drama and the preservation of the unities, but also as a product of the age: 'a world where parsons timed their sermons by an hour-glass on the pulpit, men on a journey "baited" (or paused) at an inn for refreshment, and where bidding at an auction ended when a piece of lighted candle burnt out'. Each of these is referred to fleetingly in Dryden's essay: Boulton contrasts the way in which Dryden kept his readers in touch with an everyday world, with T. S. Eliot's *Dialogue on Poetic Drama* of 1928, in which there are men 'sitting in a tavern after lunch, lingering over port and

conversation at an hour when they should all be doing something else'. Dryden, it is clear, had Boulton's admiration for the industry of his literary knowledge and the force of his argument. Dryden addressed the question of 'imitation of nature' much as Johnson was later to do: 'The truth is, that the spectators are always in their senses, and know, from the first act to the last, that the stage is only a stage, and that the players are only players.' It is the *means* (Boulton's italics) by which this is done that engages the participants.

The admiration of Dryden is for the features of his work that prose shares with good poetry (as Eliot recognised): 'logic, clarity, fluency, and vitality', as Boulton lists them. 'They cannot be good Poets who are not accustomed to argue well', as Dryden put it. This basic principle informed Boulton's treatment of another writer, Defoe, who would have been read by the polemicists of *The Language of Politics*. His *Select Writings of Daniel Defoe*, published by Batsford in 1965, and republished by Cambridge University Press in 1975, was a natural successor to the earlier book. Defoe's novels were recognised as important, but Boulton took on the task of selecting from the vast corpus of Defoe's other works, concentrating on some of his favourite topics, 'such as trade and politics, manners and morality, in poetry as well as prose, and in works ... which are characteristic blends of fact and fiction'. His introductory essay was entitled 'Daniel Defoe: his language and rhetoric', continuing the methodology of the earlier book. Once again there was an evident sympathy at work. Boulton wrote about Defoe as he had written about Burke, with an admiration for Defoe's conduct of his argument and his position in relation to the world of affairs. Defoe was a man interested in trades and professions, in schemes and projects, in wealth and poverty: his language is that of a man of the world, but an honest one. Boulton's argument is that Defoe had a view of 'the interdependence of style and morality': 'Stylistic plainness ... is both appropriate to the subject and a warranty of honest purpose; a man who writes clearly and directly, who is "plain and explicit", can be trusted.' The assessment of Defoe is shrewd and balanced, but strong in his defence: noting that critics have accused him of clumsiness and prolixity, he offers examples of Defoe's sharp and compressed strength, his 'robust vulgarity'. 'Too much can be made of Defoe's stylistic deficiencies,' he writes; 'the consequence is to underrate his literary sensibility.' Here and elsewhere, Boulton was firm in his judgement, and bold in his defence of a writer he thought under-appreciated.

These years were busy ones, on all fronts. Boulton and Margaret had two children, Andrew (born 1953) and Helen (born 1955). He was given a

personal chair in 1964; he spent six months in America in 1967 as John Cranford Adams Visiting Professor of English at Hofstra University, Long Island; he served as Dean of the Faculty of Arts at Nottingham from 1970 to 1973. It was at Hofstra that he did much of the work that resulted in *Johnson, the Critical Heritage* (London, 1971). He was a natural choice for this task because of his extensive knowledge of the periodical and pamphlet literature. The result, without in any way being prejudiced, selective, or unscholarly, strangely reflected Boulton's own values. Even as his admiration for Burke and Defoe had been evident in the earlier work, so now he was able to demonstrate Johnson's greatness. He did so by including significant extracts from Johnson's own writing, rather unusually for the series. It had the effect that he sought for. Johnson's resounding prose was like plate armour, from which the assaults of the critics fell to the ground like so many darts; and Boulton demonstrated Johnson's response to criticism, which, while sensitive, was one of brave endurance. One of the passages that Boulton singled out shows a significant similarity to the epigraph to Burke's *Enquiry* about a man who clears the way for others. Johnson wrote of the writer of dictionaries that he was 'the pioneer of literature, doomed only to remove rubbish and clear obstructions from the paths through which Learning and Genius press forward to conquest and glory'. This was not false modesty, but fact; and it accords well with Boulton's own career, which was principally devoted to the provision of texts that were scrupulously accurate, and fairly judged. It was at this point in his career that he began work on what was to be his greatest achievement.

## II

Having spent his entire early research career working on pre-1800 literature, Boulton would have been the first to agree that he happened to be in the right place at the right time (the University of Nottingham in the mid-1960s) for his scholarly interests to be directed—or diverted—towards D. H. Lawrence.

From the early 1950s, with the encouragement of the then Professor of English, Vivian de Sola Pinto, Nottingham University Library Manuscripts Department had steadily been building up and adding to its Lawrence collection, especially of material with local associations. It was therefore natural that, in the middle 1960s, the department should buy the papers of Louie Burrows, a local school-teacher and headmistress who

had known (and had been engaged to) Lawrence in his early years. The papers included an extraordinary cache of his letters: not only unpublished but unimaginable to scholars who thought they knew ‘early Lawrence’. By now Boulton was a scholar experienced with texts (exemplified by his 1958 edition of Burke’s *A Philosophical Enquiry*). It was therefore natural that he should take on the task of editing the letters; they appeared as *Lawrence in Love*, published by the University of Nottingham in 1968.

Louie Burrows had kept almost every letter which Lawrence had sent her, including most of those written during the fourteen months between December 1910 and February 1912 when they were engaged. Details of Lawrence’s engagement—indeed, of much of his life during these years—had been practically non-existent before; Lawrence scholars were now gifted with a marvellous record, and Boulton’s name rightly came to the forefront of Lawrence scholarship. For he had set himself to track down the references to Lawrence’s reading, to his circle of friends, and to his writing in progress, especially of his short stories and his novel *Sons and Lovers* in its preliminary version (*Paul Morel*). Some previously known poems and short stories were also now given a fuller background.

Boulton had to equip himself with a great deal of knowledge of Lawrence’s early life and writing career in order to annotate these letters successfully, and to introduce them; but he was an academic and a man well able to direct his talents into a new field (his strengths of accuracy, intelligence, charm and considerable impatience operated throughout his career). As a result, when the idea was first aired in the late 1960s and early 1970s of a complete edition of Lawrence’s letters (a project first suggested by Gerald Lacy and Keith Sagar: the single volume edited by Aldous Huxley in 1932 and the two-volume edition produced by Harry T. Moore in 1962 had been very limited in scope), and Michael Black at Cambridge University Press showed his interest in the project, it was natural that, when the Press was persuaded to accept it, it should have turned to Boulton. He was an academic heavyweight, an editor and a proven Lawrence scholar, and he was appointed General Editor of its *Letters* project, then planned to run to six volumes (one volume was later divided).

Because, however, the originals of a large number of the letters were at the Humanities Research Center at the University of Texas at Austin, and its Director, Professor Warren Roberts, was a renowned Lawrence expert, and also because the first catalogue of Lawrence’s letters (a crucial basis for the new edition) had been compiled by Gerald Lacy for his Ph.D. at Texas, it was agreed at an early stage that the *Letters* edition should be

driven forward jointly by the Universities of Texas and Nottingham (and later Birmingham, where Boulton moved in 1975). Steps were taken to compile two complete files of xerox copies of all known letters, one file to be housed at Texas and the other in England. This task involved writing tactfully, authoritatively and persuasively to those private individuals who owned letters, as well as to public institutions. Boulton had an indomitable talent for pursuing the recalcitrant (whether possessors of unpublished letters or editors) and—in the case of the former—persuading them to supply texts. These were tasks at which he excelled.

The project had first been conceived as a joint affair between Britain and the USA, with both British and North American editors being appointed. As it turned out, after the first volume had appeared in 1979, edited by Boulton himself, all subsequent volumes would be edited jointly by him and the previously appointed editor or editors. This solved the problem of maintaining editorial consistency, but it also allowed Boulton to continue to drive the project forwards. Warren Roberts, who had retired in 1978, was from that point onwards less directly concerned with the edition; he contributed to only one volume of *Letters* and it was clear that the balance of the edition was shifting from the USA to England. This was also because Boulton was (as might have been expected) using his expertise and his capacity for management to the full advantage of the project. Although five of the nine *Letters* editors came from North America, it was always Boulton's project, and he carried it through magnificently, making himself an extraordinary scholar of Lawrence's world, not only of his early life, while (of course) overseeing all matters relating to what inevitably remained a complex international enterprise (surviving letters were to be found all over the world).

The Cambridge Lawrence project, however, was about to extend enormously. It was clear that the existing texts of Lawrence's work were full of flaws; in 1973 Carl Baron compiled a paper describing how an edition of Lawrence's works might be implemented, and Cambridge University Press was persuaded to take on the project of the *Works* as well as the *Letters*; Michael Black, the publisher at the Press, was fully in support, as was Andrew Brown later on. The *Works*, it was thought, would run to around thirty volumes, and it was originally conceived of as an edition to be bought by the general public, not only by Lawrence scholars. Again it was planned as a project largely to be shared between England and North America, but drawing upon editors from many countries. Boulton and Warren Roberts were appointed its General Editors, potential editors

were approached in the mid-1970s, and the first volume, *Apocalypse*, edited by Mara Kalnins, came out in 1980.

The *Works* project, however, gradually detached itself from the concept of an international edition. Board meetings for the *Works* came to be held only in England, with Warren Roberts acting only in an advisory capacity. The *Works* too became Boulton's project. Without him as the guiding central figure there would undoubtedly have been the kinds of delays and disagreements which are the bane of multi-editor projects. I cannot now think of another academic who could so successfully have taken on a project such as the *Works* while also running the *Letters*. In the first place, the *Works* involved negotiating with the Press (who handled dealings with the Lawrence Estate), and then finding the right people to become editors. Boulton would ensure that each prospective editor submitted what was called the Proposal for an Edition (something demanding a huge amount of work, including as it did a sample of editing complete with appropriate Explanatory Notes and Textual Apparatus, as well as a preliminary Introduction for the volume); this would go round the Board, with each member adding comments, to be passed back to the editor. Occasionally, prospective editors were asked to re-submit their Proposals. Later on, the submitted edition also did the rounds of the Board members, and parts of it might be returned to the editor if problems with them still remained. Boulton would find himself working with and alongside a great range of people: by the time the *Letters* and *Works* editions had been completed, thirty-one people had been engaged in editing work beside Boulton himself. And this he managed to accomplish while giving the bulk of his scholarly time and attention to the *Letters* edition as it advanced, as well as to two significant Burke projects.

By the middle 1980s, it was clear that the *Works* edition was not going to be the commercial success the Press had hoped for, either in the scholarly Cambridge volumes or in the paperback series run by Granada and Grafton, which between 1981 and 1989 published the texts of the edition's first eleven volumes, with new introductions. In consequence, some of Cambridge's original editorial demands for editing appropriate for the expectations of a general public were abandoned by the end of the 1980s. An example would be the fifteenth volume of the edition, edited by Philip Crumpton in 1990, *Movements in European History*: a history book for schools which Lawrence wrote for money. If the edition's publication in the *Works* had been aimed at the general public (or even at schools), Lawrence's numerous erroneous dates would have had to have been corrected, as

editors would normally correct an inaccurate text. As it was, the Board decided that *Movements* should be published with all its errors in place (though, of course, corrected in the Explanatory notes). The decision for primarily scholarly editions, printing almost exactly what Lawrence had written (however inconsistently), never seems to have been formally taken but pragmatically accepted, with Boulton very well prepared to allow such pragmatism. Scholar and gentleman as he was, he always listened carefully to arguments on both sides of a question, but was brilliant at ensuring that decisions were then taken, and enforced. The policies and practices for the *Letters* volumes he had set out in the 1970s, however, never varied.

I was one of those invited to take on an edition of the *Works* in the late 1970s, and I experienced Boulton's commanding touch at first hand. He was enormously helpful; he answered letters by return, gave excellent advice, and went out of his way, for example, to arrange for his archive of still unpublished Lawrence letters at Birmingham to be available to me when I needed it (the letters were, as one would have expected, immaculately prepared, a task to which Margaret contributed significantly). In turn he demanded from his editors what he himself incomparably gave to the edition: energetic resourcefulness, scholarly accuracy, and (last but not least) the ability to meet a deadline. If you could match—or at least reliably aim for—these, you would get along with him. But if you demonstrated yourself incompetent, you would be rejected, however much time you had devoted to your Proposal. A lot of egos got bruised, over the years; at least one senior figure selected by the Board to offer a Proposal for an edition found it rejected when it had gone round the Board for the second time in a revised form; other editors were unable to cope with the demands of the edition on their time and resources, and withdrew; still others complained against what they thought was the Board's slowness in returning submissions, and its recalcitrance in refusing to change its mind or its methods. Boulton rode all these storms with untroubled conviction about the proper progress of the edition.

With editors occasionally added, replaced or needing to be pacified, the volumes however continued to come in. They were edited to a very high standard, for which the textual work almost exclusively done by Dr Lindeth Vasey at the Press until 2000–1 was responsible; without her the project would never have reached the level of accuracy and exceptional competence it did under Boulton's leadership.

It had always been considered a possibility that Boulton himself might take on a volume of the *Works*. The *Letters* edition having been brought

to a triumphant conclusion in 2001 (Boulton had been responsible for an eighth volume, the index, which had also included additional letters located too late for the appropriate volumes), it was put to him by the Board (a little mischievously, it must be said) that he ought to take on a volume of the *Works* himself and therefore—it was thought—go through the often agonising process to which others had been subjected. This he did, with the volume eventually entitled *Late Essays and Articles* (published in 2004), though the other members of the Board were a little surprised to find, when it came in, that Boulton had ignored the standard format of the first thirty volumes of the edition and had broken up his introductory material (always previously in one place, at the start of the volume) into short pieces preceding each essay. It was a characteristic move; no one else had ever done it, would have been permitted to do it, or would do it again. But who was to say no to such a General Editor?

As the series began to run down, with only five or six volumes of the *Works* remaining, the Board met less often and Boulton played a smaller role in the process of bringing individual volumes through to production. However, he always went through the Explanatory Notes for the individual volumes as they came in, and was inimitably to the point and astute in his comments, made in that characteristically spiky handwriting.

He was also happy to see the *Works* edition extend beyond its originally planned dimensions; six of the later volumes were of early versions of Lawrence's work (for example, *The First 'Women in Love'* edited by Lindeth Vasey and John Worthen, the first two *Lady Chatterley* versions edited by Dieter Mehl and Christa Jansohn, *Paul Morel* edited by Helen Baron and *Quetzalcoatl* edited by N. H. Reeve). All in all, thirty-nine volumes of *Works* were produced in Boulton's time as General Editor, in all of which he had played some part; the two volumes of the last edition, *The Poems*, published in 2012 and edited by Christopher Pollnitz, allowed him to see his edition of the *Works* through to the end. The eight volumes of *Letters* had, however, been an even more remarkable achievement, given the huge part he had played in every volume. It speaks (appropriately) volumes for him that Boulton should have run both editions with such acuteness and firmness, such an ability to get the best out of people, coupled with an enormous amount of sheer hard work on his own part.

It was typical of him that, after the *Letters* edition was complete, but (of course) new Lawrence letters, or better texts of existing letters, continued to be discovered, he began (with the permission of the Lawrence Estate) by seeing to their publication himself, editing the material just as he always had. But gradually he felt unable to continue with such work

and passed on the job to others. He still wanted the edition to be complete, so far as possible. The format and methods he had worked out in the 1970s for the letters' publication have, in fact, been precisely followed down to the present day, in the publication of all additional Lawrence letters and texts in the annual *Journal of the D. H. Lawrence Society*. No end is thus yet in sight for the project which Boulton started, and made half his life's work, forty years ago.

### III

Boulton was offered a Chair at Birmingham, and moved there in 1975. It was a large department, with varied interests which to some extent competed with each other for attention and resources. It was the kind of situation that university administrators describe as 'challenging', which, being translated, means 'exceptionally difficult'. Few people could have done it, and very few could have done it while retaining the respect and affection of their colleagues. One of them described him as 'the epitome of a caring and demanding head of department'. He threw himself into the work of the university with the experience that he had brought from Nottingham and the weight of a senior academic, choosing the roles that he was to play with care. He was a member of the governing body of the King Edward VI Schools Foundation in Birmingham, and he was a great supporter of the chaplaincy work of the university. His own Christian belief was deep, thoughtful, not unquestioning, and yet firm. He was a server and sidesman at All Saints' Church, King's Heath, and an active member throughout his time in Birmingham. A passing likeness to the then Bishop of Durham, David Jenkins—in face and white hair, and perhaps in some aspects of faith as well—caused him some amusement on an appointing committee when an applicant for a chaplain's post came out of the interview room to report that the University of Birmingham had enlisted the most radical bishop of the day as an external assessor. Above all, he accepted election as the Dean of the Faculty of Arts in 1981. That appointment coincided with what were widely known as 'the cuts', and Boulton was responsible for implementing them throughout the Faculty. He sought for a fair solution, and came up with the idea, now commonplace, that teaching resources should be linked to the research and publication records of the departments. It must have been an extraordinarily difficult time, when he was responsible for people being asked to take early retirement. At the end of three years as Dean, in 1984, he decided that he could

no longer go on asking colleagues to do what he was not prepared to do himself, and he voluntarily took early retirement himself.

The sequel was remarkable. The university—presumably with the agreement of the members of the Department of English—asked him to continue for another four years as Head of Department, though without any teaching duties; and he became the university's Public Orator, which gave him an opportunity to demonstrate his wide sympathy and his wit (he regarded wit and satire, as in the little Edward Arnold volume on *English Satiric Poetry*—London, 1966—that he edited with James Kinsley, as of little point unless they led to the reformation of society and the individual). Most significantly, he founded the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities. Conscious of many of his former colleagues who were nominally retired but still pursuing research, and of others in the Birmingham area who were working without the security of an academic appointment, he created an environment and conditions in which they felt supported and valued. He remained its Director until 1999, and Deputy Director until 2006.

He was Head of the Department at Birmingham until 1988. It must have been at the end of that time that two of his Senior Lecturers, Ian Small and Marcus Walsh, began to compile a collection, *The Theory and Practice of Text-Editing. Essays in Honour of James T. Boulton*, published by Cambridge University Press in 1991. It was a generous and appropriate tribute by two colleagues who were themselves distinguished editors; and it drew upon the expertise of several others—Philip Brockbank, Russell Jackson, Ann McDermott, Mark Storey and Charles Whitworth—from the same department, together with an essay by John Worthen. The result is a book that engages with the difficult questions of editing, and does not seek to avoid the pitfalls. How does an editor cope with an author's revisions? What is the status of non-literary work, such as letters, or Johnson's *Dictionary*? How much contextual information should be supplied? How much should an author's intention be taken into account when attempting to determine a correct text? How should an editor go about annotating a text? Should texts ever be modernised? The answers to these questions appear straightforward enough at first sight, but on closer inspection they prove elusive: they depend upon cultural assumptions about the audience for whom the edition is intended, and upon the tact and intuition of an individual editor. To edit is to engage in an act of mediation that has to be watchful and controlled. The editors quote Boulton's *Prospectus* to the Cambridge Lawrence, in turn quoting Robert Halsband, to the effect that letters must be printed 'to allow them to be read as widely as possible, and

with ease and pleasure', without creating 'a coterie scholarship, when we will only read each other's footnotes'.

The coming together of so many colleagues and friends in such a venture is a measure of how much Boulton was respected and honoured by those with whom he worked; it must have given him much gratification. While the complexity of the topic is never far from the surface, the common-sense approach that underlines the various contributions suggests an admiration of his methods, and is in many ways a vindication of them. Wisely, however, the editors decided not to try to summarise his achievement. They demonstrated their affection on the title page, and at the end of the volume they printed a list of Boulton's publications covering forty years, from 1951 to 1991.

In the same year, 1991, he was awarded the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Letters by the University of Durham. It gave him great pleasure to receive the degree in the Great Hall of the Castle, where he had met Margaret almost fifty years earlier. The University of Nottingham, which he had served for almost twenty-five years, followed with another Doctorate of Letters in 1993. In 1994 he was elected a Senior Fellow of the British Academy. Meanwhile, as demonstrated in Part II above, the great work on Lawrence continued. He was almost 89 when the last volume came out, and he had always said that he did not think that he would live to see it brought to a conclusion, after forty years of editing and supervising other editors. Meanwhile his work on the eighteenth century went on: in 1997 Boulton and his friend T. O. McLoughlin published Volume 1 of the Clarendon Press edition of *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*; and in 2006 the same two editors produced Boswell's *An Account of Corsica* with Oxford University Press. The year before he died, Boulton saw what he resolutely stated would be his last book, *News from Abroad*—an anthology of letters from the Grand Tour, again edited with Tim McLoughlin, and brought out by Liverpool University Press.

In that year he and Margaret had left the Birmingham that they had come to love, and moved to North Wales to be near his daughter Helen and her husband Allan, when she moved from Groningen to the Chair of English at Bangor. He was delighted when Bangor made him an Honorary Professor, and he took to the village of Nant Peris, where he was much liked. It had two features that he greatly valued, a church and a pub. It was in the second of these that he spent his last evening, taking part in the local book group, convivial and interested as ever. He died suddenly later that night, on 18 July 2013. It was a good end to a good life: no suffering, no lingering. As his beloved Samuel Johnson had written:

Then with no throbbing fiery pain,  
No cold gradations of decay,  
Death broke at once the vital chain,  
And freed his soul the nearest way.

His ashes were taken from Snowdonia to Pickering to be buried, returning to his roots in North Yorkshire which he had left so long ago.

The Lawrence edition will be his enduring monument. It involved the clearing out of an Augean Stables of previous attempts, the job of an editor being, as Johnson put it, ‘to remove rubbish and clear obstructions’. But Boulton’s heart lay with the eighteenth century, and with its prose writers rather than its poets. It is possible to see, with hindsight, that the writers that he loved were those who combined a philosophical largeness of view and high principles with a sense of the practical and the possible. As a busy academic, his patience must have been tried, again and again, by those who talked too much or too unrealistically; and his irritation at certain pamphleteers, or at the sniping of the critics of Samuel Johnson, is never far from the surface. This is not to say that his critical work is prejudiced, or that it tells us more about the critic than it does about the author. It is to maintain that his choice of topic, and his treatment of it, are based on a firm set of beliefs and values; and those beliefs and values enable us to see Burke and Johnson more clearly. Boulton’s Burke and Boulton’s Johnson will stand the test of time.

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